

# Cymdeithas Gymraeg



## Victoria Welsh Society

Newsletter: Rhagfyr 2013 December

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**Notice – 2014 memberships are now due. \$20 single, \$25 family.**

## From the Editor

Once again the Fall, or, if you prefer, Autumn, is almost done “ Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness.” Could the poet have had in mind our AGM ?

You will all be aware of that event that was held in late October – sad to say but the turnout was low, just a handful of members and the Board was not fully present either – some unavoidable absences in that case. However there was enough for a quorum and some essential business was done.

It is clear that this is a quiet time in our affairs. We are now down to the one event in the year that still commands a fairly good attendance – St. David’s Day. We all hope that continues.

## Society News

The Annual General Meeting was held in the New Horizons Hall, 234 Menzies Street on October 23, commencing at 6 p.m. The attendance was low, there being barely a quorum with only 6 members present, plus 7 Board members. The main points that were discussed are summarised as follows :

- The minutes of the 2012 AGM were adopted as circulated.
- The Treasurer’s report noted that as of August 31, 2013 the Society’s monetary assets were \$ 9158.53 , reflecting a reduction of \$ 1045.83 from the assets in 2012. ( but since August 31 \$100 in membership fees have been received).
- The President’s report covered St. David’s Day, 2013 and the possibilities of more Welsh choirs visiting Victoria.
- In the coming year the Board should endeavour to raise the profile of the Society by focussing media attention on our existence through information on St. David’s Day activities. Margaret Lintern suggested and volunteered to write to “The British Canadian” ( which is

distributed through stores and restaurants ) to let them know that there is a Welsh Society in Victoria.

A move to abolish the ‘Ladies Auxiliary’ was put on hold until it can be properly introduced at next year’s AGM. This is in accordance with the Society’s Constitution. ( The auxiliary has been non-functioning for some time.)

- In the election of the 2013/14 Board the only new face is that of Gwerfyl Richards ,who is a former Trustee. The composition of the New Board is the same as the outgoing with the addition of Gwerfyl and Lynne Thomas will replace Gill Greydanus as Secretary.
- A vote of thanks to Gill for her services as Secretary was expressed.
- The meeting was adjourned at 8.20 p.m.
- Coffee, Tea and Welsh cakes followed.

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Myfanwy Rutherford invites all members of the Society to attend her Xmas Party which will be held on December 15<sup>th</sup> ,any time after 2p.m. ( The address is 3038 Admiral’s Road .)

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The new Board held its first meeting on November 22. Among the decisions taken were the date, time, place and cost for our celebration of St. David’s Day in 2014.

It should be no surprise that the date is March 1<sup>st</sup>. ( a Saturday ), 11.30 a.m. at the Gorge Vale Golf Club ( same as last year ) and the cost will be \$40 per head. The menu will be composed of traditional Welsh fare – leek soup and roast lamb- but for those who would like something different there will be West coast salmon. Lunch will be followed by the usual toasts and greetings from other Welsh societies, a speaker and musical entertainment. ( *Plan now to attend and enjoy an afternoon with your friends! – Ed.* )

With the goal of raising the profile of the Welsh Society in Victoria and, it is to be

hoped, attracting some new members from the many Welsh in Victoria, a “media blitz” is underway. An article on Wales and the Welsh has been written, to be published in “The British Canadian” . (*Look out for this in your favourite pub and restaurant.* - Ed.)

As for visiting Welsh choirs we should not expect one before 2015 – nothing definite has come of the Board’s correspondence with several . (*Just hope for better economic times in the U.K.* - Ed.)

Our website ([www.victoriawelshsociety.org](http://www.victoriawelshsociety.org)) will be updated as soon as David Lintern’s nephew gets here from Australia.

At present the Society has slightly more than \$9000 in the bank. Several members have paid their dues for the year that started with the AGM.

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If you would like to hear a reading of “A child’s Christmas in Wales” then plan to attend St. Mary’s church, in Saanichton, on December 23 or the Alix Golden Hall on December 24. Each performance will be at 7.30 p.m. Society member Mel Jones will be reading this classic.

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### News from Wales

Figures from the 2011 Census are not wholly encouraging for those of us who want to see the Welsh language, Cymraeg, fully restored. Latest numbers show that Welsh speakers dwindled from 20.5% to 19% over the decade to 2011. However the number of children able to speak Welsh is 2.4 times those in the age bracket 16-64 and 2.3 times those over 65.

Girls are clearly better than boys in their ability to converse – nearly 45% of 15 year old girls are proficient but only 35.6% of boys are so.

The survey also revealed the depth of the regional differences in knowledge of the language . In Gwynedd 89% of children speak Welsh whilst in Merthyr Tydfil only 23% can do so. Amongst pensioners in Gwynedd 58% speak it compared with 1.3% in Blaenau Gwent, 1.7% in Newport and 2% in Torfaen.

Again, in Gwynedd, 62.5% of those of working age are able to speak Welsh but only 5.4% of those in Monmouthshire as a whole can do so.

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Since November of last year 1,325 cases of measles were diagnosed in Wales and 1,125 were located in and around Swansea and in the region of Powys. More than 50,000 people were vaccinated in April and May but less than a third of these were between 10 and 18, the hardest hit age group.

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In April the Pontfadog Oak, a 1200 year old tree at Chirk, near Wreccsam, was blown down by high winds .

The Woodland Trust said that pests and diseases threaten more than 4,200 of Wales’ most historic trees and some of the most at risk are more than 1,000 years old.

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You’ll be quite safe in Cardiff and in Swansea-Violent crimes in these two cities are the lowest of any major urban area in the U.K. according to the findings of a major new study. The first ever Peace Index ranked these two urban areas as the most peaceful in the country. This ,despite high levels of unemployment and alcohol consumption which are identified as factors leading to higher rates of violent crime, including murder. Expert opinion claims that the comparatively low levels of violence are due to better community cohesion and “joined up” work by different organizations within Community Safety Partnerships.

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Did you know that 400 years ago Henry 8<sup>th</sup> decreed that Welsh mountain ponies be exterminated since they could not carry a knight in full armour? The wild ponies lived on though, helped by their remote locations and protection by hill farmers. Now a group of native ponies in Snowdonia, that exist as a result of the failure of the cull, have been declared genetically unique and scientists say that they must be protected or they face extinction. The call for this results from the deaths of many in the bad weather last winter.

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Are you ready for some more numbers? The 2011 Census revealed that Wales is the most Irreligious part of the U.K. 32% say they have no religion.

There are 8,259 people who say that they are Jedi Knights, following the lead of Yoda from Star Wars. There are 3,448 pagans, 2,691 Spiritualists, 243 Druids, 83 witches, 740 Wiccans, 93 Satanists, 91 heathens, 57 Scientologists and just 23 free thinkers. But there are 815 people who listed themselves as humanists.

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An 81 year old man in Somerset, who had a stroke, awoke speaking Welsh. He was taken ill at his home in Bath and a few days later he was speaking the language that he had not used since childhood. During WW2 he had been evacuated to Aberaeron, in mid-Wales and lived there for 4 years from the age of nine. Doctors concluded that he had suffered aphasia, a condition that affects a person's ability to communicate. In the case of stroke survivors, they may be affected in different ways, from speaking and reading to writing and comprehension.

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Joseph of Arimathea could be buried in In Cardiff!

This is the claim of Michael Clark, a Birmingham author, in his book "Maelgwn of Llandaff and Joseph of Arimathea."

Some legends contend that Joseph was buried on the isle of Avalon following his death in 82 AD. (some accounts say Glastonbury Abbey.) However, Clark asserts that the grave is intact and to be found within the ruins of the Chapel of St. Mary in Bute Park, Cardiff. The author says that the site was pin-pointed by Maelgwn whose brother was Meurig, a local ruler, (for whom Pentre Meurig In the Vale of Glamorgan is named.)

Further, Clark claims that Joseph became known in Wales as St. Illtid and he founded a church at Llanilltid which is near Pencoed. (It is known that Joseph of Arimathea, the great-uncle of Jesus, travelled extensively in the Roman Empire through his business as a trader in metals. Cornwall was a source of tin from antiquity – known to Phoenicians – so

*it's not much of a stretch to suggest that Joseph got to South Wales in his search for copper and iron. Did he die in Cardiff whilst on business?)*

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#### Welsh Sports

- Cardiff City joined Swansea City in the Premier League at the start of the Soccer season. Both teams are having rather a tough time, after a bright start. They have played each other once, at Cardiff, where the home team won narrowly.
- Swansea had their moment of glory earlier in the year when they deservedly beat Bradford City to win the League Cup. (On the way there they beat Chelsea).
- Wreccsam are not doing very well in the lowest division and are unlikely to gain promotion.
- The fortunes of Wales in international Rugby during the series of matches against Southern hemisphere this autumn have been mixed. They beat Argentina and Fiji but came up short against the power-houses. In their most recent match Australia won again, by a narrow margin.

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#### News from Canada/USA

Cymdeithas Madog News has announced that the next Welsh Language course will be held at Brock University, St. Catharines, Ontario, July 20-27, 2014. For more information go to [www.madog.org](http://www.madog.org)

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The July/August issue of Ninnau (the North American Welsh newspaper) reports that Victoria's own love spoon carver, Dave Western demonstrated his art at St. Fagan's National History Museum, Cardiff, in May of this year. A fellow carver was Sion Llewellyn. They were described as the two finest practitioners of the art. They both created love spoons on the spot as visitors looked on.

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Dave Western also made the news in Ninnau when he visited the Madog Center for Welsh Studies at the University of Rio Grande in Columbus, Ohio. There he met another love spoon carver, Laura Jenkins Gorun with whom he had collaborated on carving the Welsh raffle love spoon for the West Coast Eisteddfod for the past two years. He also presented the Madog Center with a beautiful love spoon designed around the University's seal.

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If you are a Morgan and related to the Morgans of West Virginia perhaps you visited Marion County this past summer, joining all those other descendants of Colonel Morgan ap Morgan and his wife, Catherine .

Morgan ap Morgan is credited with being the first permanent settler in what would become West Virginia, when he built a cabin for his wife and young family on a tract of 1000 acres granted him by a Colonial Virginia land patent. He was born in Wales in 1688 and came to America about 1713.

In 1735 he established a militia which became the 201<sup>st</sup>. WV National Guard Infantry/Artillery, the is the oldest continuously serving military unit in the USA.

This year is the sesquicentennial of Morgan's arrival in America. His descendant, Francis H. Pierpoint was governor of "Restored Virginia" and was vital to the separation of the western part of Virginia and the acceptance of this part as the 35<sup>th</sup> State of the Union.

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Continuing with something different.

You will recall that in previous issues some of the personalities in the Society have been 'profiled.' Now we continue with something of our President's background :

Nerys Hughes was born in St. Asaph, a cathedral town in Flintshire, North Wales but lived in Tremeirchion, a village that used to be in Flintshire but is now included in Denbighshire. She had some primary schooling in Tremeirchion before her parents brought her to Canada in 1958. She finished primary school in Duncan and went on to complete high school there.

Nerys does not claim to be Welsh speaking, but she understands enough to know when people are talking about her.

Following her schooling she was employed by the provincial government in the Ministry of Health and liked it so much that she stayed with them for 35 years, rising to become Director of Operations for PharmaCare.

Nerys has been a member of the Society for seven years "this time around." In fact she was a member in the early 1990's and served on the Board of Trustees but then took a break until re-joining in 2006. She recalls that her parents were members of the Cymrodorian Society for many years and she attended many events and functions with them.

Although it's many years since she left Wales, it has never left her. She does not regret that her parents brought her to Canada except, perhaps, for not being able to speak Welsh fluently. She intends travelling there in 2014, after a seven year absence.

Her hobbies are golf, dogs and travelling – you will recall meeting Taffy, a Welsh Terrier (what else? ) in the May 2011 issue of the Newsletter.

As a final thought Nerys felt it important to recall, with gratitude , that when she and her parents arrived in Vancouver, after a long train journey from Montreal, they were met by relatives of her primary school teacher in Tremeirchion and that her parents were befriended by many expats, who came from the villages and towns near there.

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And now a not so tall tale from Wales :

One fine day two American tourists were driving through North Wales. They stopped for lunch in a little place named Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerych wrndrobwylllantisiliogogoch. Before ordering they asked the waitress to pronounce very slowly where they were. The girl was pleased to help :

“ Burr.....Gurr.....King “  
( Thanks to Nerys for this gem.)

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All that's left is to wish all a Very Merry Xmas and a Happy New Year.

Nadolig Llawen ichi gyd a Blwyddyn Newydd Dda.