

in all Britain, and by now much of Wales thinks of itself as multi-ethnic (not every part of it, for there are rural regions where to this day hardly a foreigner has ever settled, unless you count the inescapable English).

By and large it has happened without much friction, and it says something for the fiber of the national psyche that through all these permutations of history the Welsh identity has remained so recognizable. Pride has something to do with this resilience. Many Welsh people are caustically critical of their country, but hardly a one of them, I venture to guess, is not proud of being Welsh. Some are proud of their rugby teams, or their actors, writers, musicians, and comedians. Some are proud of their ancient and apparently inexpungible language. Some are simply proud of their incomparable landscapes.

And some, like me, are proud of the dream, that old Welsh-utopian dream, and proud of the age-long determination of the Welsh people, whether through conflict, religion, or politics, to turn it into reality. The Welsh wars of survival have ended now, the power of religion has faded, but in peaceful politics the Welsh nation is gradually achieving fulfillment as a small, modern, technically advanced and artistically gifted corner of Europe. Since 1997 a National Assembly for Wales in Cardiff has assumed many of the powers of self-government, and little by little, year by year, its responsibilities are growing. Whether in the end Wales will be fulfilled as a truly sovereign state within the community of Europe, or as a constituent unit of a federal Britain, we are entitled to hope that its diverse Welshness will only be enriched as the new centuries pass, and that with luck one day the cloud-cuckoo-land of our fantasies will turn out to be true.

Jan Morris is the author of more than forty books of history, travel, biography, and fiction, including the Pax Britannica trilogy about the climax and decline of the British Empire, The World of Venice, Trieste and the Meaning of Nowhere, The Matter of Wales, two autobiographical volumes, and five books of collected travel essays. An Honorary Litt.D. of the Universities of Wales and Glamorgan, an honorary Fellow of Christ Church, Oxford, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, and a Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE), she lives in Wales.



Anita Pearce (née Busuttil) and her daughters Leanne and Sara participated in the Mothers and Daughters project. Their family combines Maltese, Afro-Caribbean, and Welsh ancestry, thus exemplifying the multi-ethnic heritage of contemporary Wales. Photo by Glenn Jordan, courtesy of Butetown History & Arts Centre

IMAGES AND STORIES FROM MULTI-ETHNIC WALES: BUTETOWN HISTORY & ARTS CENTRE

by Glenn Jordan

Like most European nations, Wales is an ethnically diverse society. Especially in the old seaport areas of Cardiff and Newport, people of different ethnic and racial backgrounds have lived among one another for many years. Today, the city of Cardiff is said to have the highest percentage of mixed-race relationships of any city in Europe. Its Butetown community, often known as "Tiger Bay," has been seen for generations as a mecca of racial harmony.

Butetown History & Arts Centre is committed to promoting people's history and cultural democracy. Since 1987, BHAC has been collecting, preserving, and interpreting the history of immigrants and minorities in Wales from the Victorian period to the present. The Centre includes a gallery and spaces for education, and holds a unique collection of photographs, films, and audiotaped life stories. It also produces exhibitions and publishes scholarly materials.

The Centre's current major project is Mothers and Daughters: Portraits from Multi-Ethnic Wales. Consisting of more than sixty large, full-color photographic portraits and edited life stories, Mothers and Daughters will be a major touring exhibition and book by 2010.

Glenn Jordan, an activist, curator, and photographer, is founding director of Butetown History & Arts Centre and reader in cultural studies and creative practice at the University of Glamorgan. Born and raised in California, Glenn has lived in Cardiff since 1987, where he has been researching, photographing, and curating exhibitions on immigrants and minorities in Wales. He has published widely on race, identity, and visual culture.