

# REMEMBERING THE PAST: GEOGRAPHY IN WALES

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# Y WLADFA: WALES BROUGHT TO PATAGONIA

The 1800's were a time rife with upheaval and distress in Wales. The British were forcing a wave of industrialism onto the Welsh, and with this came a disregard for both Welsh culture and the language (Gruffud et al). Speaking Welsh was discouraged, and many had a difficult time preserving local traditions. Inspired by the fear of losing Welsh culture forever, a small group of Welsh settlers fled to Patagonia to form a Welsh colony untouched by the British.

This colony is still there, with only a few divergences from its original purpose. The originally pure Welsh language has taken on some distinct Spanish influ

ences, though remains mostly intact. The traditions of Wales remain, with many people traveling to Wales for the Eisteddfod, a Welsh festival. The desire to start a Welsh colony separate from the British was a success, and thus far they have not neglected their history. Their belief that Wales would soon be gone, however, has been happily proven false within the last two centuries (History of Welsh Patagonia). Wales is fighting back against the influence of the British and there has been a recent rejuvenation of effort, both in Wales (and internationally, to preserve Welsh culture and the Welsh language.



Citizens of Y Wladfa celebrate their cultural background in the streets of Argentina.



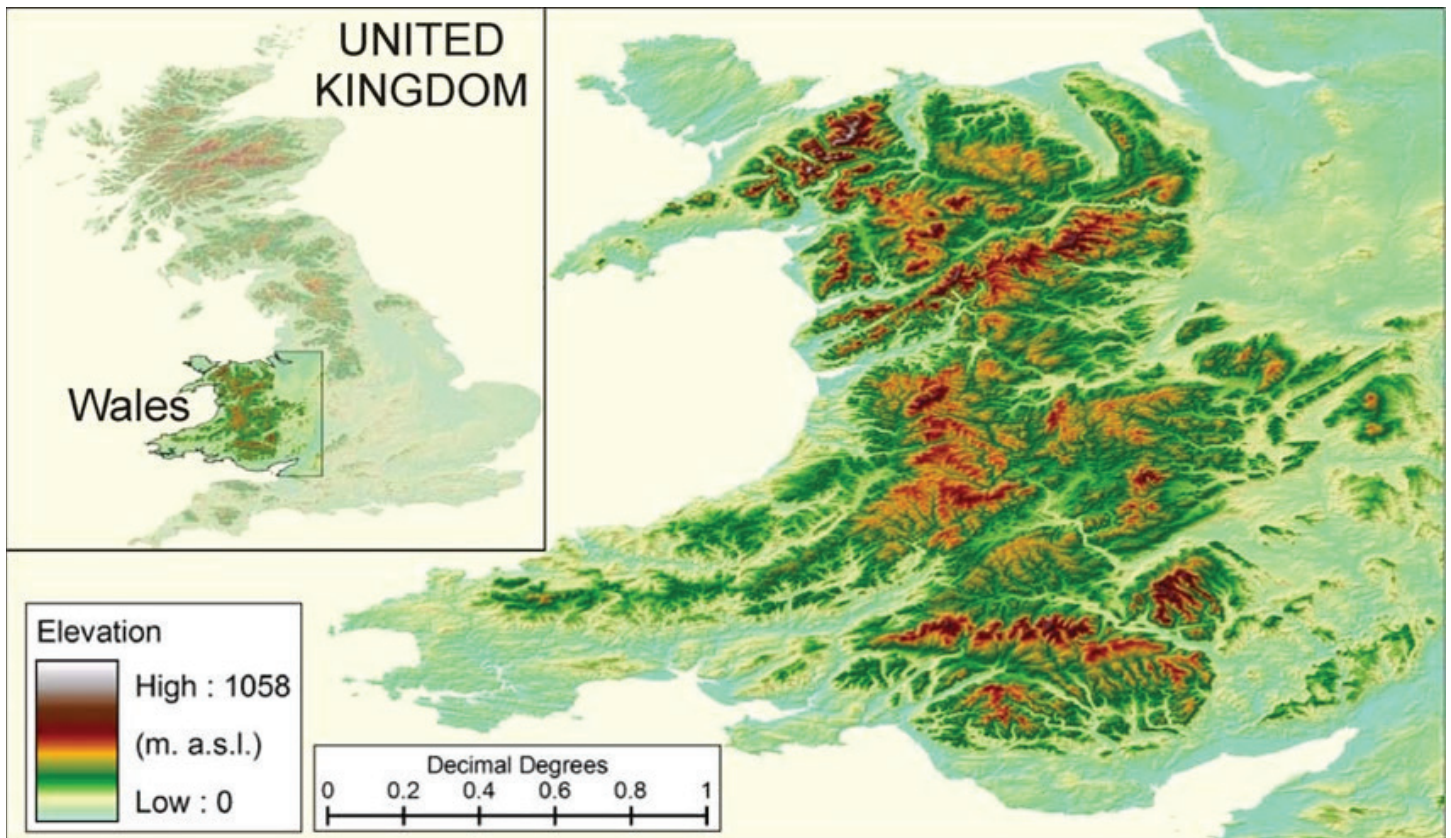
# WELSH GEOGRAPHY

Even before the Roman invasion, Wales was often in the midst of war or disputes between different tribes. The geography of Wales, with its rivers, lakes, and mountains, lends itself easily to a division between groups of settlers. These groups were so different, in fact, that their existence was later formed into stories of elves and fairies and these stories remain today (Desforges and Jones).

With these vast differences in peoples, races did not often blend until later in the development of Wales. Their languages also blended, though retaining some of the initial differences brought



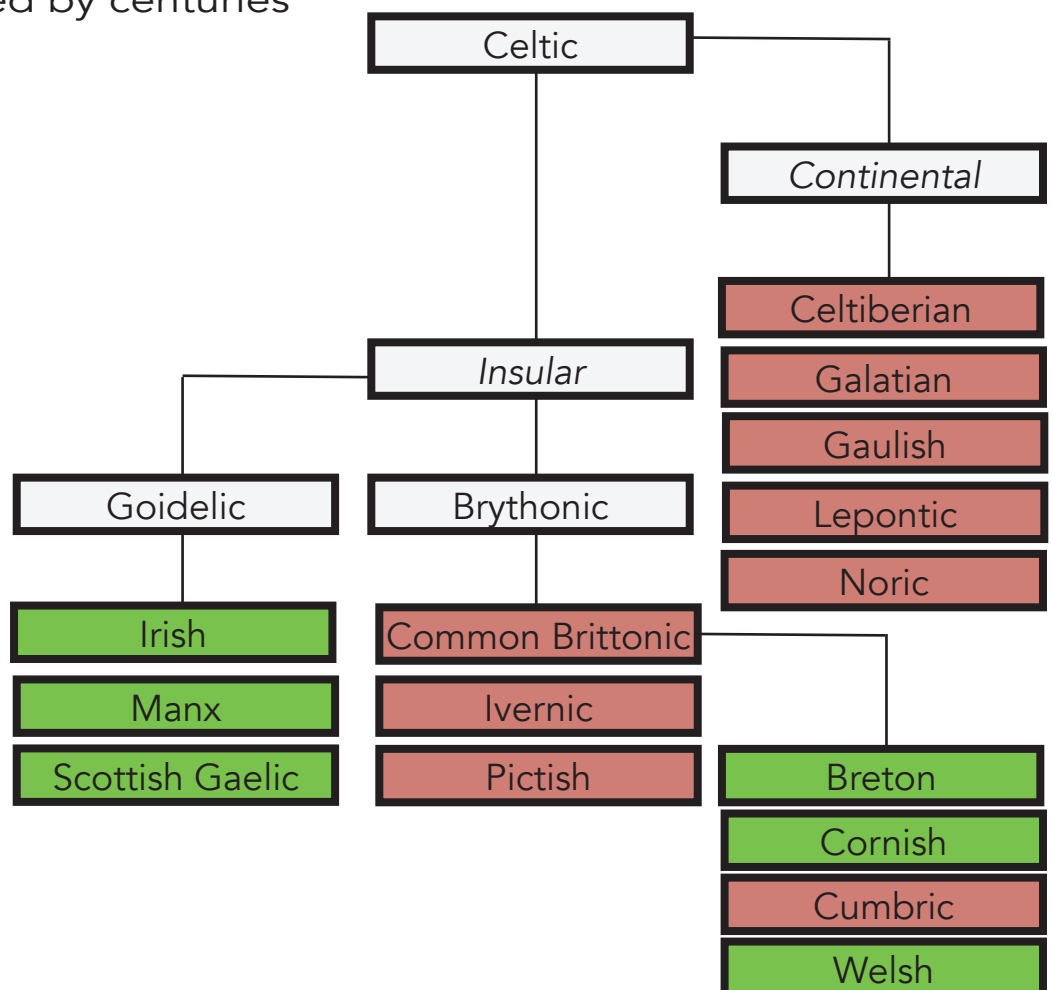
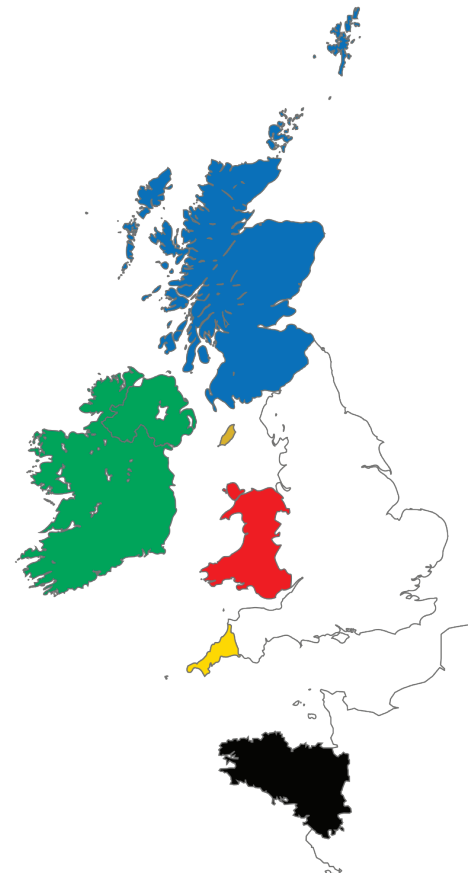
when they settled Wales. These differences are aligned with a clear border within Wales, divided into Northern and Southern Welsh. Patagonian Welsh, spoken in Argentina, is a mix of both as well as Spanish influences, though mostly descended from Northern Welsh (History of Welsh Patagonia).



# CELTIC LANGUAGES

The Britons settled Wales long before the Roman invasion. Their language was Indo-European and became the origin of Celtic languages. The divisions between the different Celtic languages has become very strong. A common misconception is that speakers of one Celtic language are able to at least somewhat understand the speakers of another Celtic language, for example Welsh and Gaelic. The truth is that these two languages are about as similar as English and German. There are similar patterns and similar roots, but the languages themselves have been utterly changed by centuries of separation.

These individual languages, though concentrated within a very small area, were able to gain their distinctive traits by being so harshly separated by the geography of Britain. The divisive nature of the geography has allowed many changes in individual groups of people culturally and surrounding dialects (Gruffud et al).



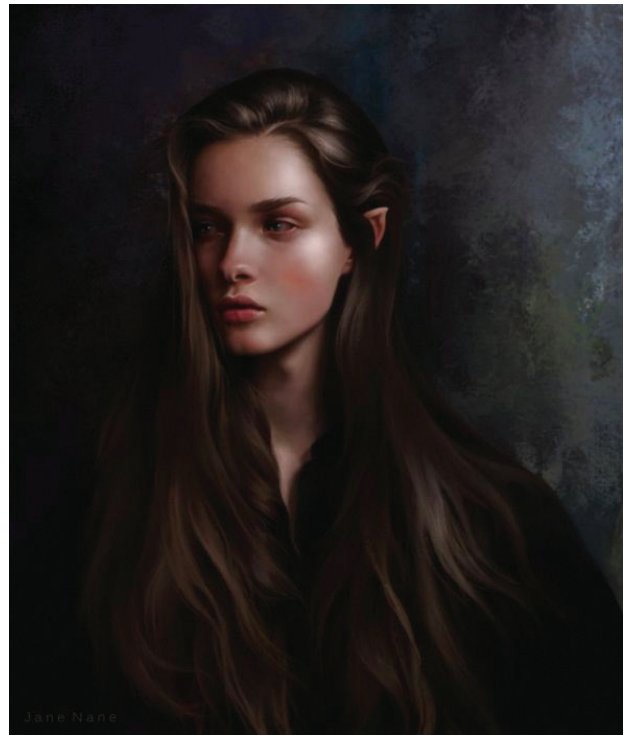


# WELSH LEGENDS: THE ORIGIN STORY

Many Welsh stories have gained popularity in the last few centuries and been adapted for other audiences outside of Wales. These are the stories we were fascinated with as children, stories of elves, Druids, and fairies with magic powers that we would act out with our siblings. Later in life, we realized that these stories aren't real, they're the imagining of some unknown authors and storytellers that lived centuries before us. The illusion is shattered, and we no longer think of these beautiful creatures, perhaps until we are trying to entertain a younger child (Owen).

Many centuries ago, however, in the time of these incredible storytellers, the Welsh were unable to simply forget the elves and fairies once they turned a certain age. These creatures were real, though not in the way we visualize them today. The different tribes in Wales were often so isolated from others by rough terrain, they had no contact with each other other than occasional travellers who brought fearful, amusing, and strange stories about other peoples' traditions to them (Alldhouse-Green). There were differences in the physical attributes as well as customs and living situations between tribes, which lent itself to even more fantastical stories evolving.

These stories are not simply the imagination of a nameless author, but in fact a distorted view of reality that became even more warped due to the geography of Wales (Owen).





# BEAUTY IN WALES



Wales is a unique country that is full of the wonder we often no longer notice after our childhood. Writers, historians, and film makers have been inspired for centuries by both the beauty of the language and the etheriality of the landscape. The mysteries of Wales are only beginning to unfold, and with more being found more legends and fairytales are being played out before our eyes. Wales is a huge part of Western culture and history, whether we give it recognition or not. With one of the oldest living languages in the world, it's no surprise that within it there is an aura of surrealism holding many secrets of Britain's past.



# BIBLIOGRAPHY

Aldhouse-Green, Miranda J. *Sacred Britannia: the Gods and Rituals of Roman Britain*.  
Thames & Hudson, 2018.

Owen details the real history that transpired and was likely the original story behind Welsh legends and myths. He dives into archaeological history before any Welsh stories were transcribed, and describes the methods by which they were passed down. He also describes some of the changes in them as well as why they were altered, and shares some of the Roman views on Welsh stories and language.

Desforges, Luke, and Rhys Jones. "Bilingualism and Geographical Knowledge: A Case Study of Students at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth." *Social & Cultural Geography*, vol. 2, no. 3, 2001, pp. 333–346., doi:10.1080/14649360120073897.

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This is a website that focuses on the travel of the Welsh from Wales to Patagonia in the nineteenth century. It describes the lingual differences, cultural differences, and why the settlers chose to move. It also describes the current traditions and cultural aspects of those who continue to live there.

Owen, Elias. *Welsh Folk-Lore*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2015.

Owen details the real history that transpired and was likely the original story behind Welsh legends and myths. He dives into archaeological history before any Welsh stories were transcribed, and describes the methods by which they were passed down. He also describes some of the changes in them as well as why they were altered, and shares some of the Roman views on Welsh stories and language.

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