

ARTS AND EVENTS

Series returns home

Mara Purl comes to town this weekend to sign the second and third in her series of Milford-Haven novels, both of which feature cover art by Cambria artist Ron Covert. The Sunday event from 2-4 p.m. will feature Purl and Covert as well as free refreshments at the Pewter Plough Playhouse on Main and Sheffield streets.

As many local readers know, The Milford-Haven novels have strong ties to Cambria.

The novels have their roots in the Milford-Haven radio drama, an early version of which starred Cambria performers Jim Buckley, Elaine Traxel, Simon Wilder, and Freedom Barry, and her fictitious town itself always did sound familiar, a pristine tourist town in California; Central Coast, with a Main Street boasting Sally's Restaurant and Finder's Gallery.

Purl's connections to Cambria continue with her book covers. Both her most recent novels feature cover art by Covert. The late Cambria artist Warren Talcott painted the original poster art that became the cover of her first book.

"Warren's distinctive style of pen-and-ink drawing was perfect for Milford-Haven," said Purl, "and he set the style. When it was time to find a new artist, I knew it would have to be a Cambrian, someone who lives here and drinks in the natural beauty and distinctive indigenous style. Ron Covert is the ideal artist to work with. His style is complementary with what we'd already established for Milford-Haven, but at the same time it's vigorous and



Mara Purl, signing one of her Milford-Haven books, hopes to do the same in Cambria on Sunday at the Pewter Plough Playhouse.

fresh. Most importantly, Ron is a true professional, and he understands my art concepts immediately. As if by magic, what I explain then appears in a visual form. I feel his drawings for my book covers help clarify my story and entice the reader into the special world of Milford-Haven."

A professional version of the Milford-Haven radio drama went on to become famous in the United Kingdom as the first American radio serial ever broadcast there, enjoying a listenership of 4.5 million.

Now Purl's Milford-Haven novels are beginning to enjoy national notoriety and are becoming a popular selection for book clubs around the country. Locally, the Milford-Haven novels are available at The Cambria Book Company, 784-C Main St.

It was by doing research on Cambria's own history that Purl discovered "Cambria" is a Welsh name, and so she looked for another Welsh name for her own town. "I

first discovered the name in Shakespeare's 'Cymbeline,' explained the author, "where a character receives a letter saying 'Meet me in Cambria, in Milford Haven.' It turns out Milford Haven, Wales, is still thriving."

Purl's historical research has now turned up a network of maritime communities: Our local Cambria in fact does resemble Milford Haven, Wales, and for good reason. Whalers and ship builders from the Welsh haven sailed the world and founded several communities: Milford, Conn.; the Milford Sound in New Zealand; and Milford Haven, Va. When Purl first visited Milford Haven, Wales, she was made an honorary citizen of (the real) Milford Haven, an experience she said she'll never forget. Visiting there again last fall to introduce her novels, she again was given the royal treatment, and was welcomed by the mayor. Cambria's last mayor was a dog, who will likely wag his tale to welcome the writer.