

Cymdeithas Gymraeg



Victoria Welsh Society

Newsletter: 2007, January 2007

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Dates, Directions, Developments



***Blwythyn
Newydd Dda I Chi Gyd***
from the Trustees of the Victoria
Welsh Society to all the members.

*We hope that 2007 will be both
healthy and prosperous for you and
your family.*

Our Society's Christmas lunch was an acknowledged success.



Forty-five folk

gathered for drinks and conversation in the lounge of the University Club on December 16. They proceeded to enjoy a fine meal of roast lamb, whilst simultaneously grappling with a seasonal crossword puzzle. Sophisticated entertainment was provided by a trio of young players from the Music

Department of the University and, true to form, members could not resist bursting into song when some of the more familiar carols were played – lacking knowledge of the words didn't deter some of the more jovial participants from la-la-la-ing along. Robust entertainment followed when teams seated at the tables grappled with the challenge of decoding a quiz based on well-known Christmas songs. A visit by Santa (*aka Dr. Peter Murphy*) must be acknowledged as one of the highlights, judging by the number of ladies who willingly sat on his knee; he distributed generous prizes whether or not participants had been naughty or nice. Santa also encouraged the group to sing a selection of carols - this time very successfully, largely because he provided song sheets! The afternoon provided an admirable boost to the Christmas spirit.

*Thanks to all the organizers, and kudos to the generous **Peter Murphy** and the industrious **Jen Pearson**.*

Your Board is convinced that the University Club is the preferred location for holding our cornerstone special event of the year – the banquet honouring Dewi Sant. Consequently, the same facilities that were judged so successful last year have been booked once again. Mark this date on your calendar – **March 3rd, 2007** Registration forms will go out in early February.

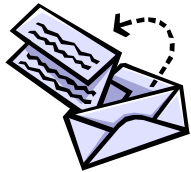


Membership fees cover January through to December, so as we gather speed in this New Year, you are urged to renew your membership in the Society. A form has been attached to this newsletter – please complete it and forward to our Treasurer as soon as you can.

At last! We take pleasure in advising everyone that our Society's new web site is fully functional. It provides some information about the history of the organization, the setting in Victoria, events – both regular and special, archived newsletters, and a selection of photographs taken over the year. To view the photos, simply click on the Photo Gallery “button”, then click on one of the 3 groups – multiple images will appear, then click on individual photos to enlarge them.

Members' reactions to the various sections of the site need to be heard. We want your advice and suggestions – what could be revised, what should be included, what you like, what you dislike. Please send your comments to the Editor, or to any member of the Board.

Letters to the Editor



A letter from the Chairman of the Bagillt Historical Club, Bagillt, Flintshire, North Wales, dated November 21, 2006:

Dear Richard,
Just a short note to say how well your new web site looks. I will pass on the information about it to members at our Christmas party meeting in early December when we will have Mr. Taffy Richards and his wife, from your society, as our guests. We will give them a real Welsh welcome and hope they will join in singing a few Christmas carols here in the hills of Wales. He will also be taken to see the Eisteddfod Chair in St. Mary's Church. The chair's homecoming is still been talked about in the village of

Bagillt. St. Mary's church was full on the day, with villagers coming from far and near to view the chair. There were also local councillors and members of Parliament - one even coming up from London to be there on the day. It made BBC TV news, BBC radio news, and all the local newspapers.

As in your website, we also have added the chair story and put in a link to your Society, And the very latest includes a link to Sian Owen's website This is the young 14 year old who played her new harp at the celebration; the video was taken by her father.

Again, I pass my sincere thanks to you and your members for becoming a part of our village history for years to come.

Colin Sheen,
BHC Chairman.

Editor's Note:

An e-mail was received from Society member **Lillian Fraser**, who explained that she had received a newspaper clipping from an old elementary school classmate, still living in Mold, about the presentation of the Bardic chair in St. Mary's Church. The clipping referred to hundreds of residents celebrating the return of the Bardic chair to Bagillt, after its disappearance more than 100 years ago. It was evidently a much-appreciated event.

Welsh Rare-bits

No one should be surprised at the considerable support given by Welsh Internet users to an on-line petition calling for St David's Day to be made a bank holiday. What is surprising however, is the limited support given by the English to a similar petition calling for St. George's Day to be made a national holiday



in England. The Welsh petition was launched by a fellow named Jones (of course) who claims that Wales has the least number of bank holidays in Europe. He believes that a Welsh national holiday on March 1st would allow “the celebration of culture, language and identity”. Obviously, thousands agree with him about enjoying such a holiday, if not for the same reasons!



What's in a name? Quite a lot if you were Phil Mosert. He was the person whose entry for the competition to name of the new visitor centre to be built on the summit of Snowden was selected from 400 suggestions. The winning name for the new \$20 million centre is *Hafod Eryri*. There is no effective one-word translation for *Hafod*, which is an old Welsh term for residence on high land, and *Eryri* translates as Snowdonia. The Centre will give visitors the opportunity to learn more about the highest mountain in Wales, its environment, weather information, and advice on routes. It will also be a nice place to have a cuppa tea – but you must wait until 2008.

Pontypridd is the unlikely setting for an experimental school class that encourages parents and grandparents to learn Welsh in the same class as their children. It seems that the kids enjoy bringing their family members into class so that they can all learn alongside one another. The teacher claims that both the children and parents develop their new language skills faster in such an environment. Classes run for two hours a week and are conducted staff from by the University of Glamorgan. The stress of learning is relieved by the language games that are played, and what is learned in the classroom can then be reinforced at home.

Did you hear the one about the car park attendant in Llanberis? ... Well, it's true!

Last the summer he gave a 50% discount to Welsh speakers. The attendant worked at the town's Royal Victoria Hotel and apparently charged English-speakers £4 to park their car. However, if you happened to have asked the price to park in Welsh it would have cost you only £2. Of course it's unfair, but as an incentive for tourists to learn a few words of the local language when they visit a nation with a distinct language of its own, it can't be beat. Can it? (Perhaps you should ask the member of our Society who has a notice outside his home that reads “*Parking for Welshmen only*”)



And as for the bilingual attendant – he's to be replaced by a machine.

Fans of Richard Burton finally have a place to visit in Pontrhydyfen - the village where he was born. A Welsh language memorial plaque was erected in November in the cemetery close to his parents' grave. Burton died 22 years ago and was buried near Geneva in Switzerland where he had a mountain retreat. Although he was a proud Welshman who never forgot his roots in the Afan Valley, until now there has never been anything erected that commemorates his birthplace. Part of the inscription on the plaque reads '*seren Cymru, seren y byd*' (star of Wales, star of the world).

Wish you were heir! Charles, Prince of Wales, has bought a holiday home at Llwynywormwood, close to Myddfai, near Llandovery * in Carmarthenshire. For a mere £1 million he and Camilla scooped a 192 acre rustic estate, with a ruined mansion, a 3-bedroomed coach house, and an organic farm. All this is only deserving of mention because the coach house will be made available as a holiday rental. Imagine using the same bed, kitchen and toilet facilities as Charles and Camilla!



(Editor: *Thanks to Joyce Jones for finding the two above items in the South Wales Evening Post newspaper*)

- Llandovery has a ruined castle with a monument commemorating Llewelyn ap Gryffydd Fychan od caen, who was publicly executed in 1401 for refusing to betray Owain Glyndwr.

News from the Okanagan

In the summer of 2006, Maggie Nixon, a valued, long-time member of our Society, left Victoria to re-establish herself in the Okanagan. At the urging of the Editor, Maggie has written what we hope will be the first of "*Nixon's News from the Interior*"

Hello All,
Well winter has hit here in Kelowna. According to my neighbours it is early, as the snow usually comes in the middle of December. This year it was in the middle of November. My cats are not too impressed with it and are in and out in a minute! All this snow means getting organized for winter i.e. going out and buying snow boots – which I did not have. The car needed to have snow tires, as ICBC only will cover cars with snow

tires, if they are in an accident. Because my car is a front wheel drive, two tires are not enough, and I had to get a set for the back wheels also! But I have noticed a difference. The car now feels more connected to the road than before. Kelowna, in my view, is not very good on road cleaning. One lane each way seems to be the norm, and this is only on the main routes - the side roads you just slide around on.

Still, I am enjoying living here; the complex that I am in is new, having only been built in the last two years. There is an age restriction, but it is 45 and up, so we have a nice range of people and ages. Lots of activities are happening within the complex. We have a club-house with a pool, so this means that I can walk to my aquafit exercises in the morning. Lots of people play cards here - I don't, so can't report on that. I have joined the Balmoral chorus, and we led the singing the other night when it was lighting up time for all the house decorations. There is a coffee morning each week and a video night once a month, plus other activities

People are very friendly, but at times I feel that I am back in Wales as people keep track of what is happening in your home, i.e. what trades people came by and what they did - so I feel quite secure here.

I wish all my friends in the Victoria Welsh Society Nadolig Llawen, a Blwyddyn Newydd Dda.

More in the New Year,

Maggie Nixon

VWS Chemainus Theatre Trip



On November 25th a party of fifteen, including one child, attended the theatrical company's production of "*Christmas in Wales*". This was a version

of Dylan Thomas's famous monologue which added song and dance without departing at all from the author's script, but included an excerpt from "*The Outing*" for good measure.

I think I speak for the entire group in saying that the performance was excellent, even if the Welsh accents did occasionally stray. The stage set was simple but effective and the dance scenes, which might offend purists, were a nice addition. There was a cast of ten, to speak the lines, dance, romp around and variously play the musical instruments, harp, violin, mandolin, flute and drum. Also Aunt Hannah sang.

A good time was had by all the Society's party, but the worst was to come – it was snowing hard when we left Chemainus!

Denis Brown

North America's Festival of Wales – 2006

In the October/November 2005 issue of the Society's newsletter, an article on the Festival of Wales, written by Les and Marion Richards, ended with the phrase "*Now, we are looking forward to attending the 2006 Festival in Cincinnati.*" The following is their report on that event:

Labour Day Weekend 2006 found us in Cincinnati. For the second time in fifteen years, we were there to celebrate the 75th Welsh Gymanfa Ganu, now part of the Festival of Wales.

We could not have asked for better arrangements from the flights, especially the non-stop from Seattle, to the hotel itself. We arrived Tuesday evening, Sept. 5th and made ourselves comfortable in the 1931 Art Deco

hotel. The lobby was on the second floor and was reached by an impressive marble staircase. We had an excellent room, which like all the others had been recently refurbished. All the events were held in the hotel.

Thursday night featured the folk concert with *Hogia'r Bonc*, a Welsh vocal group of a dozen men accompanied by guitar. They were very energetic and boisterous and were well received by the large audience. *Lyrice*, a local group of women also sang a number of Welsh songs.

Friday and Saturday were seminar days. They were all good but a highlight was Peter Read's performance of *Dylan Thomas in America*, based on Dylan's letters. It was superbly acted and left a lasting impression on us.

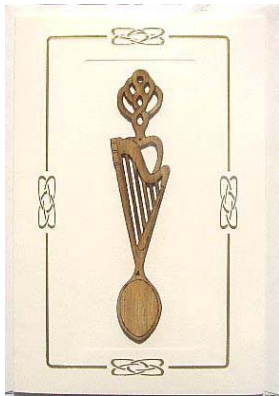
The banquet was on Friday evening and the Grand Concert on Saturday with Penrhyn Male Voice Choir. We found something lacking in the choir's performance due possibly to the furnishings in the concert hall. There was, however, nothing lacking in either event of the Gymanfa sessions on Sunday, ably conducted by Ray Morris of Ontario and accompanied by Ottawa organist Alan Thomas. Both were born and brought up in South Wales. All the old favourites were there as well as a few newer and less familiar ones. The Gymanfa closed with the usual "*God be with you*" and the passing of the Gymanfa symbols to next year's hosts in Alexandria, Virginia, a suburb of Washington, D.C.

Two non-festival features stand out. The first is the attractiveness of Cincinnati, which was not so apparent the first time we were there. The city has cleaned itself up - no litter, no panhandlers, etc. The second is *Churchill's*, a place that sells British china and other imports and has an attached

tearoom. Among the imports was real Devonshire cream sold in glass jars and made in Taunton, where we lived before coming to Canada. *Churchill's* sells light lunches and teas – no coffee! We were impressed.

Les and Marion Richards

Wood carvers are in the groove



From wooden clubs and spears, to dugout canoes, farm ploughs and simple 3-legged stools, the use of wood was extended to the unique folk art of carving Welsh Lovespoons.

You can explore this fascinating hobby by joining a group lead by our Society's Welsh-born **Dave Western**. Once again, he will be directing a carving course at the Interurban campus of Camosun College. He is an expert carver and a generously supportive teacher with a wealth of experience in his fingers – one couldn't hope for a more appropriate introduction to this gentle pastime. You might remember that in the September issue of our newsletter there was an enthusiastic review of a similar course held at Camosun College in the summer. It involved a small class of both men and women* of varying ages, only some of whom had any previous experience with carving. For those who regretted reading about this course after it ended, here's a second chance!

The official course description reads:
Carving Welsh Lovespoons.

Learn to woodcarve using a knife and one or two simple and inexpensive tools. This course will use the Welsh lovespoon as project for students to learn basic handcarving skills. Emphasis is on knifework and techniques that allow carvers to enjoy a fulfilling hobby which requires minimal space and equipment. An excellent introduction for both those wishing to try carving and those already familiar with knife carving who wish to master more difficult techniques. Tools will be supplied, but if you have your own knife or carving tools, you are encouraged to bring them.

Course #: 2007W TTAC 433V 001

Dates/Times: Feb. 8 - Mar. 15, Thursday evenings, 7-10 pm (6 sessions)

Course fee: \$265. Location: Camosun College, Interurban Campus, 4461 Interurban Road.

It's difficult to trace the history of carving lovespoons, because being made out of wood, and being considered a personal artifacts, few pre-date the eighteenth century. The oldest known example is in St. Fagan's Museum and is dated 1677. The romance that surrounds these spoons today has distorted the original intent of the offering of an ornately carved wooden spoon by a young lad to young lass. The gesture is most likely to have been an expression of interest by the carver and an acknowledgement of that interest by the recipient, rather than the equivalent of an engagement ring. But in the Wales of today, they are widely produced and considered appropriate gifts for all sorts of occasions.

David Western carves individual, unique spoons specifically designed to meet the requirements of people from around the world. He will share his expertise with those who register for his course..

* Check the class photo in the Special Events section of the Photo Gallery in the Society's newly designed website.

VICTORIA WELSH SOCIETY

2007 Membership Form

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Postal Code: _____

Tel. Phone #: _____

E-mail address: _____

Amount enclosed: \$16 (Single) _____ \$24(Family): _____

Make cheque out to "Victoria Welsh Society" and mail to

Jen Pearson, 4277 Houlihan Place, Victoria, V8N 3T2

1Summary of President's Report 2005/06.

This period was an interesting and rewarding one for the Society. Some loss of membership occurred through the death of Cliff Jones and by Maggie Nixon's move to Kelowna. A notable event was the installation of our first honorary life members - Margaret Brandon and Myfanwy Rutherford. The Xmas luncheon, held early December 2005 at the University Club was well attended. A good meal and impromptu entertainment was enjoyed. Our premier event, Dydd Gwyl Dewi Sant was again held at the University club. Some 70 attended for an excellent meal followed by musical entertainment provided by Lambrick Park School Concert Choir and Ms. Susan Smedley, a Victoria soprano. Following a request from the History Club of the village of Bagillt, Flintshire and an appeal from the vicar of St. Mary's church, the Board informed the membership of the Society that they felt that the 1889 Eisteddfod Chair properly belonged in the village of its origin and had agreed to its return. The chair was returned by air-freight in July and was formally installed in the parish church for permanent display and safekeeping, at a significant public ceremony in October. Again Myfanwy threw her house open for a BBQ in August but there was a clash of date with the Symphony Splash so the BBQ was not well attended. On September 1st. The Cwmbach Male Choir performed at the Alix Golden Hall before a large Audience. The Board was very gratified by the success, as they had put a lot into the preparation for the visit. The Society did not take up the invitation of the English Car Club to have a booth at their rally at Fort Rodd Hill on September 10th. The Board is not convinced of the usefulness of this as a means of advertising our existence and feel that much more is achieved through a visible association with a visiting Welsh choir.

This report ends by noting that the Society is declining in numbers and that we have not had a

good response to appeals for new Board members to come forward. Some of the Board have served for many years and are overdue for a rest. Thanks were expressed to Board members for their faithful service and in particular to Richard Adams for his inspired production of the Newsletter, and to the membership in general.

Denis Brown – President.