

THE WELSH SOCIETY OF VANCOUVER
Cymdeithas Gymreig Vancouver

Cambrian News

Mis Mehefin 2022

June 2022

Society Newsletter – Cylchgrawn y Gymdeithas



Tribune Bay, Hornby Island (Photo courtesy: Ruth Baldwin)

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The Cambrian News

From the Editor

Yma O Hyd

Yes - we're still here. And we've been busy. Despite continuing COVID restrictions the Executive have continued to meet - mostly by Zoom, a couple of times in person.

The newsletter is under "new management". I'm Jacquie Little. I have been on the Executive of the Welsh Society for a couple of years. I am originally from Abergavenny, and came to Canada with my husband, two daughters and our cat just over fifteen years ago. I am new at this game so please bear with me while I get to know how things work. Hopefully I will now be back on course to produce three issues of the newsletter a year. Any society member who would like to contribute articles, anecdotes, photos, items of interest - please do not hesitate to email me, Jacquie Little. It would be wonderful to hear from some of our younger members.

We have a new membership coordinator, Johanna Hickey, who has already been making tremendous progress developing this role. We will be running a feature introducing Johanna and explaining her responsibilities in a future edition of the newsletter.

Alcwyn has updated the VWS publicity leaflet and has continued to maintain the website.

Wynford has maintained contact with our regular rental groups which has ensured the rental calendar is very full since the easing of COVID restrictions.

The Red Dragon is now operational. A little while ago the cooler was replaced. It was quite a task to remove the old one and manoeuvre in the new one, involving some rebuilding of the actual bar. Since then ceiling and walls have been painted. There is now LED lighting throughout. This enterprise and building maintenance has been led by Paul with help and support from Wynford, Roy, and Andrew (Thomas).

Kathy and the Social Committee have also continued to meet. It was unfortunate that “A Child’s Christmas in Wales” – something that has become a Welsh Society tradition – had to be cancelled. A lot of behind the scenes planning was involved for this event.

Zoom has been our ally for “social” gatherings over the last two years.

Our first in-person event at the hall was a Quiz Night on April 8th. An enjoyable evening attended by about twenty people. I know that more events are in the pipeline so please check your inbox for notifications – there will be a very special “Welcome Back” event on Friday September 23rd.

Pat has continued in her Community Outreach role. She has maintained links with local and North American groups that have a Welsh/Celtic connection.

Along with a small group of volunteers she recently represented the society at

the West Van Bridges Festival and Scotsfest in Coquitlam.

Throughout the pandemic Lynn Owens-Whalen has remained steadfast as our President. Thanks to her we have a Society that continues to be forward looking, inclusive and engaged. It has not been an easy task over the last two years but due to strong leadership we have come through it. Lynn has headed the Executive, and the Society, with pragmatism and selflessness.

I cannot close this editorial without a huge “Thank You” to Ruth Baldwin who edited and compiled the newsletter for the last six years! Yes, an amazing six years. She has done an absolutely wonderful job. I have very big boots to fill. Ruth has been a great resource and support to me. Ruth is still very much involved in the Society so you’ll still see her around. Her latest venture is coordinating the Welsh Society Monday walks on alternate Mondays. If you are interested in joining in you can email Ruth for details at :

dysgwrcymraeg375@gmail.com

Forthcoming Events

All events and activities of the Vancouver Welsh Society were cancelled or postponed during lockdown. However, plans to reactivate activities are in the works. Please continue to consult the Vancouver Welsh Society website <http://www.welshsociety.com> for current information.

Typical Monthly Events

This list is for information only! All events have been cancelled or postponed until further notice. Please consult the Society Website for updated information as activities are reintroduced.

Sundays: 2nd Sunday of the month: Bilingual Church Service. The exception is in November when the service is on the Sunday of the Welsh weekend.

Mondays: 1st Monday of the month for Board Members only: Executive Meeting at 7:00 pm.

Mondays: 2nd and 3rd Mondays of the month the Red Cardigan Folk Club meets at 7:00 pm.

Mondays: 3rd Monday of the month: The Welsh speaking group meets at 10:30 am.

Mondays: 4th Monday of the month: Volunteer working party: 10:00 am until 3:30 pm.

Wednesdays: 2nd Wednesday of the month: The Book Club meets at 12:00 noon. **The Book Club is meeting on Zoom during the pandemic. The book for September is *The Book of Lost Names* by Kristen Harmel. Please email for details: gillianrogers67@gmail.com**

Wednesdays: 3rd Wednesday of the month: The Genealogy Group meets from 10:30 am – 12:30 pm in the Red Dragon.

Thursdays: Welsh Language lessons: The schedule varies and details are shown [here](#).

General Meetings: The dates of the General Meetings will be decided upon by the executive. The **AGM** for year #1 is held in February of year #2, e.g. the 2021 AGM will be held in February 2022.

New event – alternate Mondays – Welsh Society Walk. Coordinator is Ruth Baldwin.

Contact at :
dysgwrcymraeg375@gmail.com

Vancouver Orpheus Male Choir

Please refer to the choir's website for information:

<http://vancouverorpheus.org>

Vancouver Welsh Men's Choir

Please refer to the choir's website for information:

<https://vwmc.ca/>

Submissions by Members

Marilyn Hames completed a dissertation in Celtic Studies for her MA. Some of you may remember her putting a request out to Welsh Society members a while ago to complete a questionnaire to help with her research related to why and how we try to maintain our Welsh connections and culture. She is very kindly sharing this with us. A number of extracts will be published in forthcoming issues of the newsletter.

Thank you Marilyn.

How did we get here from there? (The back-story to the VWS)

Part 1—Welsh history and motives for migration

From conquering nomads to territorial tribes who settled in Wales, by the time of Hywel Da, the Cymru had laws¹ dictating property rights, obligations and social pecking order based on kinship ties, with bards to sing their praises, preserving the memory of prestigious pedigrees. Eventually defeated and colonized, they had to adapt, only reuniting if inspired by a common cause. After the Act of Union, society splintered into two main groups: a large rural Welsh-speaking underclass versus the ambitious noble landowners and the wealthy who looked to England for advancement.² By mid-Victorian times,

the two social classes at loggerheads were the Welsh-speaking, Nonconformist, Liberal peasants, miners and foundry-men, versus English-speaking, Anglican, Tory landowners, ironmasters and mine managers.³ This over-simplification ignores the rise of the urban middle class, including professionals from whose ranks most of Vancouver's recent Welsh immigrants emerged, but epitomizes the two ends of the social spectrum with their own loyalties and historic motivations to move.

Welsh history, with its laws, crises and socio-economic conditions that plunged many into poverty, forced the destitute to rely on charity, prompted people move from the rural to urban and industrial areas,⁴ and drove waves of emigration abroad, is well-documented elsewhere. Therefore, (in this series) we will only scratch the surface of that story—enough to let us dig deeper into Canadian soil and delve into the context of the Vancouver-Welsh mindset.

Since 1485 many Welsh people have been on the move. Publications often refer to three main phases of migration, but because the flow to B.C. was lower and later than that to other parts of North America or destinations in Britain, it is instructive to list the conditions that motivated smaller moves and waves too, as summarized below.

In the 15th and 16th centuries the nobility and the ambitious moved to England for education, advancement at court, in their professions and

commercial endeavors—especially in London. Farmers and craftspeople travelled to market towns, drovers took livestock further afield and sailors plied coastal trade, while some rural poor migrated to urban centres for work. However, the 17th and 18th centuries saw transatlantic migrations to the East Coast of North America, beginning with agricultural settlements in Canada's Maritimes⁵ and America's colonies of Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania. The latter attracted wealthy Dissenters fleeing religious oppression, such as Quakers and Baptists, as well as idealists hoping to preserve their Welsh language or knew no other. By 1700 over 6000 had already settled in the Welsh Tract.⁶

The 19th century began with rural migrants escaping poverty, especially from West Wales when high rents, shorter farm tenancies, and finally tolls sparked the Rebecca Riots, but failed harvests on top brought the threat of famine, destitution and the workhouse except for paupers whose passage to North America was funded by their parishes, and the lucky ones who could afford to emigrate, perhaps assisted by family. After the Napoleonic War, an economic downturn followed by fluctuations in the coal and metals markets sparked a series of strikes and pressure groups like the Scotch Cattle. The bitter strife sent waves of miners and industrial workers in search of better conditions and pay in other parts of the Empire, but thousands ended up in America encouraged by ties and chain migration.⁷ Staying closer to home,

some moved from rural areas to the Valleys to take up new trades while farming smallholdings, but recessions often defeated them. Other craftspeople, such as the weavers whose cottage industry could no longer compete with the English woolen mills, joined the ranks of a quarter of a million Welsh exiles living in London, Liverpool or Manchester where they built Welsh chapels and societies.⁸

In the 20th Century, Wales was hard hit by high unemployment during the Depression when 380,000 left, including many young people from the Valleys,²⁹ followed by an exodus of graduates in the 1950s to 70s, then another significant outmigration of skilled workers in the wake of pit closures and twilight years for heavy industries as Wales moved to a post-industrial society.

(Part 2 in this Series will look at the history of Welsh emigration to North America, while subsequent episodes will focus next on what brought Welsh people to BC, then to Vancouver, and finally to the VWS where will shall pick up the story of its activities, events and members.)

¹ J. Rhys and D. Brynmor-Jones, *The Welsh People*, Fourth Edition (London: Unwin, 1906), pp. 180-196. Full-blooded *Cymru* believed they had a common ancestor, but *Cymru* status could be conferred following inter-marriage after four generations, or nine generations of residency. Kindred to the 4th degree affected succession, to the 7th carried responsibility for homicides, with the 9th degree from a common ancestor comprising a '*cenedl*' group, (p. 196). M.E. Owen and D. Jenkins, (eds), *The Welsh Law of*

Women, Kindle Edition (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2017), Locs. 435-6, 518-532 and 2709ff. In terms of marriage, this explains its different forms and the importance of kinship, with legal responsibilities spanning four generations in medieval Welsh Laws.

² G.E. Jones and D. Smith, (eds), *The People of Wales* (Llandysul: Gwasg Gomer, 1999), p.79.

³ Lewis, *Welsh Americans—A History of Assimilation in the Coalfields*, Kindle Edition (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), pp. 14-15.

⁴ Small-holders, crofters and upland squatters on common land were gradually squeezed out by enclosures, bad harvests, recessions or plague, then the introduction of tithes, tolls and shorter tenancies added to their plight.

⁵ The Maritimes is the term for Canada's Atlantic region and provinces, but not BC on its Pacific coast.

⁶ Jones and Smith, *People of Wales*, p. 96. The Welsh 'made up perhaps a third of the... 20,000 white settlers'.

⁷ Lewis, *Welsh Americans*, pp. 5-6. This quotes 30,000 arriving from Wales by 1850, and 100,000 by 1890.

⁸ E. McLean, *The Extent of 'Welshness' Among the Exiled Welsh Living in England, Scotland and Ireland* (Lampeter: UWTSO M.A. Dissertation, 2013), pp.11-12.

⁹ Jones and Smith, *People of Wales*, p.190. Most of the 50,000 who left the Rhondda were 'aged between fifteen and twenty-nine', including the devastating 'exodus of [marriageable] young women'.

Several members of the Society have passed away in recent months – Paula Davies, Ray Batten, Betty Morgan and Terry Probert. The Executive and members of the Vancouver Welsh Society send their sincere condolences to their loved ones and friends. They will be very much missed.



Hughesovka, Ukraine

You may not have heard of Hughesovka, you may think it does not sound real. It is, however, very real. It is a town in eastern Ukraine which has been very much in the news over the last few months for all the worst imaginable reasons ... It is the town of Donetsk.

It is a town that was originally established by John Hughes, a Cyfartha-born industrialist, in 1870. Since that time it has been known as Aleksandrovka, Yuzivka, Stalin and Stalino.

Hughes had built his own foundry in Newport and made his name in developing armour plating for ships. The then Tsarist Russian government wanted

his expertise for a naval fortress on the Baltic. Around 100 workers and their families sailed with him to Russia. The Donbass region was chosen because of its rich mineral deposits, perfect for steel, iron and coal production. Over the next twenty years the new town was established around an iron works and collieries. It developed in a very similar fashion to the South Wales valleys. A hospital, schools, bath houses and tea rooms were provided for the community. I'm not sure how big the town became as I have seen reports ranging from 50,000 to one million people. Whatever its size it was a thriving ex-pat community.

Hughes died in 1889 during a business trip to St. Petersburg. His New Russia Company was taken over by his four surviving sons. The works continued to expand in the 1890's and again at the outbreak of World War 1.

The Bolshevik Revolution (1917) meant that a lot of the company's British migrant employees returned home. The Communists, under whom the works survived and prospered, renamed the city Stalino.

There are still believed to be descendants living in the region.

In 2004 a statue of Hughes was built outside the engineering university.

There is, apparently, a song by Manic Street Preachers that was inspired by Hughes - 'Dreaming A City (Hughesovska)' which was produced in 2014 on their Futurology album.

There is also a book by Colin Thomas 'Dreaming a City: From Wales to Ukraine', published in 2009.

Who knows what the future of Donetsk will be now?

References : Hughesovska: The city founded by Welsh Immigrants, Steve Duffy, BBC News

The Welsh history of Ukraine region now occupied by Russia, Nathan Bevan, Wales Online

Euro 2012: Donetsk founded by Welsh ironmaster John Hughes, Andy Roberts, BBC News

Event Report

Submitted by Pat Morris

Bridge Festival, West Vancouver was held over the weekend of June 3rd and 4th at Ambleside Park. The festival celebrates BC's diversity with immersive cultural experiences and live performances from local and international performers.

This was a highly successful event. There were national Pavilions representing many countries : Brazil, Peru, China, Japan, Iran, Korea, Ukraine, First Nations. Our Welsh table was the "Star of the UK" tent. This was well situated, next to the Queens Arms pub and all the seating for the beer garden surrounded by the food trucks. The seating was well placed to enjoy the music from the stage. The success of our Welsh corner was thanks to the hard work of our wonderful volunteers and the excellent organization, headed by

Dave Jones and also to our musical duo – Paul and Brian, who played on both days. Their music sounded great in the open air and was very popular with visitors and also by the Scottish Country Dancers who attracted a crowd as they rehearsed outside our tent for a later performance onstage, with Paul and Brian accompanying them!

Johanna noted that there were a lot of Chinese and Japanese walking by, with most of the interest focused on Welsh Cakes! Edward and Elizabeth did, however, have the opportunity to talk in Welsh to a few passers-by.

Jackie and Steve did sterling work on Saturday. Jackie with her own special style and Steve with his wealth of information about all things outdoors, both locally and in Snowdonia.

A link has been established with the Vancouver Historical Society regarding a local Welsh connection. The pioneer Welshman Jack Thomas' house is very near Ambleside Park and is in danger of being demolished by the Council. The Historical Society have been granted a reprieve for 2 years, to raise \$2 million to preserve Navvy Jack's House; so we had their flyers at our table, promoting the fundraiser.

Contact details of visitors expressing an interest in the Society were collected for follow-up.

The weather could have been more cooperative, but the crowds came anyway.

One comment was that there was no cup of tea! And also that Salty's Fish and Chips had seafood but no fish.

Things You Should Never Say to a person from Wales

We've all heard these I'm sure, makes me cringe every time!

“Wales is in England, right?”

“I can do a great Welsh accent”

“Does anybody even speak Welsh anymore?”

Welsh Proverb

Pridd y wadd sy'n achosi dyn i faglu, nid mynyddoedd.

People trip over molehills not mountains.

A warning to watch out for the little things in life that will cause you problems, rather than the big things you had been worrying about.

Welsh Interest Events

The Hay Festival ran from May 25th – June 4th. Although this event has already happened interviews and performances can still be accessed using the Hay Player feature. There is a charge for this but I feel it is well worth it. The Festival has so many interesting and diverse discussions it is impossible to listen to or watch all you want while it is running. Also it means that you can watch favourite personalities multiple times.

I watched an interview with Max Boyce. I do believe that Hillary Clinton was another one of their featured guests.

The Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod runs from July 7th – July 10th after a two year hiatus. Not be confused with the National Eisteddfod.

Royal Welsh Agricultural Show, Llanelwedd, Builth Wells, Powys - July 18th - July 20th. Not everyone's cup of tea I know but I love these events and am hoping to attend for at least one day.

National Eisteddfod running from July 30th - August 6th. This year it is being held in Tregaron, Ceredigion. A welcome return after the two year COVID break.

S4C usually provides coverage for the Eisteddfodau. Radio Wales and Radio Cymru (access on BBC Sounds) also run reports and features.

News from our Welsh American World

North American Festival of Wales – Philadelphia. September 1st-4th. I would imagine it would be very difficult to book accommodation now to attend this. Experience hiraeth and enjoyment ; plenty of music and singing, seminars, presentations. I am yet to attend one of these events Maybe next year

We will be hosting a very special ‘Welcome Back’ event at the Cambrian Hall on Friday September 23rd.

Check your email for further details as they become available.

The Cambrian News is issued three times a year - in January, May and September.



Byddwch yn iach ac arhoswch yn ddiogel!