



FACTsheet 10

St Dwynwen's Day

St Dwynwen's Day is celebrated on 25th January. Dwynwen or 'Dwyn' was the daughter of a semi-legendary 5th-century king, Brychan Brycheiniog. The Welsh bards Dafydd ap Gwilym (c1315-c1350) and Syr Dafydd Trefor (16th cent) wrote cywyddau referring to her as a patron of lovers.

The earliest version of her 'story' says that Dwynwen was in love with Maelon Dafodrill, but after refusing his sexual advances prior to their marriage, he got angry and left her.

Bereft by this abandonment, Dwynwen prayed to God and Maelon was turned into a block of ice. To reward Dwynwen, God granted her three wishes. She used her first wish to defrost Maelon; her second wish was that 'all true-hearted lovers....they should either obtain the objects of their affection or be cured of their passion'; and her final wish was that she would never have to marry. She is said to have lived the rest of her life as a nun in a church named after her, Llanddwyn on Anglesey.

But...there's a 'but'....

Although Dwynwen is mentioned in the 14th century and may have been a real person, her 'story' doesn't appear until the 18th century.



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It was published by none other than Iolo Morganwg (Edward Williams) who, depending on your perspective was either a literary genius, a shameless forger, or a bit of both. Iolo believed he had a duty to preserve traditional Welsh culture before industry destroyed it forever.

He was so in love with the past that where he felt Medieval poets had slipped up, he recreated their work. He also made up 'traditions' like the Gorsedd ceremony familiar to us today, and other things like the Coelbren bardic alphabet. It seems that Dwynwen's story is a product of Iolo's vivid imagination.

The first St Dwynwen's cards were produced in Wales in the 1960s. However, it's only in recent years that celebrating the day as an alternative (or addition to) St Valentine's Day has become more popular.

If you're celebrating St Dwynwen's Day, we hope you have a fantastic time but please try not to turn your loved-one to ice like Dwynwen!

