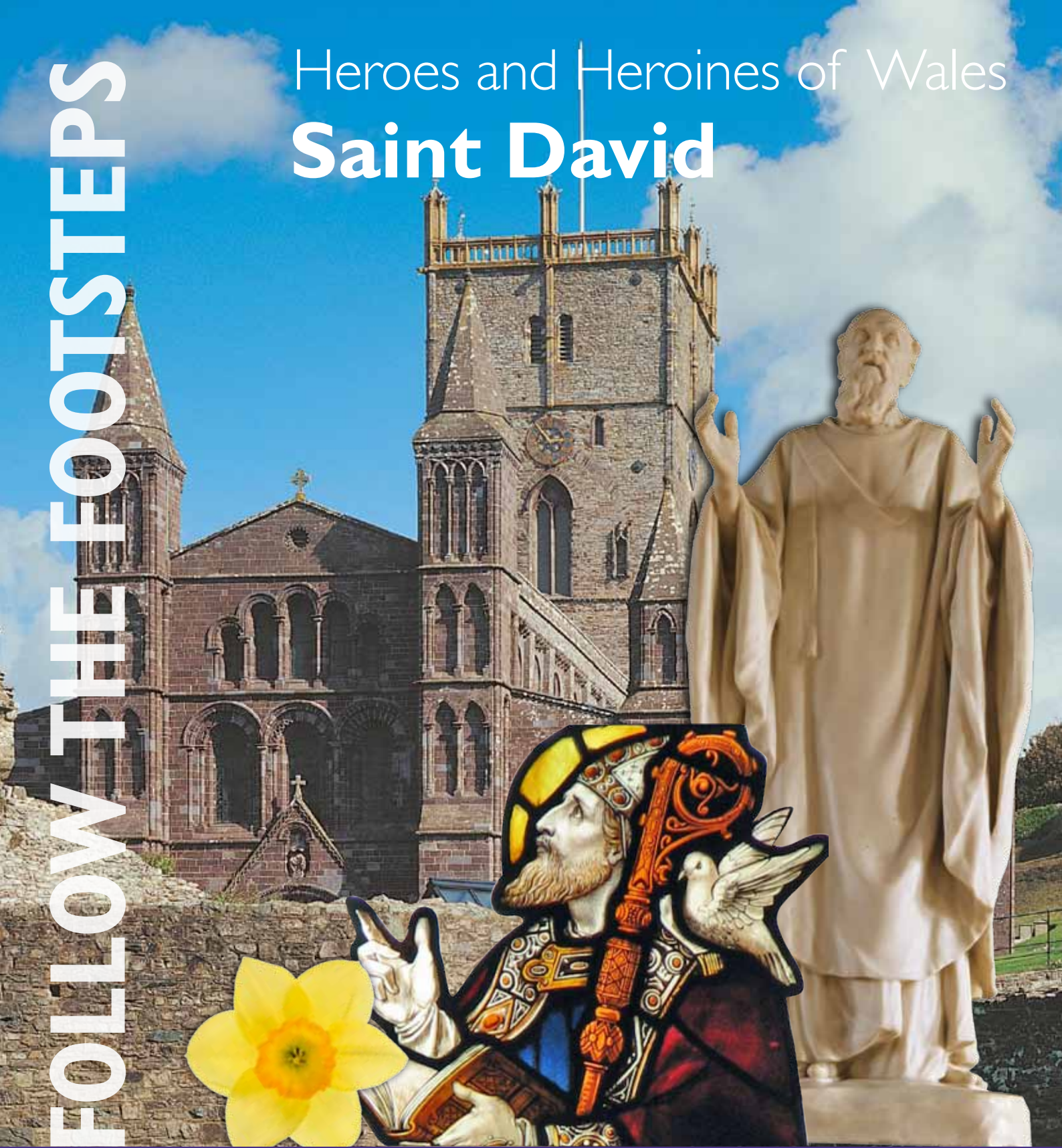


Heroes and Heroines of Wales

Saint David



 **Cadw**



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Our story is set in 6th century Wales. It was a time when Welsh kings ruled small kingdoms and their people made their living by farming. Most people in Wales were Christians, and monasteries were important centres of prayer and learning. The story of St David has been passed down over the centuries, so the line between historical fact, myth and legend is blurred...

Saint David

The patron saint of Wales



St David, the patron saint of Wales

St David was a monk who spread the message of Christianity, and encouraged his followers to care for the natural world. He is credited with many miracles, the most famous being when he raised a hill beneath his feet so that the crowds could hear him preach. By the 12th century, more than 60 churches in Wales had been dedicated to him.

St David became the patron saint of Wales. People celebrate St David's Day on 1 March with parades, concerts and other festivities, often wearing leeks and daffodils, the traditional symbols of Wales.



Daffodils and leeks are worn on 1 March to celebrate St David's Day

A saint is born

David is said to have been born around the year 520. His birth is said to have taken place on the cliffs in a wild thunderstorm, near the city that's now named after him. Some believe that David was the son of Sanctus, king of Ceredigion and a nun called Nonnita (Non).

A monk's life

As a young man, David became a monk. About the year 550, he founded a monastery close to the place where he was born. Here, he and his fellow monks lived a simple life, drinking only water and eating only bread and herbs. Meat and beer were forbidden.

David became known as Dewi Dyfrwr (David the Waterdrinker).

The monks farmed the land, but David insisted that they pull the plough and carry their tools without the help of animals. They spent the evenings in prayer, reading and writing, and weren't allowed any personal possessions.

Raising the dead and moving mountains

There are many stories of St David's miracles. They include bringing a dead boy back to life by splashing the child's face with tears, and restoring a blind man's sight.

David's best-known miracle took place in the village of Llanddewi Brefi. He was preaching to a large crowd, but some people had difficulty hearing him. Suddenly a white dove landed on David's shoulder, and as it did, the ground on which he stood rose up to form a hill, making it possible for everyone to see and hear him.



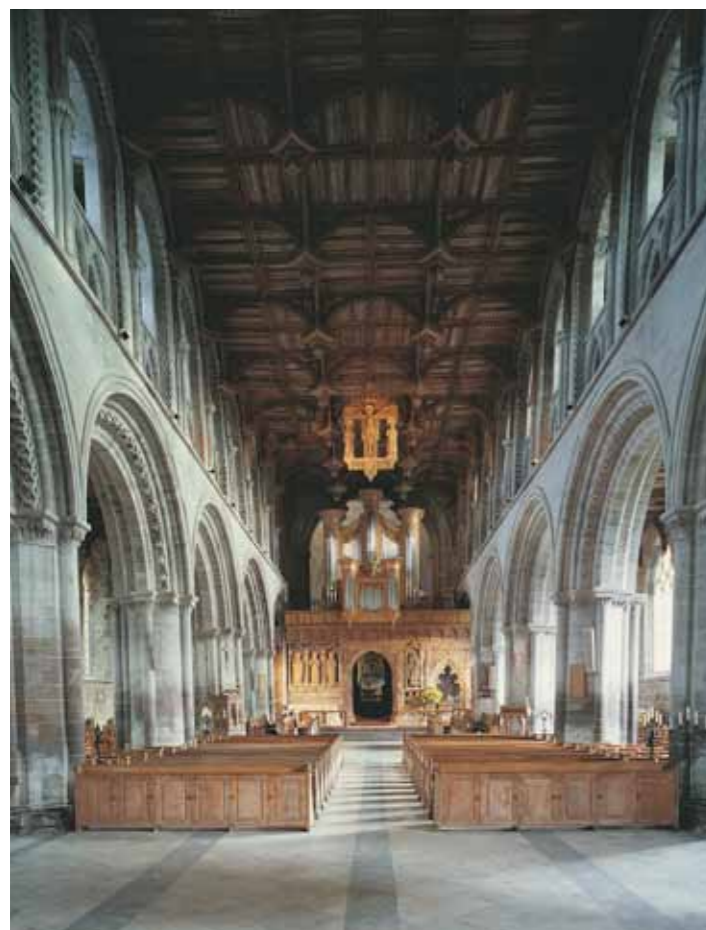
St Davids became a place of pilgrimage



St Davids Cathedral



New interpretation at St David's Bishop's Palace



The spectacular interior of St David's Cathedral

Today, a church stands on the top of this hill. The dove became St David's emblem, and often appears on his portraits and stained glass windows.

Reputation spreads far and wide

Churches and chapels dedicated to David are found not just in Wales but also in south-west England and Brittany. David's influence also spread to Ireland, where the Irish embraced his beliefs about caring for the natural world.

David's final words to his followers were 'do the little things, the small things you've seen me doing'. These words still inspire many people today.

Fame grows after his death

St David is believed to have died on 1 March 589. Five hundred years later, his first biography was written by Rhygyfarch of Llanbadarn. As his popularity grew, poems and songs were written about him. Pilgrims visited his monastery at St David's, and a shrine was built in his honour.

Follow the footsteps

Now you've read about St David, why not visit the holy places where his story is set?



A statue of St David at Cardiff City Hall

St David's Cathedral and Bishop's Palace

St David founded a monastery, probably close to where the cathedral now stands. The cathedral, built in his name, became one of the most important shrines in the medieval Christian world. In the 12th century, the pope declared that two pilgrimages to St David's were equivalent to one to Rome.

The Bishop's Palace as you see it today was built mainly in the 1300s. In contrast to the frugal life of St David and his monks, the bishops lived in the grand palace where they feasted and entertained nobles and kings.

- Visit the cathedral and the shrine of St David. Imagine the pilgrims who walked to this holy place from far, far away, seeking spiritual healing.
- Explore the ruins of the Bishop's Palace. Notice the lavish decorations and fancy stonework, showing how rich the bishops were.
- Try and catch an open-air theatre production here – when the romantic ruins are brought to life with drama and music.



St Non's Chapel, St David's

The chapel was said to lie on the spot where David was born, and was dedicated to his mother, Non. The ruins overlook the dramatic Pembrokeshire coastline.

- Imagine you've gone back 1,500 years ago to the time when David was born here in a raging thunderstorm.
- The holy well close to the chapel was said to have healing properties. Throw in a coin for good luck.



St Non's Chapel

Lamphey Bishop's Palace

Like St David's Bishop's Palace, this was built on a grand and lavish scale by the wealthy medieval church. It was a place where the bishops of St David's went to 'get away from it all', escaping the stresses of church and state life.

- Join a twilight tour of the ruins, looking for nocturnal wildlife. Experts will show you evidence – or maybe a sighting - of badgers, bats, otters and birds.



Llawhaden Castle

Llawhaden Castle

Llawhaden Castle was built by the bishops of St David's to show off their great power and wealth. The impressive ruins sit on a hilltop with spectacular views over the surrounding countryside.

Visit www.cadw.wales.gov.uk to explore the sites.