

## THE WELSH SOCIETY OF VANCOUVER

*Medi*  
2007

*September*  
2007

*Symdeithas Gymraeg Vancouver*

*Cambrian News*

*Society Newsletter - Cylchgrawn y Symdeithas*



*Menai Bridge*

CAMBRIAN HALL, 215 East 17<sup>th</sup> Ave, Vancouver B.C. V5V 1A6

**VANCOUVER WELSH SOCIETY**

**Officers:**

**President:**

**Jane Byrne (604) 732-5448**

**Vice-President:**

**Lynn Owens-Whalen 266-2545**

**Secretary:**

**Eifion Williams 469-4904**

**Treasurer:**

**Gaynor Evans 271-3134**

**Membership Secretary:**

**Heather Davies 734-5500**

**Immediate Past President:**

**Tecwyn Roberts 464-2760**

**Directors:**

**Selwyn Jones**

**Mary Lewis**

**John Morris**

**Alcwyn Rogers**

**Glyn Shepard**

**Contacts**

**Building Committee:**

**Cambrian Circle Singers:**

**Nerys Haqq 278-8978**

**Church Service:**

**Ann Roberts 987-6996**

**Rentals:**

**Abe Latif 434-3150**

**Social Events Committee:**

**Mary Lewis 331-1573**

**Welsh Folk Dancing:**

**Gaynor Evans 271-3134**

**Welsh-Speaking Group:**

**Ann Roberts 987-6996**

**Webmaster:**

**Alcwyn Rogers 742-1378**

**(www.welshsociety.com)**

**Newsletter Editor:**

**David Llewelyn Williams 737-0305**

**([williams@phas.ubc.ca](mailto:williams@phas.ubc.ca))**

*The Cambrian News*

From The Editor:

I am very much indebted to Neville Thomas for Bill Palmer's obituary and also for the pieces on Gren Thomas, Peter Roberts and the Griffiths family. Thanks also to Eifion Williams for his article on Welsh nicknames. I received several e-mails on the 'exploitation' of wind power so I chose one. The answer, my friend, is not blowing in the wind! The front photo of Menai Bridge was downloaded from Wikipedia and was taken by Mick Knapton in the early evening. An engineering conference in Bangor in July and ceremonies on August 9 centred around the bridge celebrated the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Thomas Telford's birth. He also built the Conwy suspension bridge and the Chirk and Pontcysyllte aqueducts.

*Uchelgaer uwch y weilgi – Gyr y byd  
Ei cherbydau drosti.*

*Chwithau oll llongau y lli*

*Ewch o dan ei chadwyni.*

Dewi Wyn o Eifion (1784-1841)

Finally do remember the following meeting dates for **September** and **October** at the **Cambrian Hall**:  
**Wed.Sept.5<sup>th</sup>** Executive Meeting 7.30pm  
**Sunday Sept.9<sup>th</sup>** Church Service at 11.00am followed by Te Bach.  
**Wed.Sept.12<sup>th</sup>** General Meeting 7.30pm  
**Wed.Oct.3<sup>rd</sup>** Executive Meeting 7.30pm  
**Sunday Oct.14<sup>th</sup>** Church Service at 11.00am followed by Te Bach.

David Llewelyn Williams

*Advanced Notices*

**Centenary Celebrations**

**Thursday Nov. 1st - Noson Lawen**

The November Centenary Weekend will start off on Thursday evening, November 1st, at the Cambrian Hall with a traditional Noson Lawen, an informal evening of entertainment where members and guests can show their personal talents and audience participation is welcome. Refreshments will be available in the Red Dragon Lounge for Welsh Society members and guests.

**Friday, Nov. 2nd - Grand Concert**

The Centenary Grand Concert celebrating the one hundred year history of the Welsh Society in Vancouver will feature two popular Vancouver male voice choirs:

The Vancouver Welsh Men's Choir and the Vancouver Orpheus Choir will both present individual programs and also sing together in a combined program that promises to raise the proverbial rafters.

The concert will also feature soloist Eifion Thomas, the conductor of the Llanelli Male Voice Choir, one of the most successful male voice choirs in Wales. He is an accomplished soloist and a former National Eisteddfod winner.

The concert will be held at the attractive, well-appointed Michael J. Fox Theatre in Burnaby. It was built in 1993 and is located at 7373 MacPherson Avenue on Burnaby's south slope. It is adjacent to Burnaby South Secondary School and has ample free parking.

**Sat., Nov. 3rd - Dylan Thomas Circle**

The Dylan Thomas Circle will present a variety of events from 10:30 am to 3:30 pm. There will be a film about Dylan, narrated by Richard Burton, and a performance of the poet's works by actor Russell Roberts. The program will also include excerpts from Dylan's works performed by Circle members. A delicious Ploughman's Lunch will be available to members and guests.

**Saturday, Nov. 3rd - Grand Banquet**

On Saturday night, the Grand Banquet will take place at the Cambrian Hall. Entertainment will be provided by Bronn and Katherine Journey from Seattle. Bronn and Katherine have recently entertained audiences throughout the USA with their musical versatility and their individual brand of humorous presentations. Bronn is a virtuoso on the harp while Katherine has a beautiful soprano voice.

**Sunday, Nov. 4th - Bilingual Service**

Welsh Society members, guests and visitors are invited in the morning to attend a special bilingual church service at 11am in the Cambrian Hall, followed by a traditional Welsh te bach (Welsh tea) in the Red Dragon.

**Sunday, Nov. 4th - Gymanfa Ganu**

The Gymanfa Ganu (hymn-singing festival), under the renowned baton of Eifion Thomas, will commence in the Cambrian Hall at 2pm.

The guest soloist will be mezzo-soprano Sandra Stringer, who is well known for her roles with the Vancouver Opera and her regular appearances in the Lower Mainland as a concert artist.

## A True Welshman Leaves Us



Bill Palmer passed away on May 27<sup>th</sup> in Vernon at the age of 64, after a brave struggle with cancer. Family, friends and many old colleagues from the banking world gathered on June 12<sup>th</sup> in the Red Dragon of the Cambrian Hall, home of the Vancouver Welsh Society, to remember with great fondness a truly remarkable man.

Born and educated in Swansea, Wales, Bill entered the banking world in London in 1960, emigrating with his family to Alberta in 1974 and finally moving to British Columbia in 1984. Predeceased in 2004 by Sue, his wife of 38 years, Bill leaves to mourn his son James, daughter Rachel, his two cherished grandsons Evan and Owen, and his wife Gayle, whom he married just one year ago.

In recent years, many members of the Dylan Thomas Circle and the Welsh Society had come to greatly enjoy Bill's company and involvement in both

organizations. Bill loved rugby and enjoyed the Welsh *gymanfa ganu*. He owned an enormous collection of Welsh music. Bill also had a great love of the outdoors and delighted in visiting and exploring Canada's remote areas, especially its magnificent mountains. He also had an exquisite taste for fine dining and had a reputation for the preparation of excellent meals and a first-class knowledge of fine wines. He was also a collector of art and antiques, possessing an impressive collection of silver spoons and art works.

Bill was truly a remarkable and talented individual. He derived great pleasure and enjoyment from a very active life. To the end, he retained an enormous affection for Wales, the land of his birth.

## Remembering Wales in West Vancouver

An interesting, amusing story lies behind the origin and name of the Red Lion Pub in Dunderave in West Vancouver. It is owned by Gren Thomas, a native of Wales and the operator of a major diamond mine in the Northwest Territories of Canada (his company discovered the first diamond up there )

Gren has always adhered a good old Welsh tradition with guests to his home. In late evening, he would take them out to a pleasant pub to further socialise and refresh themselves. But what if there was no such pub in West Vancouver? Well, I think you may guess Gren's solution to that problem. Gren named the delightful and most amiable new pub the Red Lion, after his favourite in his home town of Morrison, near Swansea in Wales. Its internal décor is most impressive. A ready, friendly welcome awaits you there.



It should be noted that Gren has been a generous benefactor to Welsh causes – the Festival of Wales in 2003 and also to the Dylan Thomas Circle. He has again agreed to provide a substantial sum to help defray the expenses associated with our upcoming Vancouver Welsh Society 100th Anniversary Celebration in November. Diolch yn fawr, fawr unwaith eto Gren.

**Local Welshman Grabs US Open Golf Trophy.** No, sadly it was not through his expertise on the golf course.



Peter Roberts, of North Vancouver and a native of Welshpool in Central Wales,

thoroughly enjoys his golf. In recent years he has managed to attend each of the US Open Golf Championships. Highlighting this year's visit for him was the opportunity to actually hold the US Open trophy at Oakmont in Pennsylvania – something, as he writes, that Tiger Woods failed to do!!

**Happy Welsh Returnees to Vancouver**

Greeting Welsh people to Canada is always enjoyable but it is particularly pleasant to receive them from the old Welsh settlement in Patagonia. Coming from that far southern corner of Argentina, they seem to carry with them evidence of the distinctive Welsh culture and experience that has survived there for over 140 years.



Almost a year ago, at last year's Gymanfa, we welcomed back to Vancouver from their life in Patagonia, Victor Griffiths and family. It is grand to report that the family is now doing very well here. Victor has just begun his new job as Plant Maintenance Coordinator for the Simon Fraser University Campus. Liliana works downtown for a large mining company. Their two children are enjoying an active life - Nicolas (11 yrs) plays junior rugby with Capilano but Iriel (9 yrs old and, yes, it is an old Welsh name) misses her Welsh classes in Gaiman.

### Welcome home to a Celtic instrument after 2,000 years

An Ancient Celtic musical instrument was returned to the druids of the National Eisteddfod of Wales for the first time in 2,000 years. The carnyx is a reconstructed Celtic war horn which belongs to the National Museum of Scotland and is based on the boar headed Deskford carnyx, found in North East Scotland. Found throughout the ancient Celtic world, this instrument was used to strike fear in the heart of the enemy. It was, in its day, the loudest sound in the world! This is its head reconstructed. The way it looks complete is shown carried by warriors on the Gundestrup Cauldron.



Detail: Gundestrup Cauldron

The instrument was played as part of the soundtrack to a number of animated films on the field of the National Eisteddfod.

The films are based on archaeology, landscape and the seminal works of Welsh medieval literature; The Mabinogion with a particular focus on Culhwch ac Olwen and Branwen. The carnyx was accompanied by a recording of an eclectic variety of ancient and

modern instruments - trombones, a conch shell, didgeridoo and Tibetan hand bells. Artist Sean Harris and musician John Kenny have spent two years now working with Amgueddfa Cymru-National Museum Wales, National Museums of Scotland, National Museum of Ireland and school children in the three countries, in creating this extraordinary artwork.

*Hela'r Twrch Trwyth* and *Dadeni* feature a variety of objects from the prehistoric collections of the three National Museums and the British Museum, animated using techniques pioneered by Harris in collaboration with curators. Spinning cauldrons, floating bowls, a three tailed horse and the tooth of a Great White Shark are just some of the objects inhabiting this dark world. Screenings of the films were held at Y Pair, outside Y Lle Celf on the Eisteddfod field at 3pm and 4pm, Saturday 11th August.

### Gorsedd y Beirdd (The Bardic Circle)

This year's inductees included the poet, Eurig Salisbury and also his sister, Leila Mair Salisbury in the category of Llenor (literary person). What a family! Another was 'one of the best pianists Wales has ever heard', **Llŷr Williams, from Pentrebychan, Wrecsam.**

According to the citation:

Un o'r perfformwyr offerynnol gorau a welodd Cymru erioed. Wedi gyrfa golegol ddisglair cafodd lwyddiannau cyson gydag ymateb anhygoel i'w berfformiad cyntaf yng Ngŵyl Caeredin, 2003. Cafodd gymeradwyaeth syfrdanol gan adolygwyr cerddorol penna'r byd gydag un beirniad o Wlad Belg yn dweud: "Nid curo dwylo wnaethom ni ond codi mewn rhyfeddod. Dyma Schubert fel nas clywyd ef erioed o'r blaen."

**Ohio Village flies Welsh flag** (Robin Turner, Western Mail August 10)

A VILLAGE in Ohio has adopted the Welsh flag as its official emblem to commemorate its rich historical links with this country. Rio Grande was founded in 1874 with a large proportion of its early community being Welsh. In fact, Gallia County, in southern Ohio – where Rio Grande stands – is known in the region as “little Cardiganshire” due to the influx of Welsh farmers, miners and tradesmen who started to begin new lives there from the 1800s onwards.

Earlier this summer, the village’s Beautification Committee decided it should at last have its own flag, after years of flying the American flag and various state and carnival banners from public buildings. Mayor Matt Easter suggested adopting the Welsh Dragon, particularly as one of Rio Grande’s most famous sons of Welsh ancestry, restaurant chain owner Bob Evans, died in June. The Bob Evans chain of diners, which began as a “12-stool truck stop diner” close to the family farm in Rio Grande, now has 500 eateries across the US and is a highly-respected brand. He came from a family of farmers from Llanon, near Aberystwyth.

The idea was taken up and the nearby Madog Centre for Welsh Studies at Rio Grande University agreed to help by sponsoring a number of the flags, which now fly from poles and public buildings in the village. Mark Abell, the university registrar and chairman of the Madog Centre Advisory Board, said, “It just reaffirms that what we are doing at the centre is making a difference to local communities. As the assistant director of the Madog Centre I know the flag will

assist us in our mission of fostering understanding and appreciation for Welsh heritage and culture. It will also increase tourist traffic, as people of Welsh descent travel to see places where Welsh settlers first gathered and made communities.”

The first Welsh people to settle in the counties of Gallia and neighbouring Jackson, arrived in 1818. But during the 1830s and 1840s a great wave of Welsh people, more than 3,000 immigrants, arrived from the parishes of Pennant, Tregaron, Llangeitho, Llangwryfon, Trefilan, and Llanddeiniol as well as from other parts of Wales.

The first Welsh settlers were led by John Jones of Tirbach, owner of the Ship Inn, Pennant, in the parish of Cilcennin. In Ohio, these families are referred to as the “1818 Welsh”, and they influenced other families from Wales to settle in Jackson and Gallia counties, both by writing home, and through the stories about the area carried home by other Welsh people who visited them.

A spokesman for the Wales- Ohio History Project said, “These first founders were not all temperate people, and some of them were heavy drinkers. In fact there was the odd black sheep among them who was fleeing from the law. They were not all successful in business. The Welsh established three iron furnaces in the county, called Jefferson, Cambria and Limestone. Jefferson was very successful, but the other two failed. In spite of this, a number of the Welsh established themselves as hard and industrious workers who were determined to succeed, however much work it took. Their chapels, schools and other institutions are an outstanding record of their vision.”

## WELSH NICKNAMES

Nicknames have always been popular in Wales because of the narrow band of common Welsh surnames, like Jones, Davies and Williams. Until a generation ago it was complicated even further by the popularity of traditional first names like David (Dai), Thomas (Twm), William (Billy), Margaret (Maggie), Mary ( May) and Elizabeth (Bess).

Growing up in the Swansea Valley, I knew many of my neighbours by their nicknames. Efforts are now being made to preserve these names for posterity. Last month my brother Huw sent me a list of the nicknames he and some friends had gathered from older residents of Ystradgynlais and Ystalyfera. I was amazed by their sheer number and by the ingenuity and humour attached to many of them.

The names fall into a few broad groups. One group consists of farmers, who were invariably known by the names of their farms. I remember, among many others, Jack Llwynbedw, Will Blaen Llwyn Teg, Esther Penrhewl, John Pentwyn, Jane Maesyfron, Jack Brynygroes, Will Blaen y Gors, Tommy'r Garth and Will Ty Hwnt.

The largest group of names are those associated with occupations. I remember Tommy 'Mechanic' Morgan, Dai 'China' Roberts, Rees y Rent, Phil Bach y Gof, Will Crydd, Twm 'Buff' Davies (a well-known local photographer), Jack y Dwr, Dai Barbwr, Stan Plast (a master plasterer), Gordon Grunt (a pig-breeder), Tom Siop, Dai 'Buns' Jones (a local baker), Megan y Post, Mrs. Walters y Golchi (took in washing), Will 'Pump Buwch' (had a

small farm), Idris Cig, Twm Bach y Bwtchwr (my grandfather), Will John Chips, Moc Ty Cwrdd (chapel caretaker) and Nancy'r Cop (not a policewoman but worked in the Co-op). And an undertaker in a nearby village, a relative of mine, was known irreverently behind his back as Ed the Dead.

Coal miners had their own special occupational names. Huw gleaned the following from the few remaining ex-miners still living in the area: Griffiths Cashier, Gwilym yr Ostler and Dai'r Ebol (both looked after pit ponies), Charlie 'Glo Man' and his son Johnny 'Glo Man' (sold 'small coal'), Twm Pipes (pipe-fitter, later owned a petrol station), Ianto Shot (handled explosives), Dai 'Substantial' (a prolific producer), Dai 'Double Width' (worked twice the required area underground), Benny 'Eighteen Months' Davies (took lots of time off), Dai 'Shadow' Walters (rarely seen mine manager), Dai 'Empties' Jones (gathered empty trams for filling).

Pub landlords and landladies were invariably named for their establishments. There was Will Dai New Inn, Sid Corner House, Albert Y Ship, Will Penbont, May Butch (proprietor of the Butcher's Arms), Gwen y Gwyn (much-loved landlady of the Gwyn Arms, Craig-y-Nos, popular with cavers and climbers), and Maggie Fach y Star, who despite being under five feet tall, imposed iron discipline on drinkers at the Star Inn.

Special nicknames were given to those people who came from 'away'. It didn't matter if one had lived in the area for fifty years, he or she was never allowed

to forget the awful truth of having been born elsewhere. So there was Dan Pontypridd, Will Rhymney, Dai Mwmbwls, Ifor Nant-y-Glo, Dai Kidwelly, Jack Sir Gar, Will Bala, John Bach o'r Wlad, Dai Cardi, and Will John Sais.

Even a temporary absence from the valley was never allowed to be forgotten. There was Jack California (had once emigrated and returned), Dai 'Burma' Owen (served in the army), Ianto 'Dub' Davies (mother from Dublin), Billy 'Klondike' Jones (participated in the 1898 gold rush) and Tom 'Hong Kong' Morgans. Then there was the lady who married a man from Mydrim, Carmarthenshire, who was known ever after as Sarah 'My Dream'.

Lest anyone suspect that Welsh society is not matriarchal, one need only look at how many men were identified through their mothers. In my day there were Dai 'Hannah', Jim 'Mary Ann', Twm Bach 'Nell', Will 'Mari' Evans, Dai 'Matilda' Davies, Dick 'Nelly', Dai Bach 'Sally', Johnny 'Martha', Dan 'Gwenni', Phil 'Esther' and Dai 'Rachel'. I don't recollect anyone named after their fathers but there were a few, like Mary 'Sam' and May 'Georgie', who were named for their husbands.

There were also, of course, nicknames based on an individual's physical attributes, quirkiness, habits, sayings, or other unique identifying characteristic. I can mention only a few here as the list seems endless. There was Will 'Hedfanws', (once fell off a foundry stack), Maggie Ann 'Full Pelt', (always rushing about), Dan 'Top Note' Davies (high-pitched voice), Glan 'Penguin' Griffiths (nothing to do with the

Antarctic - had white hair-pen gwyn), Will 'Doc' Morgan (not a physician but apparently knew everything), Mrs. Williams 'Pentecost' (a very devout lady), Dai 'Lastic' Jones (stretched his stories), George 'Chware Teg' Morgan (his favourite expression), Twm 'Tut Tut' Lewis (factory manager's favourite saying), Llew 'Bob Man' (drank everywhere) and Doris 'F' Williams, (known for her colourful language).

And who can forget Glanmor 'Purse' Evans, Harry 'Caws' Williams, Dan 'Bomber' Davies (had big ears), Georgie 'Giraffe' Griffiths (very tall local headmaster), John 'Long' Thomas (also tall), Bob 'Cadno' Williams (reputed to have once tamed a fox), Mocy Eidon, Twm 'Coch' Hopkins (a red-haired Welsh rugby international), Dai Davies y Bolshi (a political reference), Twm Rees y Celwydd, Billi 'Spaddwr', Dai 'Accordion', Moc 'Mouth Organ', Dai 'Shanti', Twm 'Wedai Ddim', Will 'donk', Billy 'Yeast', Dai 'Baw', John 'Pen Mochyn', Twm 'Crys Gwyn', Jane 'Don't Care', Dai Sam 'Bowler' and Will 'Bara Jam'

I knew many of the above. They were real people and I cherish their memories as a never-to-be-forgotten part of my Welsh upbringing.

Eifion Williams

[Editor's note: I still like the old one about the Evans brothers. One was a travel agent and the other an undertaker. So they were known as 'Evans there and back' and 'Evans one way'!]

## Tilting at Windmills

No-one who viewed the July 2nd television programme in the series, "Cefn Gwlad", presented by Dai Jones, Llanilar, can have failed to appreciate the scenic splendour of the Meirionydd hills of North Powys near the village of Llanerfyl. Here is a totally unspoilt, beautiful area of Wales. The views across Dyffryn Banwy, Cwm Nant yr Eira, Aran Fawddwy, Snowdonia and Llyn Efyrynwy [Lake Vyrnwy] were superb. Welsh landscapes at their best!! Therefore, what sort of people.... what sort of nation.....would be so stupid and so short-sighted as to wilfully destroy those wonderful landscapes and that irreplaceable beauty?

The answer is the Welsh people and their elected representatives in the Welsh Assembly Government [WAG]!!

This outstanding hill area, from Lake Vyrnwy in the north to Carno in the south is about to be totally desecrated as part of WAG's ill-conceived, criminal TAN 8 wind energy proposals!!

This huge region at the heart of Wales is known as Strategic Area B to the politicians. It is here that WAG seeks to install at least 200 MW of wind energy. That will be at least 100 monster turbines, driven in like giant nails, into the unprotected spine of Wales. In fact, if the recommendations of the infamous Garrad Hassan Report are adopted, there will be over double that in Area B. It suggests 430MW of wind energy and 215 gigantic turbines!! Incredible!!

Cefn Gwlad featured the nationally renowned folk singer, Sian James, who lives near Llanerfyl just to the east of Strategic Area B. In fact, looking at a map of Wales, the wind turbine zone, Area B, looks exactly like the fabled "Bigfoot", the American Yeti, and he is marching out of the hills towards

Llanerfyl and Welshpool. He will inevitably ruin the lives of those unsuspecting people living their quiet lives in North Powys. "Mwynder Maldwyn" will be thing of the past!! The scenic beauty of a vast area will be destroyed as the turbines will be clearly visible from a 30 mile radius. Such huge turbines will be plain as daylight from Snowdonia, so that wild beauty will be ruined too!! The tourism industry of much of Wales will be decimated!! The racket that will emanate from such a massive wind farm will permeate the homes of North Powys, day and night, for miles around. It will drive people to distraction!! These turbines will be far taller and have far thicker blades than anything currently in Wales.

Will the people of Powys gain anything? Of course not! They are being sacrificed by green-washed politicians in order to generate a trifling of "stop/go" electricity for the West Midlands of England, where the sporadic 50MW to 100MW will barely be noticed, compared to the area's huge consumption. What a farce!! Sian James was shown with her own recording studio at her peaceful home in the hills, where she records wonderfully quiet, atmospheric folk songs. They will soon be accompanied by thumping turbine sounds, far louder than the bass of any rock song! It will reverberate through the foundations of her home. Are the people of Powys going to be sacrificial lambs, or are they going to speak up and fight back to prevent this Armageddon that is about to be unleashed on their lives?

Safwn yn y bwlch,

Lyn Jenkins

<[clynrynys@btconnect.com](mailto:clynrynys@btconnect.com)>

Clyn-yr-ynys, Gwbert,  
Cardigan. SA43 1PR