



# Northern Arizona Celtic Heritage Society

November , 2019



## Moran Taing

Many thanks to everyone who is already working hard on next year's festival! The plans are afoot and it's not too late to get involved!

## Holiday Hooley

Mark your calendars for this year's Holiday Hooley! Bring an hors d'oeuvres to share:

3393 S Carol Dr

Dec. 7 at 6!

Did you know....

In the Celtic holiday tradition hanging the holly and ivy wreath outside the house. In pre-Christian times they warded off evil spirits?

Election time!

Its election time again! If you would like to nominate someone for an office or step up yourself please contact Richard at 928.556.3161 before November 15! Elections will be held at the December meeting on Dec. 3 at 6:30 at the Masonic Lodge.

## Holiday Fundraiser

It's almost time to do Holiday Gift Wrapping at the Mall to raise funds and awareness for NACHS. Right now we have December 24 as a possible date, no confirmation yet. If you can spare some time to help do gift wrapping, call and let us know. Then we will confirm possible times. Call 928-853-8552.

## Roald Dahl

By Meredith Young

The famous children's book author, Roald Dahl, shaped the literary tastes of many young people. Even though he spent most of his life in England, Dahl was born in 1916, in the town of Llandaff - a section of north Cardiff, Wales. His parents had separately immigrated from Norway; his father (Harald Dahl) was first married to a Frenchwoman who gave birth to two children before she died in 1907. Dahl's mother (Sofie Magdalene Dahl) moved to Wales, married Harald in 1911, and had four children: Astri, Alfhild, Roald, and Astra. Dahl was named after the famous Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen, and while Dahl spoke Norwegian as a first language, he also learned Welsh and English. The family moved to a country house in Radyr when Dahl was two, and Dahl grew up with a strong appreciation for nature. However, his early life in the country was short-lived, as his younger sister and father died in 1920. Sofie decided not to move the family back to Norway because she wanted her children to get a good education in England, but she returned to Llandaff. Dahl spent his childhood in Wales before going to an English boarding school. At the Cathedral School in Llandaff, Dahl and four of his friends executed the "Great Mouse Plot of 1924" to get back at mean old Mrs. Pratchett, who owned the local candy store. The boys put a dead mouse in a jar of gobstoppers, but were caught by their headmaster and caned. The candy store now bears a sign commemorating the event, since Roald and his friends were frequent customers.

Dahl soon transferred to two different English boarding schools that he later wrote about in his autobiography, *Boy: Tales of Childhood*. He was unhappy at both schools and was often physically abused by older students. His teachers wrote that he wasn't particularly talented at writing; one even wrote that "I have never met anybody who so persistently writes words meaning the exact opposite of what is intended." Dahl loved sports and photography, and he especially enjoyed school vacations because he was able to go to Norway to visit family. By the time he completed his education, Dahl had reached a height of 6' 6" and was very physically fit. He took the RMS Nova Scotia to Newfoundland and hiked across the province as part of a British wilderness society. When World War II began, Dahl joined the Royal Air Force (RAF), but a crash landing in Libya damaged his face and eyesight. After he recovered, Dahl flew missions for another year until blinding migraines caused him to be sent home as an invalid. He became an RAF training officer in Uxbridge until he was promoted and sent to act as assistant air attaché to the British embassy in Washington D.C. By the end of the war, Dahl worked in espionage, and held the ranks of flight lieutenant, flying ace, and squadron leader. Owing to his injuries earlier in the war, Dahl was finally declared unfit for continued service in 1946, so he left the military to begin his successful writing career.

Dahl married Patricia Neal, an American actress, in 1953. The two had five children together, but their family life was full of unfortunate events, and they divorced in 1983. Dahl's son Theo was hit by a cab when he was an infant and almost died from hydrocephalus. Dahl became instrumental in treating future cases of the condition because he worked with an engineer to design a pressure-relieving shunt for the brain. When Dahl's daughter Olivia caught a bad case of measles encephalitis at the age of seven and died, Dahl commemorated her life in his book, *The BFG*, and became a staunch advocate of vaccines. Neal had three cerebral aneurysms that burst while she was pregnant with their fifth child, Lucy, and Dahl had to teach Neal how to walk and talk again. This episode in their lives was later turned into a 1981 film called *The Patricia Neal Story*. Dahl then married Felicity Ann d'Abreu in 1983. Felicity was a British film producer who had, ironically, been born in Llandaff as well.

Dahl had begun writing in 1942; he sold his first work (*Shot Down Over Libya*, a compilation of Dahl's wartime adventures) to the *Saturday Evening Post* for a substantial sum. His first children's book, *The Gremlins*, was based on popular RAF myths of creatures that caused planes to malfunction. Eleanor Roosevelt read the book to her grandchildren, and Walt Disney even bought the rights to turn the book into a film, but never did. Dahl's later children's works included *James and the Giant Peach*, *Matilda*, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, *The Witches*, *Fantastic Mr. Fox*, and the film script for *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*. One of Dahl's adult works, "The Smoker" (also known as "Man From the South"), was incorporated into episodes of *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* and a Quentin Tarantino project. "Man From the South" also became the beginning episode of *Tales of the Unexpected*, a TV show that used Dahl's collection of short stories with the same name. Dahl also wrote the film script for the James Bond thriller, *You Only Live Twice*.

Dahl died in Oxford in 1990, at the age of 74. He had contracted myelodysplastic syndrome, a rare cancer of the blood. He was buried in Buckinghamshire, England, in what his granddaughter called a "sort of Viking funeral." Dahl's coffin held items that were important to him: snooker cues, chocolates, a power saw, HB pencils, and burgundy wine. Even today, children still leave flowers and small toys by his graveside. Dahl's widow, Felicity, continued to support her husband's interests in literacy, neurology, and haematology financially through Roald Dahl's Marvellous Children's Charity (formerly known as the Roald Dahl Foundation). The author's life and works are honored by multiple plaques, statues, and festivals that bear his name. Dahl continues to be regarded as one of the greatest storytellers for children of the 20th century, and his books have inspired countless children and adults over the years.