

Cymdeithas Gymraeg



Victoria Welsh Society

Newsletter : Awst 2010 August

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Reminder – 2010 memberships are now overdue.

From the Editor

Another three months (or thereabouts), another issue of the newsletter and the summer goes on. The Board hopes that you're all enjoying the fine weather – not too hot, which suits a lot of people, including the Editor although his tomatoes would benefit from warmer days. (Are there gardeners among you who would agree?)

If you had planned a visit to Wales this year but for one reason or another failed to get there, take heart because a bit of Wales in the shape of *Cor Godre'r Aran* will soon be in Victoria to perform at the Alix Goolden Hall and re-awaken the *Hiraeth* in you.

So let's all turn out to hear this splendid choir – they are coming to us after the *Festival of Wales* ,in which they will be the Festival Choir , in Portland, Oregon.

Society News

The board are putting the finishing touches to the arrangements for the visit and concert by *Cor Godre'r Aran*, *September 8th*. Tickets will soon go on sale at the following book-shops :

- Munro's Books
- Ivy's Bookshop (Oak Bay)
- Cadboro Bay Book Co.
- Russell Books (734 Fort St)
- Tanner's Books (Sidney)
- Volume 1 Bookstore (Duncan)

Admission is \$ 20 cash or cheque (made out to Victoria Welsh Society).

Following the concert there will be a '*get together*' with the choir. *Details will be given later.* Come and meet the choir.

Although the summer is well advanced some of the board have enjoyed a break away from Victoria – although why should anyone want to leave in the summer is a fair question. Your editor was in the U.K. in May, specifically in

Glasgow for the wedding of a grandson but also paid a flying visit to North Wales.

The President was camping in Osoyoos until quite recently but found the temperature a bit uncomfortable so didn't stay for a deep tan.

Jen and Dave Pearson enjoyed 3 weeks in North and West Wales in May.

Rita Miller was joined by former President Helen Steinle in a comprehensive visit to the U.K. from June 26 to July 16. They started in Manchester with a drive to Scotland then to North and South Wales, taking in Gretna Green and the Lake District on the way to Pwllheli and , finally ,Abergavenny Then ,of course they had to return to Manchester for the flight back to Vancouver. (*Jawch!*, makes me tired to even think of all that driving.—Ed.)

It is with great regret that we report that long-time member, Peter Gibson, lost his wife, Kay, recently. Our heartfelt sympathy is extended to Peter in his loss.

The Annual General Meeting will, as usual, be held in October. No date has, as yet been decided but be assured that sufficient notice of the event will be given. The Board, ever optimistic, is hopeful of a good turnout.

News from Wales

The Llangollen International Eisteddfod was held in early July and is of particular interest to us this year because one of the contestants in the women's choirs category was the Victoria " *City of Gardens Chorus.*"They got third prize which is a considerable success at Llangollen. (You will recall that a quartet from this ladies' choir entertained us at the St. David's Day meeting.)

The National Eisteddfod was held in Ebbw Vale in the first week of this month. Unless some member of the Society attended we shall have to wait until an account is published in "*Ninnau*" to learn anything.

Former Ebbw Vale M.P. and sometime leader of the Labour Party, Michael Foot, has died at the age of 96. He was first elected to Parliament as M.P. for Plymouth, in 1945, in the post-war Labour landslide. He succeeded Aneurin Bevan at Ebbw Vale in 1960 and held the seat until he stepped down in 1992. He was a vigorous advocate of devolution for Wales and was extremely disappointed when the measure was defeated in 1979.

Blaenau Ffestiniog recently suffered 55 job losses with the closure of the Oakeley quarry, due to subsidence of the ground. The town has depended on the slate industry for more than a century and now only two quarries are left.

So how do you like your lamb cooked? A *Rhayader* restaurant has gained national recognition in earning the title "*Best curry house in Wales*" (please, no Monty Python jokes!) Described by the judges as "*a unique gem in the heart of mid-Wales*" the *Spice Cottage* swayed the decision with *Really Welsh Curry* made with leeks and lamb from the Elan Valley.

Fishguard has lost one of its most recognisable figures, Yvonne Fox. She was famous for playing the part of *Jemima Nicholas*, the heroine of the last invasion of Wales during the Napoleonic Wars. It seems that, led by *Jemima*, a number of women donned Welsh costume, with their cloaks turned inside out to show the red lining, then marched towards the invading force who, from a distance, took them

for 'redcoats' and retired, to surrender to the British forces who finally arrived.

Did you know that *Dick Francis*, famed for crime novels with a horse racing connection and who died recently, was born in Pembrokeshire? Further, did you know that he almost won the 1956 Grand National but his horse fell with the winning post in sight? From 1953 to 1957 he served as the Queen Mother's jockey and then his writing career got going. He sold over 60 million books that were translated into 20 languages.

Spanish students ages two to eighteen participated in their school's fourth-annual eisteddfod this year, with help from Welsh friends. The school, the English Centre in Cadiz, is bilingual in English and Spanish and was founded 40 years ago by Linda Randall who is originally from Swansea. One of her aims is to introduce students to other cultures and she decided that the Eisteddfod was a fitting means for this. There were competitions in music, literature, arts and sports, including rugby, at the Festival. Every child wore a daffodil and even sang the Welsh national anthem.

Over 14,000 rare books have been saved from private collectors after Cardiff Council changed its mind about selling them by public auction. Instead they will be moved to the University Library. The collection includes 500 bibles and an early set of Shakespeare's works. The books will be available for public viewing after needed conservation is done.

Scientists at the Institute for Biological, Environmental and Rural Sciences at Aberystwith recently received the Queen's Anniversary Prize for Further and Higher Education. Research there is attempting to develop crops that can grow in the world's hottest and driest areas. The Institute is a development of the Welsh Plant Breeding Station that was established by the University in 1919. Ironically, only two weeks before the

announcement of the award, the Institute reported a deficit of 2.4 million pounds over the next two years and the threat of 70 lost jobs.

(We are indebted to “ *Ninnau* ”, the North American Welsh newspaper for the above items of news.)

Now continuing with something different.

You will recall that in the December 2009 newsletter, as a result of a suggestion by the President, it was decided to tell a little of the stories of various members of the Society. We started with *David Lintern* (he wasn't expecting to open the batting) and in this issue the personages are *Joyce* and *Brynmor Jones*.

Joyce and *Brynmor* both come from Fforestfach, near Swansea. They went to Gendros elementary school, but not at the same time. *Joyce* left school at 14 and joined her father in his retail business, where she worked until marriage to *Brynmor*. He went on to Glanmor Secondary school in Sketty, a suburb of Swansea. Both are Welsh speaking. *Brynmor* was in the Army for much of the War and landed in France on D-Day.

Post-war *Brynmor* was employed by British Steel at Port Talbot and they (now married) moved to Neath, where they lived for 37 years and where their daughter , *Ceri*, was born. After some time *Joyce* went back to work as a receptionist ,at Neath General Hospital, for 14 years.

Whilst in Neath *Brynmor* became very active in the music world , a leading singer in the Neath Amateur Opera Society and also sang with local choirs.

It is not generally known but as a boy of twelve *Brynmor* won the Boy Soprano Competition at the National Eisteddfod that was held, in Neath, in 1934. He also took the premier prize at many Regional Eisteddfods – so much so that he didn't have any time left for football- to his regret.

In 1991 they settled in Victoria, joining their daughter, who was teaching here. (A grand-daughter is a student at Boston's North Eastern University). One of the first things they

did on arrival was to join the Welsh society and *Joyce* set to volunteering in Carolyn Macklin House. As for missing Wales – yes, but no regrets about their move to Victoria.

Occasionally a member of the Society will offer something – memories, experiences, a piece of creative writing or little-known history - for publication in this Newsletter. Your editor is always grateful for these. The following verse was offered by a member who wishes to remain anonymous :

Country Memories

I remember
being frozen with fear
as the farmer's large dogs raced towards me,
whirled around, then dashed off madly
barking loudly
all the time.

I remember
walking alone,
a very small girl,
when four large horses came thundering past me
through a narrow gateway
at the end of the lane.

I remember
the fox that came
on a Sunday morning;
it caused cackling and shrieking,
but still brazenly took
a fine brown hen.

I remember
some joyous days
out in the fields at hay-making time,
then riding at dusk
on top of the load
both people and horses weary from work.

I remember
the bleat of sheep
as they lay on their backs
being shorn of their wool
and food laden tables stood outside
for shearers who worked from dawn till dusk.

(*Thank you, 'small girl', for this contribution.*
Diolch ' merch fach' am y cyfraniad hwn.)- Ed.

From time to time your editor has been pleased to extract from *The Countryman* magazine articles associated with rural activities in Wales. The following gleaning is taken from an article in the November 2009 issue of the magazine. Entitled “*A passion for lapwings*”, it was written by Julian Rollins. We thank the editor of the magazine for permission to do this.

A passion for lapwings.

Charles Grisedale is a *Cardiganshire* farmer on a mission – to save the *lapwing*, known in Wales as *the farmer’s friend*, from extinction. The threat is real. As a boy, fifty years ago, he remembers seeing flocks of upwards of 500 birds in late summer but recently the conservation concern has gone from *Amber to Red List*. In Wales the bird is now all but extinct as a breeding species. He decided to take action- “*In winter 1999 I ploughed up about four acres in one field and left it. I’d read that bare earth is what lapwings nest in.*” Sacrificing these acres paid off. Three pairs of lapwings nested in 2000 and together they raised eight chicks. He watched them assiduously but from a distance as he knew that if one walked up to the nest a fox would soon spot it. The next year six lapwing pairs nested and he thought that by blocking some drainage ditches he could give better protection by surrounding the nests with shallow pools. However that was not enough and all the chicks were taken by a fox.

He then got serious and erected a six feet high fence around the entire 23 acre field and electrified the lower part. More recently he has fenced the entire farm of 250 acres and introduced ‘hides’. The word has spread and a visitor car park was needed. He also set up a charity, the *Cambrian Lapwing Recovery Trust* to carry on the work. All this is expensive – so far he’s spent 70,000 pounds – but very successful. 150 young lapwings had fledged by the end of 2008.

The programme has been a boon for other birds too. Before the fence was erected the farm had just one pair of linnets and now there are eighty. Skylarks are also breeding again and song thrushes are thriving. But birds of prey are a constant menace and Charles

feels that conservation’s decision makers have gone too far in protecting raptors.

More can be learned about the Cambrian Lapwing Recovery Trust by visiting the website at www.clrt.co.uk or, if you are in Wales, by calling 01974 272634

Reminders

The Annual General Meeting is coming in October. If you haven’t paid this year’s dues please do so now and save yourself the embarrassment of doing so at the AGM.

The North American Festival of Wales will be held in Portland, Oregon, September 2-5, 2010. The Festival hotel is the Doubletree at Lloyd Center. Call 503-281-6111 and quote Code WNG to get discounted rate.

Buy your tickets now for the Cor Sodre Aran Concert in Victoria, September 8th 2010.

I’ll see you there – Fe fydda i’n weld chi yno.



Cor Sodre Aran

Dyna fo – diwedd. That’s it –the end.

