

THE WELSH SOCIETY OF VANCOUVER

Cymdeithas Gymreig Vancouver

*Cambrian News*

**Medi  
2018**

**September  
2018**

*Society Newsletter - Cylchgrawn y Gymdeithas*



Members enjoy the annual garden party in August

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

## **VANCOUVER WELSH SOCIETY**

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#### **Vice-President**

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**Antone Minard**

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**Various**

#### **Welsh Speaking Group:**

**Roy Beavon**

#### **Rentals:**

**Alcwyn Rogers**

**Wynford Owen**

#### **Social Events Committee:**

**Kathy Thomas (Coordinator)**

**Gaynor Evans (Secretary)**

[\*\*www.welhsociety.com\*\*](http://www.welhsociety.com)

#### **Webmaster:**

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#### **Newsletter Editor:**

**Ruth Baldwin**

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## ***The Cambrian News***

### **From the Editor:**

Although Autumn heralds the arrival of darker evenings and (for us in Vancouver) lots of rain, none of us will be sorry to see the last of the smoke that has hung over the Lower Mainland these last few summer weeks. As winter approaches, come down to the Red Dragon to participate in the great activities planned. Join us in the warmth and companionship of the Red Dragon and let the nights draw in!

One exciting event in its planning stages is a revival of the *Mari Lwyd* tradition right here in Vancouver! Members and learners will be staging the folk custom at the Noson Lawen in November. Learn more about the *Mari Lwyd* in **Antone Minard's** article in this newsletter. As Antone points out, the deeper meaning of the *Mari Lwyd* is that it can assuage “people’s uneasiness as wintertime approaches, and [assure them] that the positive aspects of sharing music and conviviality indoors outweigh the traditional worries about cold and hunger,” so it’s perfect for us as we bid summer farewell and face the dark and rainy winter months ahead. Come on down and experience the *Mari Lwyd* on 2 November!

You’ll be pleased to know that the Society will be hosting performances of *A Child’s Christmas in Wales* again this year. Look out for details on the Society’s website.

Enjoy the articles and photographs in this edition of the newsletter and please send us your own contributions and photographs.

The newsletter is the voice of the Vancouver Welsh community. We want to hear from you!

Ruth Baldwin

[youcanreachruth@hotmail.com](mailto:youcanreachruth@hotmail.com)

## Forthcoming Events

*Please note there may be date and time changes from time to time, so it's best to check the monthly page on the website before attending events.*

### Bilingual Service

**Sunday 9 September** at 11.00 am, followed by tê bach (light refreshments).

### Executive Meeting

**Monday 10 September** at 7:00 pm

### Cambrian Bookworms

**Wednesday 12 September** at 12 noon in the red Dragon. The book this month is *The Alice Network* by Kate Quinn.

### Welsh Classes

The autumn schedule is found on the “Welsh classes” page, (<http://www.welshsociety.com/Lab5/welsh-classes-at-the-cambrian-hall/>).

### Welsh Speaking Group

**Monday 17 September** at 10:30 am. *Siarad Cymraeg y bore 'ma.*

### General Meeting

**Monday 17 September** at 7:00 pm

### Genealogy Group

**Wednesday 19 September** at 10:30 am to 12:30 pm in the Red Dragon.

## Pub Night

**Friday 21 September** at 7:00 pm at the Red Dragon. Welcome Back/Quiz Night.

## Work Party Day

**Monday 24 September** from 10:00 am until 3:00 pm. A delicious lunch will be provided. Looking forward to seeing you there!

**Please mark your calendars!**

**Saturday 13 October: Anniversary Dinner**

## Ceilidh/Twmpath/Barn Dance



with  
**The Rattlebone Band**

Friday 9 November 2018 from 7:30 to 10:30 pm in the Cambrian Hall  
\$10 (13 years and older) \$5 (6 – 12years)  
Free (5 years and under)

For advance ticket sales, please call Pat Morris (phone: 604 536 9556 – email: [druidsgreen@gmail.com](mailto:druidsgreen@gmail.com))

## *The RSSG, BC Branch*

invites you to see the authentic & traditional British panto  
**Hansel and Gretel,**  
performed by the Royal Canadian Theatre Company, on  
**5 January 2019**  
at Anvil Centre, New Westminster at 3:30 pm.

Tickets \$15.00 per person for RSSG members or \$20 per person for guests. For ticket purchase and to reserve your seat(s) please call Jayne Boyer at 604-464-3177 and mail cheques made payable to Royal Society of St George to RSSG, 5639 Dunbar Street, Vancouver, BC. V6N 1W5 - Limited special group seating available – Absolute final deadline November 30 2018. Let us know if you want to join us for a bite to eat before or after too!

Hosted by *The Royal Society of St George*  
[www.stgeorgebc.ca](http://www.stgeorgebc.ca)

## Typical Monthly Events

*Everyone is invited to join us at these events but please note there may be changes from time to time, so it's best to check the monthly page on the website before attending. For further information please contact [mail@welshsociety.com](mailto:mail@welshsociety.com).*

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

**Mondays:** 1<sup>st</sup> Monday of the month for Board Members only: Executive Meeting at 7:00 pm.

**Mondays:** 3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of the month: Welsh speaking group meets at 10:30 am.

**Mondays:** 4<sup>th</sup> Monday of the month: Volunteer working party: 10:00 am till 3:30 pm.

**Wednesdays:** 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of the month: The Book Club meets at 12:00 noon.

**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:** A new term is about to start! Most but not all Thursday evenings from 7 to 9 pm. 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 2018 AGM will be held in February 2019.

## *Vancouver Orpheus Male Choir*

Please visit the choir's website for details of upcoming concerts and events:  
<http://vancouverorpheus.org>

## *Vancouver Welsh Men's Choir*

Please visit the choir's website for details of upcoming concerts and events:  
<https://vwmca.ca>

## *Welsh Genealogy*

Carole Smythe of the Genealogy Group has sent in this list of useful Internet sites to stimulate your genealogical hunting instincts! See the Forthcoming Events section for details of the group's upcoming activities.

From the website, *Who Do You Think You Are*, February 2017  
at <https://tinyurl.com/yberofss>:

### 1. NATIONAL LIBRARY OF WALES - <http://www.library.wales.uk/>

The National Library of Wales (NLW) either leads or has a hand in several of the other websites and projects featured below. The NLW's main website homepage signposts all kinds of information aimed at beginners, plus descriptions of the library's vast holdings – it's home to around 950,000 photos, 1,500,000 maps, 5,000,000 digital images and e-resources, and 15km of archives.

### 2. THE WALES COLLECTION - <https://tinyurl.com/ycecg1x8>

Findmypast's Wales Collection was launched in 2011 through a partnership with the NLW and the Welsh County Archivists Group.

### 3. CYMRU 1914 - <http://cymru1914.org/>

The CYMRU 1914 centenary project has seen the digitization of sources relating to the First World War within libraries, special collections and archives across Wales.

### 4. ARCHIVES WALES - <http://archives.wales/>

This is the single-search hub to more than

7,000 collections across 21 archives in Wales – the equivalent of TNA's Discovery – and also the body which leads all kinds of cross-archive projects.

### 5. WELSH JOURNALS AND NEWSPAPERS - <http://newspapers.library.wales/>

This website grants access to around 15 million articles and 1.1 million pages from a huge range of Welsh- and English-language titles, and you can narrow your search to focus on family notices and other announcements.

### 6. CYNEFIN- <http://cynefin.archiveswales.org.uk/>

It provides access to over 1,200 digitized tithe maps and associated apportionments.

## Photo Gallery of Recent Society Events

### The Garden Party

Members bid farewell to the summer in Lynn and Wilf Owens-Whalen's beautiful garden in August. The food was scrumptious and the company great. These photographs, taken by **Alwyn Rogers**, bear witness to the fun of the afternoon:





## Impressions of the National Eisteddfod

We arrived at our hotel in Cardiff on Friday afternoon, after a five-day small coach tour of mid and south Wales, with time spent in Harlech, Beddgelert, Laugharne, Aberystwyth, Tenby and St. Davids— a good lead up to the busy week ahead. The weather was still warm and sunny, so there was no need for the wellies we had bought for last year's Eisteddfod in Anglesey. The setting, in Cardiff Bay, also contrasted with all previous Eisteddfodau.

This was not the usual isolated rural field, with the scent of hay and sheep. We were on the transformed waterfront of Tiger Bay, and the pavilion, used for music, poetry, recitation and drama competitions, was the massive Wales Millennium Centre. The Maes was a forecourt leading to the waterfront, open to locals and visitors alike. Most of the booths around the bay were wooden huts, not tents, but the familiar *Ty Gwerin* was easy to find. Permanent buildings were also used; the nearby Portland House was used for folk dancing and the Senedd Building, home of the National Welsh Assembly chamber, housed this week a modern art collection and meeting rooms for the many group discussions taking place throughout the week.

On Saturday evening we were dazzled by the opening concert, held in the Donald Gordon Theatre within the Millennium Centre. The production was a world premiere commissioned for the Eisteddfod, with music by **Robert Arwyn**, lyrics by **Mererid Hopwood** and starring **Bryn Terfel** and a cast of hundreds. It featured vignettes from the life of **Paul Robeson**, the celebrated black American, who had a close bond with the Welsh people, especially the miners from the Valleys. He supported their struggles for justice, peace and human rights. This year coincided with the 60<sup>th</sup>



anniversary of his appearance at the Ebbw Vale National Eisteddfod. Choirs taking part in the production included

“Cordydd,” “Cor Meibion Treorci,” “Black Voices,” “Cor Ieuencid,” and “Cor Plant Ysgol Gynradd Parc Ninian Caerdydd.”

On Sunday morning, by chance, we were given front row seat tickets at the Gymanfa Ganu, also held in the theatre, and we joined the enthusiastic crowd in singing hymns, some familiar and some not. We were positioned just behind the mobile camera which panned the audience frequently and were told afterwards that our appearance had been noted on the TV recording! Each year, during the Gymanfa Ganu, there is a presentation by the Leader of the Overseas Welsh. This year the speech by **Iori Richards**, native of Anglesey, physicist and widely travelled teacher, was exceptional. It inspired and touched the hearts of many. Iori lives in Oslo, Norway, with his Norwegian wife and family. He founded the Welsh Society of Oslo.

The heart of any Eisteddfod is, of course, the *Gorsedd*, the ancient Bardic body, which, legend has it, was established by the *Lord Rhys* in the sixth century, who set the competitions in poetry, literature and drama.



*The Gorsedd banner is brought in procession to the Millennium Centre auditorium for the Crowning ceremony*

The traditional ceremonies celebrate excellence in Welsh culture by presenting a crown, a bardic chair, a medal or a blue ribbon to the winners of each literature competition. These winners are then admitted to the Bardic circle of the *Gorsedd*. We were privileged to witness the Crowning ceremony on Monday afternoon when, at the sound of the trumpet, the Archdruid declared the Bardic name of the winner and, with music playing and much applause,

**Catrin Dafydd** was discovered in the audience. She was then clothed in a purple robe and led forward to be crowned by **Archdruid Geraint Lloyd Owen** for her winning entry of a poem of free verse, over 250 lines on a set theme (see photo below).



She was then lauded in verse and song by druid members of the *Gorsedd* before leaving the auditorium in procession. Catrin was also involved in the *Siwper Stomp*, on Monday evening – a hilarious show, featuring teams of competing poets presenting skits in Welsh verse. The winning team, as judged by the highly critical audience, received a prize - the coveted three-legged stool. One of the winners was **Gryffudd Eifion Owen**, who, on Friday, was to become the winner of this year's Eisteddfod Chair – the most prestigious prize of the Festival, given for a

poem written in *cynghanedd* – strict metre Welsh verse, on a set theme.



*This beautiful quilt, displayed in the Millennium Centre lobby, was created by Marian Evans to celebrate the return of the Eisteddfod to Cardiff. The 16 panels are elaborately embroidered in Eisteddfod colours, representing different elements of the Eisteddfod- including the treble clef of music, the Gorsedd symbol, the masks of comedy and tragedy for drama, and an embroidered line of poetry*

Between the ceremonial pageantry of the *Gorsedd* events, we found lots to see on the Maes in the booths showcasing recent education, arts and science achievements and projects, such as the Nuclear Power project being planned for Anglesey. There was plenty to interest the many children who attended, including street performers from the BBC S4C recording studio on site. While David enjoyed performances in *Y Babell Llen*, I was able to appreciate the folk music of **Ar Log** and the harp of **Gwennan Gibbard** (below).



On Thursday we had a very special experience. Cardiff gave a civic welcome to **Geraint Thomas**, winner of this year's Tour de France. From our vantage point inside the window of the Senedd Building, we were able to view a sea of yellow jerseys and waving Welsh flags as a brass band played and Geraint was welcomed by city dignitaries. After this he was again welcomed at Cardiff Castle.

The Nafow and *Undeb a'r Byd* booths were of special interest to us, as we reconnected with old friends and discovered people from Welsh Societies all over the world. At a special presentation for *Cymru y Byd*, in the Senedd Building, **Bill Jones** spoke about the Australian Goldrush. This sparked my interest and Bill told me that **Gethin Matthews**, Professor of History at Swansea University, is working on a book about the B.C. Gold Rush.

There were meetings and a reception to attend in advance of the upcoming North American Festival of Wales to be held in Washington. Will Fanning, President of the Welsh North American Association, his wife **Donna and Ian Samways**, Past President, were guests for dinner at a restaurant on the Maes, (specializing in Welsh, Italian and Spanish cuisine) but, all too soon, the week was over and we were on the train to London and then home to Vancouver, with warm memories of Wales and a resolution to learn more Welsh!

Pat Morris

## The *Mari Lwyd*

The *Mari Lwyd* is a uniquely Welsh ritual from contemporary Wales, but with roots in Victorian folklore, late medieval popular culture, and ancient Celtic religion. As with many rituals, the core format is quite simple: the principle actors perform a very basic drama. Unlike in a skit or theatrical performance, however, the rest of the people present are an essential part of the ritual rather than merely audience members.

This drama has very little plot. A few people approach the building leading the *Mari Lwyd*, an outlandish costume consisting of a decorated horse's skull carried by a concealed man or woman. They ask for entry; they are refused by those inside, and debate back and forth in verse. Traditionally, this is all in Welsh, but the Vancouver Welsh Society will probably do this bilingually. Eventually, the *Mari Lwyd* and her company are allowed to enter. The *mari* dances and teases the people present, which is understood to bring good fortune to everyone there.

In its current form, the custom probably dates to the very late medieval period, perhaps the fifteenth or sixteenth century. It was largely performed in the South Wales Valleys, primarily in Glamorgan but also Carmarthenshire and Monmouthshire. It was largely moribund by the early twentieth century, but enough remained to be documented by the National Museum of History (once known as the Welsh Folk Museum); their website museum.wales contains useful information about the custom, as well as sound recordings and video footage. Other traditional videos can be found on the BBC and youtube just by searching for "Mari Lwyd."

The origins of the ritual are lost in time. Even the name is a puzzle —“*Mari*” is either the name “Mary” or the word “mare,” and “*lwyd*” is probably “grey” but could also

mean “holy” in this context. Whatever the literal meaning, the *mari* is probably distantly related to mummers’ plays (also known as mumming and guising) and other folk theatre, but with tendrils connecting back through earlier ideas to the ancient Celtic veneration of the horse goddess Epona, and thus is probably related to rituals documented throughout Wales in the nineteenth century such as the *ceffyl pren*, a kind of folk justice, or the *caseg fedi*, an end-of-harvest ritual.

The deeper meaning of the *Mari Lwyd* is probably about assuaging people’s uneasiness as wintertime approaches, and assuring them that the positive aspects of sharing music and conviviality indoors outweigh the traditional worries about cold and hunger.

Recently, because the tradition is so distinctive, it has experienced a revival throughout Wales, and so the Welsh learners’ group here in Vancouver has decided to participate. Although the Welsh *mari* is a Christmas custom, taking place during the period between Christmas and Epiphany that encompasses New Year’s Day, we felt it was appropriate to time our ritual for the Halloween season. The way North Americans celebrate Christmas and Halloween have both changed a great deal from the way they were celebrated in Wales a few hundred years ago, but some of the ideas we associate with Halloween, such as the idea of mixing with supernatural beings, were once associated at Christmas—think of the British tradition of Christmas ghost stories, most famously Dickens’s *Christmas Carol*. In any case, Halloween itself derives from Celtic New Year, and in the pre-modern Celtic countries, many traditions found associated with Christmas / New Year’s in one place are found with Halloween in another.

If you are interested in becoming an active participant in this year’s revival, please

contact **Ruth Baldwin** or **Antone Minard**. In any case, we hope you come to see it on Friday, November 2! The *Mari Lwyd* ritual itself will be quite short, as most of the evening will be dedicated to enjoying the music of the folk group Three Pound Note.



### Buy Welsh!

Members are keeping a look out for Welsh products in local shops. Colliers Cheese has been discovered at the downtown Costco at around \$11 for a 400g slab. Yum!



The British Consul, Nicole Davison, has passed on to us this list of Welsh products available here in Canada:

Fresh Concept are importing small amounts Welsh lamb. (We mentioned that we are already connected with Ronan);  
Dolan Foods are importing Welsh lamb;  
Snowdonia Cheese;  
There is a cheese called 'Chabonnier Gallois' (Welsh miner) that appears to be from Wales;  
Colliers Cheese;  
Boksburg Blue from Carmarthenshire – the product isn't good with shelf life so they are having problems with this particular product;  
Wrexham Lager (and Otley) – available at some restaurants/pubs in Ontario;  
Penderyn Whisky and Brecon Gin,  
Cradoc's Crackers.

Help us lengthen the list by looking out for Welsh products when you shop and letting us know what you've found and where we can get it.

**Member Gaynor Evans shared this link to the BBC programme, *As It Happens*:**

<http://www.cbc.ca/radio/asithappens/it-takes-a-village-welsh-residents-build-a-24-km-trench-for-faster-wi-fi-1.4726278>

**It takes a village: Welsh residents build a 24 km trench for faster Wi-Fi. They took matters into their own hands**

CBC Radio · June 28



Residents of a tiny Welsh village are so fed up with their slow internet that they decided to take matters into their own hands.

Fifty of Michaelston-y-Fedw's 300 residents banded together to dig up 24 kilometres of trenches to install faster broadband cables. "I didn't need asking twice," community member and resident "splice queen" Carina Dunk told *As It Happens* guest host Robyn Bresnahan.

Although only 11 kilometres from a large city centre, the small village of Michaelston-y-Fedw has been ignored by big internet companies, with many homes receiving just 3 Mbps of internet speed. By comparison, residents will be looking at 1,000 Mbps (or 1Gb) once their cables and trench project is finished.

"We can't download a film, we can't watch BBC iPlayer. If we're sending emails or browsing the internet then that connection will drop," said Dunk.

"Frustrating doesn't even begin to describe it."

The idea to tackle the problem once and for all was born — to no surprise — at the local pub. And after some old-fashioned door-knocking to assess community interest, it became clear there was enough support to make the project work.

"Trench across my fields. I don't mind if I'm going to get a gigabit upload," Dunk recalled one farmer saying.

With 50 per cent of the trench-digging completed, the first houses are coming online — and Michaelston-y-Fedw is beginning to see changes in its daily operations.

"Barry Dixon for example ... he's got a web-design company and he says when [he would] upload information he would go off and make a cup of coffee. But since he's been connected he can't. He's drinking so much less coffee. Everything now is so much quicker!"



Jim Dunk (left) is in charge of installing the routers in everyone's home, and Carina (middle) oversees splicing fibre connections. Carina says she knew "absolutely nothing" about such matters when the project began. (submitted by Carina Dunk)

Dunk says faster internet speeds will benefit the approximately 50 businesses that are run from home in Michaelston-y-Fedw.

Dunk also looks forward to settling in with an episode of one of her favourite shows — Homeland, or maybe NCIS — without having to wait for it to buffer. But perhaps even more exciting is the effect this endeavour has had on community building in Michaelston-y-Fedw.

"My husband lived in the village for 41 years but, up until 9 months ago, he only knew the very few people that were immediately around him. By the end of the project he will have been introduced to everyone in the village."

"It's just so amazing. It is wonderful to see the community come together."

*Written by Sarah Claydon. Produced by Samantha Lui.*



#### **News from Janet Thomas of the Central New Brunswick Welsh Society**

If you have plans to explore Canada, you'll want to know about the new exhibit at Kings Landing, a reconstructed old NB Settlement similar to Upper Canada Village in Ontario. The Welsh of New Brunswick have their own display now.

Janet Writes:

Kings Landing has created a new series of exhibits focused on the many cultures that have helped build the province of New Brunswick, and we are included! The exhibit consists of five panels of info and photos that provide information on the migration of the Welsh to NB in 1819, about the Cardigan settlement, about our Welsh culture, about our historic site at the Welsh Chapel and about **Thomas Saunders**, the settlement's first school master. There are

also a number of artefacts on display. Yesterday, **Allison Wrynn** and I spent the day at the exhibit talking with visitors about the Welsh culture and heritage. It was wonderful to be able to share with so many people from across Canada and indeed, from across the Atlantic. We have been asked to return on July 26<sup>th</sup>, and to schedule a couple more days in August and September.

As **Lynn Owens-Whalen** (who shared this story with us) says wistfully, “Wouldn’t it be great if we had an exhibit of the Welsh of Vancouver at the Vancouver Museum?!” That’s a goal we can work toward!



#### An amusing anecdote from out-of-town member, Rhodwyn Sykes:

Many years ago I took a solitary walking tour of the Outer Hebrides. One evening, when I was sitting in the bar of the hotel in Castle Bay, looking out at the castle of the Barra McNeills and feeling tired after a long day, a group of other customers came in. They were fishermen who had, that day, rowed and sailed all the way from the Irish Coast – quite a feat! Seeing me alone, they invited me to join them. The nearest one,

upon discovering that I was Welsh, asked me, “If I were to say ‘Marting va, kimmer a har shoo,’ now what would that be in Welsh?” This happened to be one of the few Gaelic phrases I’d picked up, so I was able to reply, “Bore da! Sut rydych chi!” He considered for a moment. Then, almost to himself, he said quietly, “Och, the Welsh is a terrible difficult language!”



#### *Did you know . . . ?*

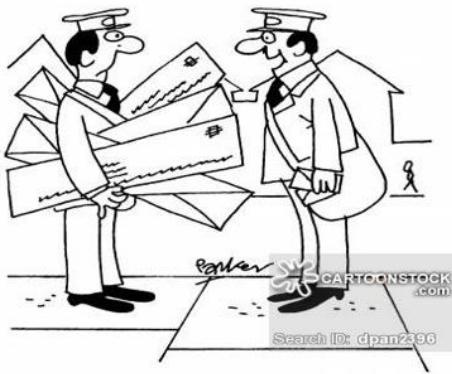
The name of the beautiful garden flower, the foxglove, may originate from “folk’s glove,” which alludes to fairy folk. In Welsh, the names include *Gwyniadur Mair* or Mary’s Thimble, and *Menig Mair*, or Mary’s Gloves. Foxglove plants were brought to America during the 18<sup>th</sup> century for their medicinal properties. From early times, healers used an ingredient in the plant called digitalin in medicinal potions to treat heart conditions





### It isn't all swatting!

The Welsh learners enjoy a (modified) game of Scrabble (above). Whether you're a rusty native speaker or a complete rookie, come down and join **Antone's** class in the Red Dragon on Thursday evenings. See the Website for the Fall schedule.



### Quiz: Part 1 (from walesbooks.com)

1. Which country calls Wales "The Land of Gentle Folk"?
2. Who was the Welshman that Shakespeare said was "not in the role of common men"?
3. Which person "brought English cooking into the twentieth century"?
4. Where is the oldest narrow-gauge railway in the world?
5. In 1998, what three men were voted the most sexy rock musicians in the world by

readers of the Melody Maker?

6. Who was Italy's "Player of the Year" in soccer in 1958?
7. In 1998, which building was voted Wales' favorite historic house? (-in the NPI National Heritage Awards).
8. What, according to the Guinness Book of Records is the world's oldest company?
9. Who and what inspired the formation of The Bible Society?
10. What is the link between the world's highest mountain and Wales?

*Answers and part 2 of the quiz in the next newsletter.*



### Obituary



Members will remember **Celia Wynne**, a Welsh Society member for the past ten years, although not an active one for the last five while she lived at Point Grey Nursing Home. Celia came from Newcastle Emlyn, Wales. She passed away on July 1, 2018, at the age of 93. She was predeceased by her husband Dick in 2006. She is survived by her loving children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Celia was loved by all for her kindness, unconditional love and sense of humour. She will be greatly missed.

***The Vancouver Welsh Society Newsletter*** is issued three times a year, in January, May and September.