

# Cymdeithas Gymraeg



## Victoria Welsh Society

Newsletter: Chwefror 2012 February

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**Notice – Unpaid 2012 memberships are now due.**

## From the Editor

Mae'n wir, dyma ni yn y blwyddyn newydd, felly, dymyniadau gorau i chi gyd am 2012. Your editor has been inspired by reports of the relative success of the attempts to re-establish the Welsh language through effective teaching in the primary schools in Wales. Hence the opening in Welsh which notes that we are in the New Year and offers good wishes to all in 2012. However that's about the extent of your Editor's knowledge of the language. Those of us who got their early schooling in those parts of Wales ( largely the industrial South ) ,where the language was treated indifferently by the majority, were in reality cheated out of what would have been a richer experience in life. It will be recalled that a little more than a year ago we were visited by some of the students and staff of Bryntawe School, in Swansea (Abertawe in Welsh). All those who came were completely bilingual and the ease with which they slipped from Welsh to English was profound. They are to be envied by most of us.

Language of course is an expression of culture ; Wales and Welshness is not short of that – witness the annual *National Eisteddfod*, ( now 150 years old ) ,countless lesser but vitally important 'village' eisteddfodau' ( the training grounds ), not to forget the annual *International Eisteddfod*, now approaching 65 years of age, where a winner is just as likely to be from Wilkes Barre as from Pontypridd. This is the Wales of substance that will last and not be unduly troubled because the 'certainty of being better off in an independent Wales' was not achieved. Belief in the economic benefit of independence was voiced, a few months ago, by a former *Plaid Cymru M.P.*, Adam Price now a Harvard University research fellow. He claims that had Wales become independent in 1990 the Welsh economy would have grown at 2.5 percent each year and that people in Wales would now be better off by some 39 percent. His argument for this is that small countries in the European Union have done better than larger ones in the last 30 years. *Hmm! Would the Germans on one hand and the Irish, Greeks and Portuguese on the other, agree?*

## Society News

A few members attended the Xmas party that was kindly hosted by Myfanwy Rutherford. It was rather disappointing because , as usual, Myfanwy had gone to considerable lengths to provide a welcome, and delicious 'eats', for all who came. Now that the road improvements are done there's little excuse for not accepting. ( and there is space for parking.)

So, from those who were there, *Diolch yn Fawr iawn, Myfanwy.*

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### Saint David's Day

Saint David's Day is fast approaching. This year the celebration will be on February 25 and the venue is changed to the Gorge Vale Golf Club. The address is 1005 Craigflower Road.

So join your friends at 11.30 and lunch at 12.30. Traditional Welsh fare with the addition of salads:

Leek soup  
Roast lamb or Salmon  
Roast potatoes  
Vegetables  
Trifle and Welsh cakes

Coffee or Tea

Entertainment to follow,

\$ 35 per person

Please send your cheque to Jen Pearson.  
(4277 Houlihan Place, Victoria, V8N 3T2 )

**Please reply by Feb. 15.**

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The Board met in January and will meet again in February to finalize arrangements for St. David's Day. They are currently working on means of attracting Welsh choirs to perform in Victoria. Nothing definite yet but there is some hope of one in 2013.

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## News from Wales

We are indebted to the North American Welsh newspaper 'Ninnau' for the following items :

- The population of Wales tops 3 million for the first time but there are more old people than children (558,100 to 548,000) The number of children fell ,in the 10 years from 2001.
- The Tower Colliery in Hirwaun is set to re-open once again. Funding of £30 million has been received to enable the only deep mine in Wales and to build an environmental resource centre. Over a 7 year period some 6 million tons of coal will be mined, with 200 jobs created.
- Wrexham (Wreccsam) and St. Asaph have submitted bids for city status. Will they succeed? Wrexham has tried three times in the past!
- Three osprey chicks have hatched near Machynlleth – the first in the Dyfi valley since 1609. According to the Montgomeryshire Wildlife Trust a pair of ospreys had nested at the Cors Dyfi reserve earlier this year. (Another pair live in the Glaslyn Valley near Porthmadog. )
- The Owain Glyndwr Centre in Machynlleth has re-opened after £350,000 restoration. The centre, which houses an exhibition on Glyndwr's rebellion against English control, is built on what is believed to be the site of the 15<sup>th</sup>. Century Welsh parliament building. (If you're travelling back home this year this calls for a visit. - Ed.)
- The oldest rock art in the U.K. has been found in the Gower – a speared reindeer scratched on a cave wall and painted red. It may be 13 to 14 thousand years old. Earlier work in the cave unearthed several hundred pieces of flint which was used in dating the drawing.
- Plans are afoot to create a 110 mile pilgrim trail in North Wales. Starting at Holywell, in Flintshire, the trail will end in Bardsey Isle ("island of the 20,000 saints.") just off the Llyn Peninsula. The project has the backing of the Archbishop of Canterbury, who is a Welshman. Among many religious sites on the trail is *Gwytherin* where, if you remember your "*Cadfael*", some rather dubious substitution of bones was done. The first pilgrimage takes place this summer, starting at the 12<sup>th</sup>.Century Cistercian Basingwerk Abbey near St. Winifrede's Well, the Lourdes of Wales.
- Among all the rivers in the U.K. the Taff and the Dee are in the ten most improved. The Environment Agency says that these have become havens for walkers, anglers and wildlife. (The Taff once ran black with coal dust and the Dee was polluted with toxic waste that killed off much of the wildlife.) The Dee has a successful cockle harvesting industry as well as a thriving fishery for salmon and trout. Likewise salmon and trout have returned to the Taff which is also home to otters, king fishers and dippers.
- *Now this one takes the Welsh Cake- Ed.* A bridge costing £650,000 is being built over the Porthmadog by-pass in Gwynedd to **help bats cross the road!** Admittedly the bat in question is the rare 'lesser horse-shoe bat '. These low flying creatures are being killed by traffic. The bridge is there to induce them to fly higher as they rely on echo location from structures to get around. (Why not build a belfry instead? – Ed.)
- The film "*Why Wales*" is now on-line. Your editor recommends that you take a look at it by going to <http://vimeo.com/26131158> and follow Liana Stewart, a University of Wales Newport graduate as she journeyed through Wales to discover why more than 13,000 students from outside Europe chose to study in Wales in 2011.
- The National History Museum at St. Fagan's, near Cardiff, has been chosen as the U.K.'s favorite tourist attraction by "*Which*" travel magazine. (So the next time you're over there become one of the more than 600,000 visitors in a year – it's worthwhile pulling off the M4.—Ed.)

## Welsh Sports

- Swansea City continues playing attractive football in the Premier League and are currently in 13<sup>th</sup> position having won six, drawn eight and lost eight games. They've been rather a surprise for the likes of Chelsea, Tottenham and especially Arsenal.
- Once again Cardiff looks as though they'll succeed in getting promotion to the Premier League. Currently they are third in their division. However time will tell. But what is certain is that they are in the final of the Carling Cup and will play Liverpool at Wembley.
- Might Wrexham rise from the ashes of the Blue Square and return to the League? That seems possible given that they keep up the form they've shown all season. Justice will be done if they get there. They had a good run in the F.A. cup knockout rounds only going out to Brighton in a third round replay, which they lost on penalty shoot-out – and Brighton, are in the power Championship division!
- Britain's athletics team captain, Dai Greene from Llanelli, is favored to win the 400m hurdles at the upcoming London Olympic Games. He won this event at an international meet in Korea in 2011.
- Wales are troubled with injuries to prominent players as they prepare for their first game against Ireland in the Six Nations rugby competition. Gethin Jenkins is ruled out for a month while Rhys Priestland and Dan Lydiate are receiving treatment for knee and ankle injuries and may not play.
- Glamorgan County Cricket Club have appointed their wicket-keeper, Mark Wallace, as captain for the 2012 season in place of Alviro Peterson, who is returning to South Africa. Peterson will be missed – he was named their 'player of the year'.

## News from Canada /U.S.A.

The Welsh National Gymanfa Ganu Association (WNGGA) which, recently, has been renamed the Welsh North American Association (WNAA) elected new trustees at the annual general meeting, held in Cleveland, in September 2011.

Trustees are elected from three regions, East and West of the Mississippi and Canada. Because three of the five Canadian positions have been unfilled for more than three years, the Constitution allows new trustees from the U.S.A. to fill the vacancies.

The President of WNAA is Hywel Davies who emigrated from Glamorgan to the U.S.A. in 1966. He was inducted into the Gorsedd of Bards at the National Eisteddfod, in Swansea, in 2005.

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The Ontario Welsh Festival will be held again in Niagara Falls in 2012. The dates are April 27- 29 and the venue is the Marriot Gateway-on-the Falls hotel. (be sure to book early if you want a room overlooking the falls. )

The festival choir will be Cor Cwmni Da, from West Wales, conducted by Marilyn Davies.

Go to [www.ontariowelshfestival](http://www.ontariowelshfestival) for details.

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The Vancouver Welsh Society will hold their St. David's Day Dinner on March 3<sup>rd</sup>. at 6.0 p.m. Tickets are \$40. Entertainment by Celtic harpist Patricia Sereno. Details can be obtained by calling Gaynor Evans at 604-271-3134.

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That splendid British monthly publication, "The Countryman" almost invariably has an article on an aspect of Welsh country life. The December 2011 and January 2012 issues were no exception and contained articles titled "A wonderful Welsh winter" (by Polly Langford) and "A walk on Mynydd Bach" ( by Linda Auld ). The wonderful winter is experienced in the Senni Valley, in Breconshire and Mynydd Bach is in Cardiganshire.

The following extracts from each article will perhaps suffice to set the scenes:

“The River Senni and its tributary streams were so picturesque, with snow perfectly balanced on every twig of the trees along the banks, glistening water gurgling around snow covered rocks, telling me that Nature was all there, asleep under its deep, cold duvet.”

And from Mynydd Bach – “I feel the cold East wind penetrating down into my lungs as I breathe more heavily going up the hill. Fields are still white on the West side where the Sun has not melted the frost. I pass the field with the colored cob colt and he watches me with his blue eye.”

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The February issue of “The Countryman” has an intriguing piece by John Vince entitled *The dangers of drink driving*. (a précis is given below) :

*It would be a mistake to think that present dangers are a creation of the motor age. About two miles along the A40 east of Llandovery stands a sizeable stone pillar, inside a neat wrought iron fence. This is the Mailcoach Pillar and its inscription relates a dramatic event on December 19<sup>th</sup>. 1835.- ‘A speeding mailcoach, driven by one Edward Jenkins, who was suffering from an excess of drink, on the wrong side of the road, had to leave the road to avoid an oncoming cart. The coach and its passengers were hurled over a precipice and a hundred feet below was shattered by striking an ash tree. Through amazing good fortune the passengers survived the crash, also the driver and the guard, who travelled outside.*

*Edward Jenkins was haled before the Magistrates at Llandovery and fined £5.’*

*The monument was erected after public donations amounting to £13-16s-6d was raised by 41 donors on the initiative of a Mr. J.Bull (sic) who held the appointment of Inspector- of- Mail-Coaches. It was unveiled in 1841 and has recently been restored for the second time.*

*Is this the oldest memorial to a driving accident?*

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## BE A PERSUADER

It may have occurred to you that the Victoria Welsh Society has a slowly declining

membership! You can do something about it. . You may have some friends with a Welsh background who have never joined us, or even some non-Welsh friends who might be sympathetic to the idea but never got around to it. Do what ever it takes to get them in! If necessary badger them, wheedle them or even send them on a guilt trip. The method is left to you.

**We know that they’re out there!**

Finally, please respond as soon as possible if you will attend the St. David’s Lunch and afterwards on February 25<sup>th</sup>.

## **Stop Press**

Wales beat Ireland in the Six Nations on February 4<sup>th</sup>.

England beat Scotland

France beat Italy

Diwedd – The End