

Breathing Fire

At the end of our long journey from South Wales to Scranton, we were greeted by great hospitality considering how late we got in.

Saturday, our first day, we explored our new home for the week, we were shocked by the similarities to Wales with its rolling hills and lush greenery. We headed to Marywood University's metal and wood workshop, sussed out our list and met up with the St. David's society. Welcomed by a waving Welsh flag and two big smiles we ventured off to Lowe's. We gathered the lumber and fixings we needed for our project and headed back to MU.

In the following days we had help from volunteers of the conference, cutting, screwing and nailing. With it's large scaly head looming above the sculpture yard walls, the Dragon caught attention of many passers-by, conference attendees and MU campus security. It seemed like every local we met had a story to tell of their link to Scranton's Welsh ancestry, it was inspiring to hear the stories people had to tell and their intimate knowledge of the history of Scranton.

Thursday, we loaded the Dragon onto a trailer and drove to the furnaces, being chased by kids on bikes down Lackawanna Avenue, it looked like a parade day float. Sited in front of one of the arches to the historic furnaces, it conjured a very powerful image. In true welsh fashion it was due to rain heavily that night so we covered it up for the next day.

The Alfred University crew who had been cracking iron and sorting coke all day for us were ready and the furnace they had brought for us was getting up to temperature. The night's performances commenced with The Manhattan Iron Project

by Mike Dominick, Josh Knoblick and Rob Modafferi and Hungry Hungry Hippo's

by Kurt Breshears and crew, the rain didn't seem to put them off. With two furnaces roaring and our incredible crew from Alfred eager to pour, the rain finally died down and we pulled off the tarpaulins revealing the Dragon to the crowd. It was incredible to hear the excitement as we did. With conditions slightly wetter than what is favourable, the furnace was tapped, the ladle of golden yellow iron was passed up to us, stood 6ft above the ground, we poured the molten metal down the tongue of the dragon into a mould sat at the bottom. With the second tap we poured the metal down a channel into the eyes, giving the effect of the Dragon crying iron. With sparks flying from the iron hitting the wet floor, the dragon burst into flames. With the dragon burning in the background we cracked open the mould to reveal a glowing iron Scranton lightbulb with the phrase 'Does Unrhyw Gelfddydd Heb Ddân' which translates to 'There is no art without Fire'.

We are both incredibly grateful for all the help we've received; the North America Welsh Foundation and St. David's Society for their generous donations, the chairs of the ICCIA for their resourcefulness and always having time for us. We could not have done it without the Alfred crew and everyone else that helped with all the hard, gruelling work while we were running around finishing things off. If it wasn't for everyone that helped, it wouldn't have happened. We have returned to Wales having made great links within the Welsh

community internationally and met some amazing iron artists, seen some fantastic talks and learnt an enormous amount.

We hope to do much more in the future to spread the word of iron and carry on doing these amazing things with amazing people, maybe next time on our side of the Pacific.

Untill the next time, Hywl Fawr,

Ashleigh Harrold and Harrison Warren.