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# CYFEILLION MADOG

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## Annwyl Gyfeillion-Dear Friends

*Daniel Ranbom*

I first came to Cwrs Cymraeg in 2012 for *Cwrs Halen y Ddaear*, The Salt of the Earth Course in Salt Lake City. I had previously studied Welsh during a year in Aberystwyth, and having learned of Cymdeithas Madog and the Cwrs online, I registered out of a desire to hold onto and improve that skill. It's fair to say I did not know what I was getting myself into. Luckily, I had an amazing time my first week: meeting the people, buying all I could from the course bookshop, and trying to drink in as much Welsh as I could.

Since that first year, I've come back to the Cwrs every year for its amalgam of tradition and change: the students and tutors who consistently return; the traditions of singing often and, often everywhere; the *noson lawen* and the *eisteddfod*; and the at times arduous yet inevitably rewarding classroom time; those are the constants, year in and year out. Yet each course is new, different: different locations, new faces, every year a perspective on Welsh culture and heritage refracted through the experiences of the people who show up and make the Cwrs possible. There are probably as many reasons for coming to Cwrs Cymraeg as there are people: a desire to explore heritage and history, a fascination with languages, whatever the case may be.

### **INSIDE THIS ISSUE**

- 2 Albany, New York & the Capital District
- 3 Cwrs Madog 2017 - Lead Tutor Interview
- 5 Cwrs Cymraeg Follows Prince Madog to Alabama
- 6 Y Ffordd i'r Dwyrain - Road to the East
- 9 Friends of Madog 2017



At the same time, the costs of travelling and attending Cwrs Cymraeg have put pressure on Cymdeithas Madog in making Welsh available to whoever wants to learn it. I'm lucky enough to be able to come to Cwrs Cymraeg every year; for others, Cymdeithas Madog's scholarship program, supported in part through the generosity of the Friends of Madog, is crucial in enabling people to attend, whether for the first time or the fortieth.

On the desk as I'm writing this is a coffee mug I got from a student on a Welsh course in Cardiff who happened to be a firefighter. It states, Welsh on one side, English on the other, "*Llogi bwriadol: Problem i bwy? . . . Problem i bawb!*" ("Arson: Whose problem? . . . Everyone's!")

It's a prized possession, that mug, not for its intrinsic value, but for the memories it evokes of Wales and learning Welsh. At the forefront of those memories now are my experiences with Cwrs Cymraeg. Welsh, one of the oldest languages in Europe, is awash in memory from the earliest of the Middle Ages to today. In that span, it's been frequently in retreat, under pressures both external and internal, yet always tenacious, managing to survive and even flourish. *Ry'n ni yma o hyd*, so the song goes, and it applies to both the Welsh and Cymdeithas Madog. I hope it will continue to do so for years yet to come. To all the Friends of Madog who have supported Cwrs Cymraeg, I'd like to say on behalf of myself and the Board of Cymdeithas Madog, *diolch yn fawr!*●



## Albany, New York & the Capital District

*Robert J. Jones  
Cymdeithas Madog Curriculum Coordinator  
2017 Local Organizer*

The Capital District of New York is one of the most important regions in the early history of the United States and has been at various points the “center of the universe,” both nationally and internationally, in its long and storied past. The first settlement in what would become Albany was established in 1614, and the Dongan Charter of 1686 establishes that Albany was incorporated as a city. It is still the city’s founding charter, making Albany the oldest city in the United States by way of decree of law. Albany is home to the Albany Institute of History and Art, founded in 1791; it is one of the oldest museums in the United States. For those who opt for the Wednesday afternoon field trip, we will be going to the Empire State Plaza at which students can choose one or more tours, including the New York State Museum, the Observation Deck of the Corning Tower (the highest skyscraper between New York City and Montreal) or the castle-like state capitol – a rarity, a capitol without a dome!

Neighboring Schenectady was founded in 1661 and its historic Stockade District is a unique neighborhood in the U.S., with examples of architecture including colonial Dutch urban through the 1950’s. Schenectady is also home to the original headquarters of General Electric and was the residence of Proteus Steinmetz,

Thomas Edison’s business and research partner in the early years of the twentieth century. For many years, Schenectady was also home to ALCO – the American Locomotive Company, responsible for many of the world’s steam and diesel engines, thus earning the moniker “The City that Lights and Hauls the World.” Schenectady is home to New York’s newest gaming venue, the Rivers Casino.

Across the river from Albany is Troy. Having the nickname the Collar City, Troy has also been known for its iron smelting industry. In the nineteenth century, most cast-iron stoves in the country were made in Troy. A couple years ago, Cwrs Cymraeg went to Salt Lake City. During our field trip, we went to the reconstruction of their first governor’s mansion in which there was a wood stove, and yes, it was made in Troy, New York. Troy is also home to the 1870 Troy Music Hall, renowned for its acoustics. Among many others, it has hosted such luminaries as Rachmaninoff.

All three cities host a wide variety of ethnic and specialty eateries, including Jamaican, Vietnamese, Mexican, Indian, French, Polish, Moroccan, Thai, and German (to name only some), as well as local iterations of BBQ and a number of local breweries, cideries, and distilleries. The general region is replete with Revolutionary War history as well as historical locales of relaxation and gaming, like Saratoga Springs. *Gobeithiaf y byddwch yn dod yn llu!* I hope you will come in great numbers!●



Mark Stonelake, Cwrs Cymraeg 2017 Lead Tutor

## Cwrs Madog 2017

### **How did you first get involved with Cwrs Cymraeg?**

I was working as a Welsh for Adults tutor in the Adult Continuing Education Department at Swansea University. One of my colleagues, Heini Gruffudd, was lead tutor on a Course, and asked me to join the team because there were too many students for the number of tutors. I remember being excited and surprised about the opportunity to teach in America. I never thought when I started teaching Welsh part-time, back in 1987, that I would teach anywhere else but in Wales. As it happens, I've had a chance to visit several other countries as part of my work over the years, including Catalonia, the Basque Country and Finland.

### **Where was your first course, and what do you remember most about it?**

Poultney, Vermont in 1996. I've just realised that's 21 years ago! I can't believe the time has gone so quickly. I remember having a lot of fun and meeting interesting people from all over the U.S. I was quite apprehensive about teaching in a new country. Would the students be very different to the ones in Wales? Would my teaching style be okay? But I had nothing to worry about. All the students enjoyed the class and I enjoyed teaching them. Most even seemed to like my dodgy sense of humor. I seem to remember that there were a

lot of people in level 1 on that course. So many, that the level had to be divided into three classes.

### **What levels on the Cwrs have you taught? Do you have a favorite to teach?**

I've been a tutor on the course many times. So, I've taught every level, from complete beginners to the high flyers of level 6. I enjoy teaching all the levels, as they all have their particular rewards and challenges, but pushed to give an answer, I'd say level 6 is my favorite, simply because the syllabus is more open ended and there is more scope for going off on interesting tangents.

### **In your estimation, how has the Cwrs changed over the years since that first course? (i.e. student demographics, students' reasons for learning Welsh, teaching methods)**

There seem to be fewer students these days, compared to 20 years ago. I think this is possibly due to financial considerations and competition from the internet.

The teaching methods haven't changed a great deal. I think we tend to explain grammar more than we used to. Not so long ago, tutors using the Wlpan method were discouraged from teaching any grammar. Now it's generally recognised that students need to know a certain amount of grammar to be able to use a language confidently.

Students' reasons for learning Welsh don't seem to have changed a great deal either. Many have family connections and some are interested in languages. I remember speaking to someone many years ago who told me that she was doing the course because she wanted to learn a 'verb first language'. Apparently, this word order is only used in about 10% to 15% of languages. I always learn something new on the Cwrs.

### **From your perspective as a tutor and native Welsh speaker, what is special about Cwrs Cymraeg?**

I am always struck by the positive, can-do attitude of everyone on the course. In Wales, the attitude tends to be more like – "oh go on then, I don't think I'll do very well, but I suppose I'll give it a go anyway". In America the attitude tends to be more like, "Yeah, let's do this!"

Welsh is often disregarded in Britain. It's very encouraging to come so far from home and meet people on the Cwrs Cymraeg who have a great regard and enthusiasm for the language.

Being amongst people with a positive attitude and respect for the language is always inspirational.

**Of the songs in the Cwrs Cymraeg songsheet, what's one that gets overlooked?  
OR If you were to add a song to the Cwrs Cymraeg songsheet, what would it be?**

I don't know about any songs being overlooked, but one I wish could be overlooked a more, or preferably removed from the songsheet is: 'Oes Gafr eto?' It seems to be one of the most popular songs and it's always got on my nerves. Every time I hear it I feel like saying 'Nac oes', and stopping it right there and then, before there's a chance to get going.

**What's the most useful piece of advice you for non-native speakers learning Welsh?**

Relax and don't worry about making mistakes. I think we adults, unlike children, are too self-critical and

worried about making a fool of ourselves. Having a go and making mistakes is essential for learning anything. The other thing I would say, as the great man himself, Dewi Sant, once said: "*Gwnewch y pethau bychain*" – Do the little things. Set achievable, short term goals for yourself and do the little things well.

**What is the most pressing challenge that Welsh faces as a language?**

There are many challenges facing the language. The obvious one is to increase the number of speakers. The Welsh government has set an ambitious goal of a million Welsh speakers by 2050. This will mean roughly doubling the number of speakers within a generation (33 years). A lot will have to change to be able to achieve this, but with the political will, the resources and the backing of the Welsh people it can be done.

**What's one thing Cwrs Cymraeg students might not know about the tutor side of Cwrs Cymraeg that you'd like them to?**

Did I mention this? We are jet lagged and some of us really don't like 'Oes Gafr eto?' •

## **REGISTER NOW!**

**Join Cymdeithas Madog for Cwrs y Seintiau – The Saints' Course, our 41st annual Cwrs Cymraeg Welsh language week at Siena College in Loudonville, NY, July 16-23, 2017.**

**Registration is open on our website, [www.madog.org](http://www.madog.org).**

<b>Adult Resident:</b>	<b>\$1200.00 USD</b>
<b>Adult Commuter:</b>	<b>\$1000.00 USD</b>
<b>Student Discount:</b>	<b>-\$50.00</b>
<b>Tag-Along:</b>	<b>\$800.00 USD</b>
<b>Single Room:</b>	<b>\$100.00 USD</b>

**Financial Aid is Available!**

**The scholarship application deadline is April 1, 2017. Visit our website or email [scholarships@madog.org](mailto:scholarships@madog.org) for more information.**

# Cwrs Cymraeg Follows Prince Madog to Alabama

*Maegan Langer*

We've heard the legend of Madog ab Owain Gwynedd, the twelfth-century Welsh prince who sailed to America long before Columbus. What is perhaps less well-known is he's believed to have landed in the area of Mobile, Alabama. Last July, Cymdeithas Madog decided it was time to follow in his footsteps!

*Cwrs Dinas y Roced* - The Rocket City Course, our fortieth annual week-long Welsh course, took place at the University of Alabama in Huntsville. Local organizers Robert and Meagan Davis went all out to make it an extraordinary week for everyone right from the start. Not only did they provide dozens of home-baked Welsh cakes for the opening reception, they topped it off with a visit from the Sugar Belle Cupcake Truck just for Cwrs Cymraeg!

As usual, we dove right into intense Welsh learning on Monday morning. We welcomed quite a few locals and first-timers last year, resulting in a large class of Level One students. We also welcomed a new tutor, Cris Dafis. Cris works with the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol at Cardiff Metropolitan University and teaches on the Welsh Degree course at Swansea University and the University of South Wales in Treforest. He also writes a weekly column for the Welsh magazine, *Golwg*.

We work hard at Cwrs Cymraeg, but we play hard too! We got to kick back and rest our brains with a fun cultural activity each evening. Monday was the *twmpath dawn*s – always a great ice-breaker. Any remaining shyness among the attendees is quickly banished during the folk dance. I think that's why we do it so early in the week! On Tuesday, we gathered at Below the Radar, a pub in downtown Huntsville, for another epic Quiz Night. Several teams battled it out for the chance to claim fortune, glory, and some *dysgu Cymraeg* swag. The ultimate prize went to the "Blue Trews."

Cwrs Cymraeg attendees spent Wednesday afternoon at the U.S. Space and Rocket Center, where we saw a real Saturn V rocket. The field trip also coincided with the anniversary of Neil Armstrong's first walk on the moon.

For Welsh film night, we watched three episodes of *Cara Fi*, a delightful Welsh sitcom. Interestingly, the scripts are written in English first and course tutor Angharad Devonald serves as their translator. She's even written one of the episodes herself.

Friday was the annual *eisteddfod*, where some of the first-time attendees took home prizes. The theme for the higher-level entries was "*Teithio*" or "Travel." Unlike last year, when no entry was deemed worthy to be awarded the Cymdeithas Madog Eisteddfod Chair, Timothy Doughty won for his piece, "*Y Ffordd i'r Dwyrain* – Road to the East." After the *eisteddfod*, we got to hear a few words from Welsh playwright, Hywel John. Hywel was in the area doing research for a play he's writing about the Wales Window for Alabama.

Before we knew it, it was time for the *noson lawen*. Students and tutors gathered Saturday evening to entertain each other with a fun skit from each class, solo songs and recitations, and a lovely harp performance by first time-attendee Grace English, to name a few. The course choir performed an original arrangement of *Gwahoddiad* by choir director Timothy Doughty after only a week of rehearsing. And in what must be a first for Cwrs Cymraeg, student Andrew Carl Finch performed *Men of Harlech* and *Sosban Fach* on the theremin!

The last morning of the course is often bittersweet. People are tired, their minds overflowing with mutations and verb tenses, yet they find it hard to leave. They want to keep going. Longtime course tutor John Otley sent us on our way with a moving homily at the Sunday morning service based on St. David's plea to "do the little things."

Cwrs Cymraeg 2016 was truly exceptional. Special thanks to Robert and Meagan Davis, lead tutor Meleri Davies, and Cymdeithas Madog's volunteer Board of Directors. • *First published in Ninnau Nov/Dec 2016*

# Y Ffordd i'r Dwyrain

## Enillwr Cwrs Cymraeg 2016 Eisteddfod

*Amheuwyr y Cefn Gwlad*

Derbyniais y gwahoddiad yn awyddus. Siawns oedd hi ddianc o'r genhadfa ble oeddwn i'n gweithio, a gweld tipyn o wlad arall. Roeddwn i ar arhosiad am flwyddyn yn Awstria gyda chenhadaeth Gristnogol. Camgymeriad mawr oedd hynny fel mae'n digwydd. Roeddwn i'n ddyn ifanc ar y pryd, jest ar ddod allan pan ymunais â nhw. Felly es i i fyw mewn cymuned or-gaeedig a stwffio fy nheimpladau'n ddwfn y tu mewn. Ond mae'r stori honno ar gyfer eisteddfod arall. Er hynny oll, roedd y lle ei hun yn hardd iawn: Tŷ mawr a phrydferth mewn steil Bafaraidd yn y fforest ychydig milltir y tu allan i Fienna.

Nid teithio o gwmpas Dwyrain Ewrop fel cenhadwr go iawn oedd fy nhasg dyddiol i. Roeddwn i yn y lle hwnnw achos fy mod i'n siarad Almaeneg, yn wahanol i'r cenhadwyr eraill. Fy swydd i oedd dysgu Almaeneg iddyn nhw. Ond, fel llawer o oedolion prysur, doedd y brodyr ddim yn rhoi llawer o sylw i'r gwaith o ddysgu, o'r herwydd yn fuan iawn roedd ein dosbiarthiadau'n fethiant hwyr. Wedyn, cariais i ymlaen gyda gorchwylion cartrefol: Mynd gyda'r bechgyn i'r siop beiriannau i brynu rhannau newydd i drwsio ceir y genhadaeth, ayyb. Roedd 'na llawer o achlysuron a oedd yn haws gyda siaradwr Almaeneg yno.

Felly, pan gofynnion nhw wrthaf fynd ar daith fach i Dsiecoslofacia, fel cafodd y wlad ei henwi yn yr 1980au, roeddwn i wrth fy modd. Yr aseiniad? Mynd â llwyth o lyfrau a defnyddiau ar gyfer Ysgol Sul i blant ar draws yr terfyn a'u rhoi nhw i gydweithiwr byddai'n disgwyl amdanaf i. Reit. Dim problem!

Efallai ddylwn i atgoffa'r darllenwr roedd smyglo Beiblau a llyfrau Cristnogol eraill i mewn i Ddwyrain Ewrop yn anghyfreithlon bryd hynny. Pam oedden ni'n llwyddiannus, gawson ni ddim ein dal, ran amlaf? Achos roedd gwarchodwyr y ffin yn ddiog, wedi blino, neu rhy brysur i edrych yn y car.

Gyda ychydig iawn o bryder, felly, ffwrdd â fi ar fore glas hafaid, y llyfrau wedi'w pacio yn y bŵt. O fy mlaen roedd awr a hanner o yrru drwy olygfeydd hyfryd Awstria, arhosiad byr ar y terfyn i stampio y papurau, ac awr arall i'r ddinas Brno, sydd heddiw yn y Weriniaeth Tsiecaidd. Trefnwyd fydden ni'n dau'n cyfarfod mewn bwyty. Roeddwn i wedi dysgu'r holl daith a chyfeiriad ar gof er mwyn osgoi ysgrifennu dim byd ar bapur. Rhag ofn.

Cyrhaeddais y terfyn gan wenu ar y gwarchodwr.

*"Papers, please," gofynnodd yn Almaeneg.*

*'Wrth gwrs.'*

*"What is your purpose of travel in Czechoslovakia?"*

*'Dwi ar fy ngwyliau.'*

*"Are you carrying anything with you?"*

*'Nac ydw.'*

*"Open the trunk, please."*

*'Damia!'*

Daethon nhw o hyd i'r llyfrau ar unwaith, wrth gwrs, ac ar ôl hynny, aeth y peth fel y disgwylwyd. Dechreuodd yr ymholiad. Roedd milwyr y terfyn rhwng Tsiecoslofacia ag Awstria yn siarad Tsieceg ac Almaeneg, ond doedden nhw ddim yn siarad Saesneg yn dda. Er mwyn rhwystro eu holiadau nhw gymaint â phosib, cogiais siarad Saesneg yn unig. Arhosais gwpl o oriau mewn cell erbyn iddyn nhw ddod â rywun a oedd yn gallu siarad Saesneg.

Roedd hwn yn ddigon cwrtais, ac a dweud y gwir roedd pob un o'r gwarchodwyr yn gwrtais. Roedden nhw eisiau gwybod dau beth: Pwy wnaeth fy anfon i, ac i ble roeddwn i'n mynd. Atebais i ddim byd, fel Iesu gerbron Pontius Peilat. Roedd rhaid imi dynnu fy nillad oddi amdanaf er mwyn iddyn nhw archwilio'r dillad am ryw ddarn o bapur a oedd wedi'w guddio. Od, nad oedd ofn arnaf, o leiaf nid ar arwyneb fy meddwl. Roeddwn i'n gwybod yn iawn na allen nhw wneud dim byd difrifol imi, ac eithrio fy nwrddio am sbel ac wedyn fy anfon i adref. Ac felly y bu.

Gyrrais y ffordd hir adref â fy nghynffon rhwng fy nghoesau. Cyrhaeddais gartre yn oriau mân y bore ac adrodd y stori. Nid fi oedd y cyntaf a gafodd ei arestio, meddai'r lleill; mae'n digwydd o bryd i'w gilydd. O'r diwedd, gallais ddychwelyd i fy stafell i, fy nghell go iawn i, ar fy mhen fy hun yn nhawelwch y fforest, a gadael i holl deimladau'r dydd lifo'n rhydd drwy fy nghorff.

Cronnodd dagrau yn fy llygaid, a beichiais i grio am amser hir.

## **Road to the East**

### **Cwrs Cymraeg 2016 Eisteddfod Winner**

*Timothy Doughty*

I accepted the invitation eagerly. It was a chance to escape the Mission where I was working and see another country for a bit. I was on a one-year stay in Austria with a Christian mission. That turned out to be a big mistake. I was a young man just at the point of coming out at the time I joined. So, I had entered an ultra-closed community and stuffed my feelings deep inside. But that story is for another Eisteddfod. Despite all of that, the place itself was very beautiful: A big, splendid house in Bavarian style a few miles outside Vienna.

My daily job was not travelling around Eastern Europe like a real missionary. I was there because I spoke German, unlike the other missionaries. I had been charged with the task of teaching them German. However, like many busy adults, the brothers didn't give much attention to the work of learning language, so our lessons quickly disintegrated. After that, I carried on with more practical responsibilities: going along with the guys to the auto shop to buy new parts to fix the mission cars, and so forth. There were a lot of occasions which were made easier by having a German speaker along.

So, when they asked me to go on a small trip to Czechoslovakia, as the country was called in the 1980's, I was delighted. The assignment? Take a load of Czech-language books and Sunday School materials for children across the border and transfer them to a co-worker who would be waiting for me. Right. No problem!

Perhaps I should remind the reader that smuggling Bibles and Christian books into Eastern Europe was illegal back then. Why were we successful, not getting caught, in most cases? Because the border guards were either lazy, tired or too busy to look in the car.

With little concern, then, I was off on a beautiful summer morning, with the books packed in the trunk of the car. Ahead of me was an hour and a half of driving through the beautiful scenery of Austria, a short stop at the border to get my passport stamped, and then another hour to the city of Brno, which today is in the Czech Republic. The two of us had arranged to meet in a restaurant. I had memorized the entire directions and address for the trip to avoid writing anything down on paper. Just in case.

I arrived at the border and smiled at the guard.

*"Papers, please" he asked in German.*  
'Of course.'

*"What is your purpose of travel in Czechoslovakia?"*  
'I'm on vacation.'

*"Are you carrying anything with you?"*  
'No.'

*"Open the trunk, please."*  
'Damn!'

They found the books immediately, of course, and after that things went as expected. The interrogation began. The soldiers at the border between Austria and Czechoslovakia spoke Czech and German, but they didn't speak English well. In order to hinder their interrogation as much as possible, I pretended that I only spoke English. I waited a couple of hours in a cell until they found someone who could speak English.

He was courteous enough, and to tell the truth all of the guards were courteous. They wanted to know two things: Who sent me, and where I was going. I didn't give them any answers, just like Jesus before Pontius Pilate. I had to take off my clothes so that they could look through them for any incriminating piece of paper that might have been hidden there. Odd that I wasn't afraid, at least on the surface. I knew quite well that they could not do anything serious to me, except scold me for a while and then send me home. Which is exactly what happened.

I drove the long trip home with my tail between my legs. I arrived in the wee hours of the morning and related my story. They said I wasn't the first to be arrested, it happens from time to time. Finally, I was able to return to my room, my true cell, alone in the silence of the forest, and let all of the feelings of the day flow free.

The tears welled up in my eyes, and I began to sob uncontrollably.●



Cwrs Dinas y Roked – The Rocket City Course  
University of Alabama in Huntsville, July 2016  
Photo by Ted Davis



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Cwrs Cymraeg 2016 Scholarship Winners  
Clockwise from bottom: Orville Guffin, Lara Garner, Anne Harris,  
Carl Finch, Kaley Bierman, Grace English, Gwen Foulkes  
Photo by Ted Davis