

Cymdeithas Gymraeg



Victoria Welsh Society

Newsletter: Mehefin 2007, June 2007

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<i>Secretary</i>		
<i>Treasurer</i>	Jen Pearson	477-2548
<i>Ladies' Auxiliary</i>	Myfanwy Rutherford	382-9343

<i>Trustees</i>	Catherine Gillion	853-6017
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Dates, Directions, Developments

The 76th Welsh National Gymanfa Ganu

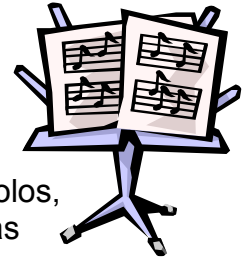


runs from August 30th to September 2nd, 2007 in Washington DC. It will be held at the Hilton Alexandria Mark Centre, which has a wonderful lakeside setting – rates are \$102 US/night. Details about the stimulating Festival program can be found at: <http://www.whgga.org>. You can register using the website, or call 1-800-445-8667, but don't leave it later than August 10th.

Our annual summer BBQ is being held on **June 24th** at Myfanwy Rutherford's home, 3038 Admirals' Road, from 2:00 p.m. onward. It will be a pot luck function – please bring a dessert or salad. Strip-loin steak can be pre-ordered at \$5 per person; send your cheque (payable to the Victoria Welsh Society), to The Treasurer, 4277 Houlihan Place, Victoria, V8N 3T2. A telephone response is requested by **June 17th** to either Denis Brown (658-8701), or Jen Pearson (477-2548).

On May 12th members of our Society and their guests (eighteen in all), enjoyed a musical evening supplied by the Arion Choir of Victoria (about 20 voices) supplemented by a 70 strong Vancouver Welshmen's Choir. The programme was good and

varied; it had timeless Welsh hymns, operatic pieces, a selection of Gershwin (including songs from Porgy and Bess), a little G and S, down to Polly Perkins of Paddington Green, with a born comic. There were also solos, voice and trombone. It was altogether a very good event. *(Denis Brown)*



Since being returned to its point of origin, the Bagillt Bardic Eisteddfod Chair that this Society had in its possession for over a decade continues to be in the news. Plans are being developed for it to be exhibited at this year's National Eisteddfod in Mold, North Wales, during the first week in August. The Bagillt History Club was approached by the Flintshire County Council with a request to exhibit the Chair in its pavilion on the Eisteddfod grounds. The Council has assured the Club that it will display the Chair 'regally' – guard ropes around a suitable raised dais will allow for maximum viewing by the anticipated crowds. The Club president, Colin Sheen, will be providing photographs, together with the history of the Chair's repatriation that was achieved through the good will of our Society. *(Em Round)*

Here's the mid-year appeal to those who have forgotten to renew their membership! We are in decline and need your support.



Prove to your Board that you are sufficiently interested in the Society by sending your cheque (\$16 Single, \$24 Family - made payable to the Victoria Welsh Society) to The Treasurer, at 4277 Houlihan Place, Victoria, V8N 3T2.

NEWSFLASH



The Society is looking for a replacement Editor for this newsletter. No sophisticated computer skills are needed. Assistance will be provided where necessary. There are huge advantages - the

title will get you into journalists' clubs, allow you to talk with stars, and give you the opportunity to boast about your family.

Please contact the current Editor, Richard Adams, by phone, 370-0937 or e/m richardadams171@shaw.ca to discover just how easy the job can be. There could be different approaches – an individual, a family, or a coffee group could undertake it. Step up - your Society needs you.

Letters to the Editor



Readers are encouraged to respond to anything that they have read in this newsletter, or to any issue that they believe will interest members.

4/10/2007

Dear Richard,
I enjoyed receiving the April newsletter, and I was delighted to read the information regarding the Llangollen International Eisteddfod. It brought back many memories of competing at the Eisteddfod. At the end of the 'prelims', which were usually held in the Town Hall, all the fifty or so competitors would wait to hear the announcement to see if they were one of the three or four singers to have been selected to appear 'on the stage'

the following day. Several times I was selected.

Singing on that enormous stage, never knowing which microphone to use, looking out at a sea of faces and wondering whether I would forget the Welsh words! Somehow, when I began singing, the faces disappeared. I did win First Prize - twice. You can imagine how that felt! Thank you for the work you put into producing the Newsletter.

Iola Scott
Victoria

Welsh Rarebits

Ever heard of Lennie the Leek? That's the name of the cartoon character that is being used to promote a healthy eating plan for Pembrokeshire school students. Lennie's promotional messages are accompanied by freshly prepared foods



and an increase in salads that are being offered on school menus. Also, sugary pops are being taken off the sales counters and chocolate and 'crisps' machines are being removed from all schools. The strategy is so successful that other Welsh authorities are using it as a template.

Brits who travel in Europe are often impressed by the number of people who can speak two or three languages. Experts are now recognizing that bilingual Welsh children could take advantage of their facility in two languages. Evidence suggests that if you speak two languages from birth or very young, you can acquire other languages more easily than someone who has only one language from birth. This means that Welsh speaking students would probably do

better with a third language than their English contemporaries would do with their second. Hence, schools in Wales are being encouraged to make a stronger drive towards multi-lingualism.



France's new "second lady" is Welsh. She is Penelope Fillon (née Clarke), the wife of the recently appointed French Prime Minister, François Fillon. She was brought up in the pretty village of Llanover, near Abergavenny, where she was

one of five children of a local solicitor, George Clarke and his wife Gladys. She has been described as very natural, unpretentious and clever. She speaks perfectly fluent French, but does have a soft Welsh accent. She was known as Penny in King Henry VIII Grammar School in Abergavenny, where she was an outstanding student, a gifted linguist and a very thoughtful person. Officials at the British embassy in Paris have said that Mme Fillion is absolutely lovely, very family orientated and extremely loyal to Wales and proud of being Welsh.

It has been one of the warmest and driest springs since records began in Wales almost 350 years ago. The first three weeks of April brought only 1% of the average rainfall for the month. Consequently, some leek farmers are predicting that their crop yields will be down almost 30%. It's hard to believe that one result of climate change could be that the "green, green grass of home" might end up as semi-arid land.

Roots, Reflections and Recall

In a recent edition of this newsletter, members were encouraged to write a short piece about some memorable link they have with Wales.

Here is a delightful piece of living history entitled

Long-ago Days

It's been a long time since I fell into the pig's blood. It took place one day after school in the tiny Welsh village of Ystradfellte, which in English translates as "valley of the River Mellte". Then, as now, the compact village square comprised just four buildings, the most prominent of which was the whitewashed and many-windowed New Inn public house. Despite its name, new it certainly was not, having been built in the mid 1600's. Many thirsty first-time visitors to the pub have probably often looked as startled as the glass-encased stuffed foxes at the pub's entrance when they, the customers, unexpectedly found themselves in the landlord's family's living quarters that, after over 350 years, still doubled as the public bar.

Opposite the New Inn, and standing behind a group of massive and ancient yew trees, stood St. Mary's Norman-built church. Constructed of locally quarried dark grey stone, and forbidding in appearance, its strong square tower has long since housed a doleful sounding bell. Funeral instructions left by an aunt of dramatic bent decreed that the bell should be tolled one hundred times just before her coffin was to be taken along the



gravel path to join the final resting place of many generations of local families, my grandparents included. A large double-fronted stone-built house, always rumored to be haunted by a fleeing lady in white, and my Uncle John's small, low profile cottage made up the other two buildings at the centre of Ystradfellte. My uncle's house was as old as the 12th century church, for its builders were the same Cistercian monks

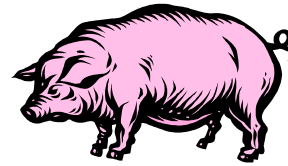
who founded St. Mary's, situated just thirty or so yards across the square. It wasn't until the 1800's that the school was built for the local children. This two-roomed structure lay around a sharp bend about three hundred yards up from the New Inn pub, so it couldn't be seen from the centre of the village. I began my schooling there just before my fifth birthday.

About ten of the thirty or so enrolled children, my older brother and myself included, lived several miles from the village, so rode daily with "Dafydd", a local entrepreneur in the transportation business. Diminutive in stature, this wizened old (at least to me) man was both sharp-eyed and quick-spoken, the sweet curls around the nape of his seldom-washed neck belied the fact that he was actually rather quick-tempered. As well, he was unreliable, so we children often had long after-school waits for his twelve-seater wooden-sided shooting-brake to arrive at the village square meeting place. In addition we never knew in what condition his vehicle might be, as on his way to collect us he had sometimes carried uncrated piglets as his passengers.

Running up at a prominent slope from the village square, and starting in front of Uncle John's cottage, was a deeply rutted lane. It was a route for only horse and cart, its surface strewn with many large smooth stones, some were embedded in mud, but many were loose. As well, generous amounts of horse manure, at various stages of decay, dotted the surface. About fifty yards up this lane, and belonging to my uncle, stood an old shed with galvanized iron roof and roughly built Dutch door. The lane carried on to a distant farm.

One day after school we waiting children somehow learned that Uncle John was having a pig slaughtered at the very time we

were there. With no hesitation we ran as a pack, helter-skelter up the lane, towards the shed where the unfortunate animal lay. However, even whilst en route we realised the most exciting part of the event was over,



as rivulets of bright red blood were already coursing down along the ruts of the lane. We pressed on regardless. Noisily jostling for position to see over the bottom half of the split-shed door, I, for one, was fascinated by the cascade of blood flowing over the well-worn step below. There was no doubt that the pig was dead as the animal was also silent. Uncle John and the slaughterman were far too preoccupied with the job at hand to pay any attention to their unexpected audience, for neither uttered a word. We were, after all, children of farming stock, so were not to be shielded from animal slaughter. We were fascinated, yes, but horrified, no. Within a minute or two of our arrival at the death scene I, as the smallest of the group, had been pushed unceremoniously to the back of the pack. A moment later a voice called out "Dafydd's here", and with that the pig was forgotten. In changing direction to run back down the lane I was now at the front of the rushing group, but not for long. Almost immediately I was mowed down by the mob. Face, hands, bare knees, as well as the front of my thick sky-blue curly cloth coat were saturated with a mixture of pig's blood, mud, stones, and of course horse manure. I felt that nobody rushed to my aid, but my brother now tells me that he indeed did. I've not mentioned that Ystradfellte had only one water tap, situated right in the village square at the side of the New Inn.

Each time I return to the place of my birth I see a small girl being publicly washed by the publican's wife, at that village tap. It was I, the day I fell into the pig's blood.

Lilian Fraser

Things to do in Wales before you...

The well-known series called Rough Guide is set to publish a book of the top 25 things to do in the British Isles – it includes 3 Welsh attractions. We know that there should be far more than three!

Listed below are alternative places to visit and things to do in Wales before you

Members are invited to send in to the Editor a short description of one or more of these attractions that would justify their inclusion in our list of recommendations for visitors to Wales:

Caernarfon Castle.
Blaenavon Ironworks.
Portmeirion Village.
The Royal Welsh Show.
The River Dee.
Gower Peninsula.
Trearddur Bay
Dan-yr-Ogof Caves.
The Hay-On-Wye Book Festival
Skomer Island

Of course, you need not be limited to this list. Submit your own suggestions, together with a brief comment of why they should be considered an important attraction.

History is interim reports issued periodically.

The following article has been excerpted from the December 2006 issue of the "Countryman". It is entitled

A Drover's House

A most interesting house is located in Stockbridge, Hampshire, England. One would not expect to find in Wessex a substantial, brick built, thatched cottage with a long message in Welsh prominently displayed on the brickwork. The words are: GWAIR TYMHERUS - PORVA-FLASUS-

CWRW DAA - GWAL CYSURUS and they were good advertising for the Welsh drovers who passed this way in the early part of the 19th century.

The translation reads "Seasoned hay: Tasty pastures: Good beer: Comfortable beds".

The message implies that the drovers were literate, but someone didn't know the word 'Da'. The route from Wales could have been across the Severn via the, now defunct, Aust Ferry, then on to Chippenham, across Salisbury Plain to Stockbridge. From there they could have made for Southampton or turned into Sussex.

The drovers took a farmer's stock and paid him on return. The system was open to abuse and the reputation of some drovers was not good. However there was some system of control in that a drover had to be licensed and to qualify for a license a man had to be married and over 30 years old. An unlicensed drover would be charged with vagrancy if caught.

In the early part of the 19th century, drovers could expect to earn about 10 shillings per week - more than double a farm worker's wage. They might also supplement this by carrying letters, long before the Penny Post, which was introduced in 1840.

Progress with a large herd, or flock, was slow and the journey from South Wales to south east England could take 3 or more weeks. Grazing had to be arranged in advance. Cattle were often shod before the journey.

When droving ceased, blacksmiths, innkeepers and graziers all suffered a loss of trade. It is thought that the house at Stockbridge probably lost its customers in the early years of Queen Victoria's reign.

Submitted by Denis Brown

End Note

Having got this far, have you considered writing something for the newsletter – an early reminiscence, a favoured holiday, an interview with a friend/spouse?