

Green Bridge of Wales - Gordon Hatton -
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Cymru a Welsh Pilgrimage

Wales is a country of hills and mountains, valleys and ravens, of coastlands and breath taking scenery. It is a country with a rich history, culture and a unique language. It is easy to romanticise the past and overlook the scars of history both physical and emotional. History has stories that are passed down from one generation to another.

The Welsh word for Wales is *Cymru*, coming from the Welsh name for the people of Wales, *Cymry*. The National Anthem of Wales encapsulates the rich heritage and culture of Wales and its people. Below is a translation of the words of 'Mae Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau', 'Land of my fathers':

1. This land of my fathers is dear to me
Land of poets and singers, and people of stature
Her brave warriors, fine patriots
Shed their blood for freedom

Chorus:

*Land! Land! I am true to my land!
As long as the sea serves as a wall
For this pure, dear land
May the language endure for ever.*

2. Old land of the mountains, paradise of the poets,
Every valley, every cliff a beauty guards;
Through love of my country, enchanting voices will be
Her streams and rivers to me.

3. Though the enemy have trampled my country underfoot,
The old language of the Welsh knows no retreat,
The spirit is not hindered by the treacherous hand
Nor silenced the sweet harp of my land.

Click to hear Land of my father - https://youtu.be/zn10tbDA_I4?si=STS9fdhr22F-CEcZ



Geraint Roberts -Creative Commons
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A monument to the coal industry,



Mark Warren 1973 Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 - Jubilee Tower Moel Famau at sunset.



North shore of Llyn Ogwen - Mat Fascione - Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0

Wales has a deep religious heritage. In terms of Christianity, it had a strong Celtic past. The 5th and 6th centuries are referred to as the 'Age of the Saints'. According to some sources, there are over 800 Welsh saints with about 600 having feast days. There is one specific site that has long been a site of pilgrimage to such an extent that three pilgrimages to the island of Bardsey was equivalent to a pilgrimage to Rome!

Ray Spencer in *The Journal of Antiquities*, 2012 (updated 2023) *The Journal of Antiquities* writes:

'Since the early 6th century AD the island has been a "Cradle of Celtic Christianity". It apparently takes its name from Bardda, a Welsh prince, but in 516 St Cadfan came here from Brittany at the invitation of Einion, King of Llyn, to establish a Celtic (clas) monastic college. Since that time the place has been called the holy island of Bardsey and, when 20,000 saints were "supposedly" buried there, its place on the list of holy, sacred sites had been sealed and the island became a place of pilgrimage'.

Let us not be so preoccupied with the accuracy or otherwise of the 20,000 saints buried on Bardsey Island that we miss the point that it was an Age of Saints. This age came after the fall of the Roman Empire in the late 5th century. It was in this dark and unsettled period that Christianity in Wales was able to grow.

The next series of reflections and imaginative pilgrimage will take us on a circular route of over 600 miles, following a well-established pilgrimage route called the Cistercian Way but before we will make a short trip to Burgundy.

We end this time together with an opportunity to hear, join in Guide Me, O Thou Great Redeemer (Tune: Cwm Rhondda - 3vv) and the Chet Valley Churches

 **YouTube** <https://youtu.be/5j48TLIRb4Q?si=wCoZyz3NLO84IZXw>

Fr Derek

Acknowledgements.

My guide for this series is Britain's Pilgrim Places (2021 by Nick Mayhew-Smith & Guy Hayward) from the British Pilgrimage Trust. Described as a 'treasure trove for the armchair pilgrim' (Phillip Carr-Comm)

The book contains over 600 pilgrim places and 100 routes for pilgrims.

While I seek to use only reliable sources when using websites, I cannot guarantee that the content on these websites is or will remain accurate or appropriate. I also have no control over the advertisements that accompany the YouTube links.

(Derek is a retired Anglican Parish Priest and a member of the congregations of All Saints & St James and St Stephen's, Elton Prior to his ordination he was accredited as a Methodist Preacher in 1968 and served within the Methodist Church until returning to the Anglican Church in the mid 1980's)

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The dual Parishes of Kirklees Valley, Bury, (All Saints, Elton & St James, Woolfold) and St Stephens, Elton are in the Diocese of Manchester.

Vicar of the two parishes - Br. Samuel Eccleston O.P. (Anglican Order of Preachers- Dominicans)