

2023 WISCONSIN WELSH WEEKEND AND STATE GYMANFA GANU

Submitted by Jan Jones Batty

The Welsh Gymanfa Ganu Association of Wisconsin, Inc. (WGGAW) held its traditional Welsh weekend the first weekend in May.

Those who were able to obtain tickets gathered at All Saints' Cathedral in Milwaukee for an early Afternoon High Tea. What a treat!

At 4:00 p.m. we met at nearby Immanuel Presbyterian Church for Welsh events. Gwenith Closs-Colgrove of Lincoln, Nebraska opened the afternoon's activities with a talk about the Great Plains Welsh Heritage Project, home of the Archive for Welsh America in Wymore, Nebraska. She also extended an invitation to everyone to attend the North American Festival of Wales which will be held in Lincoln, Nebraska this upcoming Labor Day weekend.

Carolee Schultz presented updates about the improvements to Peniel Welsh Chapel near Oshkosh, the success of last year's 100th gymanfa ganu anniversary, and invited everyone to come to the events they have planned for this year.

Next on the agenda was an eisteddfod based on the theme Dŵr/Water. This theme was suggested by the late Mary Williams-Norton, a WGGAW board member, and we held this year's competitions in her honor.

There was one entry in the Recitation category, Rev. Joe Corbin of Omro, and his presentation of "Pentref Llanfihangel" in Welsh was deemed worthy of a prize. We had two competitors in the Music category. Rev. Joe Corbin sang "Rock of Ages" in Welsh while accompanying himself on the guitar. Florence Case of Antigo, which is in the northeast corner of Wisconsin, attended with her three daughters. She sang "Songs of the Night." Florence was the winner of The Baton. There were two entries in Visual Arts – "Waves of Welsh," a painting by Kim Corbin, and a moody black and white photo of a nearby marsh by Ann Lemmenes. Kim was the winner of The Crown for this category.

The Chair, awarded for the Literary category, is the most coveted. This year's chair was procured by Bron Wentzel, lovingly restored, and adorned with daffodils on its back, and a ddraig goch on the seat. Entries were submitted under a pseudonym (ffugenw). Competitor Cymreig Bachgen Buwch (Bron Wentzel) submitted a prose entry in English – "What is the Weight of Water" and competitor Yr Un Sy'n Caru Choffi Bore (Kim Corbin) contributed the poem "Welsh Water of Wisconsin." In a ceremony that can only compare to the most solemn at the National Eisteddfod, Kim was presented her chair amidst cries of Heddwch/Peace! Robert Humphries made the announcement and Danny Proud and Rhys Humphries held the sword and scabbard.

Time was quickly running out for our Welsh activities at the church, but we managed to squeeze in a Welsh language presentation by Danny Proud, who taught us the pronunciation of the parts of the city name LlanfairPG and the words to Ar Lan y Môr. In what can only be described as Welsh Genealogy on Speed Dial, Jan Batty presented some tips for researching your relatives in Wales.

A short distance away, we reconvened at County Clare Irish Inn and Pub for a hearty meal and a Noson Lawen. Danny Proud accompanied us on folk tunes and Robert and Kathy Evans performed a medley of Welsh tunes as a clarinet duet. During the evening's events, Dale Hughes discovered a Welsh bartender, Blake, who joined us for some singing. He also unabashedly showed us his tattoo of a Mari Lwyd.



On Sunday afternoon, we gathered at Immanuel Presbyterian Church in Milwaukee for the 89th Annual Wisconsin State Gymanfa Ganu. After welcome remarks by WGGAW President Jan Jones Batty, and devotions by Rev. Teresa Larson of Immanuel Presbyterian Church, we began by singing the national anthems of the United States of America and Wales.

Robert Evans of Bourbonnais, Illinois, a relative newcomer to conducting cymanfaoedd, led us through three sets of hymns. Many were sung in the “Welsh sandwich” tradition. We were accompanied on the pipe organ by the incomparable Steve Jensen at his home console (E. G. & G. Hook and Hastings et al Op. 1045 – 1881, 83 Stops, 73 ranks, approx. 4600 pipes). Special music was provided by soprano soloist Gwenith Closs-Colgrove of Lincoln, Nebraska who sang two selections by contemporary Welsh composer Robat Arwyn. These selections were “Yfory – Tomorrow” and “Anfonaf Angel – I am sending you an angel.”

After stretching our vocal cords, we retreated to a te bach with a variety of treats, tea and coffee to refresh us. We met old friends and made new ones that afternoon.

Many thanks to the WGGAW board members, volunteers and members of Immanuel church who helped make this weekend a success. You can keep up with the Welsh events in Wisconsin at our website wggaw.org. We hope to see you at upcoming events!