

THE WELSH SOCIETY OF VANCOUVER

Gymdeithas Gymraeg Vancouver

Cambrian News

Tachwedd i Rhagfyr
2007

November to December
2007

Society Newsletter - Fylchgrawn y Gymdeithas



Gethin Hughes and Eifion Thomas
Relaxing after the Gymanfa at the Te Bach

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The Cambrian News

From The Editor:

This edition is devoted to recording our memorable Centenary Celebrations. Our Centenary Committee; Jane Byrne, Heather Davies, Gaynor Evans, Mary Lewis and Lynn Owens-Whalen are to be congratulated on their program. The members of the Executive and all the volunteers who worked so hard to bring the program to its fruition deserve our heartfelt thanks. Much of the success was made possible as a result of Gren Thomas' generous support and crucially through Lynn and Wilf and Phyllis and Ken's sponsorship of Eifion Thomas. The members of the two choirs also added their voices to several of our events and we appreciate the support we received from our visitors from across the border. Finally we appreciated the contingent from Ceredigion who added their voices and their spirit to the whole program.

The photographs of the Gymanfa, the Te Bach and on the front cover were taken by Uta Williams. Those of the Dinner were contributed by Gwyn Evans, Wilf Owens-Whalen and Eifion Williams.

David Llewelyn Williams

During the course of the celebrations, I met with David Lintern, who had with him an old poem which his grandmother had written down for him. After some deciphering of the text, the sweet story of *Dwy Sbectol Nain* (Grandmother's Two Spectacles) emerges. One is used to magnify the good and the other to minimize the bad! A great attitude!

Y Noson Lawen, Thursday November 1st in the Cambrian Hall

This first event of our celebration was arranged by Gaynor Evans and Neville Thomas. Everyone was kept in good humour by the wit and effectiveness of our M.C., David Lintern from Victoria, well-known to Vancouver Welsh Society members. The Cambrian Circle Singers started the program on the right note with a rendition of Welsh Folksongs. Neville Thomas followed with a reading of "Melin Trefin" by Crwys, and then we enjoyed two tenor solos by John Owen from Boise, Idaho. The Welsh portion of the first part of the program concluded with a recitation by David Llewelyn Williams of "Aberdaron" by Cynan, first in his English translation and then in the original Welsh. The audience was encouraged to act as a chorus for the last two lines of each stanza, and they participated with enthusiasm. We were then treated to a lively Scottish fiddle and dance performance by Annika and Cameron Parkinson-Dow, followed by an equally lively performance by the O'Connor Irish Dancers to close the first half of the program.

The second half of the program began with three Welsh songs by Nerys Haqq with Margaret Airey at the piano. We then enjoyed a 'surprise' contribution from a group of nine visitors from Ceredigion who had traveled all the way here for the Centennial. They sang two songs as an octet and Huw Davies sang two tenor solos with Bronwen Morgan as accompanist. (I particularly liked "Yr Hen Gerddor"). The music contributions concluded with three songs by soprano Brenda Andrews. The St Martin Players from North Vancouver then entertained us with their skit in which they mime

different occupations with differing motions with hilarious results. The program concluded with a reading by Lynn Owens-Whalen of the poem "The Patriotism of the Ex-Patriot" by Tom Phelps. Afterwards, many moved downstairs to the Red Dragon to further socialize. A group developed around Bronwen Morgan at the piano and we sang Welsh hymns until midnight. A classic case of "Canu'r Nos".

D.L.I.W.

The Centenary Grand Concert

The Grand Concert, entitled "A Celebration in Song", took place on the Friday evening, Nov 2nd, before a capacity audience at the Michael J. Fox Theatre in Burnaby. John Pritchard, the Master of Ceremonies, introduced the two choirs, the Vancouver Welsh Men's Choir and the Vancouver Orpheus Choir, as the two offspring of our Society who had matured and gone their separate ways. The combined choirs then sang *Hen Wlad fy Nhadau* and *O Canada* to begin the program.

The Welsh Men's Choir took the stage for the first half under the baton of Jonathan Quick with accompanist David Buchan. They started with a rousing rendition of *Men of Harlech* and followed with a wide ranging selection including such favourites as *Loch Lomond* with soloist Jonathan Quick and *Georgia on My Mind* with trombonist Ray Batten.

The featured soloist for the evening was tenor Eifion Thomas, the director of Cor Meibion Llanelli. As an unexpected bonus, Eifion's regular accompanist, Gethin Hughes, had also come out from Wales for the celebrations. Eifion started with one of my favourites, *Bugail Aberdovey*, which is difficult to hear

without the tears flowing, and followed it with *O! Na Byddai'n Haf O Hyd*, which given the weather outside seemed unlikely! He returned later to sing *Myfanwy* with the choir and closed with *Nirvana*, a favourite song of Stuart Burrows. Wonderful singing! The choir completed its program with a Russian folk song, *Kalinka*, and an American folk song, *Down by the Riverside*.

After the intermission the Orpheus Choir took the stage under the direction of Liana Bob with accompanist Barry Yamanouchi. They presented an entertaining variety of nine songs which included such favourites as *Danny Boy*, *Workin' on the Railroad* and *You Raise Me Up*. An amusing Cockney Sea Shanty was prefaced by a 'translation' from Cockney into 'Henry Higgins' English. They ended their program with an excellent rendition of *Battle Hymn of the Republic*. Both choirs took the stage for the finale, which included Monte Criste with a solo from Eifion Thomas, after which Eifion conducted the two choirs in a powerful performance of *Gwahoddiad*. The concert concluded with Eifion leading the singing of *We'll Keep a Welcome*.

John Pritchard thanked both the choirs and Eifion Thomas for a truly memorable evening. He thanked Gren Thomas for his generous support and Lynn and Wilf Owens-Whalen and Phyllis and Ken Owens for their sponsorship of Eifion Thomas' visit. He thanked the members of the Society who had made it possible and the audience for their support of the event. Everyone left feeling uplifted. A really great occasion!

D.L.I.W.

The Dylan Thomas Gathering

The Dylan Thomas Circle drew a large, eager audience to their Gathering on Saturday morning of Nov 3rd at 10:30 am. After the formality of the Annual General Meeting of The Dylan Circle, a classic film was shown which had been sourced with considerable effort from the Film Archives of Wales. Entitled "*Dylan*", it was produced in the late 50's and starred the, oh so young, Richard Burton. It was shown on a large screen coupled with an excellent sound system. The audience saw Burton at his best (and for quite a few, at his most alluring!) as he so ably recounted the life and works of Dylan Thomas.

A traditional Ploughman's Lunch of leek soup, nourishing eats and a friendly barman prepared the audience for the afternoon session. Dr Geoffrey Madoc Jones gave the main address of the day, titled, "*Road Trips – Dylan in America*". The highlights of Dylan Thomas' three visits to North America were identified. Special emphasis was given to his wildly enthusiastic reception on campuses across the USA and Canada and also, surprisingly, by Hollywood media stars (including Marilyn, Chaplin, Salvador Dali and Stravinsky). Geoff rather convincingly proclaimed that Dylan Thomas was the first of '*The British Invasions*' into North America to be later followed by the Beatles, the Stones etc. Dr Gerald Morgan gave a brief account of his visit to Aberystwyth to celebrate the life and works of David Jones. This was followed by another brief, learned analysis by the President of the Dylan Circle, David Webb, titled '*Dylan the Alchemist*'

A very successful Gathering, greatly appreciated by a fulfilled audience.

Neville Thomas

Centenary Grand Banquet

On Saturday evening, President Jane Byrne welcomed members and guests to the Banquet at the Cambrian Hall, which was filled to capacity. After the singing of *O Canada*, John Pritchard gave the Blessing in both Welsh and English and we all sat down to enjoy an excellent dinner, catered, as in numerous previous years, by Jordan's.



As the meal drew to a close, Lynn Owens-Whalen proposed the Toast to Canada. She began with the poem *The Patriotism of the Ex-patriot* and moved on to recognize two ladies present who between them represented 145 years of Welsh heritage in Vancouver and who personified the sentiments of the poem. May Lievesley aged 94 is a native of Wales who emigrated to Vancouver in 1957. For the past 50 years she has

shared her Welsh heritage both with our Society and perhaps more importantly with her son and her Canadian born grandchildren.



Phyllis Owens, Lynn's mother, aged 95 was born in Vancouver. Her parents Arthur and Ella Morgan emigrated to Vancouver in 1907. A chance meeting with Thomas Edwards introduced the family to the Vancouver Welsh Society. Phyllis has been a stalwart of our society for most of her life and has passed on her love of Wales to Lynn, who as we all know is a Past President of the North American Festival of Wales.

We were asked to stand as "representatives of the Vancouver Welsh Society, the international Welsh community and as devoted Canadians to toast the nation that encourages and expects us to retain our love and pride in what it is to be Welsh. To Canada!"



Following the toast, the Centenary Cake was cut by May and Phyllis.

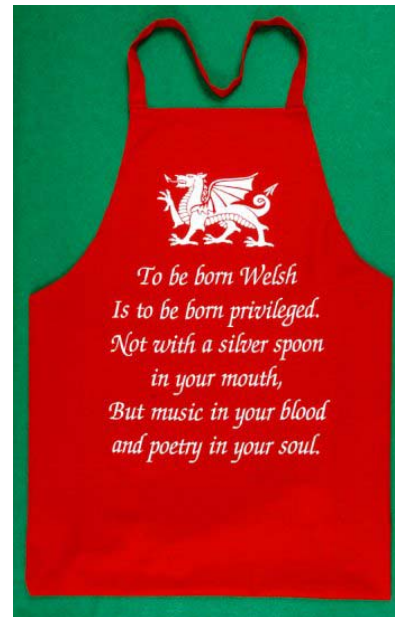


As we enjoyed the cake, we were entertained by Bronn and Katherine Journey who combined light hearted commentary with Bronn's musical artistry on the harp and Katherine's beautiful soprano voice to the delight of the audience, who responded with a standing ovation and demands for encores. Those present were especially pleased with their renditions of some popular Welsh songs.



Our President Jane Byrne brought the event to a close by thanking all those who had contributed to its success. First she thanked Gren Thomas for his support and presented him with a red apron with the well known words:
To be born Welsh is to be born privileged,

*Not with a silver spoon in your mouth,
But with music in your blood
And poetry in your soul.*



She thanked Lynn and Wilf Owens-Whalen and Phyllis and Ken Owens for sponsoring Eifion Thomas' visit. She thanked Tim Jordan for again providing us with an excellent meal, and Gaynor Evans for arranging the Banquet. She thanked Eifion Williams for creating all the programs for the various events. She thanked the members of the Executive who worked so hard to ensure the success of the Celebrations and all those volunteers who gave their time to prepare the Hall for the event. Finally she thanked your editor for providing the bottles of Ty Nant Welsh water for the Banquet.

The company moved downstairs to the Red Dragon for further socialization, where once again hymn singing around the piano continued into the night. Canu'r Nos again! A tune-up for Canu'r Dydd, the Gymanfa tomorrow!

D.L.I.W.

The Church Service

On Sunday morning a well-attended bilingual Service was held in the Hall, organized by Ann Roberts. John D. Williams chaired the service and welcomed the many visitors whom he asked to identify themselves together with their origin. Readings from the scriptures in Welsh and English languages were given by John and Hazel Williams, Delyth and John Cann, John Pritchard and Nerys Haqq. The soloist was also Nerys, accompanied by Margaret Airey; they both have contributed to many services over the years. Ann Roberts gave the 'Sgwrs' on the contributions that small countries such as Wales could make to the world. It is appropriate to note that Ann has been organizing these Sunday Services for the Society for the past 18 years and that without her efforts, the Service might not have survived, at least not in its present form. After the service a traditional Te Bach allowed attendees to mingle and build up their stamina for the afternoon. As Newsletter Editor I was fortunate to meet a number of out-of-town people with whom I had only previously corresponded and others whom I have only met on previous such occasions. This service helps to bind the society together.

Y Gymanfa Ganu (Canu'r Dydd!)

The Cambrian Hall was filled to capacity for the climax of the celebrations, the Gymanfa Ganu on Sunday afternoon. President Jane Byrne chaired the occasion and after the singing of *O Canada*, welcomed the participants and introduced the conductor, Eifion Thomas and accompanist, Barry Yamanouchi. Following the reading of the hundredth Psalm in Welsh by Eifion Williams and in English by Lynn Owens-Whalen, the

hymn singing began interspersed with mezzo-soprano Sandra Stringer's beautiful renditions of classical Welsh songs. Conductor Eifion Thomas urged everyone to sing as they felt and enjoy themselves (which was a great comfort to me!). He prefaced each hymn with some brief information about either the composer or the poet and we found that one piece was composed by an 18 year old on his way from the mine while some other pieces were first published in North America. Eifion's knowledge and enthusiasm is contagious and for the next three hours the Cambrian Hall reverberated to the sound of traditional Welsh hymns under his skillful baton. He was most ably assisted by Barry Yamanouchi, playing so well in his first Gymanfa that Eifion felt sure he must have some Welsh genes. Sandra Stringer also has Welsh in her pedigree and we were especially pleased that she chose to sing all her solos in Welsh. The last hymn chosen was *Pwy fydd yma mhen can mlynedd?* (Who will be here in a hundred years?), at the bicentenary of the society!?

President Jane Byrne in her closing remarks thanked all the participants and all who had contributed in their different ways to making this Gymanfa such a memorable event. We then stood to sing *Hen Wlad fy Nhadau* and then for the Benediction by John Pritchard. A final chorus of *God be with you till we meet again* brought this outstanding Gymanfa to a close. The Te Bach downstairs in the Red Dragon went on for quite some time until the food and tea and coffee ran out. A fitting conclusion to four days of notable celebrations honouring our society.

D.LI.W.

Pictures from the Gymanfa



Pictures from the Te Bach





Forthcoming Events

Saturday, December 1st 7.30pm for 8pm 'Mulled wine and Carols' with Christmas goodies. Cost \$5

Wednesday, December 5th 7.30pm
Executive Meeting

Sunday, December 9th 11.00am

Bilingual Carol Service and Te Bach

Sunday, December 9th 2pm:

Children's Christmas Party for children or grand-children of **paid-up members** 12 years old and under. Please phone Gaynor Evans at 604 271-3134 with child/children's names and ages as soon as possible. Older children are welcome to join in the fun, but will not get to sit on Santa's knee.

Wednesday, December 12th 7.30pm
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Friday, December 14th 6pm for 7pm
Christmas Dinner catered by Jordan's. Turkey and ham dinner with all the trimmings followed by traditional Christmas deserts. Tickets \$35. For more information please call Gaynor Evans at 604 271-3134 or any member of the executive.

The Patriotism of the Ex-Patriot

By Tom Phelps

The most ardent Welshman, it seems to me, lives in a land across the sea.

The one with the largest lump in his throat when the anthem is played is living abroad.

When the male choir sings, who sheds the first tears?

Why the person who hasn't lived there for years.

And the picture of Wales often hangs on the wall

Of one who hasn't lived here at all
But whose grandparents did, and they told him the tales, that have made him forever a lover of Wales.

The land of the neighbour 'who cares about you'

The land of my fathers and mothers too
The land of hiraeth, hwyl, Eisteddfod and song,

The land to which I'm proud to belong.

Dwy Sbectol Nain

Mae gan fy Nain ddwy sbectol aur
A'u hanes gewch yn awr:
Mae un yn ddangos pethau'n fach
A'r llall a'u gwna yn fawr.

Mi dorrais gwpan bore ddoe
A'r llefrith yn gwlychu'r llawr.
Rhoes Nain ei sbectol ar ei thrwyn,
"Dim ond rhyw smotyn," meddai'n fwyn
"Paid ti a chrio 'nawr."

"Rhyw grotyn wyt" medd Jane, fy chwaer,
Wrth fynd o'r ty Dydd Llun,
Ond dyna dd'wedodd Nain yn fwyn
A'r sbectol arall ar ei thrwyn,
"Wel gwarchod! 'Rwyt ti'n ddyn!"

Ond pan y byddaf innau'n hen
Mi brynaf yn y dre
Ddwy sbectol aur 'run fath a Nain
I wisgo yn ei lle.

Bydd un wrth law i guddio baw
Dim ond rhyw smotyn fydd!
A gyda'r llall caf weld y da
Yn mynd yn fwy bob dydd!