

Côr Cymry Gogledd America on World Tour!

by Stephen B. Glynn

There's a Spanish poem I love called "La sangre de mi espíritu es mi lengua" or "The Blood of My Spirit is My Tongue" by Miguel de Unamuno. The poem describes how the Spanish language, and through it the Spanish culture, unites Hispanics around the world. I have often thought how much the Welsh language similarly unites the Welsh diaspora across every continent. Welsh, the ancient tongue of the Celts, is truly in our blood. But the Welsh language is never more Welsh than when it is sung.

Who hasn't felt that quickening of their heart when singing *Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau*? Or joined in the chorus, "*Calon lan yn llawn daioni*"? Wherever in the world there are Welsh, there is singing, and singing in *Cymraeg*. Here in North America we are blessed with many Welsh choral groups, and one especially well known to *Ninnau* readers is the North American Welsh Choir, *Côr Cymry Gogledd America*. As 2020 began the choristers of *Côr Cymry*, who have regularly gone on tour to many areas of the world, were getting ready to share that spirit of Welsh in song with the people of Calgary and Banff, Alberta, Canada.

Then came COVID-19. The tour was rescheduled to next year. But even more heartbreaking was that choral singing was now a dangerous exercise. It seemed as though the sound and spirit of Wales had been quarantined by the pandemic. But no. "*Canu yn Gymraeg*" has survived for thousands of years, and a pandemic wasn't going to silence the voices! With a little help from technology, *Côr Cymry* continues singing. Over the past few months, thanks to the work of Artistic Director and Conductor of *Côr Cymry*, Dr. Mari Morgan (with some help from Kathy Crusi and Lisa Hopkins), choristers and friends have been on something of a "World Tour."

It happens each Saturday at 11AM Eastern Time, when choristers gather on their tablets, laptops, computers, or phones to sing, share, and travel electronically across the globe. Since March 28 the choir has "traveled" to Wales repeatedly to meet and share with well-known and celebrated Welsh poets and musicians such as Meirion Wynn Jones, Kim Lloyd Jones, Arwel Treharne Morgan, Mererid Hopwood, and Eric Jones, as well as enjoy a concert by the brilliant young harpist, Glain Dafydd.

One morning the choir



Cefyn Burgess presents to the choir

enjoyed a visit with textile and canvas artist Cefyn Burgess in his Ruthin home with side trips to Shillong, India, to see and hear about the work of Welsh missionaries and churches where Welsh hymns are now sung in local languages, and to Trelew, Argentina, where the Welsh immigrants, Spanish settlers, and native Argentines share in the traditions of Welsh culture. Not wanting to miss our trip to Canada, we joined with David and Mona Matthews (and their grandsons) one morning in their home in Calgary. The choir enjoyed a trip down the River Towy with BBC Wales radio personality Richard Rees, and his videographer daughter Ffion Rees, in addition to getting a taste of current and classic Welsh language pop, rock, and folk music.

One fascinating video visit was the time we spent with well-published Welsh language teacher Heini Gruffudd, who not only gave us insights into the language, but shared his mother's story of finding refuge from the Nazis in coming to Wales during WWII. While our tour included stops in the U.S. to learn about writing music from composer Stanley Grill, and about improvisation on hymns from organist David Enlow, one of our most adventurous tour destinations was New Zealand, where Margot Griffith stayed up all night New Zealand time, just to host our visit and tell us about emigrating from Wales to New Zealand, and similarities between the Maori and Welsh cultures.

But one thing that is central to our time together each Saturday is our singing. Oh, not together, and we all miss hearing those delightful inner harmonies, the warm overtones that give the Welsh hymns and songs their

unique character, but we do sing! Mari will que up a video or recording of a hymn or choir favorite, such as *Y Tangnefeddwyr*, and members sing—in their parts, and in Welsh.

Our singing has not ended there, however, as you may have enjoyed the choir's offering of *Tir Iarll* on the virtual NAFOW event that was offered by the WNAA over the past month. David Enlow provided



Mererid Hopwood joins Saturday rehearsal

the accompaniment. Then a group of choir members, recording at their homes provided the initial tracks in English and Welsh. After that various choristers recorded their own tracks which were mixed on top of the initial tracks, and *Côr Cymry* was once again "together," singing as we love to sing.

So, despite this pandemic, the spirit of Wales is still strong and vibrant, as the members of *Côr Cymry* can attest. Across thousands of miles, in towns large

and small, near and far, there is this connection. And the Welsh that is sung and spoken, by native speakers and those just beginning to enjoy the language, binds us together with the culture and history of Wales. The blood of our spirit is our Welsh tongue, which has survived over thousands of years, despite many trials. *Cymraeg* lives on and in a mighty way.

Be safe, and take some time to sing a bit today—in Welsh!

Historic Poultney Welsh Presbyterian Church Turns Into a New Chapter

By Janice B. Edwards

A new 501© (3) charitable non-profit corporation has been established to care for the building, its history and its use

Poultney's 120 year-old Welsh Presbyterian Church at 46 Grove Street (Route 30) in the community's Village has turned a new chapter in its life.

The founding officers and directors of "**The Poultney Welsh Church Preservation Alliance and Presbyterian Fellowship, Inc.**" [abbreviated as: "**The PWCPA...**"] are pleased to announce receipt of official 501©(3) EIN number effective June 25, 2020 from the United States Department of the Treasury Internal Revenue Service, and that they have received from James C. Condos, Secretary of State of the State of Vermont, confirmation of registration as a 501©(3) Vermont Domestic Non-profit Corporation effective August 16, 2020. Its purpose is "... exclusively for charitable, educational, religious, or scientific purposes within the meaning of Section 501© (3) of the Internal Revenue Code. To preserve, promote, and educate the community-at-large of the Welsh Church building and the value it offers to the Poultney, VT area. To rehabilitate the property retaining its historical and architecturally significant features. To sponsor, host and/or participate in programs, exhibits, and events which will promote community gatherings, family activities and religious worship service."

Frank G. Sears is Founding President of the Preservation Alliance. Additional founding officers and directors include: James Patrick Hogan, Vice President; Erin Stoneberg, Treasurer; Benita Mead,



Poultney's historic Welsh Presbyterian Church

Secretary; Thomas Bushey, Director; Kenneth Williams, Director; Nancy Williams, Director; and Benita Mead, Director. Worship services conducted in the English language continue to be held at 10:00 a.m. on Sundays under the Presbyterian doctrine.

President Sears said that additional updates and news regarding the new non-profit will be provided in the near future. At the March 2020 Annual Meeting of Poultney Area St. David's Society (PASDS), a 501© (7) Welsh heritage fellowship non-profit founded in 1988, the members voted to assist "The PWCPA..." and Welsh Presbyterian Church with this transition and with its future fund-raising needs due to the Albany Presbytery's 2020 dissolution of Poultney Welsh Presbyterian Church. The com-

munity-at-large has begun to respond to the first need of the Alliance for \$7,000.00 to enable them to finalize ownership from the Albany Presbytery. A Building Fund GoFundMe appeal beginning at \$6,440.00 is being organized with the help of PASDS members. Questions may be referred to the St. David's Society's email address: pasds1988@gmail.com; or one may contact Frank G. Sears at (802)-325-3594.

Tax-deductible donations made payable to "PWCPA..." designated for the annual and / or building fund are gratefully appreciated. Donations payable to "PWCPA" may be mailed c/o PASDS, 60 Norton Ave., Poultney, VT 05764-1029; or they may be mailed to the Alliance's brand new post office box address: PWCPA, P.O. Box 252, Poultney, VT 05764-0252.



Cor Cymry on Zoom