

Welcome to Wales - Croeso I Cymru

By Dawn Louise Wildfang

Note: The following material is text from a picture book prepared by the author. This book is available by arrangement through Oregon Geographic Alliance.

Hi! My name is Catrin. I live in the beautiful country of Wales. In this book, I am going to take you on a tour of my country and life. I hope you enjoy.

Wales is located in Europe, just west of England. We are famous for many things, including stories, singing, dancing, and a very rich history. By looking at this picture, what do you think life was like for my ancestors long ago?

In Wales, many of us speak Welsh and English. In fact, Welsh was my first language. I didn't start to learn English until I was six years old since my family speaks Welsh to me at home.

I go to a bilingual school called Ysogol Y Garnedd (isgol eh garneth). Some of our lessons are taught in Welsh, and the others in English.

Just like you, my friends and I love to go to recess. We like to play football (which is what you call soccer in America), rugby, netball, and many other sports when we get the chance to hit the playground. I bet you haven't heard of some of these sports.

One of my favorite sports is rugby - and guess what? I'm the only girl on our school's rugby team! I also tap dance, play netball, and enjoy swimming and in-line roller blading. I bet we have a lot in common with each other.

One of my favorite instruments is the piano, which I can play. However, I am really excited to start on my new instrument in grade four, and that is the cello. Why? Because I like the sound of it.

Before we go to our classes in the morning, we sing songs and say a prayer for the day. Not all schools in Wales do this, but mine does. I think we have great voices.

The lunch ladies are great cooks. They prepare great food for us everyday. My favorite food is pizza.

Before we eat lunch at my school, we pray.

This is my classroom. We're listening to directions from our teacher before we do some fieldwork. It is important that we pay attention to what is expected of us so we complete our work properly.

You may have noticed that we are all wearing similar clothing, that is because we wear uniforms. I think it's nice because you don't have to worry about what you're going to wear the next day.

Here I am with some of my friends from class on our fieldwork excursion. We've been working hard and having fun learning outside of the classroom.

In Wales, we keep our work in trays. For every subject we study (English, Welsh, math, science, geography, and history), we have a notebook. When we don't need our notebooks, we put them in our trays since we don't have a place for them at our desks.

As you can see, it is important to raise our hand when we have something to share with the teacher.

In Wales, we love art and music. Many of my friends play an instrument, including myself.

This is a picture of a bus used for a small school. You don't see the big yellow buses that you have in America over here.

How do you get to school? In Wales, some of us walk, ride bikes, take a bus, or like me, have Mum or Dad drive us.

In Wales, we have a lot of slate. This is a picture taken inside of a slate mine. What do you know about this rock?

The reason slate is so popular over here is because we use it to roof our homes. Just take a look at this roof. They usually last longer than the house does.

With slate that can't be used for roofing tiles, it can be used to make fences.

Our country has a lot of history. We have kings, queens, and many castles. It is fun to explore them.

There are many, many sheep in my country. We use their wool and meat. Lamb chops are really good to eat.

Here are a few Welsh words you can learn for yourself.

Wales is a bilingual country – that means we speak two languages. Look at these signs. The words on top are in Welsh, and the ones on the bottom are in English.

When signs have pictures on them, they can be understood in any language.

This castle is called Conwy Castle. It's walls wrap around the city. Look how a road was built through the castle walls. Instead of tearing the wall down, we adapted its use and reused it for something else – a tunnel.

When castles were built in Wales, the people would either build them on a hill or around water. Why? Because it was for defensive purposes.

In Wales, the steering wheel is on the opposite side of the car, which means we drive on the opposite side of the road. Just take a look at this picture.

Someone decided to build their house into the castle walls. I bet they have a beautiful view of the bay.

This is my brother Rhys (pronounced Reece), my sister Gwenno, and myself sitting on the couch in our living room. He's six and she's three. They are a lot of fun to play with.

This is me with my favorite book Mr. Twiddle's Adventures, by Enid Blyton. I could read it over and over again.

All of our toys are in our playroom. I'm holding my favorite bunny. As you can see, I like Barbie too.

Here I am using the computer. I really enjoy the educational games. Sometimes I get to use e-mail and write to Mrs. Wildfang.

Gwenno is a big Teletubbie fan.

These are all of our books. My brother, sister, and I love to read.

As you can see, my siblings and I like to do tricks on the furniture.

This is our pet goldfish named Bubbles.

Here we are during teatime with my Dad and friend, Aunt Gwenda, who lives in Oregon.

This is my house. The left hand side belongs to my family, and the right to another. This is called an attached house.

At home, I have chores to do (so do my brother and sister). I am responsible for tidying up after I eat, as well as cleaning my room and the playroom.

This is my whole family. You see me on your left, my Mum, Marian holding Gwenno, and my Dad, Bryn with Rhys. We're standing in our garden in the front of our house.

Here you see Rhys and I at Sunday school with some other kids from church.

In Wales, the police drive cars that look different than those in the United States. Police in Welsh is "Heddlu," pronounced heth-lu.

This castle is called Caernarfon (Can-are-von) Castle. It is the castle where Prince Charles was crowned Prince of Wales in 1969. He's the father of Prince William and Prince Harry in England.

This man is splitting slate for roofing tiles the old fashioned way. It is a lot of work!

This is a picture that is part of an old slate quarry. Isn't it beautiful?

We still have people who herd sheep in Wales. This man uses his dogs to round his sheep up from the mountains. His dogs listen to a variety of calls and whistles and know what he is telling them to do.

The highest peak in Great Britain is in Wales. It is called Mt. Snowdon. On the Fourth of July, my Dad (and his American friends, including Mrs. Wildfang) went to the top. Here you see them holding the Welsh and American flag.

Catrin's Fact File

Full Name: Iona Catrin Tomos

Age: 8

Birthday: 11-27-92

Grade: 4

Favorite Food: Pizza

Favorite Color: Yellow

Favorite Book: Mr. Twiddle's Adventures, by Enid Blyton

Favorite Pop Group: Destiny's Child

Favorite Sports: Rugby, Netball, Swimming, Tap Dancing, and Roller Blading

Hobbies: Reading, Swimming, and Watching T.V.

Favorite T.V. Show: Hotel Eddie (it's in Welsh)

Best Friends: Lowri Idris and Emma Hughes

Thank you for taking the time to learn about my beautiful country. I look forward to learning more about yours.

Love, Catrin

We have beautiful oceans and beaches in Wales too. Here you see Mrs. Wildfang standing on a cliff with the Irish Sea behind her.

About the Author

Dawn Louise Wildfang has been a part of Oregon Geographic Alliance (OGA) since the summer of 2000. Along with her adventures around the world, she is a bilingual fourth grade teacher in Salem, Oregon.