

THE WELSH SOCIETY OF VANCOUVER

Rhagfyr i Ionawr
2005 2006

December to January
2005 2006

Gymdeithas Gymraeg Vancouver

Cambrian News

Society Newsletter - Pylchgrawn y Gymdeithas



The Cambrian Circle Singers

CAMBRIAN HALL, 215 East 17th Ave, Vancouver B.C. V5V 1A6

WELSH SOCIETY
VANCOUVER

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The Cambrian News

From The Editor:

This issue is sent out just after the AGM on December 14th and shows the new Executive. A report on the AGM and the year's activities, and also ones on the Christmas Dinner and the Children's Christmas Party (both very successful) will appear in the next issue so that this one can reach you by Christmas.

I am grateful to Belinda Llewellyn for her memories of her childhood in Wales at Cwrt Y Gaer Farm at Wolvesnewton, near Usk. In response to Tecwyn Roberts' suggestion that readers pass on travel information, Belinda has mentioned that her parents have created three self catering holiday flats from the byre and granary buildings on their farm. Look at their website www.cwrt-y-gaer.co.uk for details and pictures if you want to visit. I am also grateful to Milt Morgan for his beautiful little Trick or Treat story.

Gareth Prytherch sent me the following expressions for Merry Christmas in five Celtic languages:

Nadolig LLawen
Nadelek Lowen Cornish
Nedelek Laouen Breton
Nollaig Shona Irish Gaelic
Nollaig Chridheil Scots Gaelic

And the same a Blwyddyn Newydd Dda to you all!

David Llewelyn Williams

We have a winner!!

At the raffle draw at the AGM, the First Prize of an All-inclusive 2-day stay for two at Yellow Point Lodge goes to:

Mary Lewis

Congratulations to Mary!

Recent Events

The 'Celtic Christmas at the Cambrian' on the last day of November was closely followed two days later by the Society's Mulled Wine Evening. Jane Byrne, Heather Davies, Gaynor Evans, Sybil Jamieson and Mary Lewis worked hard decorating the Hall for both occasions. Elizabeth and Don Murray volunteered their services at the bar on the first occasion and Mary Lewis and Art Kelm on the second.

The impetus for the Celtic evening to benefit the Welsh Society Roof Fund came from Jennifer Parkinson- Dow and Neville Thomas and it was indeed a rousing evening before a capacity audience. M.C. Neville Thomas kept everything flowing smoothly. The Red Dragon created a cosy atmosphere, but the ideal viewing of several of the artist was inhibited by the comparatively cramped surroundings, which was a real shame given the wealth of talent they presented. But talented indeed they were and I could go on about the young Scots dancer, the amazing young fiddler and the young harpist – an enormous encouragement that the traditions are safe in the future. Representing the adults, the Celtic Ayre Vocal Ensemble even offered a verse of Suo Gan in Welsh. The O'Connor Irish Dancers were my personal favourites with their high stepping 'Riverdance' number and their clog dancing.

The second half of the program featured a special presentation of 'A Child's Christmas in Wales' in which readings by Russell and Colleen Roberts were interspersed with piano music composed by Brian Tate and carols sung by Colleen. It was a highly original interpretation, which was very well received by the audience. The evening concluded with traditional carols and mulled wine. Neville and Jennifer are to be congratulated on creating a great event.

The Society's **Mulled Wine Evening** on December 2nd was very well attended especially when considering the weather prognosis. The evening's program consisted of carol singing to the piano accompaniment of Lynn Owens-Whalen alternating with Christmas readings by Teresa Hancock, Jane Byrne and your editor. With some trepidation in view of Wednesday's dramatic performance, your editor read "A Child's Christmas in Wales" in three parts between the carols. Members exchanged Christmas wishes upon the serving of the Mulled Wine and the Mince Pies and a convivial atmosphere abounded. President Jane Byrne thanked all who had participated and especially those whose hard work had made the evening possible; Heather Davies, Gaynor Evans, Teresa Hancock, Sybil Jamieson and Lynne Shepard: Lynn Owens-Whalen for stepping in to play the piano; Mary and Art for tending the bar and your editor for reading. Jane herself certainly deserves our thanks for all the hard work she herself has put in. An evening full of good fellowship!

Forthcoming Events

Church Service Sun. Jan 8th 11.00am

Executive Meeting Wed. Jan 11th 7.30 pm

Vancouver Orpheus Male Choir Concert
Saturday January 14th at 7.30 pm
St. John's Strawberry Hill United Church,
7655 120 Street, Delta

Attention! A work party will convene in the Hall on **Saturday January 21st** to start to address some of the more urgent interior upgrades. Please participate!

VWMC Sun. January 22nd at 2.00 pm Benefit for
Lions Gate Hospital Foundation, Centennial
Theatre, 2300 Lonsdale, North Vancouver.

Annual Membership Renewals

Name:.....Phone No.....
Address:.....
City:.....Postal Code:
e-mail.....

It would be very helpful if you would indicate whether you wish to receive a copy of the Newsletter by mail or if you are content to view the Newsletter on the website (in glorious colour!). You will then be notified by e-mail when the latest edition appears on the site.

I wish to continue to receive the Newsletter by mail (YES or NO).....

Membership Dues for 2006: Regular: \$35
Family (Member, Spouse & Children to 18): \$60
Seniors/Students: \$20
Out of Town (50 miles or more): \$20

Note that there has been no increase once again in the membership dues, but any donations to our Roof Fund will be gratefully received. Cheques or Money Orders should be made payable to **“THE WELSH SOCIETY OF VANCOUVER”**.

Send your renewals to: **Heather Davies, Membership Secretary, Cambrian Hall,
215 East 17th Avenue, Vancouver B.C., V5V 1A6**

The Welsh Weekend November 4-6

The Welsh Weekend in November has become a tradition. Regrettably I did not attend all the events so I am grateful to Eifion Williams for his observations on the Gymanfa Ganu and to Heather Davies for her article in the Celtic Connection.

The Weekend began with an Open House on Friday evening in the Red Dragon and provided an opportunity to meet and sing along with Lucy Sorensen playing Welsh melodies on the piano. On Saturday morning the Dylan Thomas Circle held their Annual General Meeting followed by a Ploughman's Lunch. This was followed by readings of four of Dylan Thomas' stories by members of the group 'Mythpoetica' who brought the tales to life.

On Saturday evening at St. Patrick's Parish, the Benefit Concert for the Society by the Vancouver Orpheus Male Choir with their guests, the Cambrian Circle Singers, was full of good spirit and humour and thoroughly enjoyed by the audience. The Orpheus selections covered a wide spectrum; Welsh hymns, Russian and American folk songs, Canadian classics such as Rita MacNeil's *Working Man*, and even a Flanders and Swan song. In complementary contrast, the Cambrian Circle Singers presented a Welsh Medley of eight folk songs. On behalf of the Society, Lynn Owens-Whalen thanked the choirs for putting on

such a splendid event and for their continuing support for the Society. Following the concert the choirs were hosted to a reception at the Cambrian Hall, where socializing and music continued.

Sunday morning there was a good attendance at the Church Service which was introduced by Ann Roberts. She recounted her recent visit to Italy where she had viewed a war cemetery which focused her on remembrance, which was the theme of this service. The Sgwrs (Talk) on this occasion was given by Gareth Prytherch who, in his own inimitable way, recounted two of his experiences as a prisoner-of-war in Germany which had taught him never to categorize people. The first told of the kindness he had experienced from a German mother whose son was on the Eastern Front; the second of an interrogation by a Welshman who turned out to be an enemy agent while representing the International Red Cross. The soloist was Nerys Haqq and Margaret Airey was the accompanist. After the service, members enjoyed a light lunch which bridged the time before the afternoon's Gymanfa Ganu.

The Gymanfa was a great success. The Hall was full and John Pritchard did a great job of chairing the proceedings. Gareth Prytherch and Mary Lewis opened the Gymanfa with scripture readings in Welsh and English respectively. The conductor, Jonathan Quick, was able to draw out some very enthusiastic renderings of the familiar hymns and seemed to be enjoying himself doing it. Lois Carter's singing and cello playing was also very well received. Ray Batten provided expert accompaniment both for the communal singing and for Lois Carter's solos. All-in-all, a very successful Gymanfa! In the absence of the President, Barrie Hancock thanked all the participants for their efforts and especially singled out John Pritchard for his chairmanship and for the honour he had received from the National Eisteddfod over the summer. A large number of participants gathered for the te bach following the Gymanfa. To quote one of the faithful attendees who had driven in from Abbotsford for the whole day's events – "It was a cheap trip to Wales".

Certainly the Society owes a debt of thanks both to the Social Events Committee and to all the many people who contributed in their various ways to make this Weekend a success.

D. Ll. W.

Trick or Treat – A Question Asked

The porch lights were on, the dishes clean, when the door bell rang. I folded my apron, walked to the front door and there he was – Superman or was it Zorro without his sword? Three or four years old and then he spoke, "Do you have a Dragon?" The voice was soft and enquiring. I kneeled down and looked straight at the eyes behind the mask; I thought and replied "Yes, he's in the basement. He's quite small and fast asleep." Another question came, "Can I see him?" "No, we can't wake him, but if you come back next year you can meet him." That seemed to satisfy him.

He dipped his hand into the pumpkin, took out a chocolate and thanked me. "Take one for your Mum and Dad." The little hands managed to pick out four more because Gran'ma showed up. Smiles and thank you and they were gone.

The next day was Practice Night, my friend Eric picked me up and we compared Trick or Treat stories. Then I mentioned the dragon. "Oh," he said "when I was parked in your driveway my headlight shone on your dragon. It's the Society sticker on your bumper!"

T.M.

Huw the Explorer

The story of the forgotten Welshman who made an incredible voyage to the Arctic - and survived the sinking of his ship - is to be retold using archive footage. Huw Williams from Anglesey left home in 1912, a 24-year-old hungry for adventure, in the same year Captain Scott was headed for the South Pole. A year later Williams was aboard the *Karluk*, which set sail in June 1913 from Canada's Pacific coast on an expedition to explore the Arctic. Disaster struck as the ship became stuck in solid ice, which then proceeded to crack around the *Karluk* as the terrified crew listened in darkness for weeks. Eventually the ship was lost. But an epic tale of endurance, faith and heroism ensued as the ship's crew suffered the full horrors of an Arctic winter, stranded on pack ice a thousand miles from civilisation and safety. This little-known tale has now been brought back to life by production company *Cwmni Da*, using a combination of actors and real footage from contemporary cinematographers.

'You would not know of Huw Williams as a hero as such, and really he was in the wrong place at the wrong time and got swept up in a terrible series of events,' said presenter Iolo Williams. 'But he was part of this massive, massive adventure.' Like many on board, Williams had little experience on the sea and had been working on the family farm just months before the voyage began. 'His daughter told me that he threw his pitchfork to the floor and said, 'Dad, I am going to sea', said Glenys Lloyd, who wrote a Welsh-language novel about the journey called *Heldir y Diafol*. 'He went across the Menai Straits to Caernarfon and sailed away.'

This motley crew - led by noted explorer Vilhjalmur Stefansson - and the fact the ship was just an old fishing vessel, meant the trip seemed doomed from the start. After sailing through the Bering Straits, the ship became stuck fast in the pack ice on August 11, just short of her destination. Many of the men would not survive. As winter set in, the crew suffered several setbacks, including desertion and the loss of the ship, which foundered in the ice's vice-like grip. The remaining crew decided their best hope lay in making for a small deserted island, a hundred miles away across the ice. In conditions of -40 to -50C, they covered less than three miles in the first six days. After reaching the island, they were still far from safety. Iolo said, 'This is the story of one of the hardest journeys in the history of the Arctic.'

Williams was nicknamed 'clam' because of his quiet nature and his stoic qualities would stand him in good stead as weeks in the wilderness turned to months. He fell through the ice and struggled on with frostbitten toes, even enduring an amputation operation using tin-cutting shears. 'He was a strong man, both physically and spiritually, and I think that his background in Wales helped him through in the end,' said Glenys Lloyd. The programme features archive footage of the *Karluk* stuck in the ice and of the survivors' eventual rescue. There is also first-hand testimony of the unfolding tragedy in an interview with Scottish crew member, the late William McKinlay, filmed in the 1980s and never broadcast before.

Yn y Pacrew - Taith Olaf y Karluk (In the Pack-ice - The Final Voyage of the Karluk) will be broadcast on S4C. English subtitles available. (article from website ic Wales)

Royal Mail snubs Welsh National Anthem (from Western Mail, Dec. 3rd)

The Royal Mail will not commemorate the 150th anniversary of Wales's national anthem with special stamps. It said the schedule for 2006 was full and it was too late to produce stamps for Hen Wlad fy Nhadau. Both the Welsh Assembly Government and the opposition have written to the Royal Mail to ask for stamps. Plaid Cymru MP Adam Price put down a Commons motion asking for them. Hen Wlad fy Nhadau was composed by Evan James and his son James in Pontypridd in 1856 and it was first performed in Tabor Chapel, Maesteg, that year.

Plaid Assembly Shadow Culture Minister Owen John Thomas noted that the Royal Mail rushed out commemorative stamps when England won the Ashes and the 2003 Rugby World Cup. He said "It seems that when something is important to one part of the United Kingdom, but not to another, then that's OK. That seems to me to be grossly unfair – arrogant in fact."

In a letter to Mr. Thomas, the Royal Mail said stamps marking the Ashes, Royal Weddings and the Rugby World Cup "were the result of our policy to commemorate major events when they occur and so were additions to the stamp program".

NINNAU & Y DRYCH

NINNAU & Y DRYCH, The North American Welsh Newspaper®, is published monthly for the Welsh community in Canada and the United States. It merges the youthful vigor of NINNAU, founded thirty years ago in the border city of Detroit, with the long tradition of Y DRYCH, The Oldest Welsh Newspaper in the Americas, founded more than a century and a half ago. The papers are now united to serve their readers better. The united paper brings you all the news worth reading about the North American Welsh, plus feature articles and much useful advertising. It is mailed worldwide. To subscribe, send a check or money order for 33.00 Canadian dollars to: NINNAU PUBLICATIONS, 11 Post Terrace, Basking Ridge, NJ 07920, USA

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year - Nadolig Llawn a Blwyddyn Newydd Dda.

Christmas was a busy time on the farm. There were lots of calves to feed, lots of cows to milk, and lots of straw and hay to be spread. Unlike Dylan Thomas's memories of Christmas in Wales, we rarely had snow. What we did have was mud: *lots* of mud. We squelched through it in the farmyard, trudged through it in the fields and tried to scrape it off our boots at the back door. All the usual chores were that bit harder because of the weather, but that didn't detract from the excitement of the season. My sister and I had about three weeks off school and would spend our time feeding calves, spreading straw and helping with the Christmas baking.

There are many traditions associated with Christmas in England and Wales. The ones I remember most clearly involve music and food. Mince pies were made using Granny's 'good' pastry recipe – with real butter and icing sugar, and Mummy always made a wonderful, rich fruit cake – a family favourite – which was absolutely not to be touched until Christmas afternoon, after the Queen's speech. These tasks were often done while listening to Christmas tunes on the radio. Feasting didn't start until Christmas Eve, when we would be allowed to eat nuts and sweets while Daddy peeled the chestnuts for the stuffing and prepared the sprouts (not forgetting the little crosses in the bottom so they cooked properly). Some years we were still trimming the tree and icing the cake on Christmas Eve. After the Disney movie it was off to bed, hanging our stockings at the foot of our bed – a British tradition. In the morning, we would always find an orange, some nuts and a sugar mouse in our stockings, along with little toys and a comic book. These kept us going until it was time to get up for breakfast.

Turkey was a must for Christmas Day, following which it was a running battle to keep the cat out of the pantry, as she was particularly partial to poultry. The turkey was always nice and big, to allow for plenty of leftovers. We all loved the meals of turkey with mashed potato and chutney, and the sandwiches. We never ate turkey on Boxing Day though. That was the day we met with my Aunt, Uncle and cousins, and Daddy would make sure we had a really good piece of roast beef that day. This was followed by blackberry & apple pie, made from fruit picked in the autumn and kept for winter. There were usually leftovers from this meal too, so we didn't do a lot of cooking between Christmas and New Year.

Music and food combined at the Carol Service. This was the traditional service of the twelve lessons, interspersed with carols, which usually took place on the Sunday nearest Christmas, always in the evening. Reading a lesson at this service was my first experience of public speaking. Norman churches are not well heated, so we were always happy to get home to warm mince pies. In Wolvesnewton, where my parents now live, the parish has been adjourning to Cwrt-y-Gaer for sherry and mince pies after the Carol Service for longer than anyone can remember. When they first moved in, my parents were asked if they would be willing to continue this tradition, which they were very happy to do. Other people bring mince pies too, which are enjoyed with sherry, mulled wine or coffee. When I was younger,

this was the main Christmas service. Growing up in a small, rural community, there were not enough children to have a Sunday school, so there wasn't a pageant.

When my oldest son was a little boy we attended a vibrant Anglican church in Derbyshire which had a thriving Sunday school so there was a pageant, which was great fun. The other main family service at that church was on Christmas morning. The children were encouraged to bring one of their new (quiet) toys and the exchanging of the Peace was extra, extra long, to give the children time to show everyone their presents and the adults to exchange Christmas hugs and blessings.

As a child, I longed to go to the midnight service on Christmas Eve. I first got to go when I was fourteen. My younger sister was too tired, and Daddy had to be up even earlier than usual at Christmas, so that he and our herdsman could get everything done as early as possible, so as to enjoy as much of Christmas Day in leisure as they could. So just Mummy and I went. Over the years this has become one of my favourite services. There is something very special about celebrating the birth of Christ and then coming home in the quiet of the "dark, sacred night". And I think to myself; what a wonderful world.

Christmas hugs and blessings.
Belinda J. Llewellyn.