

# THE WELSH SOCIETY OF VANCOUVER

*Gymdeithas Gymraeg Vancouver*

*Cambrian News*

*March/Ebrill*  
*2008*

*March/April*  
*2008*

*Society Newsletter - Pylchgrawn y Gymdeithas*



*St. David's Day Banquet*

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

## VANCOUVER WELSH SOCIETY

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#### **President:**

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#### **Treasurer:**

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#### **Membership Secretary:**

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#### **Immediate Past President:**

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#### **Directors:**

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Mary Lewis

John Morris

Alwyn Rogers

Eifion Williams

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## *The Cambrian News*

From The Editor:

At the General Meeting on February 13<sup>th</sup> the slate of officers for the current year was elected. Lynne Shepard has taken on the role of Secretary from long serving Eifion Williams who has agreed to stay on the Executive and John Cann has returned to the Executive after his leave of absence. I'm sure we are all grateful to them for taking on the responsibility for guiding our society

On a sad note, May Lievesley our long time member, passed away at the age of 94. Our condolences go out to Paul and the family. We missed her presence at the St. David's Day Dinner. Her obituary which appeared in the Celtic Connection is included here.

We also send our condolences to Theophilus Jones on the passing of his partner Ethel Walker; both were regular attendees at every Society Dinner, the Church Service, the Welsh Weekend as well as the North American Festival of Wales. Several members attended her Memorial Service on January 26<sup>th</sup>.

A report on our Centenary Celebrations has appeared in *Ninnau* and in *Yr Enfys* and one of our visitors from Ceredigion has written a very appreciative report on their visit here. It can be found at [http://www.bbc.co.uk/cymru/deorllewin/papurau\\_bro/clebran/newyddion/chwefr/or08.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/cymru/deorllewin/papurau_bro/clebran/newyddion/chwefr/or08.shtml)

Finally, note that Bryn Terfel is singing at the Chan Centre on April 12.

David Llewelyn Williams

**MANY GATHER TO REMEMBER  
MAY LIEVESLEY**

A large gathering attended the funeral services in the Cambrian Hall on February 28 for May Lievesley, a long-time member of the Vancouver Welsh Society. May passed away on February 19 at her home in Dunbar, in her 95th year, surrounded by her loving family.



Phoebe Mary Rees was one of eight children born into a mining family in Gorseinon, South Wales. As a young woman, May moved to Cornwall, where she worked in a hotel and there met her husband, Bernard Lievesley.

In 1957 May, Bernard and their son Paul emigrated to Canada, arriving in Halifax during a snowstorm and then proceeding by rail to Vancouver, where they joined May's older brother and his family.

For many years until their retirement, May and Bernard owned a rest home in Vancouver. Sadly, Bernard passed away in 1982. In her last years May enjoyed spending time with the family, especially

the happy times with her grandchildren in their holiday beach house first in Osoyoos, and later in Point Roberts.

May rarely missed a special event at the Cambrian Hall and last year helped cut the cake to celebrate the Welsh Society's 100th Anniversary. She will be remembered for her gentle nature and her obvious love both for the country of her birth and the country that provided her family with new opportunities.

The funeral service was conducted by Welsh Society member John Cann. In his eulogy, Neville Thomas recounted some of the significant events in May's life in Wales and Canada, while David Ingram spoke about how much May meant to the family. John Pritchard and Russell Roberts presented readings in Welsh and English. The service also included several rousing renditions of May's favourite Welsh hymns.

Paul Lievesley thanks all those who contributed to the memorial service, especially Kearney's Funeral Service, and has requested that any donations in May's memory be made to the Vancouver Welsh Society.

Eifion Williams

*Forthcoming Events*

**Sunday, March 16<sup>th</sup>** 11.00 am  
Bilingual Service and Te Bach

**Wednesday, April 2<sup>nd</sup>** 7.30 pm  
Executive Meeting

**Wednesday, April 9<sup>th</sup>** 7.30 pm  
**General Meeting**

**Sunday, April 13<sup>th</sup>** 11.00 am  
Bilingual Service and Te Bach

### St. David's Day Dinner

This year our Dinner coincided with St. David's Day on Saturday March 1<sup>st</sup>. After a welcome from our President, Jane Byrne and a Blessing by Mareth Hunter, we sat down to a tasty repast excellently prepared for us once again by Jordan's. (see front page photo)



Eifion Williams brought us greetings from a multitude of Welsh Societies around the globe and concluded with a message from Rhodri Morgan, the First Minister for Wales. The list of society messages grows each year, doubtless expedited by e-mail.



A highlight of the evening was a tenor recital by David Tuck ably accompanied by Winfried Rompf. His first set of three Welsh songs started with one of my favourites, Dafydd Y Garreg Wen and the second set of three started with yet another of my favourites Yr Hen Gerddor. He also sang by special request Bugeilio'r Gwenith Gwyn, a favourite of 98 year old Margaret Davies.

The Toast to Canada was proposed by Glyn Shepard who reflected on the welcoming openness of Canada which created a feeling of family in whichever community one visited or lived in. After the Toast, we sang O Canada.



The Toast to Wales was proposed by Neville Thomas who reflected upon the centrality of the Welsh language to the Welsh identity and the attempts such as the "Welsh Not" to eradicate its use by children in schools. After the Toast we sang Hen Wlad fy Nhadau.



This year the Toast to St. David was separated from the Toast to Wales. John

Pritchard in proposing the toast succinctly summarized David's life and his well known quotes. .



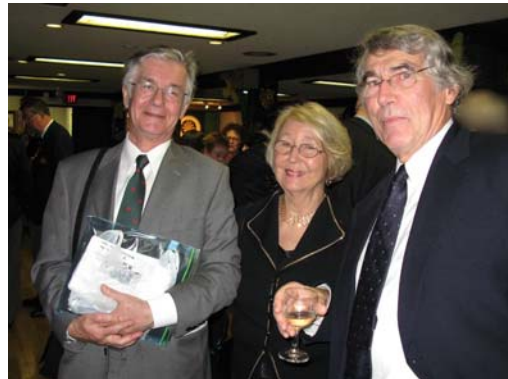
The program concluded with community singing under Lynn Owens-Whalen with Lucy Sorensen as accompanist.



President Jane Byrne acknowledged the hard work put in by members who had prepared and decorated the Hall for the celebration and especially Gaynor Evans for organizing the whole event. She also thanked Jordan's for once again rising to the occasion. Jane herself was thanked by Barrie Hancock for her continuing contributions as President.



We then retired to the Red Dragon where some members of the VWMC had gathered following their concert and "Myfanwy" held us in her spell. The evening continued with the singing of classic hymns around the piano. We can only echo our President's thanks to all who made it this evening possible!



Thanks to Gwyn Evans for the front page photograph, to Idris Hughes for the group photograph opposite and to Uta Williams for all the other photographs.

### **John Thomas “Navy (or Navvy) Jack”**

Ieuan Lampshire-Jones sent me an article from the North Shore News (Nov.4) which stated that the first European settler on the North Shore was a Welshman called **John “Navy Jack” Thomas** who was the grandfather of the late Chief Dan George. Upon checking various sources especially the West Vancouver History site, I found that John Thomas’ nickname was “**Navvy Jack**”. He was quite an entrepreneur!

**In 1866** he initiated West Vancouver’s first, by-request, ferry service across Burrard Inlet, admittedly by rowboat!

**In 1868**, he began extracting sand and gravel from the west side of the Capilano River. This material was used in the making of concrete and was transported in his five-ton sloop to construction sites in Moodyville, Hastings and Gastown.

**In 1872**, James Blake became West Vancouver’s first land owner with the pre-emption of a plot of land that cut across Hollyburn Creek.

**In 1873** John Thomas, who had married Row-i-a, the granddaughter of Chief Kiep-i-lano, sold his half interest in the Granville Hotel and arranged to take over Blake’s pre-emption and built a house for his bride. This house is the oldest continuously inhabited residence in the Lower Mainland and still stands today at 1768 Argyle Avenue.

**In 1876** the first settlers’ children were born in West Vancouver; Christine Thomas at Navvy Jack Point and James Atkinson Woodward at Point Atkinson.

(Notes: Today Navvy Jack means a combination of washed sand and aggregate which is ideal for making concrete and is much cheaper than bags

of concrete mix. The charts today show the point as Navy Jack Point)

### **Rhys Meirion touring to save**

**Patagonia festival** (Feb 2 Daily Post)  
Opera superstar Rhys Meirion is flying to South America to take part in a Patagonian eisteddfod which is at risk of folding. And the tenor from Ruthin wants an army of supporters to follow him there. The annual Welsh Eisteddfod in Trevelin, western Patagonia, which has been going for more than 100 years, is threatened by a lack of funding. This year’s festival in May may be the last. Rhys has agreed to attend the eisteddfod, conduct the Cymanfa Ganu and give concerts in each of the five major Welsh towns in Patagonia to help raise money to save it. He will waive his normal concert fee and his expenses will be paid for by the Argentine province of Chubut.

Rhys said: “It has always been a dream of mine to visit Welsh Patagonia and when I heard that the Eisteddfod in Trefelin was in danger of dying, I had to do something to help. We have set up a website [www.rhysinpatagonia.com](http://www.rhysinpatagonia.com) with all the information about my trip and the eisteddfod. The site also contains details of an official tour for all my fans, where they will attend all the concerts and be invited to all the parties, receptions and Argentinean barbecues to which I have been invited. We will donate £100 to the eisteddfod’s funds for each person who accompanies us on the official tour,

The Trevelin Eisteddfod runs from May 2-4. Rhys Meirion will give two concerts in western Patagonia and three in the East, as well as in Buenos Aires and at informal events. Rhys’s three-week tour will be from April 23 to May 15, 2008.

### **Coal mine closes with celebration**

(January 25)

Miners at Wales' last deep mine have marked its closure with a celebratory march, similar to the parade staged when they bought the pit 13 years ago. Tower Colliery in Hirwaun, Rhondda Cynon Taf, was taken on by 239 staff, each pooling £8,000 redundancy to buy it after it closed in 1994. The pit reopened in January 1995 but the coal has effectively run out.

Tower had reopened in defiance of the large-scale pit closure program under the Thatcher government following the year-long miners' strike of 1984-5 - a strike in opposition to colliery shutdowns. With feelings still running high amongst many who lived through that time, miners and their families started Friday's parade at 1100 GMT, walking from the pit which disproved claims it was too expensive to run. The official closure comes a week after the last coal was mined.

But the day is one of celebration, not mourning, according to its chairman Tyrone O'Sullivan, who led the buyout of Tower. "When there was the miners' strike, and all the rapid pit closures, there tended to be something resembling a wake afterwards," said the 62-year-old grandfather-of-three, who started working at the mine 40 years ago after his own father died there. "In Tower's case, it's a celebration of the last 13 years." From the pit, the 270 workers headed to the Penywaun, the club where the decision to buy the pit was made. About 120 of the workers are expected to transfer to two newly-opened drift mines in the Neath Valley. Seventy are expected to go to Aberpergwm mine within two months and the Unity mine will take a further 50 miners.

Miner John Wood, 57, from Merthyr Tydfil said: "For the first three or four months in 1995 we struggled but we had a go at it and it has been a success for 13 years. We have never had to lay men off and we've had a weekly wage. It's sad but it's something we have to accept - the coal has been exhausted."

Cynon Valley MP Ann Clwyd, who spent 27 hours down the mine to protest against the attempted closure in 1994, joined the final march. She said: "I'm just very proud to have been part of it and to have been with the men all the way in the fight to keep it open." First Minister Rhodri Morgan said the miners had been "inspirational". "It's a story of confidence among the workers in their own ability and in the future viability of their mine." Deputy first minister Ieuan Wyn Jones added: "It is an icon of Welsh resistance - the abiding history of a mining community which fought against all the odds and scored notable success."

**Celtic Land of Dead** (Steve Bagnall, Daily Post, Dec 24)

A 19th century map in Llangollen town hall could unravel one of Celtic history's most enduring mysteries – the location of the legendary Land of the Dead. According to Welsh mythology the Land of the Dead – or Annwn: Underworld – was ruled over by Gwynn ap Nudd. He escorted the souls of the dead there, and led a pack of supernatural hounds. For centuries this place has believed to be pure fable. But, experts say there is a grain of truth in the story with the evidence now pointing to Ruabon and Halkyn Mountains.

Steve Blake, author of the Keys to Avalon, said: "Llangollen and the Dee

Valley are rich in this piece of Celtic folklore. Central to this is St Collen, from whom Llangollen takes its name, who in the sixth century established the church and surrounding area as his parish. One story has him battling Gwyn ap Nudd on a nearby hill.”

Archaeological research and a late 19th century Ordinance Survey map on the wall of Llangollen town hall have highlighted the greatest concentration of bronze and iron age burial chambers anywhere in the world on Ruabon and Halkyn mountains. This points to the area being extremely significant, according to an ancient Welsh work entitled the Stanzas of the Graves. It is believed there are in excess of 500 burial chambers on the mountain, but modern maps only show those on the edges of the Eglwyseg escarpment, since the vast majority were destroyed during World War II as the area was used for decoy bombing.

### **Master choirmaster dies**

Dec 20 2007 by David Edwards,  
Rhondda Leader

The valley is mourning the death of renowned choirmaster Richard Williams, MBE, who has died at the age of 84 at his home in Thomastown. He was a born entertainer. Even at the age of 15, he was already touring the music halls of the UK before returning home to join the fledgling Welsh National Opera. But his musical career ended when his baby son, Richard, became profoundly deaf after contracting meningitis. Appalled by the lack of facilities for deaf children, he decided to educate his son himself.

He formed the Gentleman Songsters in 1951, the Richard Williams Singers in 1965 and the Richard Williams Junior Singers in 1966. Each achieved

remarkable success, with frequent broadcasts and concert tours of Europe and North America. (Members may remember his visit to Vancouver with his Ladies Choir in about 1990).

### **CAMBRIAN CIRCLE SINGERS**

#### Spring Schedule 2008

Jan. 11 /18/25, Fri. Rehearsal 7:30 p.m.

February 2, Sat. Minoru 2:00 p.m. \$60  
Minoru Blvd./ Westminster Hwy

Feb. 8/15/22/29 Fri. Rehearsal 7:30 p.m.

March 7, Fri. Augustine House 7:30 p.m.  
3820 Arthur Drive, Ladner

March 14, Friday Rehearsal 7:30 p.m.

March 18, Tues. Chalmer's Lodge 7:30  
p.m. 1450 W. 12th. Ave. Van

March 28, Friday Rehearsal 7:30 p.m.

April 4 Fri. Crescent Gardens 7:30 p.m.  
1222 King George Hwy White Rock

April 13, Sunday  
Our Saviour Lutheran 7:00 p.m.  
6340 #4 Road, Richmond (S. of  
Westminster Hwy.on E. side)

Apr 11/18/25 Fri. Rehearsal 7:30 pm

May 2/9/16 Fri. Rehearsal 7:30 p.m.

May 21 Wed. Holy Family 6:30 p.m.  
7801 Argyle, Van (E. Knight St./N  
Marine Drive)

May 30 Friday Rehearsal /(St Edward's  
concert?)7:30 p.m.