

Tachwedd
2004



November
2004

Cymdeithas Gymraeg Vancouver

Cambrian News

Welsh Society Newsletter — Cylchgrawn Cymraeg



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The Cambrian News

From The Editor:

This month you will receive two mailings; the first being expressly concerned with our Welsh Weekend, Nov. 5 – 7. Do attend and support this celebration of the 75th Anniversary of the Cambrian Hall. The picture of the Hall on the front cover was taken (in colour) by Eirlys Ann Thomas and cards with this photograph will be available for sale at the Hall with the proceeds to benefit the Roof Fund. The Foundation Stone on the left of the picture records the major contributors in 1929. Members are also encouraged to contribute a supply of Welsh cakes to feed the expected multitudes on the Weekend. Do bring them to the Hall on any (or all) of the three days.

A most successful Anniversary Dinner was held on October 16th and we are most grateful to Gaynor Evans for all the work she put into organizing the event. Also to Jeff and Gaynor Owen who manned and womanned the bar! Several longtime members contributed historical reminiscences of the Hall as befitted this significant milestone.

I have taken the liberty of including my translation of an excerpt describing a slate quarryman around the early part of the twentieth century. My maternal grandfather worked in the slate quarries then and my paternal grandfather came from a farm in Môn, so the passage has a special appeal. I am sure that similar stories apply to coalmining communities.

David Llewelyn Williams

Forthcoming Event

Please take note:

The Christmas Turkey Dinner will take place on Saturday December 11th. Reserve this date on your Calendar and contact Gaynor Evans (604-271-3134) to reserve your place!

Dorothy Walters

Dorothy Bethany Victoria Carpenter Walters, a life time member of the Vancouver Welsh Society died on Saltspring Island on August 26 at the age of 101. She was born in Brampton, Ontario and as the daughter of a Methodist minister, spent her childhood in many different parishes in both Ontario and British Columbia. She received her teaching certificate from the Vancouver Normal School at 12th and Cambie and embarked on her teaching career with an assignment at Halls Prairie School just south of Cloverdale. Dorothy met Evan Walters at First Baptist Church and they were married on April 1, 1929. They had four sons, Evan Lorne, Phillip Frederick, Vaughan Thomas and David Llewellyn.

Dorothy and Evan filled their lives with music, both with the church, where Evan was Organist and Choirmaster, and the Vancouver Welsh Society. In June 1939, Evan conducted a 1500 male voice choir on the steps of Vancouver City Hall for King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, and in 1947 he conducted an evening of male voice choirs featuring the Welsh Choir and the Red Army Chorus at the old Georgia Auditorium. At the same time Dorothy was a devoted mother to her four boys but also continued her teaching career. When the Vancouver School District initiated a kindergarten program in 1960, Dorothy found herself at Sir Kingsford-Smith Elementary with 100 kindergarten students (25 in the morning, 25 in the afternoon and two different groups of 25 the following week). Her last teaching assignment was in 1976 at the age of 73.

Evan and Dorothy were devoted members of the Vancouver Welsh Society throughout the years. One of Dorothy's fondest memories was her involvement with the ladies of the Society to make and present Welsh Period Costumes of the 17th and 18th century to coordinate with the 1980 Welsh National Gymanfa Ganu at the Pacific Ballroom of the Hotel Vancouver. Three years later, Dorothy and the Cambrian Circle Singers traveled to Wales to exhibit the costumes in the land of song. Customs and insurance documents still exist in the name of the Vancouver Welsh Society that photograph each costume, describe each in detail and state the cost for insurance purposes. This was a remarkable initiative in both providing us with valuable evidence of historical significance and raising the profile of the Vancouver Welsh Society both in North America and in Wales.

Dorothy moved to Saltspring in 1999 to be close to her sons, Vaughan on Saltspring and Lorne in Nanoose Bay. Our warmest thoughts are with Vaughan, Lorne and their families. Dorothy's friends in the Welsh Society will all miss her dearly.

A teacher to the end, Dorothy would want to leave us with this message; " your response to everything is all in attitude and what you make of it."

Lynn Owens-Whalen

Northwest Passage (from the Calgary Welsh Society Newsletter)

Way back in 1631 a little known Welsh born explorer, Captain Thomas James, spent the best part of a couple of years searching for the elusive Northwest Passage that was supposed to lead European merchants to the wealth and treasures of the exotic East. Commissioned by the Bristol Society of Merchants, he published a detailed narrative of his hazardous voyage fraught with navigational uncertainties, treacherous Arctic ice and extremes of weather. His work was largely dismissed in the nineteenth century despite being highly regarded in surveys of exploration and by many scholars. Long time Society member Wayne Davies has conducted extensive research and produced a reevaluation of the many problems faced by James and his crew and believes that James' thrilling tale of adventure should occupy a prominent place in the study of exploration, literature and history. *Writing Geographical Exploration – Thomas James and the Northwest Passage, 1631-33* by Professor Davies is published by the University of Calgary Press.

Ifan Môn

A translation of an abstract from “O Law i Law” by T. Rowland Hughes, first published in 1943. The story is set in a slate quarrying village in North Wales. The main character has just buried his mother and three old friends stay to keep him company in the house as they consider how to dispose of the contents. They settle on passing the items on “From Hand to Hand” and subsequent chapters illustrate different aspects of village life and its characters as he reflects on the past in deciding who should receive first refusal on the various items. This abstract is from the first chapter and recalls his memories of his father’s friend, the quarryman, Ifan Jones.

Ifan Jones stared into the chimney as if he were seeing the years vanishing into the smoke. I felt a bit irritated that he wasn’t leaving, but as I looked upon his great strong face, I knew there wasn’t a kinder person in the world. He was getting along in days by now, although he continued to go to the slate quarry every day, fair weather or foul. He was sure to be over seventy, although you’d hardly think it looking at his crop of grey, curly hair, or at the skin on his face which was still like the skin of an apple. Still he had aged somewhat recently and the strongly built shoulders stooped a little. I saw the blue veins on the back of his hand, and the skin like thin bright paper after you had squeezed it in your handshake. His eyes too were dull and watery and made me think of the eyes of a newly caught trout. Indeed, even Ifan Jones was getting old.

I remember when I went, as a boy, to meet my father from the slate quarry, so that I could carry his food tin and eat the honey sandwich that was left in it. I felt much like a man as I tried to stride between my father and Ifan Jones. They both worked on the same quarry face and walked home together almost every evening. Most often the two would discuss something to do with the chapel, but sometimes Ifan Jones’ conversation would wander to his days as a farm-hand in Mon (Anglesey) before he thought of venturing into the slate quarrying region. ‘Ifan Môn’ he was called in the quarry and as ‘Ifan Môn’ my father referred to him every time he mentioned him to my mother. He was a giant of a man, and I felt very small as I tried to walk together with him on the way back from the quarry. But I was not afraid of him on those occasions; he was a quarryman, in his rough dust covered clothes – a quarryman and a friend of my father. And as a quarryman he spoke – “Well, Robat, we’ll have to get corduroy trousers for this boy before long. (Wel, Robat, rhaid inni gael trowsus melfared i’r hogyn ma cyn bo hir.) Won’t we, John bach?” “We must,” said I, sticking the food tin under my arm and pushing my thumb into the armpit of my waistcoat. But it was pretty difficult to hold the position squarely when your legs were too short to stride forward as every quarryman did after the horn sounded.

Somehow, it was not the same Ifan Môn that kept a class of us in order in the Sunday School. I was afraid of him every Sunday afternoon, even though he called me “John bach” every time he asked me to read a verse or answer a question. Keeping us quiet was his intent and his responsibility, and truly, we were like mice if it happened that Ifan Môn frowned at any of us. Holding on to your ear and pinching it was his way of punishing you, but he rarely had to use it, since his look was sufficient. One day the Superintendent said that Ifan Jones’ class was the quietest in the whole school, so afterwards he made a

special effort to kill all talk and all laughter. Dafydd Preis was the most talkative among us, and he went home every Sunday afternoon with his ear as red as his father's nose. "Come and sit next to me, you little rascal. How many times... This one's just like his father. I'll give you cigarette cards! Give them to me...and the others... and the others again.....do you have any more? Empty out your trouser pockets." Then Dafydd Preis' hands scattered the most strange chaos on the seat. "Huh, why is there a need for marbles on a Sunday? (I be' mae isio marblis ar y Sul?) And where did you get these matches? Putty, is it?..... Do know that this watch could be worth money if someone except the Great Being Himself could mend it? These things belong in your everyday trousers. Read that verse again before I put this putty down your throat....." And with Ifan Jones' fingers at the base of his ear, poor Dafydd read as fluently as he could.

Most often Ifan Môn was content to ask us to read verses and then answer questions on the meaning of words. But sometimes he told us a story and then it was never necessary to pinch anyone's ear. For he had an unusual gift for telling stories, his whole body communicated his emotion in their telling. It would be a story from the Bible of course, but Ifan Jones coloured every event with his own imagination. The son of some large farm in Mon was the Prodigal Son and in a city resembling Liverpool he dissipated his wealth. When I visited Liverpool, years after the days of the Sunday School, I realized that, and I must confess that the picture drawn by Ifan Môn was remarkably true to life. Some years later still I discovered the castle, quay and square of Phillipi in the town of Caernarfon; if I remember correctly, Lydia was baptized up by Pont Seion and it was at her house, somewhere down at the quay where Paul and Timotheus stayed.

We heard the wind hitting the corner of the house and shaking the old door in the back. Dafydd Owen threw a nasty look in that direction as if the wind was some big dog that he had left outside and felt responsible for.

"The old blankets are being shaken tonight, Dafydd"

"Ha! Yes, Ifan Jones"

Ifan Môn held the copyright on the joke about the blankets since many years, taken from a rather misty fable about some giants who hung enormous blankets above the valley on a line from Y Foel to the Clogwyn. So "Ifan Môn's blankets" became a sort of metaphor in the region when mentioning the wind. Unfortunately, it was not the imagination of Ifan Môn that locally immortalized the idea, but the observation of some rather drunk old fellow who was swept by the blankets into Preis the Barber's shop one very rough night –

"Ewch i nol Ifan Môn, bobol. Mae'r blydi lein wedi torri heno!"

"Go to fetch Ifan Môn, people. The bloody line's broken tonight!"

D. Llewelyn Williams

November 2004

Mis Tachwedd 2004

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 Walking Group 10 am Mondays	2	3 Executive Meeting 7.30 pm	4	5 Noson Lawen Cambrian Hall 8.00 pm	6 8.00 pm Gala Concert VWMC St. Patrick's
7 Church Service 11.00 Gymanfa Ganu 2.00 pm	8	9	10 General Meeting 7.30 pm	11 Welsh Folk Dancers	12 Cambrian Circle Singers	13 Red Dragon 8.30 pm
14	15 11.30 am Welsh Speaking Gathering	16	17 Cambrian Circle Singers	18 Welsh Folk Dancers	19	20 Red Dragon 8.30 pm
21	22	23	24 Cambrian Circle Singers	25 Welsh Folk Dancers	26	27 Red Dragon 8.30 pm
28	29	30				Note Dec 11 th Turkey Dinner