THE WELSH SOCIETY OF VANCOUVER

Cymdeithas Gymraeg Vancouver

Cambrian News

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Society Newsletter - Cylchgrawn y Gymdeithas

August Society Garden Party

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

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The Cambrian News

From The Editor:

2014 has been a very sad time for our Society; no fewer than 8 members have passed away to date and one other faithful member has returned to Wales. I have included pieces by Eifion Williams on John Pritchard, Sam Haqq and Gareth Prytherch, but we will defer tributes to Don Murray, Larry Corbett and Lucy Sorensen in a later issue.

Members should be aware of at least, **two urgent commitments**; **first** please let Gaynor know if you are intending to grace the **Anniversary Dinner** with your presence**. Second**, you will notice that the society's tribute on October 18th to Dylan Thomas is **free** to paid up members. Guests and visitors signed in by members are $10 each – but no minors in view of our LCB license. **So make a commitment by Sept. 26th by reserving a ticket from Gillian Rogers at 604 742-1378 so that we know how many tickets we can assign to non-members.**

There is one society event, which has been overlooked for lack of space; the successful Spring Sale, which rests very much on the initiative of Carol Smythe. The Celtic Connection, thanks to Catholine Butler, carried a full page of text and photographs in its May edition. We also had a very enjoyable Garden Party at Lynn and Wilf Owens-Whalen on August 23rd. More photographs by Gwyn Evans of this event are appended. Thanks to Mairwen Thornley and Pat Morris for the Tramor and WWI photos. I am grateful to Eifion Williams for all his articles, which made this newsletter possible.

David Llewelyn Williams

Forthcoming Events

Sunday, September 14th at 11 am
Church Service followed by tê bach

Monday, September 15th at 10.30 am
Welsh Speaking – Siarad Cymraeg

Thursday, September 18th.
Welsh Lessons at 6.00 pm

Sunday, September 21st at 2 pm
Memorial Service for Gareth Prydderch. Tê bach to follow.

Monday, Sept. 22nd from 10am to 3pm. Work Party Day. A delicious lunch will be provided. See you there!

Friday, September 26th at 7.30 pm
Pub Night in the Red Dragon
Open from 7.30 to 11 pm.

Wednesday, October 1st at 7.30 pm
Executive Meeting

Thursday, October 2nd
Welsh Lessons at 6.00 pm

Saturday, October 4th at 7 pm
Anniversary Dinner
Please contact Gaynor Evans at 604 271-3134 or fgevans@telus.net to reserve tickets at $40 each.

Sunday, October 12th at 11 am
Church Service followed by tê bach

Wednesday, October 15th at 12.00 noon Cambrian Bookworms; *The signature of things* by Elizabeth Gilbert.

Thursday, October 16th.
Welsh Lessons at 6.00 pm

Saturday, October 18th at 7:45 pm in the Red Dragon. Doors open at 7 pm. Our Society will present "An Evening with Dylan" celebrating the 100th Anniversary of Dylan Thomas. We will present "Though I sang in my chains by the sea", devised by and starring Russell Roberts. Admission will be free for current Welsh Society members but please notify Gillian Rogers (604-742-1378) if you wish to attend so that we can reserve tickets for you. Remaining tickets will be available to guests at $10 each, but no minors can be admitted in view of the bar license.

Monday, October 20th at 10:30 am
Welsh Speaking – Siarad Cymraeg

Friday, October 24th at 7.30 pm
Pub Night in the Red Dragon
Open from 7.30 to 11 pm.

Monday, Oct. 27th from 10am to 3pm.
Work Party Day. A delicious lunch will be provided. See you there!

Vancouver celebrates Wales.

Saturday November 1st.
Social evening in the Red Dragon.
As this will be a post Halloween party, fancy dress will be encouraged. We will have a variety of wonderful performers and for sustenance, The Celtic Treasure Chest are going to supply delicious pies. We are delighted that Nerys Jones from Seattle will be joining us for the weekend.

Sunday November 2nd at 11 am
Church Service followed by Te Bach
Gymanfa Ganu at 2 pm
followed by Te Bach

The 2014 North American Festival of Wales in Minneapolis, August 28 – 31.

Last year a sizeable contingent from our society attended the Festival in Toronto, but only two attended in Minneapolis. The Hyatt Regency Hotel had been recently renovated and provided very good facilities for the many events.

The Opening Ceremony, after an Official Welcome by local committee organizers, Mary Morris Mergenthal and Kay Gavin, featured the Apollo Male Chorus and then we were entertained by an apocryphal humorous tale related to Llanfair PG presented by John Dingley.

The Opening Concert that evening featured Tramor, a trio of musicians led by John Good, a Welsh performer on a multitude of Celtic pipes: harpist John Pigott and guitarist Billy Parker, who also performed on the mandolin and the bouzouki. A very spirited and lively evening, punctuated by commentary and poetry by John Good. Everyone left in good humour.

Friday night, at the Grand Banquet, the NWAF 2013 Heritage Medal was awarded to Mary Morris Mergenthal for her distinguished service to the Welsh American community. Mary has directed cymanfaoedd canu across America including the 1994 Gymanfa Ganu in Bellvue, Washington. She has directed choirs, served on the Boards of both the Minnesota Welsh Association and the St. David's Society of Minnesota where she is its current President. She served as owner, Publisher and Editor of *Y Drych* for 12 years (since merged with *Ninnau)* taking the publication to its 150th anniversary celebration.

The evening's exceptional entertainment was provided by tenor Joshua Owen Mills, winner at the 2013 Denbigh National Eisteddfod of both the Blue Ribband Osborne Roberts Memorial Prize for singers under 25 and the W. Towyn Roberts Scholarship. This year he was named as the 2014 recipient of the Guildhall Wigmore Recital Prize and he is performing with the Glyndebourne Opera Company. His attendance was funded by a gift to the National Welsh American Foundation. Outstanding!

Saturday night, the Grand Concert featured Only Men Aloud under the musical direction of Tim Rhys-Evans, who also served as accompanist. The first half of the program featured traditional Welsh classic hymns and folk songs and such classics as *Nessun Dorma* and *Largo al Factorum*.
In contrast, the second half featured popular classics such as *Ticket to Ride, In the Mood,* and *Bridge over Troubled Waters*. Not only was the singing superb, but so was the dramatic choreography, leaving the audience wildly enthusiastic.

The events on Sunday were held at the magnificent Westminster Presbyterian Church across the street from the Hyatt Hotel. We shared the Morning Service with members of the local congregation and included in the service a powerful sermon by Rev. Dr. Neal Evan Lloyd, who had served on the Board of the then

Welsh National Gymanfa Ganu Assoc. in the 70's. The traditional Memorial Ceremony was conducted by Megan Williams, the Executive Secretary, who announced the names of members who had passed away since the last Festival. These included Theo Jones and Don Murray from our own society.

Both the afternoon and evening sessions of the 83rd National Gymanfa Ganu were also held in the Church. Meirwyn Ioan Walters, who had previously conducted at the National Gymanfa in Minneapolis in 1999 and in Buffalo in 2004, was an inspiring conductor who brought out the emotional significance of the wording of the hymns. He was accompanied on the organ by Steve Jensen, who had played at the National Gymanfa Ganu in 1978 in Minneapolis. They formed a most effective partnership.

We returned to hotel that evening on an emotional high to gather with our new and old acquaintances before our departure on Monday.

These were the main events for all to participate in, but there was an excellent program, offering more interesting seminars and films than I could attend. The evening traditionally offered informal singing but Tramor hosted an Open Mic on Friday night at which I participated, and a Pub Night in a local pub on Saturday for those with stamina! Many attended!

Tramor

The Eisteddfod competitions proceeded and the winners performed at the Eisteddfod Concert on Saturday. The winner of the Hymn Singing, Nancy Wright, performed at the Church Service. The David G Morris winner, Maggie Rees, performed at the afternoon Gymanfa as did Joshua Owen Mills. Elinor Bennett also played at the Church Service and at the evening Gymanfa.

The Tea Room and the Marketplace offered a relaxed meeting place and across the hall a large poster board contained memories of WWI, which included a submission by Eifion about his great uncle, Ben Williams.

Two readings of Under Milk Wood allowed me to hear most of one of them

The seminars by Elinor Bennett were the high point for me. The first I attended was called "In the words of Mered and Phyllis" and showed film clips from her

interview of these two icons of Welsh folk music, Meredydd Evans and Phyllis Kinney. Elinor has been involved with Canolfan Gerdd William Mathias and had arranged an event to honour Mered and Phyllis at Plas Glyn y Weddw in early 2013, so here at least was a chance for me to see and hear them. She accompanied her talk with selections of harp music appropriate to the interview.

Her second talk entitled "A Musical Journey through Life" based upon her translations of excerpts from her auto-biography, *Tannau Tynion*, which she wrote for her grandchildren ultimately. I found (perhaps I imagined) so many resonances with my mother's family in mid Wales. A courageous presentation, interspersed with melodious harp music selections. Memorable indeed.

I managed two other very interesting seminars, the first by Lord Dafydd Wigley of Caernarfon, former President of Plaid Cymru and Elinor's husband, on "If Scotland leaves the UK, what happens to Wales". A very detailed analysis, perhaps as much on the consequences for Westminster and the Labour Party as on Wales, but, clearly, consequently on Wales. A narrow win for the NO vote, as in Quebec, could nonetheless lead to beneficial change for both Scotland and Wales. But let me not oversimplify his understanding of the political complexity that could ensue.

The final seminar I attended was "Holy Wells of Wales" by photographer and writer, Phil Cope. It was supplemented by readings by poet Suzanne Iuppa. The National Library of Wales has purchased many of Phil's photographs for the Nation. A very interesting illustrated talk discussing the significance of springs from at least Roman times and the discovery of long lost sources. I bought two books, *Holy Wells of Wales* and *Borderlands*, full of unique photographs which I will be happy to share. There is even an ancient spring in Prestatyn!

My final regret was my inability to attend Cinema Wales. Gerry Baker Parry had assembled four films from Wales; I would have really liked to see *Mamwlad – Kate Roberts* to fit with Antone's Welsh lessons, but also *Murray the Hump* which documented the life of a Welsh Chicago Kingpin!

Overall, this was an uniquely enriching experience for me; the program committee are to be congratulated. But above it all, the fine hand of Executive Secretary, Megan Williams, efficiently and pleasantly ensured all was in order.

David Llewelyn Williams

WELSH SOCIETY MEMBER'S DOCUMENTARY SHOWN AT DOXA FILM FESTIVAL

Documentary filmmaker and active Welsh Society member Mathew Parry had a short documentary film officially selected for this year's prestigious DOXA Festival in Vancouver. The DOXA Documentary Film Festival is held annually and is sponsored by the Documentary Media Society, a non-profit organization. This year's Festival was held from May 2 to 11. In addition to screening selected documentaries the Festival also offers discussion forums and workshops for filmmakers. Mathew's film is entitled *Hives for Humanity: The Power of Bees.* It relates the story of Julia Common's decision to share her passion for bees with the rest of Vancouver. In the summer of 2012 Julia placed a hive in a community garden in Vancouver's Downtown East Side with the aim of bringing people together in a cooperative project. The film drew a positive response from the audience. Following the showing Mathew said: "DOXA is an amazing festival and I'm grateful to have been able to participate this year."

Mathew has worked in the world of film and television for many years. Born in Wales, he worked for a time with the Wales Screen Commission in the UK and later worked in Los Angeles for the UK Film Council, now the British Film Commission. Now settled in Vancouver, Mathew plans on getting several other creative projects off the ground. He has already completed a short film on Zachery Cameron Longboy, a native artist who continues to paint despite battling Parkinson's Disease.
Mathew is currently working on a documentary history of the Welsh Society, whose history since the end of the 19th century mirrors that of the city itself. He says the film will include a mixture of vignettes, animations and profiles of past and present Society members. The Society's role as it enters the 21st century will also be examined.

Eifion Williams

In Memory of John Pritchard

The Vancouver Welsh Society lost one of its most popular and esteemed members with the recent passing of John Pritchard at the age of 84. John was one of the Society's longest-serving members, having served over the years in many capacities, including several terms on the Society's Executive. John always endeavoured to make members and visitors feel at home in the Cambrian Hall and his loss will leave a void in many of the Society's activities.

John Owen Pritchard, sometimes known affectionately to his friends as John O.P, was born in Talysarn, near Penygroes, North Wales and attended college in Bangor. He came to Canada in 1957,

spending two years in Alberta before moving to Br. Columbia. Following further study at UBC, John became a teacher and school psychologist in the Vancouver School District. A few years after arriving in Vancouver, John met and married his wife Llinos and both became actively involved in our Welsh Society.
John personified the best attributes of his Welsh roots. He was passionate about the language and enjoyed chairing the monthly Welsh-speaking meetings. He also relished participating in traditional Welsh ceremonies such as the St. David's Day celebrations at the Hall. John had a presence and command of the Welsh language that for many members brought back fond memories of the Welsh homeland.
John also organized the monthly bilingual church meetings at the Hall, where over the years he encouraged many members to participate in the services. The June 8th service was dedicated to John's memory, with many of his long-term friends recalling their memories of John.

John and Llinos regularly maintained close ties with Wales and attended the Welsh National Eisteddfod as often as possible. John became active in *Undeb Cymru A'r Byd* (Wales and the World), the organization for Welsh exiles. In 2005 he represented the organization and gave the traditional speech on behalf of all Welsh exiles at the Snowdonia National Eisteddfod.

John Pritchard will be remembered fondly by all those who knew him as a gentle, affable friend with a quiet sense of humour. In accordance with John's wishes there was no funeral service.

Eifion Williams

In Memory of Sam Haqq

Sam Haqq passed away peacefully on May 16 at his Richmond home after a life of service to the community. Sam was well-known to Welsh Society members through his frequent attendance at events with his wife Nerys.

Samuel Aimul Haqq was born in 1927 to an Indian immigrant family in St. Thomas Village, Chaquana Township, Trinidad, where his father was a head teacher. Educated under the British school system, he wrote the 11-plus examination and won a scholarship to St. Mary's College in Port of Spain. Sam graduated from St. Mary's with a Cambridge School Certificate in 1945 and held several positions with the Trinidad Government before moving to Vancouver in 1953.

Sam enrolled in the Agriculture Department at UBC and earned a BSc in 1957 and an MSc in Agriculture in 1960. While living at UBC's Acadia Camp, Sam met his future wife, Nerys, who was attending the UBC Summer School of Opera. They were married in 1959.
In 1960-61 Sam enrolled in UBC's Faculty of Education and began teaching Science and Math at Steveston Senior Secondary School in Richmond. He later became an administrator at McNair Secondary, followed by stints at McRoberts Secondary and Hugh Boyd Secondary. His last teaching assignment

was at Cambie Junior Secondary from which he retired in 1992. He was also a Summer School principal for several years. During his teaching career Sam took two years off to work on a PhD in Agricultural Science.
Sam always had a passionate interest in tennis and until his eyesight failed he spent as much time as he could on the tennis court. For many years he was the Junior Director of Tennis with Tennis BC, accompanying BC teams to tournaments. He also spent over 30 years as Provincial Advisor of Tennis for the BC Summer Games. Together with Nerys, he ran the tennis program for the 1983 World Transplant Games at UBC. i

Sam and Nerys were faithful worshipers at the monthly bilingual church services at the Cambrian Hall, where Nerys is a regular soloist. Sam was for many years a member of the Welsh folk dancing group. He was active in St. Edward's Anglican Church in Richmond, where he served for a time as people's warden.
Sam is survived by his wife Nerys, their three sons, Stephen, Kenneth and Andrew, and their twelve grandchildren. A well-attended Celebration of Sam's Life was held on May 29 at Coyote Creek Eaglequest Golf Course in Surrey.

Eifion Williams

GARETH PRYTHERCH, VETERAN AND MAN OF MANY TALENTS

Long-time Vancouver Welsh Society member Gareth Prytherch, who passed away on June 2, was a talented individual who could be said to have lived many lives. He was one of a dwindling number of veterans of the Second World War, part of which he spent in a German prisoner-of-war camp.
Born in New Quay on Wales' Cardiganshire coast, Gareth grew up in the Vale of Neath mining village of Resolven, where his father owned a hardware store. His mother died when he was two years old and Gareth often recalled fondly how this void in his life was filled by the kindness of the community and his many friends. His father, a deacon in the village chapel, encouraged him to speak Welsh and attend chapel every Sunday. He always remembered the wonderful singing in the chapel and these two influences, the Welsh language and the love of singing, remained with him throughout his life.
After attending grammar school in Towyn, North Wales, Gareth enrolled in a technical school before volunteering for the Merchant Navy at the beginning of the War.
Unfortunately, the ship to which he was assigned was sunk during a Luftwaffe raid on Bristol. Gareth then became an air observer on anti-submarine patrols before joining Bomber Command's 149 Squadron. In 1943 he bailed out over Frankfurt and spent the next two years in POW Camp Stalag IVB before being liberated by Soviet troops in April, 1945.
Gareth always had a positive view of life. In talking about his wartime imprisonment he was more likely to comment on acts of kindness on the part of his captors than on any harsh treatment he received. He recalled, for example, the German mother who prepared a meal for him when he was

captured and brought it to his cell at considerable risk. It was also in the POW Camp that he came to appreciate the importance of communication and he always credited Stalag IVB with his decision to learn French and German. After the War, Gareth earned a Bachelor of Commerce degree from the University of Southampton, specializing in industry and trade in South America. At the same time he added to his collection of languages by learning Spanish. In the early 1950's he spent three years working for the Cocoa Marketing Board in Nigeria, following which he taught Economic History and French in Bath Technical College.

Responding to an advertisement in the *Times Educational Supplement* Gareth then took up a teaching post in Surrey, B.C., followed by many years teaching in the Vancouver school system. During this time he acquired Bachelor of Education and Master of Arts Degrees from UBC. In the 1970's Gareth spent three years teaching in a Department of National Defence school in Lahr, West Germany. While there he enjoyed singing beautiful German folk music as a member of the Concordia Male Voice Choir.

Gareth's life was not without tragedy. His wife Doreen died shortly after the family returned from Germany. Together, they had raised three children, Rhodri, Rhys and Sian. During his wife's terminal illness Gareth gave up teaching high school and served as a part-time lecturer in UBC's Faculty of Education, preparing teachers of French, German and Spanish. In 1990 Gareth met Gail Howitt, who became his devoted friend for the rest of his life. The two families welcomed the loving and respectful relationship that brought so much contentment to their parents.

Gareth joined the Vancouver Welsh Men's Choir shortly after its inception in 1980. In addition to singing, he also acted as the choir's translator and pronunciation coach and accompanied the Choir on several overseas tours. One of his fondest memories was chatting with Katherine Hepburn during the filming of the movie *Mrs. Delderfield Wants to Marry*. Gareth was one of eight choir members hired to sing a Gregorian chant during the filming. He is still remembered by choir members as the voice on the pronunciation tapes. In 2008 the VWMC gave him an honorary life membership in recognition of his long association with the choir.

Gareth was an active member of the Vancouver Welsh Society for over fifty years. He was a frequent speaker and raconteur in Society events and a regular participant in the monthly bilingual religious services and Welsh-speaking sessions. Described by one member as 'a Welshman to the core', Gareth also had a healthy appreciation for other languages and cultures. He was a member of *Alliance Francaise* and the Spanish Circle in Vancouver and encouraged the VWMC to develop an international repertoire in keeping with Canada's multicultural society.

Over the course of a long and fruitful life, Gareth Prytherch touched many lives in several parts of the world. He will be remembered in Vancouver with great fondness and respect by all those who benefited from his knowledge and wisdom in so many diverse activities.

A Memorial Service for Gareth will be held at 2pm on September 21 at the Cambrian Hall, 17th and Main.

Eifion Williams

Garden Party Photographs by Gwyn Evans

23/08/2014

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