

GWOBR
Tirnan-og
AWARD 2014

Getting to Know

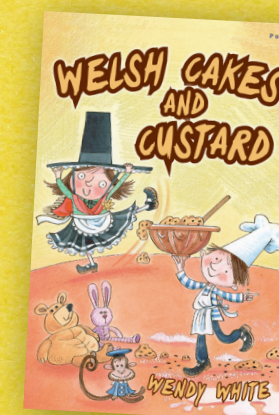
Wendy White

As a child growing up in Llanelli, Wendy loved spending Saturday mornings browsing the shelves of her local library. When she was older, and had completed her degree at Lampeter University, Wendy was fortunate enough to work in that very same library. Later she trained to be a primary schoolteacher and taught at schools in Wales and England. Wendy now has two grown-up children, and lives with her husband in Kidwelly – a small Carmarthenshire town with a large castle.

Welsh Cakes and Custard

Welsh Cakes and Custard is a collection of five short stories about two friends, Emyr Rhys and Betsi Wyn, with illustrations by Helen Flook. It's Wendy's first book, and here's a bit more information about it:

Life is full of surprises when you're five years old. Betsi Wyn is trying out lots of things – school dinners, concerts, pirate parties – and all for the very first time. That's when it's good to have friends – people like Emyr Rhys, who knows about Welsh cakes and clog dancing, and Mam-gu ... who knows about everything else!



Author Photo by Emyr Jenkins



CYNGOR LLYFRAU CYMRU
WELSH BOOKS COUNCIL

gwales.com
LLYFRAU CYMRU BOOKS ONLINE



Noddir gan
Lywodraeth Cymru
Sponsored by
Welsh Government

Where did you grow up?

In Llanelli, the town known for making tinsplate – the metal that is turned into tins for baked beans. It's also the home of the Scarlets rugby team.

Which school did you attend?

Bryn County Primary School, Llanelli.

What was the best thing about your school? The very best things were my friends. Also, the puzzle competitions which one of our teachers held every week. I loved trying to solve them. My favourites were the crossword puzzles, which I still enjoy doing.



What did you want to be when you grew up? As a child, I desperately wanted to be a librarian, but I also loved going to school and I wanted to be a teacher. Also, I wrote lots of stories when I was growing up, so I really wanted to be an author too.

What are your hobbies? I love reading books, and writing stories and poems. I belong to writing groups, where we read the stories we've written out loud, and that's great fun. It's good to have friends who love writing. I'm also trying to get better at speaking Welsh, so I go to Welsh classes every week.

What was your favourite book when you were a child? If I had to pick one, I'd choose *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* by C. S. Lewis. And then *The Snow Queen* by Hans Christian Andersen ... and then *Dog Stories* by Enid Blyton. I could go on and on!

Which authors inspire you? There are lots of authors that inspire me, like Michael Morpurgo, Jacqueline Wilson and Roddy Doyle. As a child I was inspired by Penelope Lively's writing, and when I had my own children, I loved reading to them. Some of our favourite books were Janet and Allan Ahlberg's *Funny Bones* and *Miss Wobble the Waitress*, and the *Alfie* stories by Shirley Hughes. I also enjoyed reading Roald Dahl's *Danny the Champion of the World* to the older classes I taught. All of these authors – and more – have inspired me to write my own stories.

When did you start writing? When I was about seven, and I've been writing ever since. I always asked for notebooks as birthday and Christmas presents, and I wrote my stories in those. I absolutely loved writing then and I still do now.

What was the inspiration behind *Welsh Cakes and Custard*? I started going to writing classes about ten years ago. One week we had to write a short story for children as our homework, so I wrote a story about a little girl having dinner in school for the first time. She thinks the mashed potato in her soup is ice-cream, and the custard on her apple pie is yellow gravy. The idea came from helping the nursery children I taught when they struggled with new food at school, and that story became the first chapter in *Welsh Cakes and Custard*.

What advice can you give to budding young authors? Read lots and lots, and write as much as you can. Read and write about anything that interests you – adventures, football, animals. Don't be put off if you're not sure how to spell something or where capital letters and full stops go. Keep reading – the more you read, the more you'll notice how authors spell and where they put their punctuation. And write and write and write!

Do you have any rituals when you write? I usually write on my laptop at the kitchen table, with a mug of tea next to me – and one or two chocolate chip cookies!



How did it feel when you won the Tir na n-Og award? Very shocked ... and then really delighted. It's great to win this important award for my first book, as it certainly encourages me to keep writing.

If you were stuck on a desert island with only one book, which book would that be? I would love it to be *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C. S. Lewis. I haven't read those stories for ages and they would remind me of being ten years old again.

What's next? I love writing about children so it would be wonderful to have a second book published about Betsi Wyn and Emyr Rhys. I'm also writing a story for young adults and grown-ups about a six-year-old boy who is having a difficult time at home. I'll be working hard on my poems too.