

## International Visitors at the Royal Welsh Show 2024: A Celebration of Global Agriculture and Culture

The Royal Welsh Show, held annually in Builth Wells, Wales, has long been a beacon for agricultural enthusiasts, professionals, and communities from around the world. This year's event was no exception, with a remarkable array of international visitors adding a rich tapestry of global perspectives and cultural exchange to the four-day agricultural extravaganza. This year, hundreds of visitors from 29 different countries signed in at the International Centre during show week, including visitors from The Philippines, Cuba, Brazil and The Bahamas, as well as many from New Zealand, Australia, Canada, the USA and a variety of European countries.

### Falkland Islands Delegation: A Symbol of Shared Heritage



Falkland Islands Government Presentation at the International Pavilion

Among the distinguished international visitors was a notable delegation from the Falkland Islands, underscoring the deep historical ties and shared heritage between the islands and Wales. The Falkland Islands, a remote British Overseas Territory in the South Atlantic, has a unique connection to Wales, with many residents tracing their ancestry back to Welsh settlers.

The Falkland Islanders' presence at the Royal Welsh Show was not just a symbolic gesture but a practical exchange of agricultural knowledge. The delegation, comprising farmers, agricultural experts, and community leaders, was keen to share insights into their unique farming practices shaped by the islands' challenging climate and terrain. At the same time, they eagerly absorbed the latest innovations and techniques showcased by their Welsh counterparts.

One of the highlights of their visit was a presentation on sustainable sheep farming, a significant industry in both regions. The exchange of ideas on breeding practices, animal welfare, and environmental sustainability provided valuable lessons for both the Falkland Islanders and Welsh farmers. During the presentation, a delegation of Girl Guides gave an extremely interesting insight into teenage life on the Falklands. The Guides, who had teamed up with Girlguides Cymru, had been volunteering at the show throughout the week, alongside their Welsh hosts.



Falkland Islands Girlguides with delegates from the Falkland Islands Government  
(photo courtesy of Lisa Edwards, Guirlguiding Cymru)

## **Gaiman's Billy Hughes: A Cultural Bridge Between Patagonia and Wales**

Another fascinating addition to this year's international contingent was Billy Hughes, a Welsh speaker from Gaiman, a small town in Argentina's Chubut Province, known for its vibrant Welsh community. Gaiman is one of the most important hubs of Y Wladfa, the Welsh settlement in Patagonia, established in the late 19th century by Welsh emigrants seeking a new life in South America.

Billy and his wife, Gladys, from Gaiman, who had travelled over 12,000 kilometers to attend both the Royal Welsh Show and the National Eisteddfod at Pontypridd, served as a living testament to the enduring bond between Wales and Patagonia. Fluent in both Welsh and Spanish, Billy told BBC Radio Cymru presenter, Terwyn Davies about his life in the Welsh colony, where the Welsh language and traditions have been preserved and continue to thrive during an interview for Radio Cymru's farming programme, 'Tro'i'r Tir'. Billy, who is a regular visitor to Wales, is a keen singer and has performed with Welsh singer Aled Wyn Davies on numerous occasions, told listeners about his life growing up on a sheep farm in the Gaiman and of the Merino sheep that they kept and how his brother now works the family farm. Billy works for a wool merchant, and explained how Merino sheep produce around 4kg of fleece per animal and that wool prices continue to thrive in Argentina at around \$5/kg, compared with under £1/kg in the UK. Billy and Gladys would be staying in Wales for the National Eisteddfod in Pontypridd and Billy explained how he was fortunate to be involved with all aspects of Welsh culture at home and sang each year during the Eisteddfod at Chubut.



Billy Hughes, from the Gaiman, Patagonia with BBC Radio Cymru's Terwyn Davies.

## **A Global Gathering of Agricultural Expertise and Culture**

A delegation from the Royal Ulster Agricultural Society spent the week at the show building on the already close relationship between the two Agricultural Societies. Members attended many of the award ceremonies and receptions held on the showground during the week and it gave both societies an opportunity to learn from each other. It also provided a chance for the members to catch up with friends from across the UK and beyond.

The Royal Welsh Show 2024 was a truly global event, attracting visitors from countries across the World, each contributing their unique perspectives and experiences. The International Pavilion was abuzz with activity, giving visitors an opportunity to meet fellow international visitors and gain different perspectives of agriculture across the globe. It even provided an interpretation service for an exhibitor and a visitor who, using one of the stewards at the pavilion's Portuguese language skills, brokered a deal to buy a Welsh Cob!

The show's organizers were keen to emphasize the importance of international collaboration in addressing the challenges facing the agricultural sector today. Whether it was through discussions on climate change, food security, or the adoption of new technologies, the Royal Welsh Show provided a vital platform for global dialogue.

The participation of international visitors, including the Falkland Islands delegation and Billy Hughes from Gaiman, highlighted the Royal Welsh Show's role as more than just an agricultural exhibition. It is a celebration of global connections, shared heritage, and the enduring power of culture to bring people together. As the show continues to grow in stature, its international dimension will undoubtedly play an increasingly important role in shaping the future of agriculture and rural communities around the world.