

St. David's Welsh Society of the Suncoast



JANUARY 2016

welshsocietyofthesuncoast.org



EVERYONE INVITED *CROESO*

Regular meetings of the St. David's Welsh Society of the Suncoast are held at noon on the **third Tuesday of the month**. From October to April at the **Lake Seminole Presbyterian Church**, 8600 113th Street N, Seminole Florida (right on the corner).

A potluck luncheon and program entertain all persons with an interest in celebrating Welsh heritage. We have great fun so bring a friend to socialize. (They do not even have to be Welsh to be welcome.)



MEETING

There will be no snow in her comments, I am sure, but on January 19 our own Barbara Girdali will report on her adventures in Wales this summer. "Back to Wales" will recount her return to a country loved by all. There may even be some familiar places to share memories of.

TRIVIA QUESTION: What letters of the alphabet do not appear in the Welsh alphabet at all?

ABCDEFGHIH
IJKLMNOPQ
RSTUVWXYZ

Speaking of letters, Don Briggs reports that he used to go out with a girl with 36DDs. It was a ridiculously long name.

St. David's Day Banquet

March 6

Kally Ks Restaurant

NEW LOCATION FOR ST. DAVID'S DAY BANQUET

This year we are trying a new location for our St. David's Day Banquet. We will gather at the same time (4:00 social hour) at a new but familiar location—Kally Ks Restaurant on Main Street in Dunedin. It has been the site of many successful summer luncheons.

You will have a choice of stuffed flounder, cheese stuffed chicken or strip steak. For only \$27.00 you will enjoy a scrumptious meal and an evening of musical entertainment.

Mark your calendar now to join your friends to celebrate our Welsh patron saint day.



NEWSLETTER AVAILABLE ONLINE



Remember our newsletter is now online. You can read it anytime at welshsocietyofthesuncoast.org. Many thanks to a tech savvy non-Welsh friend who loads it every month for us. If this will suffice for you and you want to be removed from the mailing list, please let the editor know. This will save us considerable money in postage and printing costs.

CELEBRATIONS

January Birthdays

| | |
|----|-----------------|
| 5 | Nancy Mellican |
| 21 | Marjorie Rubart |
| 25 | Vickie Anderson |
| 30 | Roger Hughes |

No February birthdays or anniversaries.

AROUND THE MEMBERSHIP

Feeling a bit under the weather **Rhianon Hardy** would appreciate hearing from her friends.

Having suffered a set back at Christmas, **Leslie Jones** is recovering at Menorah Manor, room 403.

Roger Hughes is recovering from hernia surgery. We hope to see him at the January meeting.

If you have any news to share, please contact Nancy. She can only report what she is told.

Welsh and Numbers

Two Welshmen, Dylan and Glyn, are sitting on a park bench reading their newspapers.

Dylan notices the headline, '12 Brazilian Soldiers Killed.'

Turning to Glyn, Dylan (Dull'un) enquires, 'Just how many is a Brazilian?'

SARASOTA WELSH SOCIETY

The Sarasota Welsh Society invites you to attend their upcoming meetings.

Saturday, January 23, 2016: Gymanfa (Welsh hymn singing) 11 a.m. followed by lunch and Annual Meeting at 12:30, at The Glenridge on Palmer Ranch.

Tuesday, March 1, 2016: St. David's Day Celebration at Heritage Oaks Golf Club beginning at 6 p.m.

For details contact Amy Ferrell 941-349-6069
amypferrell@gmail.com

STILL TIME TO PAY DUES

Our dues are still a bargain at only **\$10.00 per person**, due in October each year.. In return you will receive a new membership directory and our monthly newsletters to keep you informed of Welsh news. If you cannot attend the next meeting, send your dues to

Nancy Mellican
6 Fernery Lane
Safety Harbor, FL 34695

Our treasurer thanks you. So far we have only 46 paid members for 2015-16.

YOUR HELP NEEDED

It still costs a great deal to publish and mail this newsletter—much more than our meager dues can cover. Sharing news from our friends is one of the ways we keep in touch with our Welsh friends. Again this year we are soliciting donations to cover the costs. Large or small donations are appreciated.

This month's newsletter is sponsored by **Mark Taber, Kristy Alderson, and Meg Zeigler**. We appreciate everyone who contributes to keeping this newsletter going.

CHECK YOUR CUPBOARDS

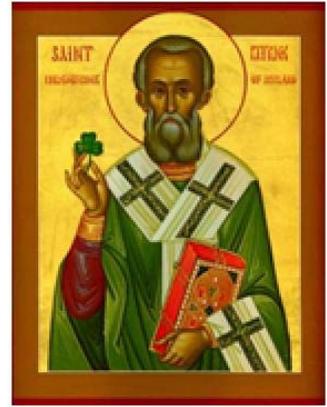
Once again we are planning a silent auction at the St. David's Day Banquet. Now is the time to check your cupboards for items that you might want to donate to the auction. You can bring items to the next meeting or even bring them to the banquet. This auction is one of the few fund raisers we have during the year and everyone seems to enjoy bidding on the wonderful donated items. Clear your clutter and do your good deed at the same time.

*The name **David** is of Hebrew origin, and means "beloved".*

ANSWER TO TRIVIA QUESTION: The letters K, Q, V and Z do not appear in the Welsh alphabet at all.

Who was Saint David ?

Saint David (c. 520-c. 601) is the patron saint of doves, poets, and Wales. One source calls him "perhaps the most celebrated of British saints." An other gives him credit for evangelizing much of Wales. The body of information available about him today is thin in substantiated fact but rich with tradition, including even King Arthur and a sea monster. Saint David's mere existence may provide evidence that Christianity in Wales persisted in tact and uninterrupted since Roman times.



Rhygyfarch Embellished Story

Most information about Saint David comes from the writings of an eleventh-century monk named Rhygyfarch (also Rhygyvarch, Rhigyfarch, and Ricemarch), son of Bishop Sulien, of Saint David's Cathedral, Saint David's favorite of the churches he established. Rhygyfarch claimed to have gathered his information from old written sources, but those have not survived. Rhygyfarch's life of Saint David is regarded by many scholars as suspect because it contains many implausible events and because he had a stake in enhancing Saint David's history so as to support the prestige of the Welsh church and its independence from Canterbury, the center of the English church (still Catholic at the time). According to David Hugh Farmer in *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, Rhygyfarch's history of Saint David "should be treated as propaganda, which may, however, contain some elements of true tradition." Another source considers Rhygyfarch's biography "traditional, symbolic tales of a great religious leader." Saint David's existence at least does not seem to be in doubt; it is attested to in written records from earlier dates. The earliest is an Irish Catalogue of the Saints of 730. Another is an Irish Martyrology of 800.

Saint David Born

One legend says Saint David's birth was foretold to Saint Patrick (about 373-464) by an angel 30 years in advance. In the traditions surrounding Saint David, his mother is said to be a woman named Non, now Saint Non, who may have been a nun at the cloister called Ty Gwyn, near Whitesand Bay. She may also have been the daughter of a chieftain in Pembrokeshire. She is said to have been very beautiful, and it was her great beauty that is said to have driven Saint David's father, Sant, or Xantus, a local chieftain or king, perhaps related to King Arthur, to rape her. (Other traditions say Sant and Non were married, and she became a nun later in her life.) She became pregnant with Saint David. Yet another legend says that during her pregnancy she entered the church of Saint Gildas in Wales, and he was struck dumb. He realized the Welsh church must be intended for the future Saint David and left for Ireland. In any case, Non is said to have given birth during a storm (so violent as to have deterred a local ruler who planned to kill Saint David in order to eliminate a rival for power in the realm) at a spot overlooking Saint Bride's Bay, south of today's Saint David's Cathedral.

The year is given variously as 454, 487, 520, 542, and 544. A medieval chapel named for Saint Non was built at the spot; it is today in ruins. Non's son was baptized at Porth Clais by Saint Ailbhe, who may have been Non's nephew. Miracles marked the event: a new spring erupted and sight was restored to a blind monk, Movi, holding the baby.

Excelled in School

Saint David went to school at a monastery called Hen Vynyw, or Henfynyw, in Cardigan. Rhygyfarch wrote, "He grew up full of grace and lovely to behold. And there it was that holy David learnt the alphabet, the psalms, the lessons for the whole year and the divine office; and there his fellow disciples saw a dove with a golden beak playing at his lips and teaching him to sing the praise of God." One source points out he would have learned Latin there and studied mathematics, astronomy, and music. After Hen Vynyw, he went to an unidentified island (one source says it was the Isle of Wight) to study for the priesthood under a Welsh scribe, Saint Paulinus. A legend says that Paulinus had gone blind from crying so much as he prayed, and that Saint David restored his sight with a gentle touch. Another legend says that an angel told Paulinus to send Saint David out to evangelize the British.

Founded Monasteries

As a traveling priest, Saint David is said to have founded 10 or 12 monasteries. The number is disputed, but several have been authenticated. He also allegedly cleansed deadly water at Bath and turned it into a warm and healing pool. Another legend says some monks tried to poison Saint David's bread, but Saint Schuthyn rode to Saint David one night from Ireland on the back of a sea monster to warn him, and Saint David blessed the bread, counteracting the poison. There is consensus that he ended his evangelizing travels in Mynyw, or Menevia, in extreme southwest Wales (where Saint David's Cathedral is today) and founded his major abbey there, training "many great pastors and eminent servants of God," according to Father Alban Butler on the Catholic Forum website. Butler described Mynyw as "formed by nature for solitude, being ... almost cut off from the rest of the island." Another source calls the site "lovely and lonely."

Wrote Strict Rule

Saint David's monks followed a very strict rule "in the spirit of penance," according to Father Butler. Others say Saint David adapted his rule from that of monks in Egypt. "Every moment of the day had its duties," wrote Amy Steedman, one interpreter of Saint David's life. Wearing animal skins, they labored in the fields, plowing without farm animals; "every man his own ox," Saint David is reported to have said. Speaking was severely restricted, and they were to pray, silently if not aloud, at all times. When not in the fields, they prayed, studied, and wrote. They ate bread, vegetables, and salt and drank only water and a little milk. Following the evening meal, the only one of the day, they prayed for three hours before going to bed, then awoke at dawn. Because he didn't allow the consumption of wine or other spirits, Saint David is nicknamed "The Waterman." The monks were to pray continuously from evening on Friday until daybreak on Sunday, with only an hour after Saturday Matins for rest. Farmer noted, "David devoted himself to works of mercy and practised frequent genuflections and total immersion in cold water as his favourite austerities."

Father Butler wrote that if someone wished to join Saint David's monastery, he had to wait outside for 10 days, "during which time he was tried by harsh words, repeated refusals, and painful labours, that he might learn to die to himself. When he was admitted, he left all his worldly substance behind him."

Combated Pelagian Heresy

A man who lived over a hundred years before Saint David played a role in the next major event in the traditional telling of Saint David's life. The monk Pelagius, born in Britain in about 354, visited Rome in approximately 380. Although Pelagius was not a priest, he was a popular religious leader who placed a high value on asceticism, or self-denial, as a way of drawing closer to God. The self-indulgent excess he saw in Rome shocked him, and he blamed it on the doctrine of salvation by grace, the idea that people cannot earn salvation by good works but that only God can bestow it. To counteract this doctrine, which Pelagius thought led to moral degradation, he insisted humans were responsible for their own salvation. For this he was declared a heretic and excommunicated in 417 by Pope Innocent I.

By the fifth century, Pelagius's heresy, called Pelagianism, was widespread in Britain. It was suppressed, but legend says it sprang up again in Saint David's lifetime, and a meeting of church officials, called a synod, took place at Brefi, in Cardigan, in about 519, to suppress it again. Saint David was invited to attend. Although he spoke to the assembly only reluctantly, his words were compelling, and legend says a hill rose up under his feet so that everyone could see and hear him and a white dove came and sat on his shoulder as he spoke. (He is represented in church art standing on his hill with the dove on his shoulder.) He not only put down the heresy, but was elected primate of the Cambrian, or Welsh, church unanimously. The incumbent primate, Dubricius, even resigned in Saint David's favor. Saint David accepted on the condition that the headquarters of the see be transferred to his home monastery in Mynyw (now Saint David's Cathedral). Some traditions say the legendary King Arthur approved the relocation of the see.

PICTURE PAGES



Connie Osmulski sets out the ham for the buffet—even the dessert table was delicious!



Smiling Jack Jacobson provides piano accompaniment for the group singing.



Reliable Ray Denman leads the Pledge of Allegiance.



Betty Walker came all the way from Zephyr Hills to be with her Welsh friends.



Jan Briggs catches up with an old friend from the Tarpon Singers.



President Matt Hall and Meg Zeigler anticipate a delicious meal before the meeting.

Barbara Girdaldi enjoys an afternoon of good fellowship.



Threesome Kelfryn James, Wendy Whitaker, and Betty Walker share stories.



Don Briggs lends his dulcet tones to the National Anthem.





Irishman Danny Kearns shares fantastic stories with Welshman Dave Thomas.



Mr Socks Leslie Jones shows off the Christmas edition from his wardrobe.



Wendy Kearns always has a smile for her Welsh American friends.



Visiting from North Carolina, Owen Hughes is spending a month with his grandmother Mary Hughes.



Cynthia Roberts enjoys a Welsh joke.



Our traditional Christmas guests, The Tarpon Singers entertained with a variety of seasonal songs—serious and humorous.

