

O ble wyt ti'n dod? An American's journey to reconnect with Welsh

by Liz Williams

As a newcomer to the Welsh language class in Canberra, I was recently asked the question, "O ble wyt ti'n dod yn wreiddiol?" or, "Where are you from originally?" I answered to the class that I was from Efrog Newydd (New York) originally, and was met with some perplexed looks. If I was American, why was I learning Welsh?

My link to Wales goes back several generations to 1886, when my great-great-grandfather left his home near Aberdaron, in North Wales, to join a small community of Welsh immigrants living in central New York. This area was a hub of Welsh-American immigration during that time period, and his family remained there for generations.

When I was growing up there in the 1990s, the Welsh culture was still prominent, with 'Gymanfa Ganu' hymn-singing events held regularly and other Welsh cultural traditions celebrated. My Welsh heritage interested me, and I travelled to Wales several times over the years to explore this connection, and even began learning the language in 2012.

It wasn't until I became an immigrant myself, though, relocating to Australia in 2018, that I really started to appreciate my Welsh heritage. While adapting to life in a new country, I found myself drawn toward the Welsh-Australian community.



Liz Williams and her son, Levin, holding a photo of the house near Aberdaron, Wales, where Liz's great-great-grandfather lived before emigrating to New York in 1886. Pictures: Supplied

It felt familiar to me, while so many other aspects of adjusting to Australia were disorienting and unsettling. I joined the Welsh language classes at the Melbourne Welsh Church, and linked up with the Canberra Welsh Society after moving there last year.

Reconnecting with my Welsh heritage as an immigrant has been a fulfilling experience for me, and I see learning Welsh as a lifelong journey that will continuously bring me closer to that part of my heritage. I hope to share this connection to Wales with my son someday, as he is just two years old and has only known Australia as his home.

Like many who call this country home, that question "O ble wyt ti'n dod yn

wreiddiol?" can be complex. Yes, my son is from Australia, but from America before that, and from Wales even before that. I hope to share this multifaceted heritage with him as he grows, wherever in the

world we may be.

Liz Williams is an American writer living in Australia with family ties to Wales. She can be contacted through her website at lizwilliamswrites.com.

New Venue

**The Sydney Welsh Choir
St David's Day Concert 2024
West Ryde Community Hall
3-6 Anthony Road West Ryde
2pm Saturday March 2nd**

Cost \$10 each (pay cash at door)

This year we plan hold a concert in the style of a cymanfa ganu with lots of opportunity for community singing

The choir will sing a few songs. Our poet in residence Rob Ferguson will deliver prose. There will be a short talk on the life and times of Hwyl Dda. The guest performer will be Karen Hickmott on the harp.



Welsh cakes, bara bryth, sandwiches/ tea and coffee will be served after the concert

The West Ryde Community Hall is in the main shopping precinct directly opposite Coles and Woolworths. It is close to the railway station and the bus routes along Victoria Road. There is some street parking and 2hr free parking in Coles.

There will be lots of hwyl!



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