

Knagf
199

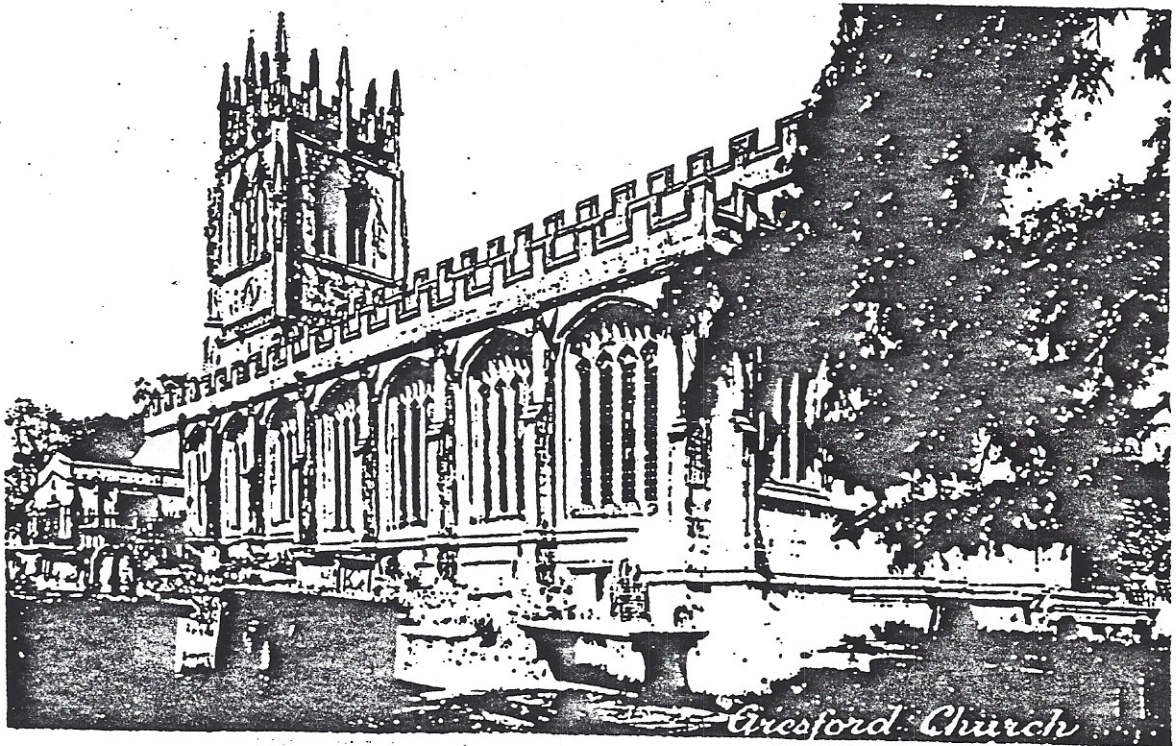


December to January
1997

Cymdeithas Gymraeg Vancouver

Cambrian News

Welsh Society Newsletter — Cylchgrawn Cymraeg



Gresford Church
Gresford Church from a postcard
courtesy of the Clwyd Family History Society, Ruthin

CAMBRIAN HALL, 215 East 17TH Ave, VANCOUVER B C V5V 1A6 Tel: (604) 876-2815

Nadolig Hlawn—Merry Christmas

Christmas and its attendant celebrations came to be the best-loved time of the year in Wales, and there are many traditions connected with it, some religious and some entirely secular. For example, this was the time of the year when a plough was brought into the house and placed under the dining table to mark the beginning of the Christmas season, when work was suspended on the farms.

In many parts of Wales up until quite recently, it was the custom to get up very early on Christmas morning to attend the Church service known as **Plygain** (Daybreak) held between 3 and 6 a.m. To pass the time during the long overnight wait on Christmas Eve, young people would make treacle toffee and decorate their houses with freshly gathered mistletoe and holly.

The mistletoe was considered both as a magical plant and a powerful protector of the home from evil. The holly, a symbol of eternal life, was also prominently displayed, along with the ivy, rosemary and bay leaves.

Dancing and singing to the harp under their festoons of greenery, many people spent an enjoyable Christmas Eve with their neighbours until the more serious time arrived to go to church.

The churches would be ablaze with light, provided by as many as several hundred special Plygain candles brought by the parishioners in recreation of the ancient festival of light. The Plygain itself was often a short form of morning service in which carols were sung by visiting soloists and groups of singers, but in some churches, as many as 15 carols were sung, and services may have lasted until 8 or 9 in the morning. The custom managed to survive in many country areas, and because of its simplicity and beauty, is being revived in many others.

Nos Galan (New Year's Eve)

The activities of the Christmas season came to a climax at the New Year. It has been suggested that the detaching of one's self from the events of the immediate past and at the beginning of a new future gave the celebration special significance.

One custom associated with the end of the Christmas season, formerly carried out in all parts of Wales but only surviving the vicissitudes of the centuries in a few villages in Glamorganshire, is that of the Mari Lwyd. This consists of a horse's skull with false ears and eyes attached, along with reins and bells, covered with a white sheet and decorated with colored strips of cloth or bright ribbons and carried around on a pole. The horse's jaw is operated to open and close usually by a young, agile man disguised under the sheet, who carries the Mari Lwyd from door to door accompanied by his

companions, Sergeant, Merryman, Punch and Judy, and various others, all dressed in motley and faces blackened. At the houses' doors, verses are recited by the team as they beg for admittance. Those inside the house must reply, also in verse, refusing entry until the visitors inevitably win the impromptu contest (they usually have prepared a whole list of "impromptu" verses well in advance !!). Once inside the house, the Mari chases the young ladies, one person plays the fiddle, Judy pretends to sweep the hearth, Punch engages in all kinds of mischief and so on until it is time for food and drink (the wassail) to be offered to end the nonsense. After feasting, the party goes on to the next house and the verse contest begins anew, continuing in this manner throughout the day. Good news concerning this ancient custom is that it is being revived in many areas where it had formerly died out, especially by students at the University of Wales, whose merry making in the streets of Aberystwyth is carried on entirely through the medium of the Welsh language.

The most popular New Year's custom was one that was carried out in all parts of Wales: the **Calennig** (small gift). Very early on the morning of January 1st, groups of young boys would visit all the houses in the village carrying an evergreen twig and a cup of cold water drawn from the local well. The boys would then use the twig to sprinkle the faces of everyone they met. In return, they would receive the Calennig, usually in the form of copper coins. Even the doorways of some houses (when the occupants were still asleep or away) were sprinkled, and all the while a short verse was sung or chanted that celebrated the letting in of the New Year. The custom continued from dawn until noon, (after which it was considered very unlucky indeed), and in certain areas the boys carried apples or oranges into which sprigs of holly or corn were inserted. These offerings later became very fancy, with raisins, hazel nuts, or colored ribbons all helping to decorate the fruit. The custom, in various forms survived in some areas well after World War II, at least the chanting of a small verse or two in exchange for small coins.

Nadolig Llawen a Blwyddyn Newydd Dda
I

Bob Aelod o'r Gymdeithas Gymraeg Vancouver

A Merry Christmas & Happy New Year
To

All Members of the Vancouver Welsh Society

A language that dared not speak its name

BY CARL HONORÉ

GAIMAN looks, at a glance, like any small town in Patagonia. The smell of grilled beef wafts along streets that vanish into the rugged *pampa*. Locals follow soap operas beamed from Buenos Aires, and cheer Argentine football teams from the edge of their seats. Spanish is the mother tongue.

Yet Gaiman has another face, too. Nestled in the Chubut Valley, this quiet, leafy town is the cradle of a curious renaissance: After decades of decline, the Welsh language is making a comeback. "It's a surprise to everyone," said a local schoolteacher.

In fact, a debt with history is being settled. In 1865, 150 Welsh settlers dropped anchor not far from here. Their dream was to build a "Little Wales beyond Wales," where each family could work its own land, and their language and stern Protestantism could thrive unmolested. Their resilience is the stuff of legend. Undaunted by the howling winds and unfriendly terrain, they prospered, and were joined by brethren from Wales and North America. Some pushed as far west as the Andes.

But "Little Wales" faltered. Welsh migration had dried up by the First World War, and Argentine newcomers flooded in. Though the language kept a toe-hold in the chapels and in some families, intermarriage sped the takeover by Spanish. Welsh was derided as un-Argentine. "The taboo was so strong that I never knew that my grand-

mother could speak it," said Gabriel Restu-cha, the 29-year-old schoolteacher. In Patagonia, descendants of the Welsh settlers number 20,000, but only a few hundred, mostly old people, can speak the language of their forebears.

The revival began in the 1980s. Tourists started coming from Wales, where Welsh was enjoying a powerful resurgence. Their enthusiasm for the ancient language — and the pop songs and television series written in it — gave Patagonians pause. Since 1990, a program that gets its funds by way of donations from both sides of the Atlantic has sent teachers, choirs and students between Wales and Patagonia.

In Gaiman, the language that dared not speak its name is now as trendy as MTV and in-line skates. Welsh and Spanish intermingle, at the gas station, in shops and bars. "Three years ago, people still laughed at you for speaking Welsh," said 28-year-old Hector MacDonald, whose grandmother, Sarah, was among the few to keep up the language at home. "Now they ask what the words mean so they can say them back next time."

Nowhere is that spirit more apparent than in the classroom. Two teachers from Wales give language lessons in towns up and down the valley. At a new nursery in

LETTER FROM PATAGONIA / The dream of a Little Wales beyond Wales' never came true, but the language is being revived.

Gaiman, toddlers sing and listen to stories in Welsh. Last year, for the first time in more than a century, a Welsh course was included in the curriculum of a local school; more than half the eligible pupils signed up. "It's fun being able to understand what the old folk are saying," said Rosmeri Day, 17, whose mother attends evening classes.

People find they can speak Welsh with acquaintances they had assumed knew only Spanish. Even Patagonians with no Welsh blood are slaving over Welsh grammar and pronunciation in classrooms and choirs.

Some are annoyed by the Welsh boom, while others worry that it might fizzle out. But the commercial spinoffs are an encouragement to all. Tourists flock to the region in search of Welshness. They fill the gift shops and museums. In tea houses festooned with doilies and pictures of Harlech and Cader Idris, they wash down cakes and scones with steaming cups of tea.

To many old-timers, though, tourism plays second fiddle to the sight of grandchildren learning the old Celtic language. Said 84-year-old Sarah MacDonald: "Maybe now we can rescue Welsh from the grave."

Carl Honoré is a Canadian living in Britain.

INGREDIENTS :

- 4 ozs Butter
- 4 ozs Sugar
- 4 ozs S.R. Flour
- 2 ozs Dried Fruit
- 2 Standard Eggs
- 1 Lemon
- Assorted Nuts
- Pinch of Salt
- 1 Bottle of Whisky



Captain Juan's Favourite Drink!

METHOD :

Sample the whisky to check for quality.

Take a large bowl. Check the whisky again, to be sure it is the highest quality, pour one level cup and drink. Turn on the electric mixer, beat one cup of butter in a large fluffy bowl. Add one teaspoon of sugar and beat again.

Make sure the whisky is still O.K. Cry another tup. Turn off the mixer, breaks two leggs and add to the bowl and chuck in the dried fruit. Mix on the turner. If the fried fruit gets stuck in the beaterers, pry it loose with a drewsciver.

Sample the whisky to check for tonsisticity. Next, sift two cups of salt, or something, who cares? Check the whisky. Now sift the lemon juice and strain your nuts. Add one table. Spon. Of sugar or domething. Whatever you can find.

Grease the oven. Turn the cake tin to 350 degrees, don't forget to beat of the turner. Throw the bowl out of the window, check the whisky again and go to bed.

'Traachers' - Everyone's Favourite Ingredient !!

A man' car collided with a truck carrying a horse. A few months later, he tried to collect damages for his injuries. "How can you now claim to have all these injuries?" asked the insurance company's lawyer. "According to the police report, at the time you said you weren't hurt."

"Look," the man replied, " I was lying on the road in a lot of pain, and I heard someone say the horse had a broken leg. The next thing I know this police officer pulls out his gun and shoots the horse. Then he turns to me and asks, 'Are you okay?' "

For the child still in us : What did Mrs. Claus say to Santa as he made for Vancouver? " I hope it doesn't rein, deer"

Mrs Nancy Abraham

It is with regret that we learnt of the passing of Mrs. Nancy Abraham on November 8 last.

She was born on the Prairies in 1924, and became very active in our Society after moving here. Nancy served as Secretary, Newsletter Editor and Membership Secretary for the Vancouver Welsh Society, as well as being a faithful member of the W.A. Wherever she and her late husband Glyn lived in Canada, they always became members of the Welsh Society of that particular area.

She married her husband Glyn, who was in the RCMP, in the N.W. Territories under very unusual circumstances; it was 4 o'clock in the morning under the Northern Lights! It so that happened that a preacher was passing through the area and another one was not due to arrive for six months.

Nancy's favourite hymn was "All Things Bright and Beautiful" which was so appropriate because she thought everyone was beautiful and special; and knowing them made life even brighter for her. Nancy's husband Glyn hailed from New Tredegar in S. Wales and predeceased her over ten years ago.

We extend our deepest sympathy to her family.

Gaynor Owen

Events of Interest

Cambrian Circle Singers

Dec. 17. New Westminster
Buchanan Sunset Lodge

Dec. 18 Vancouver
7:30 pm VanDusen
Oak St @ 33 Gardens

Orpheus Male Voice Choir

Dec. 13, Lynden, Wash. USA
8 pm plus Barbershop quartet

Dec 18. p.m. Concert @ the Fort
Fort Langley, BC

Welsh Men's Choir

Dec.20 Abbotsford
@ New Life Church



VANCOUVER WELSH MEN'S CHOIR
P. O. Box 2978, Main Post Office
Vancouver, B. C. V6B 3X4

November 8 and 9 saw us performing with numerous military and pipe and drum bands at the "Canadians Remembered" exhibit in the Seaforth Armoury on Burrard Street. The number of individual congratulatory comments which we received from members of the audience was surprising. This was followed on Remembrance Day evening by a concert and sing-along at the George Derby Centre in Burnaby for an enthusiastic crowd of veterans and their families. Our attention is now focussed on our series of Christmas concerts in the Surrey Arts Centre on December 9, in Vancouver's St. Andrews Wesley Church (Burrard & Nelson) on December 12 and 13 and in Abbotsford's 900-seat New Life Church on December 20. Guest soloist at all these concerts will be local star soprano Ingrid Suderman. Tickets for these concerts are still available from Collin Johnsen(988 - 7669), Sheena Macdonald (437-7012) or from Ticketmaster.

Officers and Directors for 1998

President Jeff Owen
Vice Pres. Ann Roberts
Secretary Margaret Barclay
Treasurer Tecwyn Roberts
Memb. Sec. Margaret Monk
Newsletter Ed. Gwilym Evans

Directors Rob Barclay
 Jane Byrne
 Victor Griffiths
 Ieuan Lamphire-Jones
 John Pritchard

Library Acquisitions

Our Society has been very fortunate in acquiring books for our library. They were donated by Mr. and Mrs. Rhys Davies, Barkley Drive, Delta and were the property of Mr. Davies' father, the late Mr. Illtyd Davies. They comprise two volumes on the history of Cardiff ; volumes 1,4,5,6 & 7 of the history of Glamorgan ; two volumes on the colourful history of Barry ; an unique collection of photographs of old Pontypridd ; photographs and commentaries on the old Rhondda ; and finally, an illustrated guide to touring Wales with historical, geological and archeological commentaries.

We are greatly indebted to Mr. and Mrs. Davies for their generous and thoughtful contribution to the Welsh Society of Vancouver.

Sian(Jane) is considered a 'lucky` name in Cardiganshire and North Pembrokeshire and it brought good fortune if someone of that name was the first visitor to the house on New Year's night.

It is with regret that we learnt of the recent death of Trevor Morgan, a long-standing member of our Society. A tribute will appear in the next newsletter.

Internet Presence

Gwyn and Gaynor Evans have brought the Vancouver Welsh Society into the 21st. century by providing an internet presence for us in the Welsh Men's Choir Internet Home Page on the World Wide Web. Diolch yn fawr iawn Gwyn a Gaynor.

Gordon Coslett Thomas

Yale University

Wrexham is the burial place of Elihu Yale. His father emigrated from Plas-yn-lal House to North America in 1637, and Elihu was born in Boston , Massachusetts , soon afterwards. Elihu was the founder of Yale University for in 1691 he sent a cargo of books and Indian goods from Fort Madras, India , where he was governor. These were sold for over five hundred pounds , which initiated the university in 1692. Yale University has a Wrexham Tower in the Memorial Quadrangle.

Twelfth Night Cake

On January 6th, the Feast of the Epiphany was an important celebration in Wales. In Glamorganshire, a huge loaf or cake was prepared, which was then divided up into three parts to represent Christ, the Virgin Mary and the three Wise Men. A large company of neighbours was invited to be present at the dividing of the cake in which rings were concealed. Whoever discovered a ring in his piece of cake (or bread) was elected as King or Queen of Misrule and presided over the day's festivities. January 6th, of course, was the date of

the old-calendar Christmas Day, and many of the festivities connected with it lasted well over a century after the new calendar was introduced in 1752.

Mulled Wine Evening—29Nov/97

What a wonderful evening we had! The hall was full, a delightful aroma wafted from the kitchen, and the Christmas spirit was felt everywhere especially after members of the Orpheus Male Voice Choir began to sing. After the carol-singing, Alan Jones, Elizabeth Murray, Rob Barclay and Paul Livesey gave a lively presentation of "A Child's Christmas in Wales".

Thanks to everyone who attended to make the evening a wonderful success.

Gaynor Owen

Annual Dinner Dance—Dec.14/97

Seventy-five people attended our Annual Dinner Dance. The hall looked beautiful thanks to the decorating crew. The food by Jordan's was excellent and the music was great. People enjoyed themselves as they danced the night away.

Twenty-seven lucky people won draw prizes and six won door prizes.

A great evening was enjoyed by all.

Gaynor Owen

The Red Dragon

This popular pub will re-open on Sat. Jan. 3rd.

The Social Committee wish everyone a Merry Xmas, and thank you for your support throughout the year.

Gaynor Owen

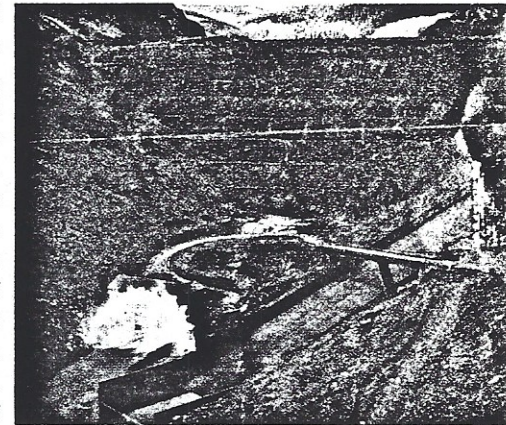
Welsh hydro dam sets new standards in UK

A new hydro-electric station in Wales is being hailed as a model for other facilities of its type for both its environmental and aesthetic qualities. The new hydro station at Llyn Brianne, Wales will provide enough energy to

UTILITY NEWS

power a small town, while saving more than 15,000 tonnes of "greenhouse" gas emissions each year. The project is also acclaimed because it has preserved the natural beauty of the surrounding countryside, thanks to the careful approach during the development phase. The plant generates power through three turbines, installed in a structure at the foot of the dam. Power, at over 33kV, is transformed and transmitted through 20 km of underground cables to connect with a distribution network some distance away.

Britain is aiming to develop more renewable energy resources, in line with the government's non-fossil-fuel obligation policy.



The Llyn Brianne hydro dam is hailed for preserving the unspoiled beauty of the Welsh countryside

An old man lay dying. His children stood around the bed, waiting for his last words. Finally, he said, "Kids, your mother and I have been married for more than fifty years— and she cooks like an angel. Even now I smell a strudel baking. Sarah, be good and go get me a piece."

In a few moments she was back. "Where's the strudel?" her father asked.

"Mom says you can't have any. It's for the funeral tomorrow."

WA REPORT

The November meeting of the WA was a lively one. Ten members voted to give our annual donations to the **Battered Women Support Services, and our Children's Christmas Party.** We then turned to our own December luncheon.

Our resident chefs, **Betty Morgan, Veronica Gilder, and Joan Wilkinson** have things well in hand and the discussion centered around last minute plans.

The handicrafts have been going well and the remaining ones will be offered for sale after the December Church Service and before the Children's Party.

This will also be your last chance to buy a raffle ticket for the beautiful illuminated picture of a Christmas Tree. The winning ticket will be drawn at Children's Party.

Beverly Thomas, Secretary

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

This will be my last membership report and it is with a certain amount of regret that I give it up. I have been your chairperson for four years and have seen membership go from 165 members in 1994 to 192 in 1996. This year it has dropped to 186 mostly through the loss of some of our oldest, most treasured members. There has also been the usual member movement out of town, which has been made up by the addition of 9 valued new members. The latest of these is:

John Ernest Sandon-Humphries
West Vancouver

We welcome you to the Society.

You will find a renewal form in this issue. I urge you to make life easy for your new membership secretary.

Membership renewals in our society are due January 1st.

And now I wish you

Nadolig Llawen a
Blwyddyn Newid Dda

Beverly Thomas

Annual MEMBERSHIP Renewals

Name : _____

Address : _____

City : _____

Postal Code : _____ Phone No. () _____ - _____

Please:- Cheques or money orders payable to:
"THE WELSH SOCIETY OF VANCOUVER".

199 Membership:-	Regular: \$35.00	Family: \$60.00
(Circle one)	Seniors: \$20.00	Out-of-Town: \$20.00
		50 miles or more

Send renewals to:- Beverly Thomas, Membership Secretary
Cambrian Hall, 215 East 17th Ave.
Vancouver, B.C. V5V 1A6

Orpheus Choir Concerts
 Dec. 13, '97 8:00 pm
 Lynden, Wash, U.S.A.
 With Barber's Quartet

Dec. 18, '97 at the Fort
 Fort Langley, BC
 An evening concert

December 1997

Mis Rhagfyr 1997

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
14 11:00 a.m. Church Service and te bach. 2 pm Childrens Xmas Party	15	16 W.A. (Noon) Meeting	17 Cambrian Circle Singers 7:pm @ Buchanan Sunset Lodge, New West.	18 Cambrian Circle Singers 7:30pm @ VanDusen Gardens Vancouver	19	20 Welsh Men's Choir @New Life Church Abbotsford Red Dragon Closed till Jan 3
21	22	23	24	25 Christmas	26	27 Closed
28	29	30	31	Cymdeithas Cymraeg Vancouver Welsh Society Cambrian Hall, 215 E. 17th Ave, Vancouver, B.C.		
Welsh Men's Choir Rehearsals Tuesdays at Cambrian Hall. Orpheus Choir Tuesday Evenings at John Oliver High School 530 East 41st Ave, Room 201, at 7:30 pm.						
January 1998						
Mis Ionawr 1998						
4	5 7:30 p.m. Welsh Lessons	6	7 7:30 p.m. Exec. Mig	8 Welsh Folk Dancing	9 Cambrian Circle Singers rehearsal	10 Red Dragon Open 8:30 p.m.
11 11 am Church Service	12 7:30 p.m. Welsh Lessons	13	14 7:30 p.m. General Mig	15 Welsh Speaking Night	16 Cambrian Circle Singers	17 Red Dragon Open 8:30 p.m.

Blyddyn Newydd Dda!