

THE WELSH SOCIETY OF VANCOUVER
Cymdeithas Gymraeg Vancouver

Cambrian News

Mai i Mehefin
2011

May to June
2011

Society Newsletter - Cylchgrawn y Gymdeithas



Paul, Mary & Jane in Royal Wedding Attire
CAMBRIAN HALL, 215 East 17th Ave, Vancouver B.C. V5V 1A6

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The Cambrian News

From The Editor:

April saw two successful events.

The Spring Sale brought us together to volunteer our time and to donate our goods and services for an harmonious result!

The celebration of the Royal Wedding was a most memorable and thoroughly enjoyable evening with everyone entering into the spirit of the occasion. The competition for the Best Dressed Wedding Guest brought out elegant fashionable attires with colourful hats very much in evidence.

I enjoyed reading Burrow's 1939 R.A.C. County Map & Gazetteer of South Wales, donated by Anne Bosch and I'm sure it will interest others.

I have included a letter to Ninnau in part because some of you will have encountered Hafina Phillips as an instructor at Cymdeithas Madog Welsh language courses, but also because of the influence *Capel Yorath* in the small community of Cwmgiedd has had on Welsh music. Eifion Williams discussed this influence in a talk at our February Church Service.

I was especially glad to be able to report on David W. Spencer's entry into the B.C. Business Hall of Fame. All too often the contribution of the Welsh to the development of Canada goes unrecognized. As you read in the January newsletter, Eifion Williams wrote an article about him a few years ago with some of his information being provided by Chuck Davis.

Finally, most members have renewed their memberships for 2011, but some still have not. Please take this opportunity to do so.

David Llewelyn Williams

Forthcoming Events

Monday, May 30th 10:00 am till 3:00 pm
Workparty Day Lunch will be provided and everyone is welcome.

Wednesday June 1st at 7:30 pm
Executive Meeting

Monday June 6th at 7.30 pm
GENERAL MEETING

Wednesday, June 8th at 11:30 am
Book Club will meet at a new location to discuss "Blink" by Malcolm Gladwell. Phone Jane at 604-732-5448 for details.

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

An invitation is extended to members and friends to join the Social Committee in the Red Dragon for

"A GRAND FINALE"

Pre- Father's Day Quiz followed by Strawberries and Cream Dessert
Saturday, June 18th at 7:30pm

This is the last social evening before we break for our summer vacations, so please join us for a evening of fun.

Monday, June 20th **CANCELLED**
Welsh Speaking - Siarad Cymraeg

Monday, June 27th 10:00 am - 3:00 pm
Workparty Day. Lunch will be provided and everyone is welcome.

Welsh in the Fraser Valley

On Tuesday May 10th a small group of "Welsh in the Fraser Valley" met at the Trinity Memorial Church, Abbotsford. We enjoyed coffee, welsh cakes, pikelets, bara brith and some lively discussion. Despite the

less than expected attendance, we were able to plan for future events this year. It was suggested that, in order for more members to be able to come, a regular day could be established. We will set aside the fourth Friday of each month to meet for a Pot Luck evening meal.

The first one will take place at the home of Grace and Martin Gouldthorpe on Friday, June 24th.

The July 22nd event will be a Picnic/BBQ at Mill Park, Abbotsford,

August 26th, Dan and Ruth Dorling in Mission will host the event at their home or in a park nearby.

If you would like to join us, please contact Pat at 604.536.9556.

Membership Secretary's Message

Dear Member,

If you have **not already paid** your membership fee for 2011, please make the cheque payable to 'The Welsh Society of Vancouver' and send it to:

The Cambrian Hall
215 East 17th Avenue
Vancouver, V5V 1A6

The respective annual membership fees are shown below:

Regular member (single)	\$45
Family (joint)	\$70
Senior (65 & over)	\$30
Student	\$30
Out of Town (over 50 miles)	\$20

If you would like to discuss your Welsh Society membership, please do not hesitate in contacting me. **If you have already paid your membership fee please disregard this message.**

I look forward to your continued support.
Best Regards, Mark

The Spring Sale

Our Annual Spring Sale on April 16th generated net revenue of about \$3000 for our Building Fund. Our home-made preserves and baked goods were again very much in demand and together with the Silent Auction of donated items accounted for about half the proceeds. Visitors enjoyed the teas in the Red Dragon – as did the volunteers manning the stalls! After the first flood of buyers in the first hour and a half, we had a lull at lunch time before the afternoon ‘tide’.



A lull in the action!

Thanks to all the volunteers and also to those who contributed to the Sale.



Jane and Pat preparing the preserves and baked goods.



Gillian and Mary preparing items for the Silent Auction.

I have been informed that two former members of our society associated with the Vancouver Welsh Rugby Football Club passed away this year.

Bob Weston, who hailed from Newport, founded the Vancouver Welsh Rugby Football Club and in the early 80's he organized many visiting Rugby teams from Britain (Newport, Porthcawl, Penygraig, Cardiff, the Welsh Second team, and Havant to name a few) to play the Vancouver Welsh. The visitors all enjoyed the refreshments and hospitality of the Red Dragon. In the autumn of 1982, with the extra revenue these visits had generated, Bob was able to purchase the tables, chairs and barstools, which we still enjoy today. Bob died on January 25, 2011, aged 80.

Richard Evans, for a time Vice President of the Vancouver Welsh RFC, died suddenly on February 7 in New Zealand in a boating accident at age 63. Born in North Wales, Rick was formerly a London Metropolitan police officer who joined the Vancouver Police Department shortly after moving to Canada. He was also for many years a well-respected Rugby referee.

The Royal Social Committee
is commended by The Queen to invite
You and a Guest to celebrate

*The Marriage of His Royal Highness Prince
William of Wales to Miss Catherine Middleton*

at the Red Dragon in the Cambrian Hall, on
Friday, 29th April, 2011 at 7 p.m.
A recording of the Wedding will be shown
on the big screen at 7.30 p.m.
A prize will be awarded to the
Best Dressed Wedding Guest!

This announcement heralded a most festive
well attended evening with all entering into
the spirit of the occasion. Heather Davies,
whose idea it was, had appropriately
decorated the Hall.



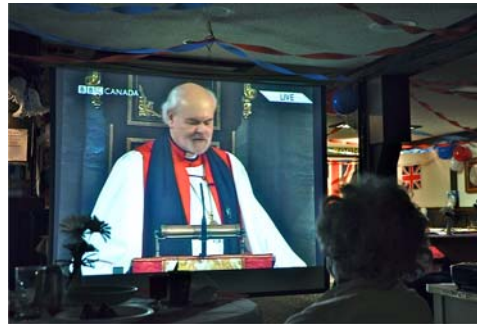
British and Welsh Flags



Paul Lievesley had recorded the Ceremony
so that we could view it in excerpts during
the evening, allowing suitable breaks for the

ample supply of donated supper foods and a
large Cake!

The Wedding itself had a strong Welsh
flavour, from the hymn tunes of Cwm
Rhondda and Blaenwern to the Welsh Gold
that formed the ring. Archbishop of
Canterbury, Rowan Williams, himself a
member of Gorsedd y Beirdd (Bardic
Circle), hails from Ystradgynlais and the
BBC Commentator was Huw Edwards.



Gwilym Evans, Paul Lievesley and John
Pritchard undertook the challenging task of
choosing the Best Dressed Wedding Guest
from among the many elegantly attired
contestants. Mary Lewis was declared a
most worthy winner!





Hats!

More Photos from the Wedding



Lynn with Phyllis in Welsh Red



More contestants.



Alcwyn and Gillian colour coordinated.



The Three Runners Up



Pat relaxes after the preparations.

To conclude, we toasted the Bride and Groom with another form of Welsh Gold (Aur Cymru) – Pendragon Welsh Whisky provided by your editor.

Jane Byrne thanked all those who had participated in this spirited evening, especially Heather and the Social Committee and Paul. We all left in a rare good humour after a most enjoyable evening. (Photos of this event by Uta Williams)



Paul enjoys a Supper Break

A Letter to Ninnau

We were pleased to read in Betty Cullingworth's article in last month's Ninnau that Hefina Phillips was to be awarded the first Gold Award at the Ontario Welsh Festival for her significant contribution to Welsh life in the Province.

Hefina grew up in the small village of Cwmgiedd, now part of the former mining town of Ystradgynlais. It is likely that few people have ever heard of Cwmgiedd despite its rich cultural history. Cwmgiedd, the valley of the Giedd, a small river flowing from the Black Mountain into the River Tawe, was never a mining village, although many of its inhabitants worked in the coal and iron industries in neighbouring villages. The village is barely a mile long and no more than a quarter mile wide at its widest with a population of a few hundred people, almost all Welsh-speaking. The surrounding area is dotted with farms stretching up the slopes of the Black Mountain.

In 1942 the village was the setting for a British documentary film, *The Silent Village*, based on the wartime destruction of the Czech village of Lidice. The entire population of Cwmgiedd was involved in the film, which has now become an iconic part of local folklore.

The most prominent feature of Cwmgiedd is the big chapel in the middle of the village – Yorath Chapel, *Capel Yorath*, one of the earliest Methodist chapels in Wales. The chapel held its 200th Anniversary in 2006 but Methodist worship is recorded as having been carried on in the area for many years before 1806, mostly in remote farmhouses in the surrounding hills. Hefina's promotion of the Welsh language and Welsh culture in Ontario is almost certainly influenced by her early years attending Yorath Chapel.

In this respect she is in excellent company. There was Thomas Levi, who went to work at the Ynyscedwyn Iron Works at nine years of age. He regularly attended Yorath Chapel Sunday School where he became recognized as a gifted orator and started preaching at an early age, eventually becoming a Minister at the largest Methodist Chapel in Wales, The Tabernacle, Aberystwyth. Thomas Levi published many poems and essays but his main fame rests on his creation of *Trysorfa y Plant*, a periodical that in the first half of the last century sold approximately 40,000 copies a month, greater than any Welsh-language periodical up to that time.

One of Thomas Levi's close friends was J.T. Rees, also a product of Yorath Chapel. J.T. Rees went to work in a coalmine at the age of nine. At a young age his musical talent led to his teaching a Sunday School class in tonic sol-fa. He later spent a few years in the United States and Canada, obtaining a Bachelor of Music degree from the University of Toronto before moving to Aberystwyth, where he spent the rest of his life. He became known throughout Wales as an outstanding musician, adjudicator and conductor and as the composer of numerous anthems, overtures, cantatas, choral works and hymn tunes.

One of J.T. Rees's Sunday School pupils in Yorath Chapel was Daniel Protheroe, who conducted his first choir, *Côr Ystrad*, before he was eighteen years old. He moved to the United States as a young man, eventually settling in Chicago and becoming a well-known teacher of music and a celebrated conductor. Daniel Protheroe is remembered as the composer of choral works such as *Invictus*, *Crusaders* and *Nidaros*, in addition to many hymn tunes.

These are just a few of the talented individuals nurtured in Yorath Chapel. In

recent years Cwmgiedd has produced a new generation of literary stars such as writer-director Ed Thomas, who won the BBC Writer of the Year award in 1993, and award-winning television writer Ewart Alexander.

We congratulate Hefina on her award and are especially proud of her connection with Cwmgiedd. For all of us with roots in Cwmgiedd, Hefina is part of the family. *Llongyfarchiadau Hefina oddiwrth hen wynebau o'r Ystrad.*

Jane Byrne, Vancouver
Eifion Williams, Vancouver
Hetty Martin, Ottawa

Burrow's R.A.C. County Map and Gazetteer for South Wales

I received from Anne Bosch a copy of the Second Edition of Burrow's R.A.C. County Map and Gazetteer for South Wales, which covers Pembrokeshire, Cardiganshire, Carmarthenshire, Breconshire and Glamorgan, retailing at for 1 shilling and 6 pence. There was no publication date on it. However, on reading the Aberystwyth entry, I discovered that Marine Parade had been 'reconstructed after serious damage by 1938 gales'. Also under the entry for Dan-yr-Ogof Caves it stated that they would likely be opened to the public in 1939. So this edition was probably produced in 1939.

The guide is really very well thought out with detailed maps, brief descriptions of about 800 places of interest and 9 Circular Motor Runs in South Wales. There are also about 25 photographs; three in particular appealed to me: Coracles on the Towy, Craig Gôch Dam in the Elan Valley, and St. Govan's Chapel.

Twenty-nine 18-hole Golf Courses are listed, with easily the most expensive being

Royal Porthcawl at 5 shillings a round but 7/6 pence on the weekend. There were also thirty 9-hole courses at 2 shillings a round. Several 9-hole courses and the 18-hole Aberystwyth course were closed on Sundays, in true Methodist tradition.

The advertisements included a large selection of Hotel and Bed & Breakfast accommodations. For example, Caerleon Private Hotel in Aberystwyth offered weekly rates from 3 to 4 guineas and Bed and Breakfast for 6 shillings and 6 pence. The New Continental Café and Restaurant in Cardiff claimed "The most modern American Soda Fountain in Wales".

Finally the guide offers advice to the tourist including the following, "The curious upward inflexion and the sing-song effect of Welsh speech may charm or irritate you, according to circumstance, but your welcome to South Wales, and an exceedingly rich reward when you get there, can certainly be relied upon."

This copy is donated by Anne to our Archives. I will bring it to the next General Meeting so that interested members can view it. There is much interesting material about the South Wales of that time.

Welsh Soccer Teams

There has never been a team from Wales in the Premier League since its inception. However, this year Swansea City placed third and Cardiff City placed fourth in the League Championship Table. The top two teams are automatically promoted; the next four are involved in a play off for the last remaining promotion spot. Last week Swansea advanced by defeating Nottingham Forest, but Cardiff were defeated by Reading. So now Swansea will meet Reading at Wembley on May 30th to determine which club will be promoted.

**David Spencer inducted into B.C.
Business Hall of Fame.**



On May 11 at the Business Laureates of British Columbia Hall of Fame Gala was held at the Fairmont Hotel in Vancouver, **David W. Spencer, (1837 – 1920)** was one of the 2011 Inductees. Of special significance to the Vancouver Welsh Society is that not only was David Spencer a strong Welsh influence in early British Columbia but also his son Chris was later one of the founding fathers of the Cambrian Hall in 1929.

A U Tube video has been made entitled **2011 Business Laureate David W. Spencer (1837 – 1920)**. It features his great, great, grandson, Bob Armstrong, who accepted the award on behalf of his ancestor and also David's grandson Victor Spencer, a founder of the BC Lions.

The Financial Post on Jan 4, 1924 carried an article entitled ***Spencers – Merchant Princes and Farmers of the Western Coast***, and subtitled Famous Cariboo Gold Rush Attracted Welsh Boy and Big Department Store with \$2,000,000 Annual Payroll is the Result.

It details “the life history of one of Canada’s greatest merchants, David W. Spencer”. “Born in St. Athan, South Wales on August 9, 1837, he

was educated at Cowbridge Grammar School and then apprenticed to a draper for five years. At 21, deeply religious, he was a local preacher in the Bridgend and Cowbridge circuit of the Wesleyan Methodist Church.”

The article provides much information on the innovative business practices pioneered by David Spencer ranging from early advertising to establishing sources of quality merchandise (often from his own farms and abattoirs) and cash discounts to discourage the use of credit. His relationship with his employees was also exemplary; during the rebuilding of the stores from fire damage, not one employee was let go. The golden jubilee of the first store in Victoria in 1923 was celebrated by the whole city with a week of festivities as a fitting tribute to his memory.

The Romance of Vancouver, published by the Vancouver Tourist Association in 1926 contains an article on David Spencer Limited, which likens the company and its growth to a ‘gracious wide-spreading tree – a firm native to British Columbia.’ It also extols the family – ‘native sons and daughters, blessed with the pioneer spirit of the day, and destined to become leaders as men and women in the life of British Columbia’. The new store in Vancouver ‘represents faith in British Columbia – her present – her future.’

Here is his citation at the Gala:

It was reported that David Spencer’s greatest satisfaction had come from two sources. The first was the growth of his stores from the 1870s, when he had one small shop and six

employees, to the 1920s, when his stores occupied 462,000 square feet and employed 1,400 employees with an annual payroll of \$2,000,000. The second was that all of his sons had followed him into business. His family, the growth of the Methodist Church, and above all, Spencer's Stores, were the legacies David Spencer left to British Columbia.

One of nine children from a long line of farmers, David Spencer arrived in Victoria, BC from Wales in December of 1863 at the age of 26 to seek his fortune in the gold fields. But upon seeing many prospectors returning empty-handed, he changed his course, establishing himself in the dry goods business, a profession he had trained for as an apprentice.

In 1864 Spencer purchased a book and stationery business which he ran as a Reading Room and Library for almost a decade. During that period, Spencer also became active in Victoria's Methodist community, serving as church secretary, organizing choir concerts and teaching Sunday School. It was there that he met Emma Lazenby, also a recent immigrant, whom he married in 1867. The couple went on to have 13 children, five boys and eight girls. (Editor's note At their golden wedding celebration in 1917, there were present 13 children and 35 grandchildren!)

By 1873, David Spencer saw greater opportunities in the dry goods business than the lending library. After a five-year partnership with William Denny as co-owner of Denny & Spencer, David Spencer began his own retail outlet. Despite fires in 1901

and 1910 that greatly damaged the Spencer Arcade in Victoria, David Spencer's retail empire steadily grew through repeated expansion of the Victoria location and extended Provincial reach into Nanaimo and Vancouver. (Editor's Note: The Vancouver Store was founded in 1907, but so rapid was its growth that it eventually occupied the whole city block between Richards and Seymour)

David Spencer was a savvy entrepreneur whose passion for business spanned generations. The Spencer family is one of the few instances in Canada in which all of the sons have followed in the footsteps of their father. Spencer's five boys remained to successfully carry on the business after his death. In addition to prosperous commercial endeavours, Spencer gave back to his community. The Methodist Church and a number of social causes relied heavily on his financial support. He bequeathed \$10,000 in his will to develop a new tuberculosis ward at Victoria's Royal Jubilee Hospital.

Testimonies to his legacy were the tributes paid to his retailing empire 13 years after he died, when Spencer's celebrated its sixtieth anniversary, having added stores in New Westminster and Chilliwack. In 1948, when the stores were sold to Eaton's, newspapers of the day lamented that the Spencer name, which had fond and familiar memories for generations of British Columbians, would no longer be represented in the province's retail landscape. Today, the Spencer heritage building in Vancouver is home to Simon Fraser University's Harbour Centre campus.