

# QUEER CYMRU



gan cerian wilshere-davies  
arlunïadu gan breifnï heymann

# ***Introduction***

This zine is a collection of queer people from Welsh history that I find interesting, inspiring and celebratory of being queer in Wales. The purpose of this zine is to try and ignite and forge connections between Welsh national identity and queer identity. If we can grow and develop our queer perspective on Wales, then we are able to feel more of a sense of belonging in our communities. I believe Wales can be a sanctuary for queer people and by weaving a queer perspective into communities, traditions and landscape we can feel a sense of belonging in Wales.

When researching for this project I found it difficult to find specifically trans voices, as all the people I have been researching lived in the 17th to the 19th century, it is hard to know for sure if any of them would actually identify with our modern understanding trans. This is due to there being no modern terminology for people to identify with, until very recently in our history and it would also be very dangerous for trans people from these eras to make themselves known.

So, it is only down to speculation as to whether any of these figures were trans, but all of them did push the boundaries of gender and were very successful in integrating their queer identity and perspective into Wales.

As a queer person growing up in Wales, I felt that my sexuality and gender was a very separate to my Welsh nationality. I never learned about any queer figures in Welsh history in school and being from quite an isolated area of Wales I didn't really meet many other LGBTQ+ people when growing up. Moving away from Wales seemed like a natural progression for me, I felt like I needed to move to a more metropolitan area in order to find a community of people that I fitted in to. When I was 14, I joined a local youth theatre, through them I met queer professional artists, writers and theatre makers that made work in and about Wales, more specifically about queer lives in Wales. This was when I realised that there is a place for queer people in Wales and it is our job to develop and celebrate the connections between queer identity and Welsh nationality.



# Cranogwen

*"A tall, dark, striking woman, strong-willed and supremely confident, but possessed of a delightful sense of humour, Cranogwen was, without doubt, the most outstanding Welsh woman of the nineteenth century."*

*- Professor Deirdre Beddoe*



Cranogwen (Sarah Jane Rees) was born in a small coastal village called Llangrannog in 1839. From an early age Cranogwen stood out, she was bold and strong willed. She was given a male education and although her parents wanted her to be a dress maker, she convinced them to let her to go to sea with her father, who was a mariner and teacher. She then studied at a navigation school, which led to her becoming a sea captain, which was almost unheard of for women in the 1800s.

Cranogwen was in quite an open lifelong lesbian relationship and she wrote about women fondly. For the magazine 'Y Frythones' (which she was also the editor of) she wrote 7 articles all on one woman that she deeply admired. For the same magazine she answered questions from her female readers as an Agony Aunt, she would encourage her readers to reject expected gender roles, motherhood and marriage and encourages them to pursue what they want to do and to be themselves.

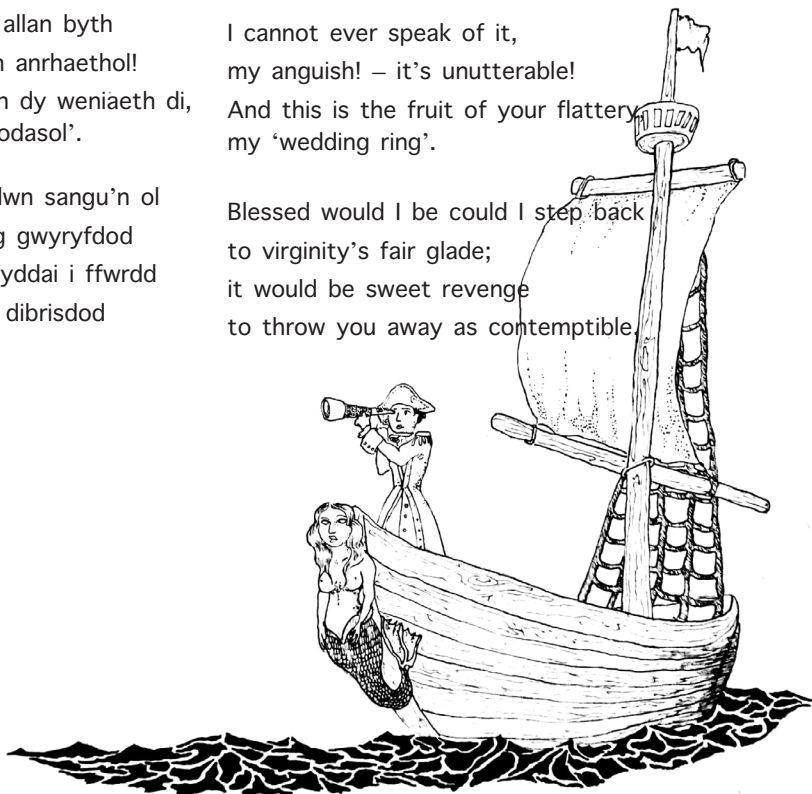
*Cranogwen pushed the boundaries of gender expectation, as well as being a mariner she had many other professions throughout her life that defied gender norms, such as; Headmaster, journalist, campaigner and poet. She is most famous for her poetry because in 1865 she became the first woman to ever win a poetry prize at the Eisteddfod. She entered using the bardic pseudonym Cranogwen. The poem that won her the prize was called 'Y Fodrwy Briodasol' (The Wedding Ring). This poem tells the tales of three women unhappy in marriage and is a commentary on Cranogwen's own feelings on marriage and heteronormative relationships. When revealed it was written by a woman Cranogwen became instantly famous around Wales for her bold and daring attitude.*

Breuddwydiais, -credaus dy fod di	I dreamt – I thought you were
Fel carreg yr athronydd,	The stone of the philosopher,
Yn meddu'r hynod rin i droi	possessing the rare virtue to turn
Y cwbl yn aur o ddefnydd.	the whole to gold material.

'Ond O! y siomedigaeth flin	But O! The bitter disappointment
-----------------------------	----------------------------------

Nid allaf siarad allan byth	I cannot ever speak of it,
Fy ing!- mae yn anrhaethol!	my anguish! – it's unutterable!
A dyma ffweyth dy weniaeth di,	And this is the fruit of your flattery
Fy 'modrwy briodasol'.	my 'wedding ring'.

Gwyn fyd na allwn sangu'n ol	Blessed would I be could I step back
Ar lannerch deg gwryfodod	to virginity's fair glade;
Dialedd melus fyddai i ffwrdd	it would be sweet revenge
Dy daflu mewn dibrisdod	to throw you away as contemptible.



# Ladies of Llangollen

“MY DEAR MRS GODDARD I CANNOT PAINT OUR  
DISTRESS.

MY DEAR SALLY LEPT OUT OF A WINDOW LAST NIGHT  
AND IS GONE.

WE LEARN MISS BUTLER OF THE CASTLE IS WITH HER.  
I CAN SAY NO MORE...

WE ARE IN THE UTMOST DISTRESS AND I AM SURE YOU  
PITY US...”



Sarah Ponsonby (Sally) and Eleanor Butler were two Irish women from very wealthy backgrounds in the 18th century. Desperate to be together they flee their family homes, Sally even jumps out of the window with a pistol in her hands to be with Eleanor. But the two women were caught and separated. They run away like this several times until eventually both families agree that it is impossible to keep them apart and allow them to live together. They decide to settle in the village of Llangollen in North Wales where they lived together all their lives. Many famous people of the time came to visit them, all knowing that they

were in a ‘romantic friendship’ (code for lesbian relationships at the time, which meant they could live openly together). The ladies of Llangollen really paved the way for other lesbian couples to be able to live openly in ‘romantic friendships.’



# Love Spoons

Love spoons are a traditional Welsh item used for hundreds of years. It originated from the wooden spoon used for Cawl (traditional Welsh stew), over the years the spoons became more intricately decorated so they became more ornamental objects. Generally, a man would carve a love spoon for the woman he is courting. He would carve symbols into the handle of the spoon; each symbol would have a different meaning e.g. a heart signified love or bells would signify marriage or hope.



The LGBTQ+ community also use a lot of symbols to identify and celebrate each other. I think that Love spoons are a good example of how we can combine Welsh tradition with queer identity. Not only do they both use symbols, they both have a strong message of love. Love spoons are intended more for romantic love but maybe we could use this tradition to create symbolic objects that promote self-love as well as romantic love. Maybe love spoons could be given not only to lovers but to friends, family and for ourselves to symbolise our hopes, dreams and desires.



Supporting  
a loved one



Love



Smooth  
passage  
through life



Wealth & good  
fortune



Good fortune &  
happiness



Together in  
harmony



True Love



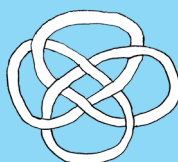
Affection



Faith or  
blessing



Love or  
running away  
together



Eternal love,  
everlasting  
strength



Strength &  
protection



Security,  
home &  
together-  
ness



Soul



Security,  
settling down



Strength, honour &  
eternity



Trans\*



Gay



Lesbian



Intersex

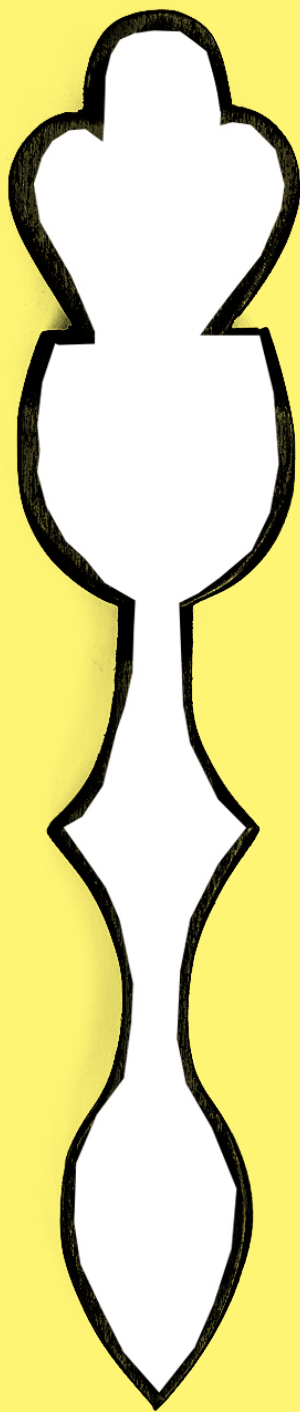


Bisexual



Polyamory

# Design your own love spoon!



You can interpret these symbols any way you want. You can even make up your own :)

# Henry Paget

Henry Cyril Paget, the 5th Marquess of Anglesey was an extremely eccentric aristocrat from the 1800s. He lived in and inherited the Plas Newydd Estate in Anglesey. In the Marquess' lifetime he spent around £43 million pounds on costumes, precious jewels and accessories. He converted the chapel at his estate to a theatre and named it 'The Gaiety', in this theatre he



would put on elaborate performances by himself and professional actors, he also performed for the local community in Anglesey. The most famous performance he did was the 'butterfly dance', his dancing style was described as "sinuous, sexy & snake-like'.



Due to societal pressures at the time the marquess did marry but the marriage was annulled after three years as it was never consummated. His wife said that the only intimacy between them was when he would cover her naked body with jewels and admire her from a distance. 'Her fair beauty, porcelain complexion and willowy frame were believed to be the everything the Marquess hoped he could be.' The marquess was likely to be gay and his lifestyle also shows that he defied gender expectations in an extreme way.

# Rituals

**Wales has many rituals involving costume and performance; on St.David's day people dress in traditional Welsh costume, around Christmas and New Year's Eve the Mari Lwyd (someone dressed in a sheet, puppeteering the skull of a horse) comes out and everyone dances and sings to celebrate the winter and the festive season.**



Merched Beca  
"Becky's gals"





**Historically the Welsh people have used protests to improve the conditions of Wales. An example of this is the Rebecca Riots, in the mid 19th century men from Wales dressed in women's clothing and destroyed and vandalised toll booths all over Wales. They were protesting against the unfair taxation of the toll booths by rich English landowners. Similarly the LGBTQ+ community has historically protested for**

**the rights of the community and against prejudice and unfair treatment. In 1984 both the Welsh and the LGBTQ+ community came together to protest against the closures of the mines.**

**The LGBTQ+ community also use performance and costume as a way of celebrating and connecting with their identity. Examples of this are drag performances and pride celebrations.**

# GLOSSARY

Rhyw: sex

Hunaniaeth rhywedd: gender identity

Mynegiant rhywedd: gender expression

Cyfeiriadedd rhywiol: sexual orientation

Dyntrawsryweddol: transgender man

Menywdrawsryweddol: transgender woman

Traws: trans

Trawsrywiol: transgender

Rhyngryw: intersex

Cwiar: queer

Heterorywiol: heterosexual

Syth: straight

Hoyw: gay, queer

Lesbiaidd: lesbian

Deurywiol: bisexual

Panrywiol: pansexual

Anneuaidd: non-binary

Dod allan: coming out

Gwrywraig: masculine woman

Benywyn: feminine man



*Books to read:*

**Forbidden Lives: LGBT Stories from Wales by Noreena Shopland**

**Queer Wales edited by Huw Osbourne**

**A Little Gay History of Wales by Daryl Leeworthy**

**On the Red Hill by Mike Parker**



Instagram:  
@ceriansworld  
@breifniheymann.celf

