

**THE WELSH SOCIETY OF VANCOUVER**

*Cymdeithas Gymraeg Vancouver*

*Cambrian News*

Medi  
2011

September  
2011

**Society Newsletter – Cylchgrawn y Gymdeithas**



Phyllis at 99

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

**WELSH SOCIETY MEMBERS ENJOY ANNUAL SUMMER GATHERING**

Members of the Society held a summer social gathering on August 20 at the Dunbar residence of Lynn and Wilf Owens-Whalen.



The members enjoyed a variety of refreshments in glorious sunshine amid the luxuriant surroundings of the Owens-Whalen garden. The event was coordinated by the Society's Social Committee, under the direction of Gillian Rogers.



The highlight of the afternoon was a celebration of the 99<sup>th</sup> birthday of Honorary Life Member Phyllis Owens, the Society's much-loved longest-serving member. President John Morris congratulated Phyllis on her birthday and presented her with a giant birthday card signed by those present.



Many of the guests expressed their gratitude to Lynn and Wilf for providing such a pleasant venue for what is becoming an annual summer event. Gillian Rogers presented Lynn with a small gift in appreciation of her contribution to the event. Eifion Williams

*Forthcoming Events*

**In what promises to be a very busy Fall schedule for the Welsh Society!**

**Sunday, September 11th at 11:00 am  
Bilingual Service followed by Tê Bach**

**Monday, September 12th at 7:30 pm  
GENERAL MEETING**

**Wednesday, Sept. 14th at 12:00 noon  
Book Club** The book to be reviewed is Ken Follett's "Fall of Giants".

**Saturday, September 17th - 19th Welsh  
Movie showing in Vancouver!**

“Sleep Furiously” at the Vancity Theater  
Vancouver Cinematheque,  
1181 Seymour St., Vancouver. Look up  
Vancity Theater for showtimes.

**Monday, September 19th at 10:30 Welsh  
speaking – Siarad Cymraeg**

**Monday, Sept. 26<sup>th</sup> 10:00am - 3:00 pm  
Workparty Day** Lunch will be provided  
and everyone is welcome.

**Wednesday, September 28th at 7:30 pm  
Welsh class** Social gathering for those  
interested in learning Welsh.

**Wednesday, October 5th at 7:30 pm  
Executive Meeting**

**Sunday, October 9th at 11:00 am  
Bilingual Service followed by Tê Bach**

**Wednesday, Oct. 12th at 12:00 noon Book  
Club** Book yet to be decided.

**Anniversary Dinner**

The Society's Anniversary Dinner will be held this year on **Saturday, October 15 at 7pm sharp in the Red Dragon**. Jordan's International Food Designs will once again

prepare a delicious buffet at a cost of \$40 per person, including the HST, gratuity and entertainment (yet to be confirmed). Tickets for the event will be limited and are available from Gaynor Evans at [fgevans@telus.net](mailto:fgevans@telus.net) or phone 604 271 3134. Gaynor would appreciate it if members reserved their places for this social event as soon as possible.

**Monday, October 17th at 10:30 Welsh  
speaking – Siarad Cymraeg**

**Monday, Oct. 24<sup>th</sup> 10:00 am - 3:00 pm  
Workparty Day** Lunch will be provided  
and everyone is welcome.

**Wednesday, October 26<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 pm  
Welsh class** Social gathering for those  
interested in learning Welsh.

*Preview of November Events* **Wednesday,  
November 2<sup>nd</sup> at 7:30 pm Executive  
Meeting**

**Vancouver Celebrates Wales**

**Friday, November 4th at 7:30 pm Noson  
Lawen** in the Cambrian Hall.

**Saturday, Nov. 5<sup>th</sup> 10:30 am - 3:00 pm**  
The Dylan Thomas Circle will meet at the  
Cambrian Hall.

**Saturday, Nov. 5<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 pm** Pub  
night at the Red Dragon featuring Legendary  
Wales.

**Sunday, November 6<sup>th</sup> at 11:00 am**  
Bilingual Service followed by Tê Bach.

**Sunday, November 6<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 pm** Our  
annual **Gymanfa Ganu** (Hymn Singing  
Festival) followed by a Tê Bach  
(refreshments)

**Monday, November 7<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 pm**  
**GENERAL MEETING**

**Wednesday, Nov. 9<sup>th</sup> at 12:00 noon Book Club.** Text to be decided.

**Monday, Nov. 15<sup>th</sup> at 10:30 am Welsh speaking –Siarad Cymraeg**

**Monday, Nov. 28<sup>th</sup> 10:00am - 3:00 pm**  
**Workparty Day** Lunch will be provided and everyone is welcome.

**Wednesday, Nov. 30<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 pm Welsh class** Social gathering for those interested in learning Welsh.

**December: Please mark your Calendars!**

**Mulled Wine Evening. Saturday, December 3rd**

**Children's Christmas Party Sunday, December 11th**

**Christmas Dinner Saturday, December 17th**

**NEW WELSH CLASSES AT THE CAMBRIAN HALL**

The Welsh Society has reformatted and restarted its program of Welsh language instruction. Last year a group of motivated students went through the BBC's online self-study Welsh course, Catchphrase. This year we are once again offering language classes in the Hall and beginners and Catchphrase veterans are welcome to improve their Welsh.

Classes will take place in the Red Dragon at 7:30 pm on the last Wednesday of each month. The first meeting will be on September 28, followed by October 26 and November 30. There is no charge for Welsh Society members in good standing.

Classes will begin with a short lesson of around twenty minutes, followed by fifteen minutes of conversation either in Welsh or about the Welsh language. One or more of the Welsh Society's native Welsh speakers will be there to model the language. For the rest of the evening participants are welcome to stay and practise their Welsh or simply enjoy a social evening.

The instructor, Welsh Society Executive member Dr. Antone Minard, learned Welsh at university in California and continued his study of the language while living in Aberystwyth. Dr. Minard received his doctorate in Folklore and Mythology from the University of California, specializing in Celtic Studies.

Together with a team from the Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies in Aberystwyth, he was one of the authors of An Atlas for Celtic Studies (2007) and has recently edited The Celts: Life and Culture, an encyclopedia to be published in 2012. He currently lectures in the Humanities Department at SFU and the Classical and Near Eastern and Religious Studies Department at UBC.

**THE WELSH SOCIETY ON TWITTER**

The Vancouver Welsh Society now has 86 followers on its Twitter feed (@VancouverWelsh), from Vancouver locals to Derek Brockway, a popular BBC Wales weatherman ("Derek the Weather") and the Welsh National Museum in Cardiff.

Twitter is a contemporary social networking trend, a very effective way to spread news about what's going on around town. Welsh Society member Mathew Parry, who recently arrived in Vancouver from mid-Wales via Los Angeles, tweets about points of connection between Wales and Vancouver and other interesting items from Wales as well as local news.

Mathew hails from the Rhymney Valley but for most of the last fifteen years has lived in the Aberystwyth area where he worked to promote Wales to the film and television industries. He used his knowledge of the local area on behalf of production companies considering filming there. More recently, Mathew has been working for the UK Film Council in Hollywood. He holds a Master's degree in Welsh Social History from the University of Wales and has a strong interest in the role of the Welsh in local history.

Mathew says that if you use Twitter please follow @Vancouver Welsh. If you are not a user, please mention to friends, neighbours and colleagues that the Welsh Society now has a Twitter feed and encourage them to follow our updates and posts.

### **NERYS HAQQ PROUD OF HER FAMOUS ANCESTOR**

Most of us know Nerys Haqq as the long-time conductor of the Cambrian Circle Singers, a group that has done much to present the face of Wales to the general public. Nerys and her husband Sam are also regular worshippers at the Society's monthly bilingual church service where Nerys has for many years contributed a solo of sacred music.

At the recent June service, Nerys gave a talk on her great-grandfather, Sir William Henry Preece, one of Wales' most famous historical figures.

He was an electrical engineer, born in Caernarfon, who pioneered many of the major advances in communication in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. He was for many years the Engineer-in-Chief of the British General Post Office. His fame today rests largely on his friendship and collaboration with Guglielmo Marconi, who conducted some experiments with wireless

communication in Wales, many of them based on Preece's earlier experiments. Anyone with internet access will find an astonishing amount of information on the career and achievements of this brilliant Welshman.

In 1899 Preece was knighted and in the same year became the first ever Freeman of the Borough of Caernarfon. His achievements are best summed up in the inscription on the plaque on the corner of the main Post Office in Caernarfon:

THIS TABLET RAISED BY PUBLIC  
SUBSCRIPTION COMMEMORATES  
ONE OF THE EARLIEST PIONEERS OF  
WIRELESS TELEGRAPHY  
SIR WILLIAM HENRY PREECE K.C.B.,  
F.R.S  
ENGINEER IN CHIEF TO THE POST  
OFFICE  
A NATIVE AND FIRST HONORARY  
FREEMAN OF CAERNARFON  
HE WAS AMONGST THE FOREMOST  
OF PIONEERS IN THE DEVELOPMENT  
OF WIRELESS TELEGRAPHY AND ONE  
OF THE FIRST TO EXPERIMENT  
SUCCESSFULLY WITH THE SENDING  
OF THE SPOKEN WORD THROUGH  
SPACE  
ARLOESYDD YNGLYN A HOLL  
DDATBLYGIADAU CYNNAR Y RADIO  
YN Y WLAD HON A THROS Y  
MOROEDD

Coincidentally, a member of the Welsh Society recently received an email from a Welsh academic requesting information on any descendants of Sir William Henry Preece, rumoured to be living in British Columbia. The request was passed on to Nerys, who will no doubt be pleased to discuss any topic relating to her famous great-grandfather.

## TOLLS LED TO THE FAMOUS REBECCA RIOTS

Opposition to the levying of tolls to finance infrastructure projects like roads, bridges and tunnels has a history going as far back as Ancient Rome.

British Columbia has had its share of controversy over such tolls and the issue promises to flare up again with the government's plan to toll the new Port Mann Bridge, which many claim will adversely affect commuters living east of the Bridge.

Perhaps the most bizarre fight against tolls occurred in nineteenth century Wales, when farmers dressed as women attacked rural tollgates, terrorizing the local inhabitants. Known collectively as the Rebecca Riots, the attacks occurred in South and Mid-Wales between 1839 and 1843, a period when tenant farmers and agricultural workers suffered acute poverty due to high taxes and low returns on their produce.

Adding to their misery was the British Government's granting of Turnpike Trusts to wealthy landowners and private individuals, ostensibly to build and maintain local roads by levying tolls. In fact, the tolls became largely a source of income for the Trust owners.

As tollgates proliferated, farmers taking their produce to market were forced to sell at a loss after paying ever-increasing tolls. The gates were even placed on side-roads to catch evaders, including farmers carting lime to their own fields.

Starting in 1839, groups of men in some communities banded together and attacked and destroyed the gates. Punishment for such actions could be severe – long terms of imprisonment or transportation for life - so the men concealed their identities by dressing in women's clothing. They called

themselves Rebecca's Daughters (*Merched Beca*), invoking a Biblical quotation from Genesis 24:60: "And they blessed Rebekah and said unto her . . . let thy seed possess the gates of those that hate us."



This stone erected outside Pontarddulais commemorates the destruction of the Bolgoed Gate by a Merched Beca group led by Daniel Lewis in July 1841.

Eifion Williams