

CENTRAL NEW BRUNSWICK WELSH SOCIETY

MAY 2026



The **Founders' Day Service** will be held at 3:30 on Sunday, **June 7th** at the Welsh Chapel, 2900 Route 620, Cardigan, NB followed by a social time. Tea and punch will be provided but please bring your favourite sweets to share. See you there!

Annual General Meetings – of the Welsh Society and the Welsh Heritage Trust will be held at 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, May 28, 2025 at St. John's Anglican Church, 75 Main Street, Fredericton, NB. Come and give us your ideas for activities and events.

SPRING CLEAN UP



Clean-up day at the Welsh Chapel will be on Saturday, May 30th at 10:00 a.m. We can use your help if you can spare an hour or two!

Genealogy Gathering

There has been interest expressed in gathering to share our collective genealogy knowledge and sources. Many of us have access to old bibles, wills and other documents, family trees, and old photos of family members and the Cardigan area. If there is enough interest, I am willing to organize a gathering at the Welsh Chapel where we can share our genealogy information. If this is something you would like to attend, please send me a note with your thoughts on when we should come together. I can be reached at nbwelshsocietytrust@gmail.com or call me, Janet Thomas, at (506) 474-0812.



Memorial Plaques The plaques in the Welsh Chapel are inscribed with the names of members of the NB Welsh Society who have passed on. To have your loved one added, please contact us at nbwelshsocietytrust@gmail.com or Janet Thomas at (506) 474-0812 with the following information: Name, Place of Birth or Residence (your choice), Year of Birth, Year of Death.



OUR STORIES

WALTER AND JANE DIXON

Although Walter and Jane were neither one of the original Cardigan families or of Welsh origin, they were well-established members of the Cardigan community, and their descendants carry the blood of the original Cardigan families.

Walter Dixon and Jane Pringle were born in Northumberland, England, not too far from the Scottish border. They came to New Brunswick with their two small daughters in 1836 as part of a group of 110 settlers who were recruited by the New Brunswick and Nova Scotia Land Company to settle the new village of Stanley. The settlers were promised 100 acres of farmland, with 5 acres already cleared and planted, and a comfortable log cabin. They would have a 50-year lease at an annual rent of one shilling per acre, with an option to purchase the land. They were to have a grace period of two years before having to pay on their leases and to repay their passage money. There were other promises made related to access to supplies and employment.

The English settlers arrived in New Brunswick in June 1836 to find that the Land Company had not fulfilled any of the terms of the settlement agreement. No land was cleared, no crops were planted and no cabins were built. By necessity the families got to work and by fall most had a few acres cleared and log cabins built in what is now English Settlement. The settlers began a bitter dispute with the land company to require them to comply with the agreement. Walter signed the first petition to the House of Lords in February 1838 which led to concessions from the Land Company. Walter, however, did not sign the June agreement between the settlers and the Company, perhaps already intending to move elsewhere.

Sometime after October 1838, Walter and Jane moved to Lot 15 on the west side of the Cardigan Road. They likely moved before June 1840 when they would have had to begin paying the annual lease rent for the English Settlement land. The land in Tay Mills was originally granted to John and Mariah Davis. The lot was sold a couple of times until it was purchased by John A. Beckwith, a Fredericton businessman whose brother-in-law, Isaac Jouett, owned the mill in Tay Mills. Beckwith had bought lots 15, 16 and 17 on the west side of the road in 1835 and then lots 18 and 19 in 1836 where the mill was operating.

It is unclear why Walter and Jane decided to move. Perhaps John Beckwith offered them a more advantageous lease agreement than the Land Company. It would certainly be in Beckwith's best interest to have his newly acquired farms continue to be productive, particularly if he was receiving a portion of the harvest which would feed his family and

livestock in town. Or perhaps Walter had realized it would be easier to work an established farm than to struggle with clearing the land in English Settlement.

The next decade saw the growing Dixon family thrive in their new home, despite the loss of 9-month-old Walter in 1844. The older children, Elinder, Jane and Anne were enrolled in the Cardigan school, and the family was able to practice their Presbyterian faith with others in the community led by Reverend Archibald McCallum. In 1844 John Beckwith sold much of his Cardigan land to settle debts, including Lot 15W. Walter signed a lease with their new owner, Robert Fulton who had a distinguished career in the Clerk's Office of the Legislative Assembly.

The Dixon family marked the mid-century with tragedy. In May 1950 Jane died only a few hours after the birth of her son, John Edward. The devastated family pulled together to ensure the survival of the newborn. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Walter did not remarry to secure help in caring for his children, preferring to rely on his older daughters.

Elinder (Eleanor) married Thomas Thomas when her baby brother was 4 years old, but was still available to help her father as the Thomas farm was just across the road. Two years later, Jane married John Saunders who lived a short distance down the road. Marriage into the Thomas and Saunders families cemented the Dixon connection to the Welsh settlers. Thomas Thomas' parents, John and Esther, had originally emigrated to Shelburne, Nova Scotia in 1818 but moved to Cardigan in 1821 to take up farming on Lot 15 on the east side of the Cardigan road. John Saunders was the grandson of David and Elizabeth Saunders who arrived in 1819 and farmed Lot 6 East.

Walter continued farming until his death in 1873. His son, Archibald, took over the lease of the farm. The land finally came into ownership by the Dixon family when John Edward purchased it in 1885. John Edward gifted the land to his niece, Annie Dixon Leslie, in 1915.

Today Walter and Jane's descendants are spread across the continent, but many continue to live in the Fredericton area. They have continued to honour their Welsh heritage through involvement in the Welsh Heritage Trust.





TWO STICKS AND STRING

Along with being fiercely independent and outspoken, Welsh women were known for their knitting prowess. Visitors to Wales in the 17th and 18th centuries often reported, with amazement, at both the skill and productivity of Welsh knitters.

It was said that Welsh women always had knitting in their hands, and in fact, it wasn't uncommon to see them knitting as they walked. It was said that a Welsh woman could knit a pair of stockings as she walked to and from the market.

Of course, Welsh women knitted sweaters, hats, gloves, mitts, socks and stockings to meet the needs of their families, but they were famous for their stockings. There was a great demand for woolen stockings, made in a variety of colours and degrees of fineness. Stockings sold for a good price; fine stockings were very profitable. Welsh women would sell their stockings at markets, to merchants or to the 'stocking man', a fellow who would collect from them weekly to sell in the larger towns in England. It was an important source of income for families. In 1799 it was estimated that 192,000 pairs of stockings were produced!

Children, especially girls, learned to knit at a very young age. And although knitting was usually women's work, it wasn't uncommon for men to knit as well, when time allowed.

A yarn hook was used when knitting while walking. One end of the hook was tucked into the waistband of the skirt or apron, while the other held the ball of yarn, thus freeing up the hands for knitting.



In addition to knitting while waiting for supper to cook or walking to chapel, Welsh women would often gather for a knitting assembly (a Cymmorth Gwau) where they would knit and socialize, sharing candles and warmth and of course, local stories. Sometimes neighbours would hold a Noson Weu, a Knitting Evening, where everyone came together to knit, sing and tell old tales.



"May saltwind fill your sails at dawn of day; may your steps, like stars of dew, stitch the seam of land and sea." (A Wales Coastal Path Blessing).