

CENTRAL NEW BRUNSWICK WELSH SOCIETY NOVEMBER 2017 NEWSLETTER

Christmas Celebration

**When: 5:30 p.m. to socialize
6:00 p.m. for dinner
Friday, November 17, 2017**

Entertainment: Fiddlers Fancy

**Where: Ramada Hotel
580 Riverside Drive
Lower St. Mary's, Fredericton
\$25/person**

Please let your caller know if you have a special dietary need.



A SONG WAS HEARD AT CHRISTMAS

By Timothy Dudley Smith

A song was heard at Christmas
To wake the midnight sky:
A saviour's birth, and peace on earth,
And praise to God on high.

The angels sang at Christmas
With all the hosts above,
And still we sing the newborn King
His glory and his love.



From the Central New Brunswick Welsh Society and the New Brunswick Welsh Heritage Trust

From Wales Online Dec 13, 2016

Why was the snowman looking through the carrots?

He was picking his nose (submitted by Shan Evans)

Two snowmen were standing in a field.

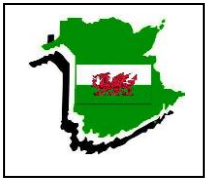
One said, "Can you smell carrots?"

(submitted by Pete Potty Mumford)

What did Adam say the day before Christmas?

"It's Christmas Eve" (submitted by Geri Rees)



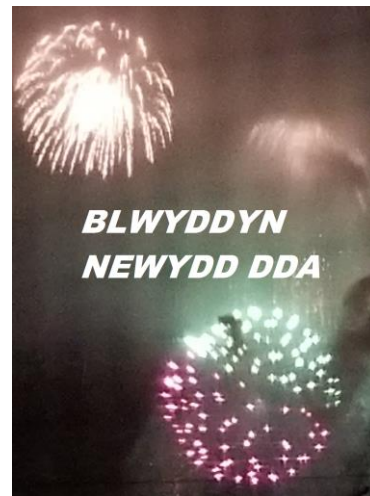


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HERE WE COME A-WASSAILING

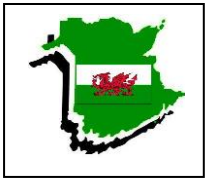
The tradition of wassailing goes back to the Celtic times, even though the word 'wassail' comes from the Anglo-Saxon greeting 'Waes hael' which means 'be healthy'. There are two traditions associated with wassailing. The first was intended to honour apple trees with the wassail. The wassail would be carried from orchard to orchard to ensure a good harvest in the coming year. Wassail soaked pieces of bread were buried at the trees' roots or hung in the branches to appease the tree spirits. The second tradition involved carrying a two-handled bowl from house to house where it would be filled with fruit, sugar, spices and warm beer. The bowl would be passed from person to person, with each one making a wish for good health and good crops. Sometimes a piece of toast would be floated in the wassail and luck came to the one who got the toast. This is the origin of our habit today of toasting. In Wales, with its strong musical tradition, wassailing was usual accompanied by caroling.

*Here we come a-wassailing
Among the leaves so green,
Here we come a-wassailing,
So fair to be seen:
Love and joy come to you.
And to you your wassail too,
And God bless you and send you,
A happy new year,
And God send you,
A happy new year.*



**Watercolour of
Fredericton,
New
Brunswick, in
the Year 1818**

Dr. John Clarence
Webster



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THE MOTIVATION TO LEAVE

The migration of families from southwest Wales is somewhat unlikely, given the very nature of this area. This was the very heart of Welsh life and culture, a decidedly rural area characterized by small freeholdings, hamlets and villages whose people were stubbornly Welsh and almost all unilingual Welsh speakers. What would drive these families to the uncertainties of crossing the Atlantic to settle in the wilds of British North America?

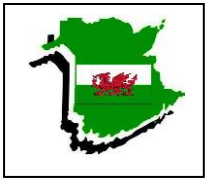


The answer lies in the economic and social conditions of Wales following the Napoleonic Wars. A recession in the early 19th century resulted in great poverty and unemployment in Wales. Wages fell because there were more workers than jobs, exacerbated by the replacement of people by new machinery and an increasing population. The protectionist Corn Law imposed high tariffs on imported grain which kept prices high. In addition, there had been a serious crop failure the summer of 1816 which was known as 'the year without a summer'. Heavy rains and cool temperatures led to crop failures and widespread famine with the price of food skyrocketing. Villages and towns could not support the vast number of poor families. People were dying of hunger and sickness. Cardiganshire and Carmarthenshire were the hardest hit counties of Wales.

By the early 1800's, arable land in Wales had become depleted due to the continuous planting of grains during the Napoleonic Wars, with many farms no longer able to sustain families. Many families had already been forced off their farms by the Enclosure Acts which enforced the enclosure of common land and larger farm properties. These common lands had traditionally been available to small freeholders for grazing their stock and many were unable to pay the fees now charged for the use of this land. Others were unable to cover the cost of fencing their freeholds as required by the new laws.

The loss of their lands had a profound effect on Welsh freeholders who had a deep attachment to their land and an intense pride in their lineage. Land ownership gave them standing in their communities no matter how small the freeholding. Their pride in continued and unbroken hereditary property meant that the custom of *cyfran*, dividing the land amongst all sons on the death of the landowner, survived until the early 20th century. While this reflected the deep-rooted Welsh belief in land ownership at all costs, it unfortunately also resulted in increasingly smaller freeholdings, with most farms being smaller than 100 acres. By the early 1800's there was no longer an ability to divide the lands, thus depriving the sons of freeholders of the means to acquire land.

Add the difficulties faced by the Dissenting churches, and small wonder that the *Albion* sailed with a full load of passengers. In North America, the Welsh emigrants could settle on their own land, worship in their own way and hopefully, provide a better future for their families.



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MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL *Annual Dues*

2018 Dues: \$25 per family, \$15 per individual. Your dues cover the costs for photocopying and mailing our newsletters and for putting on our events. Send your dues to: P. O. Box 421, Station A, Fredericton, NB E3B 4Z9 or pay them at the Christmas celebration.



How Santa Came to New Brunswick



While the legend of Santa Claus traces back to St. Nicholas who lived in 320 A.D., our modern Santa Claus has its origins in the late 18th century with the immigration of Dutch settlers to the United States. In 1822 Clement Moore wrote his famous poem *A Visit From Saint Nicholas*, and the Santa Claus legend was launched. His 1864 version of Santa, depicted on the right, did not yet have the trademark red suit.

Undoubtedly Santa had already made his presence known in New Brunswick by the middle of the century. However, it was Fredericton confectioner Charles A. Sampson who first collaborated with Santa to benefit New Brunswick children. In 1869, he announced in the local newspaper that he had entered into a partnership with Santa Claus. Parents were invited to bring their children's socks to his store on December 23rd and 24th where Santa would fill them with candy, nuts, fruit and toys. In 1872 his Santa began delivering all goods purchased at his store to the home of the purchaser on Christmas Eve. Initially Sampson's Santa was pelted with snowballs by Fredericton teens, causing Sampson to advertise that if it happened again the teens would be charged. This seemed to work as Sampson's Santa peaceably delivered toys to the residents of the city and surrounding communities for the next three years. On Christmas Day, it was Sampson's habit to distribute all the left-over candy to local children. Sometimes more than 500 arrived at his shop to receive his treats.

Charles A. Sampson was most likely New Brunswick's first commercial Santa. He was born in St. Andrews but spent most of his life in Fredericton. He was active in the Wilmot Church and for many years served as secretary of the School Board. But surely it was Sampson's association with Santa which granted him such a long life. He died in 1929 at the age of 90.