

South Wales Echo Friday 27th February 2009
 Schools and choirs clamouring to perform four-year old song

Gwenno rings out the bells for St David



■ Gwenno Dafydd, who wrote the lyrics of the new St David's Day anthem Ring Out The Bells For St David
 PICTURE: Liz Pearce ©

SUNDAY will mark exactly four years since Gwenno Dafydd had a revelation.

It happened as she walked with one hundred other people towards the Senedd building in Cardiff Bay, ringing the heavy brass bell of St David.

She realised the day was lacking its own song and as she walked she resolved to write one.

Cenwch y Clychau i Dewi, which translates as Ring Out The Bells For St David, was born.

Last week Bryn Terfel and Only Men Aloud's Tim Rhys Evans officially launched a downloadable manuscript version for schoolchildren and choirs.

Gwenno, 51, from Pontcanna, Cardiff, wrote the lyrics in 2005, in a caravan near St Davids in Pembrokeshire, while peripatetic violin teacher Heulwen Thomas penned the tune.

The following year Gwenno sang it at the National St David's Day Parade.

"Now it has just come so far, its taken on a life of its own," said Gwenno.

"I found that after I first performed it people were asking me for copies.

"I took it from school to school on my bicycle, teaching it to the children, but Heulwen and I couldn't keep up with demand."

With the support of the National Grid for Learning Cymru, Gwenno and Heulwen recorded their song, and commissioned composer Eilir Owen Griffiths to write arrangements for mixed, male-voice and female-voice choirs.

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The song has since been performed in Patagonia, boomed out to 12,000 football fans in Ninian Park and is even being translated into Breton.

Gwenno said: "The downloadable version is now available on the web to all the 2,200 schools in Wales. I can't believe how its taken off."

Cenwch y Clychau i Dewi will be sung by schoolchildren at the beginning of this year's parade in Cardiff on Sunday, of which Gwenno is one of the hard-working organisers.

"This year we have Bryn Terfel on board as patron," she said. "We have Bretons coming down, Cornish and Irish, it's a real celtic affair."

"What we'd really love is for our patron saint's day to be taken up like St Patrick's Day, which everyone celebrates."

"The National St David's Day parade isn't just for Welsh people, it's for anybody who feels an affinity with Wales. If you love Wales you should be there."

All four versions of the manuscript are available to download for £2 from www.yolofa.com and the recorded song from www.download-factor.com



■ St David's Day parade through Cardiff

PRIDE OF A NATION ON DISPLAY AS PATRIOTS GO ON PARADE

MORE than 20,000 people are expected to hit the capital on Sunday to join dancers, musicians and hordes of schoolchildren for the National St David's Day parade.

Crowds will gather outside the National Museum Cardiff at midday with a rousing rendition of parade anthem Cenwch Y Clychau I Dewi at 1.05pm.

St David and his accompanying brass bands and folk dancers will

then lead the way towards the castle. The forest of waving flags will travel down the length of St Mary Street and Lloyd George Avenue to the steps of the Senedd building in Cardiff Bay.

Since its inception six years ago the parade has gone from a handful of patriotic people to the 8,000-strong crowd of last year.

Organisers say that based on the parade's booming popularity over

20,000 could join in this Sunday.

David Peterson, who will be at the front carrying the flag of St David with a yellow cross on a black background, said: "The most important thing for us is that this is a civilian parade. It is for anyone and everyone, regardless of whether they are Welsh or just want to be Welsh. It is for people who want to celebrate the fantastic culture of the country we live in."

A FRIENDLY FOLK FACE-OFF WITH FRANCE

CARDIFF will be hosting a Wales V France face-off of a different nature on Sunday.

Forty folk dancers and musicians from Brittany, northern France, will join Welsh bands to beat out a soundtrack to Cardiff's National St David's Day Parade.

The Breton band, known as a Bagad, were invited with a dance troop to join in the parade's festivities.

Organiser Gareth Westacott said: "The Bagad will bring a lot of colour and noise to the parade."

"They play bagpipes, drums and bombardes, which are a bit like oboes. They leave quite an impression."

"There are a few stories from last year, they are all very good drinkers," said Gareth. "But the Bagad we have invited this year have about 31 teenagers, and just a few adults."

The troop will stop in at St Fagans Museum on Saturday to perform in front of St Tello's church.

"It will be an interesting trinity," said Gareth. "According to Breton tradition, St David was born in Brittany. The dance troop are from St Pol de Léon, named after St Pol, who was a tutor to St David and of course his cousin St Tello."

"It was in the 5th and 6th centuries, when St David was around, that people

PLENTY OF WAYS TO CELEBRATE

EVENTS will be taking place across South Wales to celebrate St David's Day.

Rhondda Heritage Park will have music, cookery demonstrations, Welsh lessons and arts and crafts for free, as well as offering two-for-one entry underground between noon and 4pm on Sunday.

In Cardiff, Queen Street will play host to The Really Welsh Food Festival from Thursday, February 26 through to Saturday 28 where 15 Welsh food producers will be giving away samples and selling their wares.

On Saturday and Sunday Merthyr Tydfil Leisure Centre will hold a gala concert with Phantom of the Opera star Peter

Students from the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama will perform a concert at the Norwegian Church Arts Centre in Cardiff Bay. The concert runs from midday on Sunday until 2pm and tickets cost £2.50.

Cardiff Castle will be echoing with traditional Welsh music to celebrate. The concert is 11am until 3pm and entry is free into the castle grounds.

Duffryn Gardens in St Nicholas, Vale of Glamorgan, will offer free entry with a bilingual Daffodil-spotting tour at 2.30pm and a harpist performing in the tea rooms.

Finally Aled Jones will host the BBC National Orchestra and Chorus of Wales with Thierry Fischer conducting