

Cymdeithas Gymraeg



Victoria Welsh Society

Newsletter: Hydref 2011 October

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Notice – 2012 memberships are due at the forthcoming A.G.M.

From the Editor

Unwaith eto – once again a new year for the Society is almost on us. It begins with the Annual General Meeting to be held, as usual this month. Last year the A.G.M. coincided with the visit of Bryntawe School and we had an evening of entertainment by a very talented group of youth.

This year something different – we shall have a speaker, an expert on genealogy, Melanie Arscott, who will give us some pointers to help you discover your ancestry, the good and the not so good apples, and, to round out the evening, our annual business meeting will follow.

It is to be hoped that we have a good turnout of members, who will regard the A.G.M. as more than necessary tedium. It is, of course, the opportunity to voice your approval, or disapproval, of the way in which the Society's affairs were conducted in the last year, to voice your ideas on what initiatives or new directions should be taken and even stand for office. On top of this, our Constitution demands that an A.G.M be held. All officers and trustees from last year must stand down and offer themselves for re-election. A new beginning will be at hand.

Society News

Several members were in the U.K. this past summer – some may even be there still. Your Editor was one who was there in late July and able to attend the National Eisteddfod that was held near Wrexham. With the usual tight schedule of people and places to visit he could only spare a day – you know how it is, “Be sure to come and see us next time.” So one day it was, but one that was well worth the encounter with the traffic on the road from Cheshire.

This was our first attendance at the National. (My wife is English and could hardly be expected to have been to one but I have no excuse.) My reaction as we entered the admissions tent was “impressed by the scale and professionalism of all we encountered.”

Inside the paid-up enclosure (easily 10 acres in extent) the atmosphere was one of carnival, flags flying, tented booths lining the

temporary roadway of crushed slate (a natural product in North Wales) and the immense Pavilion (white with a pink roof) where the finals to the competitions took place. Inside was deep stage and all the accoutrements-, technicians and equipment, necessary to hearing, seeing and recording the performers.

We took our seats in the big tent and for the next three hours were impressed by the level of performance that we heard. The boys' solo (ages 12 to 16) final was won by the youngest of the three finalists. (Another Aled Jones?) There followed competitions for mixed voices choirs, ages under 21 and under 25 (both won by the same under 21 choir), the final of the Harp solo (over 19 years) and, surprisingly Solo Disco Dancing (any age). After lunch in Y Pantri (a farm fare tent) we heard the preliminary competition in the Girls' Solo (ages 16 to 19). This was held in the Pagoda, a subsidiary tent. There were 14 entrants, all singing the same classical piece, a Schubert song I believe. The poise and stage presence of these young girls was astounding. I couldn't have decided on the top three but the adjudicator was confident in her choice.

Between competitions considerable time was taken by the adjudicator in critiquing the performances. Unfortunately my knowledge of Welsh was hopelessly inadequate for understanding the adjudication – all I could do was applaud the winners.

If I have another opportunity to attend the “National “I'll be sure to spend more time there.

Helen Steinle was also in Wales in the summer and had a “royal “time at the Royal Welsh Agricultural Show in Builth Wells, its permanent locale. This year the sponsoring county was Caernarvonshire and was special for Helen as her brother-in-law was the President of The Show. She was able to stay in the Presidential caravan (trailer) for the entire week and enjoyed the stay. On being asked by one of the stewards where she came from he expostulated “From *Qualicum Beach!* I was there two years ago. *Relatives live in Nanaimo!*”

An interesting event in the show was a fly-past of a WW2 Lancaster bomber, in honour of the late honorary treasurer of the Royal Welsh,

Richard Moseley, who had served in that capacity for 40 years. As an eighteen year old during the War, he had flown 32 missions in that most dangerous role, the rear gunner. (*The only other WW2 Lancaster still airworthy is based in Hamilton, Ontario*).

Two notables attending the Show were Max Boyce (Welsh comedian, who hails from Cwm-Nedd, (or *Glyn-Neath in English*) and the Duke of Kent. (*I don't think he comes from Kent! – Ed.*) The latter admitted to being surprised at so many different breeds of Welsh sheep.

As well as the Royal Welsh, Helen also had a day at the National, spending the day walking around 'y maes', (the grounds). There she met several members of '*Cantorion Colin Jones*', one of whom vowed a return of the choir to Victoria in two years time. She also attended the concert by the '*Three Welsh Tenors*', and described this as 'fantastic'.

Myfanwy Rutherford was forced to change the date of her Garden Party this year. This was because your Editor didn't get the date right. (*Serves him right that he had a wasted trip to 3038 Admirals' Road, on August 21, finding the doors locked and no one about*).

Sorry, Myfanwy.

The Board did not hold a meeting in July -- otherwise it's been business as usual with monthly meetings.

At the September meeting the question of membership fees came up. Should they be increased? They've been at the present level for some years! More of this discussion at the AGM.

A more serious question than money is the continuance of the Society! Shall we carry on? The President feels bound to ask this of the members at the AGM.

(*Should be a lively AGM*).—Ed.

Recently, with the expanded role of the Welsh Government, a body, known as the Welsh Centre for International Affairs has come into

being. As well as being a charity WCIA is also a National Forum for the exchange of ideas on international issues. This body is seeking information on Welsh organizations outside Wales and have invited our co-operation in answering a questionnaire. This is in electronic form only at present and an email address has been given for those who wish to comply with the request. There are 17 questions to be answered – all quite innocuous. The covering letter and questionnaire were forwarded, to members on the email list, recently.

Myfanwy Rutherford invites us all to an early Xmas Party at her home, 3038 Admirals' Rd. in December. We'll be given the time and date later.

News from Wales

The Welsh Assembly Government and the U.K. Parliament are co-operating in a measure to make St. David's Day a national holiday in Wales. It is suggested that this would be an alternative to the May-Day holiday and would put St. David on a par with St. Patrick and St. Andrew. (But would the remnant of the Communist Party in Merthyr Tydfil go along with losing May-Day?)-Ed.

Now that we have the Welsh Gov't in mind did you read or hear of the job opportunities for masseurs (male and female I should hope) that have sprung up? These are required to soothe and restore the overworked and generally badgered-about Civil Servants in the new regime. (*Jawch, my Uncle Tom slaved for years in the 18 inch seam of the Rock Colliery! Nobody was concerned for his aches and pains.-Ed.*)

Welsh Wine! – No not ridiculous, notwithstanding that old Monty Python joke about Welsh Claret. In the land of mists and rain along the River Wye the *Parva Farm Vineyard, in Tintern, received a silver award in the International wine Challenge recently*. If

you want to try it ask for "*Tintern Parva Bacchus 2009*." The vineyard has the oldest vines in Wales, planted in 1979. This award was the second time in less than a year that a major prize was won.

An Oaken Eisteddfod chair is being returned to the village of Penmachno, in Snowdonia, where it was won by Idris ap Harri in 1926. The chair was bought at auction, in Shrewsbury, for £620, by a local chapel. The poet, Idris ap Harri, was very successful in competition as he won 36 Eisteddfod chairs between 1921 and 1955.

Aberystwyth, Bangor, Cardiff and Glamorgan universities are set to raise tuition fees to £9000 per year, pending permission by the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales. ***Now get this!*** *These fees will be slapped on any student from the U.K. outside Wales. About 25,000 students are likely to be affected. How many of them will think that a Welsh degree will be worth the price?*

A new study by Dr. Carl Phelpstead of Cardiff University has revealed that J.R.R. Tolkien (author of "*Lord of the Rings*") had a deep knowledge of the Welsh language. He read a lot of medieval Welsh literature and taught the subject at Leeds University. An examination of unpublished manuscripts and the collection of Welsh books owned by Tolkien reveals evidence of his knowledge of medieval and modern Welsh.

Nine historic Welsh buildings have been named as "buildings at risk" by the conservation group "*Save Britain's Heritage*." Among them is ***Shotton Steelworks on Deeside in Flintshire***. It is claimed that it has the potential for re-use as homes, shops or conference facilities! *(I think it's a bit of a stretch to pass off a former strip mill as a desirable address. Heritage has its place and many*

worthwhile ancient buildings deserve preservation – but surely not a crumbling factory. – Ed.)

(The Editor is indebted to the North-American newspaper "Ninnau" for the previous five items.)

Welsh

Sports

As might be expected Swansea City F.C. are finding the Premier League to be a tough place to make a living. They had a torrid time when they visited Chelsea. However they secured a good win over Stoke City (no mean opponents), recently, so there's hope that they will stay in the top division and continue to play attractive soccer.

In early European Cup competition, Wales, under manager Gary Speed, had a very good 2-0 win against Switzerland recently. They now have two wins out of the last three games, an unexpected revival considering that they lost the first four games of Euro 2012.

All eyes and ears in Wales will be on the semi-final against France in World Cup Rugby in New Zealand on October 15. (Hold your breath and hope!) If the Welsh XV play as well as they did against South Africa, early in the competition, losing a very close game, and then beating the experienced Irish XV 22-10 in the quarter-final then maybe they'll prevail in the semi-final against France and then, just maybe?.

Stop Press

The sad news of Wales' loss in the semi-final came early on Saturday, October 15. Beaten 9 points to 8 in a match in which they dominated for much of the game, nevertheless the boys can hold their heads high. What was Alain Rolland, the referee (an Irishman in spite of his name), thinking of when he ordered Sam Warburton off on grounds of excessively rough play? Rugby is a rough game and a warning should have been enough!

Enough of that, there's another game to be played, against Australia, to decide the 'bronze'.

Now hope for justice!

And now to lift our spirits, a joke.

(Not a very good one, perhaps)

On being congratulated by the Vicar for the champagne provided at his daughter's wedding, Dafydd Jenkins, a Breconshire farmer agreed, with the caveat, "But the real pain comes with the bill."

We should be pleased at the news, from the May-June issue of "Ninnau", that Alan Upshall and his wife Gretta were to be presented with an Heritage Medallion, by the National Welsh-American Foundation, at the North-American Festival of Wales in Cleveland, in September 2011. The medallion is in recognition of an individual, or individuals, of Welsh ancestry for services to the Welsh-American community.

It should be recalled that Alan was instrumental in organising the first Eisteddfod at the 1994 National Gymanfa Ganu in Bellevue. Later, as President of the Welsh National Gymanfa Ganu Association he was instrumental in bringing about the modification of the annual event now known as the North-American Festival of Wales (NAFOW).

Alan visited us prior to the Gymanfa that was held in Richmond in 2003 and was Chairman of that Festival .

So we congratulate Alan and Gretta on their being recognised for their services.

Next year's NAFOW will be held in Scranton, Pennsylvania commencing September 2.

(More details will be forthcoming).

The winner of the Adult Recitation competition at the 2010 NAFOW Eisteddfod, Ian Samways from Pittsburgh, did well to come second in the *Solo Recitation for Learners* at this year's National Eisteddfod in Wrexham.

And now for something from the past

Easter sporting encounters in medieval Wales.

"Cnapan" is a Welsh medieval forerunner of modern rugby union that was played between neighbouring parishes and with few rules. One contest used to take place in the 16th. Century on Easter Monday at Portheinon (on the Gower coast) between the parishes of Meline and Eglwyswrw. An Elizabethan manuscript describes a typical Cnapan game:

' You shall see gamesters returne home from this playe with broaken heads ,black faces,

bruised bodies and lame legges ,yet laughing and meryly jesting at their harmes ,telling their adversaries how he brake his head, and how he repayed the same to him againe, and all this in good myrth without grudge or hatred. And if any be in arrears to the other, they score up til the next playe, and in the meantime will continue to be loving friends; whereas if the least of these blowes be offered out of this playe, it presentlie breedeth unquenchable quarrels.'

(If Alain Rolland had taken this message to heart he might not have sent off Sam Warburton.

We are indebted to The Countryman magazine for the above article – Ed.)

Now it's time to remind all that the AGM and a talk on Genealogy will be held on Wednesday, October 19 at 6:30p.m. ,in the James Bay New Horizons Hall, 234 Menzies Street – but get there early as space is limited and the public are also invited.

Also, if you feel inclined please bake some Welsh Cakes and bring them along.

Dewch i'r Cwrdd Cyffredin Blynyddol am Hydref 19, Amser 6:30 p.m.

A phobi rhai Teisen Cymraeg, os gwelech yn dda, a dwyn hwythau hefyd.

Dyna ef – Diwedd

That's it – the End