

THE WELSH SOCIETY OF VANCOUVER
Cymdeithas Gymraeg Vancouver

Cambrian News

Ionawr
2012

January
2012

Society Newsletter – Cylchgrawn y Gymdeithas



Eleven Month Old Dylan with Santa

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

VANCOUVER WELSH SOCIETY

Officers:

President:

Jane Byrne

Vice-President:

Nant Roberts

Secretary:

Eifion Williams

mail@welshsociety.com

Treasurer:

Gaynor Evans

Membership Secretary:

Alwyn Rogers

Immediate Past President:

John Morris

Directors:

Heather Davies

Gwyn Evans

Antone Minard

(Recording Secretary)

Gethin Owen

Contacts

Building Committee:

Cambrian Circle Singers:

Nerys Haqq

Church Service:

John Pritchard

Rentals:

Richard Williams 604-340-8545

Social Events Committee:

Gillian Rogers

(Gillian.Rogers@shaw.ca)

Welsh Speaking Group:

John Pritchard

Welsh Learners Group:

Antone Minard

Webmaster:

Alwyn Rogers

(www.welshsociety.com)

Newsletter Editor:

David Llewelyn Williams 737-0305

(williams@phas.ubc.ca)

The Cambrian News

From The Editor:

This issue is very much a collaboration and I am grateful to Gaynor Evans, Neville Thomas and Eifion Williams for their articles. So much good material was submitted that some will only appear in the next issue!

January 25th is St. Dwynwen's Day but we will not celebrate the Welsh Patron Saint of Lovers this year since the Hall is being re-constructed. I did try to pay homage to her this summer!

Our executive for 2012 was elected at the Annual General Meeting. John Morris, having served his three year sentence, should be warmly thanked for his leadership and commitment during his Presidency.

Alwyn Rogers, among his many roles, is our new Membership Secretary. It would be appreciated if you would renew your memberships to show your concern for the Society – at least before St. David's Day. Membership fees have not changed for several years. Send your cheques payable to **The Welsh Society of Vancouver** to Alwyn at the Cambrian Hall. Include your address, email and phone number. Let us know if you wish a print copy of the newsletter.

Our September Newsletter celebrated the 99th Birthday of that Icon of our Society, Phyllis Owens. Regrettably, she passed away on December 22nd. Her presence at our gatherings will be missed.

The Ontario Welsh Festival will be held at Niagara Falls, April 27-29, 2012. For details see www.ontariowelshfestival.ca

David Llewelyn Williams

Mulled Wine Evening a Great Success

The Annual Mulled Wine Evening at the Cambrian Hall on December 3 was very well attended. The cheery atmosphere and spirited audience involvement contributed to an enjoyable festive occasion. Master of Ceremonies Neville Thomas kept the festivities going with his usual skill, including leading the audience in the robust singing of the traditional Christmas carols.



The program, designed by Kathy Thomas, was varied and entertaining, and contributed to the evening's air of informality and fellowship. The guest accompanist for the evening was Wen Wen, a young student from the Academy of Music, who impressed all with her skill on the keyboard. A reading of Dylan Thomas' *A Child's Christmas in Wales* was a recurring theme throughout the evening, with several readers contributing sequential excerpts. The readers were Don Murray, Kathy Thomas, Paul Lievesley, Mathew Parry, and John and Tora Anderson.

A highlight of the evening was the distribution of the traditional mulled wine and food by members of the Society's Social Committee, followed by a toast to the season. The final carol, *The Twelve Days of Christmas*, capped the evening's entertainment with audience participation enthusiastically directed by Neville Thomas.

In his closing remarks, President John Morris thanked all those who had organized and participated in this year's event and invited all present to become members and contribute to the Welsh Society's activities.



Members of the Social Committee, led by Gillian Rogers, organized the event and prepared the refreshments. Here's Pat Morris at the Christmas Stall.

Eifion Williams

Children's Christmas Party

Sunday, December 11th at 2pm saw the Red Dragon Lounge looking its best, with Christmas fairy lights making the room festive for the arrival of our special guests. In no time at all, 18 children aged 11 months to 11 years arrived with parents and grandparents, with hopes of a visit from Santa Claus. The Christmas tree had been beautifully decorated, and was surrounded by brightly wrapped parcels. These were eyed by the younger ones, in hopes that their name might be on one of them.

First though, came the balloon games to break the ice, and then busy fingers decorating cutout snowmen with glitter and warm woolly scarves invaded the craft table. Reindeer made from clothespins were given 'googly' eyes and bright red pompom noses, and lovingly taken home to hang on Christmas trees.



As always, musical chairs had to be played and then ‘pass the parcel’.



By this time, word was that Santa was on his way, and so carols had to be sung with gusto, so the BIG GUY would hear and know where to stop off.



And so with “Jingle Bells” rattling the rafters, Santa made his entrance with his “Ho, Ho, Ho” and took his place of honour on the Big Chair. Each and every child made their secret wishes to Santa, and was given a gift to unwrap and take home.



Once all the parcels had been opened and the wrapping paper stowed away, hot dogs were handed out, followed by juice and ice cream. Before leaving Santa extended his Seasonal good wishes to other family members!



A very happy and satisfying afternoon was concluded with the children decorating gingerbread Christmas trees with icing and candies, and leaving with smiles and “thank-you”.... until next year!

Thank you to Katie, Hailey, Hilary, Heather, Andrea and Paula for helping with the games, crafts and food preparation, to Ray Batten for playing piano for the games and carols and to the moms for their donations of delicious cookies. An especially BIG ‘thank you’ to Santa for taking the time out of his busy schedule to visit with us.

Gaynor Evans

Annual Christmas Dinner

Fifty seven members and friends attended the Society's annual Christmas Dinner on Saturday, December 17th. John Morris, our outgoing President welcomed everyone and Gwilym and Irene Evans gave the Grace in Welsh and English.

The Red Dragon Lounge, decorated a few weeks earlier by the willing hands of some of our members, looked exceptionally festive and contributed to the spirit of Christmas.

As always, Jordan's Caterers served a mouth watering meal of sliced Tom Turkey together with Tim's home made cranberry sauce, succulent Ham and hot seasonal vegetables, fresh fruit and Christmas desserts. With our stomachs full, and relaxed with our tea or coffee and cookies home baked by Lorraine Jordan, John Cann's reading of "Twas the night before Christmas" and the reading by John Pritchard of the humorous poem, "The Twelve Days of Christmas Turkey", entertained us. Carols were sung with the talented Capt. Ieuan Lampshire-Jones accompanying on the organ. This was a real treat!

The raffle was drawn with one lucky table winning most of the prizes! Thanks were given to Tim Jordan and his staff, to everyone who helped organize the event, and especially to Mer Montador who so ably ran the bar. We all wished one another "Nadolig Llawen a Blwyddyn Newydd Dda" and good health and happiness in 2012, before leaving for a safe drive home.

Gaynor Evans

(Editor's Note: The moving force behind the smooth running of both the last two events is Gaynor and she deserves our heartfelt thanks.)

Major Repairs at the Red Dragon

The sagging floor of a portion of the Red Dragon is being addressed and its reconstruction is proceeding under the capable direction of John Morris.

Work began on Monday, January 9th.



Large portions of the lower hall were sealed with plastic sheets to avoid damage from the considerable dust that arises during construction. An excellent extractor fan removes most of it to the outside. The floor and wall plates have been removed and the replacement lumber has arrived. The coating of the exposed damp walls and the laying of new joists is well underway.



It is anticipated that the project will be completed in just over two weeks. Volunteer assistance is welcome!

Neville Thomas

A Visit to Llanddwyn Island – almost!

In early August, I told my hosts, Hefin and Margaret Salisbury, that I would like to see Llanddwyn Island, so we set off from Prestatyn and joined the coast road all the way until we crossed the Menai Straits and arrived in Anglesey. We by-passed Llanfair Pwllgwyngyll (where my great aunt Mary once lived) and took the A4080 to Newborough. From there we took the narrow road to Newborough Beach, passing by an excavation of a former court of the Llywelyns. Soon we reached a Forestry Commission toll road (£3 per vehicle) leading through the forest to a large parking lot by the sandhills next to the beach. The long sandy beach was full of tourists, but we were still about a mile away along the beach from Llanddwyn Island. Unfortunately, we also arrived on a day of one of the highest tides, so it really was an island and inaccessible by foot. We were only able to make out the ruins of St. Dwynwen's Church and one of the crosses. Still I was very impressed by this veritable paradise and Margaret took photos of the island and also of the Llŷn Peninsula across the water.



On our way back through Newborough, we followed a sign pointing to tea, and found ourselves at an imposing structure, the Pritchard-Jones Institute, built by Sir John Pritchard-Jones, a Newborough native. Sir John served an apprenticeship as a draper eventually rising to the position of chairman of the famous Dickens & Jones department store in London to

which he gave his name. The Institute was completed in 1905 at a cost of £20,000. It was intended to serve as a community centre for the people of Newborough. Its facilities included a library, exhibition space and meeting and lecture rooms. Today it also includes a local museum. Now, for anyone with connections to Bangor University, the Saturday night 'hop' at the Pritchard Jones Hall was the centre of social life; so it was interesting to learn of Sir John's other contributions.

We left Anglesey over Menai Bridge ("Uchel gaer uwch y weilgi") and drove to Bangor with a view to revisiting Neuadd Reichel, the Men's Residence where I spent much of my undergraduate time. Also, by a remarkable coincidence, Uta attended a Summer School there in 1958 – a couple of years before we both met in UBC. But it was covered in scaffolding and being renovated to house both male and female students.

Quite a departure from my day when women were allowed to visit our rooms 'Only on Sunday'! Here is a picture of Reichel as it was in 1958 taken by Uta.



We decided to go from Bangor to the National Slate Museum (Amgueddfa Lechi Cymru) on the shore of Llyn Padarn in Llanberis. There was much to see, including four quarrymen's cottages transported and carefully reassembled from Tanygrisiau, near Blaenau Ffestiniog. The first three were furnished to reflect a particular era; Tanygrisiau 1861 – the Golden age, Bethesda 1901 – the Penrhyn Strike, and Llanberis 1969 – the closure. The fourth was

used to show a film telling the stories of these houses and the people who lived in them. There were many collections of the equipment used together with explanations, but for me the highlight of the visit came when we met the Slate Splitter. We had just missed his last demonstration of the day, but Margaret persuaded him to meet me and when I told him that my grandfather had been a Slate Splitter in the Bryn Eglwys Quarry, he sat me down in the traditional low seat and coached me so that I split my very first smooth slate! I was allowed to keep it as a momento!



We travelled further through the majestic scenery of Snowdonia, up to Capel Curig and then down the Nant Ffrancon Pass to Bethesda. On our route, we stopped to view the mountain likeness of Queen Victoria's reclining face!



Further down the road to Bethesda, we stopped at the Peace Flame.

In 1999, seven flames of peace were flown across the oceans from five continents and united to create a single World Peace Flame in North Wales. Lit by peacemakers, the flames each represented the highest intentions for peace within their continents. The resulting World Peace Flame thus represents the combined aspirations for peace of humanity as a whole. The flame is now burning at five sites world wide.

Now, on to Bethesda, where Margaret's photo is taken from above the church overlooking the town.



Our final visit was to local residents Dr. Emyr Roberts, retired electronics lecturer at Bangor and his wife Christine, a sculptor, who designed a complete set of moveable fibre glass stones for the Gorsedd Circle replacing the need for local granite stones.

My profound thanks to Hefin and Margaret for giving me a taste of so many of North Wales' unique features.

D. Ll. W.

Forthcoming Events

Monday, January 30th at 7.30 pm
Welsh Lessons (possibly in the Upper Hall).

Wednesday February 1st at 7:30 pm
Executive Meeting

Memorial Service for Phyllis Owens

Many have heard that Mum passed away suddenly and amazingly unexpectedly on December 22, 2011. Mum was born into and lived her entire life within the Welsh community in Vancouver. She prized her culture and most especially the many friends within the society over the years, all of which gave her great joy. With this in mind, her Welsh association will be an integral part of a celebration of her life to be held on **Sunday, February 5 at 2:00 pm** at West Point Grey United Church, 4595 West 8th Avenue in Vancouver. The church is on the corner of West 8th Avenue and Tolmie Street. In lieu of flowers, donations may be given to the Vancouver Welsh Society Cultural Fund or West Point Grey United Church Senior's Ministry. (Message from Wilf and Lynn Owens-Whalen)

Monday February 6th at 7.30 pm
GENERAL MEETING

Wednesday, Feb 8th at 12:00 noon **The Cambrian Bookworms** will be discussing "Sarah's Key" by Tatiana de Rosnay.

Saturday, February 11th at 7.30 pm
Pub Night at the Red Dragon
Featuring fabulous Welsh Rugby from the past. Bar Snacks will be available.

Sunday February 12th at 11:00 am **Bilingual Church Service** followed by a **Tê Bach**.

Monday, February 13th at 7.30 pm
Welsh Lessons

Monday, February 20th at 10:30 am
Welsh Speaking - Siarad Cymraeg
Monday, February 20th at 7.30 pm
Welsh Lessons

Monday, February 27th from 10:00 am till 3:00 pm **Workparty Day.**
A delicious lunch will be provided. We look forward to seeing you there!

Thursday, March 1st at 7.30 pm
Traditional Open House
Our traditional **St. David's Day Open House and Celebration** will be held in the Lower Hall. Cawl Cenin will be served. Come along and join in the fun.

St. David's Day Dinner

Our annual St. David's Day Dinner will be held on **Saturday, March 3rd** at the Cambrian Hall. Doors will be open at 6 pm and dinner will be served at 7 pm. The event will be catered by Jordan's and the menu will include:
Leek Soup, Roast Beef, Chicken, Hot Seasonable Vegetables. Delicious Deserts, Fruit Plate, Coffee, Tea and Bread Rolls and Butter. Entertainment will be provided by Celtic Harpist, Patricia Sereno..
Please reserve early. Tickets at \$40 each can be obtained from Gaynor Evans at 604-271-3134 or fgevans @telus.net

Monday, March 5th at 7.30 pm
Welsh Lessons

Wednesday March 7th at 7:30 pm **Executive Meeting**

Sunday March 11th at 11:00 am **Bilingual Church Service** followed by a **Tê Bach**.

Wednesday, March 14th at 12:00 noon
The Cambrian Bookworms

Monday, March 19th at 10:30 am
Welsh Speaking - Siarad Cymraeg

Monday, March 19th at 7.30 pm
Welsh Lessons

Monday, March 26th from 10:00 am till 3:00 pm
Workparty Day.

A delicious lunch will be provided. We look forward to seeing you there!

Advanced Notice!
Grand Spring Sale
Saturday, April 14th
10.00 am till 2.00 pm

In recent years this has been the most successful fundraiser for the society and, with your help, this will be the best yet.

The stalls will include:

Home made baking and preserves, China, Collectibles, Pre-owned Books, CD's, DVD's and Videos, Kitchenware, Linens and Jewelry, "White Elephant", Children's Wear and Toys, "Things Welsh", Electrical and Electronics.

Now is the time to start collecting any items that you would like to contribute. Please let us know if you have an item worth \$25 or more since we plan to hold a Silent Auction. Volunteers are needed both before the sale and on the day.

More details to follow.

Dylan Thomas and his Aunties

I received an email from David N. Thomas, the Dylan Thomas biographer, who has written several books on Dylan. One of the more recent was made into the film "The Edge of Love" and another "Fatal Neglect", an analysis of Dylan's death in New York, was discussed in our

November 2008 newsletter. Readers will recall his article in Cambria entitled *From Fountain to River; Dylan Thomas and the Bont* which was discussed in our December 2010 Newsletter.

Now Cambria (Autumn 2011) has just published his article on Dylan and his aunts. I personally find this a most illuminating article; his poetry makes much more sense to me and maybe especially *Fernhill*. There is also a much fuller version online at <https://sites.google.com/site/dylanthomasandhis-aunties/> which has source notes, photos and family trees, as well as a number of subsidiary papers. This site is full of rich detail, emblematic of the thorough research of the author.

To quote David N. Thomas:

"The article covers the ways in which Dylan's various aunts, including Florence's Llangain and Ferryside cousins, helped in his upbringing. It also has a stab at suggesting how Dylan's preoccupation in his teenage poetry with death, and with birth and fertility, were anchored in his family experiences. Finally, the online version also draws attention to the depth of Dylan's roots in the Llansteffan peninsula. Please pass this email on to people you know have an interest in Dylan (or in aunties or the Llansteffan peninsula)."

I pass this on with pleasure. In my not so humble opinion, anyone professing an interest in Dylan Thomas should read it. Maybe even subscribe to Cambria!

D.L.I.W.

Postscript:

The Autumn issue of Cambria also contains a review by Meic Stephens of Byron Rogers' latest book. Byron is best known for his prize-winning biography of R.S. Thomas. He is Alwyn's cousin

Welsh Cakes on the Campaign Trail

If Republican frontrunner Mitt Romney becomes President of the United States, visitors to the White House might well be treated to Welsh cakes baked by the First Lady.

There have been several reports in recent weeks that Ann Romney treated campaigners and journalists to home made Welsh cakes on her husband's campaign bus. In one report, CNN journalist Wolf Blitzer said: "When I was on Mitt Romney's bus in Iowa, Ann Romney gave me a small homemade Welsh cake. Delicious." One of the Romney sons told the UK Daily Telegraph that their mother followed a recipe passed down from her Welsh grandmother. (The Telegraph published the recipe.)

Few people were aware of Ann Romney's Welsh ancestry before the current Presidential campaign. Her father Edward Davies was born into a coal mining family in Nantffyllon, in the Llyfni Valley near Maesteg. He emigrated to America with his parents in 1929 at the age of fifteen after his father was injured in a coal mine accident.

The Davies family eventually settled in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, and Edward was educated at the General Motors Institute of Technology in Flint, Michigan. He went on to become a self-made businessman, co-founding a very successful multi-million dollar company, Jered Industries and serving a Mayor of Bloomfield Hills. Edward Davies' daughter Ann, whose forebears were Welsh Congregationalists, converted to Mormonism and married Mitt Romney, the son of Michigan Governor and prominent Republican George Romney.

The marriage of Ann Davies, a second generation American of Welsh working class

ancestry, to the wealthy equity businessman and Massachusetts Governor, could be viewed as a classic American dream. Some commentators have even suggested that Ann's working class background could help change the current negative image of her husband as a wealthy elitist out of touch with the ordinary working Americans.

Ann Romney is proud of her Welsh roots, which she has passed on to her five sons. On one visit to Wales, the entire family went down a mine to experience the conditions that their ancestors faced. At one campaign stop in Iowa, Ann summed up her feelings about her Welsh background: "I am a coal miner's granddaughter. I feel I am just one foot away from where that mine was and how close we all are, all of us, to the sacrifices of our parents and grand-parents who tried to make a better life for us."

There 's obviously a lot of feeling behind those delicious homemade Welsh cakes.
Eifion Williams

Don Thomas Autobiography (1932 - 2010)

Don was born and raised in Glyncorrwg, near Port Talbot. His fascinating life story spans his years in Wales, in architecture, the Middle East, Vancouver plus innumerable journeys and adventures around the world. Here is the link to access "A Life A Little Less Ordinary" by Donald L. Thomas:

https://docs.google.com/open?id=0Bxa3L_3oztqTMmQwYjEyZjctNGQ5Zi00NTI2LTkwNGQtZGZhYjQ1MjRiNDgl

Annual Membership Renewals

Name:.....Phone No.....

Address:.....

City:.....Postal Code:

e-mail.....

It would be very helpful if you would indicate whether you wish to receive a copy of the Newsletter by mail or if you are content to view the Newsletter on the website.

You will then be notified by e-mail when the latest edition appears on the site.

I wish to continue to receive the Newsletter by mail (YES or NO).....

Membership Dues for 2012: Regular: \$45

Family (Member, Spouse & Children to 18): \$70

Seniors/Students: \$30

Out of Town (50 miles or more): \$20

Note that there has been no increase once again in the membership dues. Additional sums as donations are welcomed! Cheques or Money Orders should be made payable to

“THE WELSH SOCIETY OF VANCOUVER”.

Send your renewals to: **Alcwyn Rogers, Membership Secretary, Cambrian Hall,
215 East 17th Avenue, Vancouver B.C., V5V 1A6**

Please circle any committee(s) that you are willing to serve on in 2012:

Bar/Social

Building

Church Service

Welsh night

Membership

Other?

We would welcome any suggestions you have for the coming year. Please indicate your ideas in the space below.