

WALES: ST. DAVID

by Ross Mulkern

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Aside from the red dragon, which represents the Celtic people, other Welsh national symbols include the daffodil and the leek. These are chosen to represent St David, the patron saint of Wales. So, who was St. David and what did he do?

The story of David begins before he was even born. His mother, St. Non, had become pregnant and was waiting to give birth. Meanwhile, the local king had heard of an ancient prophecy telling that a great child would soon be born – a child that would grow up to be a great leader. The king believed that this would be Non's child and so sent his soldiers to kill her and the baby. That night, Non was out walking by the sea when she felt the baby coming. The soldiers had seen her from far away and started heading towards her. However they were stopped from reaching the sea by a great storm which suddenly appeared. As Non gave birth on a rock by the sea, the storm raged all around except for the area surrounding Non, where the weather was peaceful and quiet. Despite this miracle, Non's labour was extremely painful. It is said that in her pain she gripped the rock so hard that she left finger marks in it. This rock later became a holy object and is supposedly buried beneath a shrine to the saint near the place where she gave birth.

David lived and did indeed go on to become a great man. Not a king, however. He became a spiritual leader who converted many people to Christianity and performed many miracles. Among these miracles, he is said to have made a blind man see, raised a new hill from the earth so that people could hear him speak and even brought a boy back from the dead!

So where do the leeks come in? Well at this time, the Celts were fighting the Anglo-Saxons. However, because they wore similar armour, the two armies were often getting confused on the battlefield and killing their friends instead of their enemies. David said that the Celts should put leeks in their helmets so that they could recognise each other in the heat of battle. This

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strategy proved very effective and is why the leek is the national vegetable of Wales today.

The colour associated with David is yellow, which is why he is also represented by daffodils. Every St. David's Day many Welsh people wear daffodils in their buttonholes to remember their patron saint. This colour is also used in the flag of St. David, which is a yellow cross on a black background. The Union Flag, the flag of the United Kingdom, is made from a mixture of the flags of England, Scotland and the flag of St. Patrick representing Northern Ireland. The flag of Wales is not included as when the Union Flag was designed, Wales was still considered part of England. These days, however, there is a chance that Scotland could leave the United Kingdom, which would mean that the flag of St. David could be used instead and the famous Union Flag would then have a black and yellow background.

What do you think? Should the UK keep its iconic flag even if Scotland leaves? Or should it be changed to include the flag of this great national saint?