

This rather brief December Newsletter is being sent out early to make members aware in good time of the important events that are occurring in the early part of the month. We hope the enthusiasm generated by the very successful Welsh Weekend will encourage your participation on these occasions.

The picture on the front is of the Tal-y-Llyn Railway in Merionethshire. It was built in the mid 1860's at the same time as the village of Abergynolwyn, which housed the quarrymen, to carry slate from the Bryn Eglwys Quarry to Tywyn on the coast. It is now a popular tourist attraction.

D. Llewelyn Williams (Editor)

## **Forthcoming Events in December**

### **Bilingual Church Service & Te Bach:**

Please note that this will take place on the first Sunday of the month, Dec. 5<sup>th</sup> rather than the usual second Sunday. The service will start at 11 am and will consist of Lessons and Carols.

### **Annual General Meeting:**

The Annual General Meeting of the Society will be held on Wednesday, Dec. 8<sup>th</sup>, starting at 7.30 pm. Please plan to attend this important occasion. The Agenda will include the election of the Officers and Directors of the Society for 2005 as well as reports on the year's progress.

### **Christmas Dinner & Mulled Wine Evening, Saturday, December 11<sup>th</sup>.**

This year we have combined the two events to be able to accommodate both in the available dates. The Hall will open at **6 pm for cocktails** and other libations, **Turkey Dinner will be served at 7 pm** and we expect the **Mulled Wine to be available at 9 pm** so that everyone will be in good spirits for the readings and the carol singing. **Tickets for the Dinner are \$18 each.** So be sure you book early with Gaynor Evans (604-271-3134) so as not to miss this enjoyable evening.

**Nadolig LLawen a Blwyddyn Newydd Dda**

**Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year**

## **Canu Cynulleidfaol yng Nghymru** (Congregational Singing in Wales)

It was a warm spring evening and the chapel was full, every corner, over 1000 people from every corner of the valley and surrounding area. The gallery was divided into the altos, sopranos, tenors and basses. The non-singers like me were only allowed to sit in the lower levels of the chapel. We were called Y Gwrandawyr (The Listeners). In the pulpit stood the conductor in his shirt sleeves, dragging the singing out of the congregation. What an evening! This is how I remember a Gymanfa. Sadly this chapel is closed like many others, never again to hear the singing of Welsh Hymns.

R. D. Griffith in his definitive work traces church music in Wales from the time of Constantine. Until the 17<sup>th</sup> century the congregation took no part at all in the service, the singing was left to the choir. All kind of arguments were advanced against the participation of the congregation. Who had the right to sing the word of God? Was it proper to let an unprofessional sing to the glory of God? But in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century two important happenings in England had great influence on Wales – hymns of a high standard and tunes in a new form which was easier to sing than the Psalms which had to be chanted. Isaac Watts published hymns and Spiritual Songs and into this era we see the coming of William Williams Pantycelyn, Daniel Rowland, Hywel Harris, Morgan Jones, Edmund Williams and Ann Griffiths. Looking only at William Williams, he wrote over 900 hymns in about 27 different meters between 1744 and his death in 1791.

The first hymn book as such appeared in 1811. More hymn tunes were needed and we see at this time the establishment of Musical Societies. One such Society was started in 1819 in Bethesda by Robert Williams who held classes for people to learn music. They met at the Methodist Chapel on a Saturday afternoon and sang together in the evening. People came from all over Gwynedd to join the classes, such was their reputation. Upon his death, friends decided to call the Society ‘Cantorion Crefyddol (Religious Singers of) Bethesda’; the original rules and regulations are archived in Bangor University Library. One of the members was William Owen Prysgol who composed *Bryn Calfaria*. Many such societies developed across Wales and hymns played an important part of the service during the Revivals of 1854 and 1904. The separate denominations published their own hymnals until by today we have one for all denominations – Caneuon Ffydd (Songs of Faith).

R. D. Griffith writes at the end of his book “It was from the religious movement that the desire for learning the elements of music came. It was the early hymn tune books that led John Miles and Alawydd to write the Music Text Books. These were the pioneers that led the musical renaissance and golden era of congregational singing during the last half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.”

On a Friday afternoon in August 1945 at the National Eisteddfod in Rhos Elfed was led on the stage. The audience stood in total silence as it was announced that the war with Japan was over. No cheers, no shouting, only perfect peace. Elfed was led forward to pray and the Welsh joined together singing the hymn “Arglwydd Iesu, arwain f’enaid” (Lord Jesus, guide my soul). It has been said our religion, literature and feeling are tied together. No other way was appropriate than a hymn to end all hostile thoughts. Nowhere else could we see such passion to show the feelings of a nation.

Abstracted from Ann Roberts’ address at the November Church Service

## Items of interest

This past year Meiric Preece picked up his second top Canadian award. His first was the 1999 Canadian Award of Engineering Excellence for his Tsable River Bridge on Vancouver Island. Meiric is the great, great grandson of Sir William H. Preece, 'Father of Wireless' who made that list of 100 greatest Welsh people, even if he was fairly low. The Canadian Council of Professional Engineers awarded the Millennium Line SkyTrain Expansion Project its 2004 National Award for Engineering Achievement. Previously ProjectWorld Canada had recognized the Project's exceptional project management skill with its 2003 Project of the Year Award. RTP 2000, a company owned by the Province of B.C. was established in 1998 to extend Greater Vancouver's SkyTrain System. Key project management firms included ND Lea Consultants Ltd. Led by John Eastman P.Eng. and Meiric Preece P.Eng. They provided the overall project management and were also responsible for the construction management of the fixed facilities.

(submitted by Nerys Haqq)

From an e-mail received by Jeff Owen:

My brother and his wife learned a hard lesson this last week. Their house burned down with nothing left but ashes. Fortunately they had insurance so the home and its contents will be replaced, but they were upset when they found out the cause of the fire. The insurance investigator sifted through the ashes and traced the cause to the master bathroom. He asked my sister-in-law what she had plugged in in the bathroom; she listed the normal things....curling iron, blow dryer. He kept saying "No, this would be something that would disintegrate at high temperatures." Then she remembered she had a plug-in air freshener in the bathroom and the investigator had one of those "Aha" moments. He said he has seen more home fires started with plug-in air fresheners than anything else and when he looked in the wall plug the two prongs of the plug-in were still there. My sister-in-law had one of the plug-ins that had a small night light built in it. She had noticed that the light would dim and then go out but would be on again a few hours later. The investigator said the unit was getting too hot and would go out rather than just blow the light bulb. Once it cooled down, it would come back on. That is a warning. So I thought I should warn you all.

(Please note we know of no official safety concerns about these products, which, given the comments of the investigator, seems surprising. Still it's good to be careful! Editor)

## Welsh Union

The actor Ioan Gruffudd intends to marry his love in a Welsh Ceremony. The 30 year old star of film and television has told friends he intends to marry actress Alice Evans, and he intends to make his marriage vows in two languages. So the star of the television series, *Hornblower*, will say "Ydw" in addition to "I do". (Translated from Y Cymro)

He constantly stresses his patriotism and says that if he had children, he'd ensure they grew up bilingual. "Even if I was living in Hollywood, I'd want my children speaking Welsh. It's part of my heritage, and I'd never be willing to give that up." (Yr Enfys quote)

**From the Editor:** The December Newsletter was sent out in haste in order to meet the statutory requirement of 14 days notice for our Annual General Meeting. These two pages form an addendum to that Newsletter to properly recognize the important and highly successful events marking the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Hall. Eifion Williams' article on the Dinner is taken from the *Celtic Connection* and I am grateful for his input on several points with regard to the Welsh Weekend. I have tried to recognize the major participants and I apologize if I have inadvertently omitted anyone. D. Ll. W.

**Reminder:** The Dylan Thomas Circle presents Russell Roberts reading "A Child's Christmas in Wales" accompanied by pianist Brian Tate. Doors open at 7 for 7.30 on Friday, December 17<sup>th</sup> at the Hall. Carol Singing follows. All are welcome.

### **75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations of the Cambrian Hall**

The Hall was officially opened on September 1, 1929 by Marion Malkin, wife of then Vancouver Mayor William Harold Malkin. The donors were prominent Vancouver citizens whose names are recorded on the Foundation Stone. Today, the maintenance of the Hall is a constant challenge and the repair of the 'leaky' roof has been the focus of recent fundraising. The Vancouver Welsh Society celebrated the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary at an Anniversary Dinner on October 16<sup>th</sup> and with a Welsh Weekend November 5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup>.

### **The Anniversary Dinner**

A delicious buffet was followed by the cutting of a large birthday cake by three of the Society's long-time members, Nita Adams, May Lievesley and Phyllis Owens. The Master of Ceremonies was Vice President Barrie Hancock.

Nita and Phyllis, along with Milt Morgan and Eirlys Ann Thomas, recounted some of their memories of the Cambrian Hall and their personal recollections of various renovations and additions to the building and its furnishings. In his own inimitable fashion, Gareth Prytherch contributed a humorous anecdote from the past.

David Llewelyn Williams entertained the audience with a reading he had translated from *O Law i Law*, (From Hand to Hand), a story by famous Welsh novelist T. Rowland Hughes set in a

slate quarrying village in North Wales. David's grandfather was himself a slate quarryman and his appreciation of the humour and characters of the period depicted in the novel was evident in his reading.

The highlight of the evening was a musical performance by Bowen Island entertainer Ruta Yawnei. Ruta played on the Ukrainian and Celtic Harp and presented songs from many parts of the world, ending with the popular Welsh folk song *Suo Gan*.

After the banquet the members enjoyed socializing in the Red Dragon. The evening's success was largely due to the efforts of Society Treasurer Gaynor Evans, who planned and organized the event.

Eifion Williams

## The Welsh Weekend

The Weekend began on Friday evening with a Noson Lawen before a capacity audience in a club-like setting. Master of Ceremonies David Lintern's deadpan underplayed delivery kept us in good spirits between the acts with a steady stream of jokes, both ancient and modern. Vocal contributions from the Cambrian Circle Singers, Alan Tucker, Derek Mowatt, Nigel Tucker, and the Vancouver Orpheus Choir, were interspersed with poetry recitations by Gwyn Evans, David Llewelyn Williams, and Garath Hill. The skit performed by the 'Party of Eight' at the close put everyone in good humour as the company moved to the Red Dragon for sustenance, socializing and singing.

Open House at the Hall on Saturday featured a Ploughman's Lunch as people took in the displays. The main attraction was the O'Connor Irish Dancers under the direction of Jennifer Parkinson-Dow. David Holmes from Duncan gave a spirited reading of one of Dylan Thomas' humorous short stories, "A Visit to Grandpa's".

Saturday's highlight was a Grand Concert by the Vancouver Welsh Men's Choir staged in the impressive newly built St. Patrick's Catholic Church. Music Director Jonathan Quick, soloist George Roberts and accompanist David Buchan combined to produce a most enjoyable program much appreciated by the audience. Welsh classics such as *Men of Harlech*, *Gwahoddiad*, *Myfanwy* and my favourite solo *Dafydd y Garreg Wen* were included together with other pieces as diverse as *Sky Boat Song* and *Down by the Riverside*. After the concert, the choir and many of the audience moved to the Red Dragon for Welsh Cakes and liquid refreshments.

Sunday morning opened with our traditional monthly bilingual Sunday Service followed by a Te Bach. John D. Williams presided and Ann Roberts gave the address.

The Gymanfa Ganu in the afternoon was well attended and conductor Richard Williams managed to deftly inspire the singers with the able assistance of accompanist Ray Batten. Our soloist, Lois Carter, having won the 2003 North American Festival of Wales competition, represented North America at the National Eisteddfod of Wales in Newport. She included two of the Welsh songs from that competition in her performance. This was generally acknowledged to be the best Gymanfa we have experienced for some time. Jane Byrne thanked all the participants and particularly recognized those who had traveled from outside the Lower Mainland to support our events. Our Anniversary Celebrations closed with a further opportunity to socialize with refreshments in the Lower Hall

President Jane Byrne and her Planning Committee members, Heather Davies, Gaynor Evans, Barrie Hancock, Mary Lewis, Lynn Owens-Whalen, Neville and Kathy Thomas and Eifion Williams deserve our thanks for all their hard work in arranging a memorable event. The Committee ladies, ably assisted by Sybil Jamieson and Eirlys Ann Thomas, performed heroically in preparing the food for all the social occasions. Literally mountains of Welsh Cakes fed the multitudes! To all those who donated the raffle prizes (which raised \$500 for the roof) or who contributed in their various ways to making the Weekend a success, we offer our thanks. We look forward to the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary!

D. Ll. W.