

Cymdeithas Gymraeg



Victoria Welsh Society

Newsletter: Ebrill 1/April 1 - 2006

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Dates, Directions & Developments

"A grand success" – such was the general opinion of our Society's banquet that celebrated Dewi Sant on March 4th at the University Club of the University of Victoria. Over 70 people attended - friendships were renewed and personal histories were reviewed. Traditions were maintained through a program of music, song, explorations of our history and exchanges of goodwill. Plaudits should be offered to the organizers of this splendid evening.



There has been a reasonable response to the annual call for renewal of membership in our Society. If you were unable to complete and forward the renewal form that has been included in the last two newsletters, now is the time to rectify the situation. Please send your name, address, telephone number and e-mail



address to our Treasurer – Jen Pearson, at 4277 Houlihan Place, Victoria, V8N 3T2, together with a cheque for \$16 (single membership) or \$24 (family membership) and the Victoria Welsh Society will benefit from your continued support.

Conversations overheard during our St. David's banquet indicated that members enjoy reading in the newsletter things that touch them personally. Hence, items submitted by people like Maggie Nixon, Les and Marion Richards, and Gwyn Solomon have helped to reveal the rich experiences and resourcefulness of our members. We must hear more from you, so please use this newsletter as a forum to explore anything that interests you and that also advances links with Wales and our Victoria community at large. A new section has been inaugurated in this issue of our Society's newsletter that will allow members to verbalize, vindicate and/or vent. It is "*Letters to the Editor*".



In a regular newspaper, such a Section traditionally gives readers an opportunity to put their opinion out there – to enquire, to inform, to challenge. See if you can tickle our readership in some similar way. The Welsh have never been backward in coming forward:- Darllenwch, Dysgwch. Ceisiwch!

Many photos were taken at the St. David's banquet, but as it would be prohibitively expensive to print them all in colour, only a small selection has been included in this newsletter. There could be an electronic mailing of many more photos, or some could be posted on our web site – neither of which involves additional printing costs. The membership is invited to give direction to these ideas Please use our new *Letters to the Editor* Section to explore such concepts.

In Memoriam – CLIFF JONES

Cliff was a long time member of this Society. He died in mid-February and is survived by his wife Mary, his three children and his six grandchildren. His many friends and associates are invited to attend a service to be held in his honour at First Memorial Funeral Chapel, 1155 Fort St. on Saturday, April 8th at 2:00p.m. A reception will follow in the Holly Room. Born in Ontario, Cliff took considerable pride in his Welsh lineage, supporting and enjoying the various cultural activities of our Society. Throughout his life Cliff had a professional involvement in various aspects of aviation, engineering and accountancy. He had lived in New Zealand, worked in the Arctic and travelled extensively in Europe. His passions included gardening, photography, flying and finance. All who interacted with him will miss his wit and willingness to contribute.

Letters to the Editor



Memory versus Imagination

I want to comment on the piece by Haydn Mason in the February 2006 issue of the Society's newsletter.

It was beautifully written and brought back so many fond memories to me of the coal mines, hobnail boots, the Coop, and singing Welsh hymns in chapel. I never did lay down with "*a curly haired lovely in the cemetery*". More's the pity. (Did you make that up or was it from memory, Haydn?)

Haydn comes from Blaengwynfi which is just over the mountain from where my parents and grandparents lived in Blaencwm. There used to be a train tunnel through the mountain from Blaencwm to Blaengwynfi. I went as a child on the train (with a stop over in Blaengwynfi at my Auntie's) to Aberavon beach, with the Sunday School. It always rained when we went with the Sunday School but there was always bright sunshine for the Working Men's Clubs. My father used to say it rained equally on The Just and the Unjust, but I didn't believe him. I only remember it raining on the Just.

I sneaked a trip once to Aberavon with my Uncle who was on the Committee of the Labour Club. Gorgeous weather but, serve me right, God gave me a sunburn. I thought a sunburn was not too bad considering, better than a waling and gnashing of teeth.

Thank you, Maggie Nixon, for bringing Haydn's composition to publication.

David Lintern

A totally unbiased review!

I was a guest at the Welsh soiree celebrating Saint David held at the University Club on the campus of University of Victoria March 4th. Sartorial statements abounded among those assembled. Noting discreet harps, tasteful tiny leeks and daffodils, dragon-strewn ties and sweaters, and blatant nationalistic bedraggled pocket-filling leeks, it was obvious to me that this was a partisan crowd. The wit of emcee David Lintern was astounding. How does one man know so many corny jokes? But, the home crowd was very appreciative groaning him on. Music provided during the buffet dinner was by Mount Douglas High School's String Ensemble, and afterwards by the 40-strong concert choir of Lambrick Park Secondary School led by the energetic Karen Hughes. What a talented group of youngsters! They bode well for Vancouver Island's future music scene.

Richard Adams, called to the podium twice in error and once for certain, eventually gave an inspired reflection on the saint himself, painting him as an aesthete who brought Christianity to the Welsh.

Jen Pearson and Marion Kelbrick, read greetings from other Welsh Societies. An email,

purported to be from US President George Bush, was read by VWS President Denis Brown. The audience did not cheer; neither did it hiss. Both *O Canada* and *Mae Hen Wlad Fy Nhadau* were sung by the evening's participants with the minimum amount of fudging of the words. Once again, it was proved that the "*Welsh are a musical nation*"!

Vocalist Susan Smedley rounded out the entertainment with a selection of Welsh folk songs, followed by informal round-the-piano singing.

Everyone seemed to have had a great time – good food, affable company, renewal of friendships and exemplary organization made it an event that should be repeated in, say, about one year's time.

Name withheld by request

Welsh Rarebits



A new trend ...

is growing amongst Welsh musicians – lots of home-grown bands are showing an increasing interest in singing in Welsh. Many well-known pop bands came out from Wales in the 1990s, but they sang almost exclusively in English. The new generation of groups is capturing international attention through traditional sounds, lyrics in Welsh, and fast up-beat arrangements. Leaders of this trend include groups such as Y Cyrff, Moch Pryderi, Tystion Llwybr Llaethog and Anweledig. Their styles range from Celtic and Renaissance, to rap, hip-hop and heavy metal.



School meals ...

in Rome now include Welsh lamb. Prime Welsh organic meat is being exported to Italy so that nutritious lunches can be provided to students in the capital city. Children who eat in school cafeterias have pronounced lamb from Wales to be the tastiest meat in all of Europe. The cost to prepare each meal is the equivalent of £2.80 per child, which is almost four times the amount allocated for an average school meal in Wales.

In the past ...



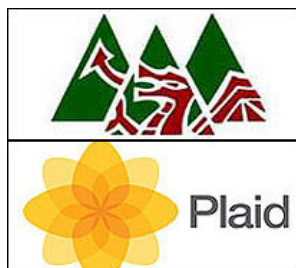
agricultural summer shows in Wales included sheep dog trials and auctions. Working sheepdogs that had served their owner-farmers for seven to ten years were retired and then sold at auctions. This was often done after the dogs had been given the opportunity to show their skills at the agricultural fair, by rounding up and controlling a small flock of deliberately chosen recalcitrant ewes in a paddock or field. The dogs auctioned off by hill farmers were sometimes sold with tape recordings of the commands in Welsh. Although the farmers from North Wales easily moved back and forth from Welsh to English, the training of their dogs had been exclusively done to Welsh commands, hence the need for the tape recordings. The new owners would be often forced to climb a steep learning curve when they returned home with, effectively, a Welsh-speaking sheepdog!

The Welsh National Anthem ...



was written 151 years ago. In 1856 Evan James of Pontypridd wrote the lyrics of "*Mae hen wlad fy nhadau*" and his son James James composed the melody. It was first printed in 1858 and then, having been sung at the National Eisteddfod in 1874, it attained unofficial national anthem status; in 1899 it is reputed to have become the first piece of recorded music in Welsh. This song, with slight variations is used as a Celtic anthem by the Cornish: "*Bro goth agan tasow*" (Old Land of our Fathers) and by the Bretons "*Bro gozh ma zadoù*".

Out with the old ...



and in with the new (both name and logo), as Plaid aims at creating a more modern image. In a move away from "defensive nationalism" the party is embracing change by dropping the word Cymru from its title, because it is trying to appeal to a wider electorate and so combat declining

popularity. It is also changing its image by "moving on" from the green triban symbol that has been used since 1933 and replacing it with a Welsh yellow poppy. The triban – the three peaks of Snowdonia – were thought appropriate in the early days of the party because they represented the resilience of a partly-conquered nation. But today, as the concept of a Welsh nation has been recognized, it is hoped that the stylized poppy will invite both interest and cooperation as Wales accepts the challenges of the twenty first century.

The UK Passport Service ...



is including Welsh (and Scottish Gaelic) in passports for the first time when the biometric passports are introduced in the Fall of this year. This means that Welsh will appear in the newly designed passports alongside other European Union member state languages, but it will not be included on the personal details page. The new passport will include an embedded chip containing biometric information (such as iris patterns, fingerprints and facial image) that can be scanned electronically. The aim of this concept is "to reduce misuse by organized crime and the threat of international terrorism" The new and "improved" passport will still last for ten years and will cost £51 - a consequence, it is said, of the need to boost security and fight fraud.

The changing demography of Wales

The statistical directorate of the Welsh Assembly shows that of the 48,000 who on average move annually from Wales to England most are under 40 years of age. However, the nearly 60,000 who migrate into Wales from England are mostly retirees. A large percentage of the out-flow consists of 16 to 24 year olds, though many are university students some of whom do return home to live and work. Much of the inflow consists of people coming from the cities of the north west of England, or the west Midlands. There are high concentrations of migrants settling in North Wales, especially the Conwy coastal region. Pembrokeshire experiences a

high level of population movement in both directions.

Internal movements are characterized by anomalies such as Cardiff attracting “twentysomethings” from all across Wales, while the high house prices in the capital appear to account for the numbers moving to the Valleys from the city centre. The city also saw a decline in its population of older people, whilst at the same time experiencing an increase in its student population and in the number of professionals in search of work. The South West experiences an outflow of young people, apart from the city of Swansea, where jobs and the university attract people in their 20s. In North Wales there has been an outflow of young people, except from parts of Gwynedd. The universities in Lampeter and Aberystwyth probably explain the high levels of movement in and out of Mid-Wales. As for the Valleys, there are lower levels of movement in both directions than elsewhere in Wales.

Note: Regions are based on council boundaries used in the classification followed by the Office for National Statistics:

North Wales: Isle of Anglesey; Gwynedd; Conwy; Denbighshire; Flintshire; Wrexham

Mid Wales: Powys; Ceredigion

South West: Pembrokeshire; Carmarthenshire

South East: The Vale of Glamorgan; Cardiff; Monmouthshire; Newport

Valleys: Bridgend; Rhondda Cynon Taf; Merthyr Tydfil; Caerphilly; Blaenau Gwent; Torfaen

Aspects of Welsh social life in rural Wales in the early 1940s

Part II of the reminiscences of Hadyn Lloyd Davies, a Welshman who emigrated from Denbigh to Australia over 50 years ago. Here are more of his memories about growing up in a farming community in the Vale of Clwyd.

Social Structure:

The social and class structures in rural North Wales have been referred to as “The last remaining feudal part of Britain” by A J P Taylor. There was a village sociology, a town sociology and an area sociology. Occupying the top

stratum of the class structure and regarding themselves as the aristocracy were the “old families” (Arglwydd y Plas) who were completely Anglicised despite having Welsh names such as Griffiths, Watkins, Williams-Wynn and Lloyds. Characteristically, they lived in the ‘Plas’ –a vast mansion employing a large indoor and outdoor staff. To the rest of us, they did not appear to do any work, hunted minimally two or three days a week, sometimes sat on the Magistrates’ bench and were generous and courteous to their staff, while the management of the estate was left to their agents. They were never educated in Welsh schools (their children were taught by governesses until they were sent to English public schools) nor did they make any contribution to the Celtic way of life. The one outstanding exception was Squire Wynn of Garthwin who, at his own expense, built the first Welsh Drama Theatre in Wales for the production of Welsh plays. His peers, of course, regarded him as a rather dotty eccentric.

The social structure in the town would be similar to the social structure of towns almost anywhere else in the UK with the professions heading the list, but in the early 20th Century this would include the Grammar School teachers who were regarded certainly as being on par with the learned professions and also, unlike the present situation, Ministers of Religion, regardless of denomination, were classified with the professions. Below that tier were the business men and the various self-employed and managerial strata.

Rather more interesting in relation to the Celtic culture was the village structure. The “aristocracy” felt themselves very much part of the village, would always know the farmers, craftsmen and shopkeepers and would exchange the time of day with every strata of society. They usually busied themselves in ecclesiastical affairs, locally and nationally and were often the commanding officers of the local Territorial infantry battalions. The village structure consisted of the farmers, who were very jealous of their status and this was generally accorded on the number of employees per farm, the shopkeepers, craftsmen (blacksmith, carpenter, plumber and ‘builder’), and labourers. An important feature of the village life was the easy communication within



the society and the protective mechanisms to ensure that the less able did not suffer unduly and that the gifted were encouraged. Areas where social distinctions disappeared were in

cultural activities and in religious matters. One's occupation, or social standing, or assets owned, would not effectively ensure a senior position as an elder (or deacon) of the Chapel. This was an elected position that could only be attained by earning the respect and regard of the local community. It has become fashionable to poke fun at the Elders of churches and chapels now, but in those days they were incorruptible guardians of moral standards.

Hadyn Lloyd Davies

WWW = Wired Wise & Welsh

The term "wired" has been defined in a variety of ways. It can now be used to describe the group of Internet users who are 55 years and older because they are increasing their "on-line" activities and decreasing their reliance on traditional media. Almost 70% of those recently surveyed in the USA said they use the Internet because content can be accessed any time of day. Other advantages that were cited included information being more accurate, current, detailed and focused. Consequently, seniors spend less time reading magazines and newspapers, watching television and listening to radio.

The Net is used to gather information for personal needs, to research products and services, to check out news, weather and sports, and to communicate with others. Browsing the Net allows links with a staggering variety of information sources – ranging from universities, governments, businesses, libraries, museums etc. to private individuals. Personal computer users operating singly or in various diverse groups are all linked together by an international network of computers that speak the same language – HTML (Hyper Text Markup Language). When you connect to the Internet,

your computer becomes part of this worldwide network and your communication options undergo a dramatic change – in effect, you decouple space and time. Accessing discussion groups, searching data bases, purchasing on eBay, sharing information about hobbies, setting up personal web pages, becoming a blogger - have all become commonplace. It has been calculated that a variety of interactive web sites have now become so popular that the Internet can draw numbers similar to the most favoured television shows.

The ability to keep in touch with someone who has an Internet connection is a great advantage. One can be linked locally, nationally or internationally, all without paying for a lengthy phone call or for stamps. E-mail is an attractive form of communication because it is both immediate and asynchronous. It gives a quick and easy way to transmit data without involving time-consuming voice conversations. Also, a newsletter can be sent off to as many as desired without the inconvenience of printing pages, then folding and stuffing them into envelopes that have to be bought, addressed and then mailed.



The Victoria Welsh Society wants to benefit from having an electronic connection with its members. More than one dollar is saved on each newsletter sent by e-mail rather than by regular mail. Therefore, your Board (especially the Treasurer) would be most appreciative if you made a cognitive shift and converted to this form of communication. And remember, e-mailing saves trees!

If you have the equipment please choose the e-mail option, even though you might favour hard copy. Contact the Editor for an address change at: Richardadams171@shaw.ca

NOTE: Our associate Welsh Society in Vancouver has a sophisticated web site on which you will find their newsletters for the last 12 months. They emphasize how an electronic newsletter enjoys the advantage of colour, and is an efficient means of communication. You are invited to explore their web site at: www.welshsociety.com

THE ART OF BARAGAMI – is it endangered ?

What is Baragami ? Baragami is the ancient, Welsh art of decorative toast arranging. The name is derived from **Bara** – the noun for bread, and **gami** – the Japanese art of paper-folding. This cultural activity involves the creation of intricate presentations of toast that often have arrangements or designs that reflect topical events. Just as haiku poems should have a reference to the seasons, a skilful baragamist tries to capture the essence of significant current issues, whilst simultaneously maintaining classical toast arrangements.

Historic background: This almost lost art was first documented in Aberystwyth, though the actual date of origin has not been authenticated, having been lost in the mists of Plynlimon Fawr. Historians have proven that toasting bread was a common activity in Roman times: the Latin root of the word toast is “*tostum*”, which means to scorch or burn. Then there are some early cave markings in Ogof Pant y Llyn (Dyfed) which illustrate how early Welsh nomads were aware that toasting would prolong the life of bread. But simply sticking a lump of bread on an extended fork in front of an open fire was not really conducive to the flowering of baragami. That had to await the invention of the electric toaster (Crompton & Co., England, 1893), and more especially the development of the machine that sliced and wrapped bread (Frederick Rohwedder, Chillicothe, Missouri, 1928).



Philosophy: Baragami aims to create artistic toast designs with the minimum use of cuts. It may be necessary to remove some crusts or use slices from different loaves to attain various sized pieces, but crenulations, zigzags and fancy curves etc. are frowned upon. In the lesser art of toast sculpture, pieces may be cut to the desired shape, but the baragamist aims to use only simple, regular shaped pieces – such as triangles, rectangles and squares. It is believed that there is more skill in working within the constraints of the slice than carving slices to meet particular needs. Also, in toast sculpture,

props such as toothpicks are often used to hold a sculpture together, whereas in baragami the pieces must be balanced against each other, although the occasional use of a “cement” such as butter or marmalade is grudgingly permitted, since these are items closely associated with toast. However, purists dispute the Australian baragamists acceptance of vegemite.

In toast sculpture, the design is explicit – a castle has carved on church has windows cut idiot can toast



twiddly bits towers, a arched into sides. Any understand sculptures.

However, in baragami the intelligence of the viewer is respected by showing “an idea of the design” rather than it being given on a plate, as it were. What is “*not there*” is just as important as what is there. By adhering to simplicity and balance, baragami presents a *concept*; this could represent a static item, a moving object or even an abstract idea, such as “harmony”.

Reflections on the true meaning of toast have caused some to recall how in their childhood there was nothing their family enjoyed more on a cold winter’s evening than making their own entertainment with toast. Others have noted how, in the distant past, family outings involved going to a Toasteddod where master baragamists could be seen at work, and some lucky folk even watched the deft fingers of the famed Dai “*The Crust*” Evans at work.

Instruction: For those who wish to receive lessons in baragami, please contact the Editor who is prepared to organize a course in this under-appreciated Welsh art (*Baragami for Beginners*) if numbers warrant. This would include exploring designs such as the *Simple Fan*, the traditional *Crop Circle* and the *Maltese Cross*, plus some of the more complex three-dimensional patterns e.g. *Eryri*, *Hwyl* and *Hiraeth*

Warning: It must be noted that although affiliated with the Toast Leaners Club of Pisa, the First International Baragami Society (F.I.B.S.) is not connected in any way with the less reputable toast-related organizations such as Freetoastery or the Church of Our Toastery.