

Cymdeithas Gymraeg



Victoria Welsh Society

Newsletter : Chwefror 2009 February

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| | | |
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From the Editor

It is perhaps late to be wishing you all a Happy New Year but nevertheless “ Blwyddyn Newydd Dda Ichi Gyd” and that implies the best of health for us all.

As a Society we can look forwards to a fairly active year with our usual gatherings -- St. David's Day, summer BBQ, AGM, Christmas Lunch. However this year, under the prompting of our President, your Board has decided to alter the format of our St. David's Day celebration and also to hold it in the afternoon of February 28th. The change of the time reflects the fact that many of us don't care to go out at night – now, if there's a strong reaction we can revert to an evening meeting in the future. The format change is in the nature of a “ do it yourself” entertainment, traditionally the “ Noson Lawen”, hence the term “ Prynawn Lawen” in the notice. But we shall also do the usual things. There will not be a Speaker (too formal) -- the emphasis will be on a social gathering. The Board's goal is to involve as many people as possible. To this end we shall spend on advertising, in the belief that there are a goodly number of people out there, with Welsh connections, who are not in our Society.

Society News

- Christmas Luncheon – 38 members and their guests enjoyed an excellent meal of leek soup, roast lamb, dessert and coffee served at the University Club on December 13th last year. Background music was provided by a string trio from the University Music Department, who also accompanied us for some carols. Richard Adams furnished sheets of testing questions on Christmas lore to the enjoyment of all. We wound up the afternoon with “ drawing out of the box” for gifts in keeping with the season.
 - The Board held their usual monthly meetings in January and earlier this month. The following are items of interest that are under discussion :
1. A social gathering in May to be held at the CNIB hall. As part of the proceedings the video film *Coalhouse* would be shown and there would be a pot-luck meal.
 2. Currently there is discussion with the Risca (Near Newport, Gwent) Male Voice Choir about a concert tour of B.C. in August 2010. The choir are interested in performing in Victoria and other venues. At present matters are at a very preliminary stage but the Board is hopeful that this tour will materialise.
 3. Another initiative of the board lies in exploring the possibility of the having Cymdeithas Madog (the Welsh Studies Institute in North America) hold a language learning course in Victoria. (They will be holding such a course in conjunction with the University of Alberta in Camrose in July of this year.) We are awaiting a response from the Institute on this.
 4. In an attempt to raise public awareness of our Society the Board has decided to do a wider advertising of the St. David's Day celebration than in former years. So, in addition to the two notices that have gone out to members, announcements of the event have also been placed in the Times-Colonist.
 5. This year, 2009, will see the present Society reach 30 years of age. Some thought has been given to arranging some kind of an event to celebrate this and the board would welcome ideas from members. There has been some thinking around holding a “ Welsh Week-end” with invitations being extended to neighbouring Societies, notably Vancouver, Vernon and Puget Sound. Give the Board your reaction please.
- One of our members, David Williams, who emigrated to Canada and arrived in Victoria in 200,5 has been the victim of bureaucracy on the part of Canada Immigration as his letter explains :

Dear Members of the Victoria Welsh Society,

It is time once again to renew my membership .It must seem that I'm a phantom member since I arrived from Port Talbot with my wife, a native of Victoria, in 2005.

For four years I've been trying to get a Permanent Resident's Card from the Immigration Department. It has proved to be a long, exhausting and expensive process. Most of the difficulty has been due to the fact of previous family reporting not complying with Canadian Immigration forms.

During these four years I've been struggling to build a cleaning and caretaking business. I'm hoping that 2009 will be the year that I get The Card. Then I'll be able to separate work from pleasure and attend some of the Society Functions that I read about in The Newsletter.

Meanwhile, if any members spot a purple car with a big Welsh flag blowing in the wind that will be me flying the Red Dragon for Wales. Welsh to the end!

A Happy New Year to everyone in the Victoria Welsh Society.

-- Dai Williams.

We should all be pleased to learn that very recently 2009 has indeed become the year for Dai – his Card has been granted.
- Ed.

News from Wales

- Did you hear of Swansea town council's embarrassment? Last year the council called in its in-house translation service to design a road sign barring heavy trucks from a particular road. But the translator was not available and they received an automated e-mail response in Welsh saying "I am not in the office at the moment." Unaware of the real meaning of the message officials had it printed on the sign under the English words. Welsh speakers enjoyed the council's plight.
- The National Library of Wales is to start digitising all the books, periodicals and

newspapers in its holding, at a cost of 20 million pounds. The material will be available world-wide through their website --- soon we'll be able to read the Western Mail (and the Aberdare Leader) the same day.

- But plans for a Welsh National Gallery have been delayed for at least four years, after a study concluded that it would cost 85 million pounds. ----- How much can anyone rely on cost estimates for this kind of project?
- A former Archdruid, Dr. Robyn Lewis, who is president of the Friends of Llyn,(a Welsh Language pressure group) is asking the Maritime Museum in Liverpool to return the crown of the King of Bardsey , a small island off Anglesey. It is thought that the practice of crowning a king (chosen by election) started in the late 1700's. In the ceremonies at that time ,Bardsey's owner , Lord Newborough , would hold a feast giving away hats to the inhabitants and a ribbon to the king and queen. The crown in question is made of tin and brass and was part of the Wynn Collection of maritime artifacts gathered over 200 years. ----- The Liverpool Museum are not prepared to part with it arguing that the Wynn Collection must stay intact.
- You're too late if you want to buy the top floor flat in what is to be Wales' tallest building. Located at the 26th. floor in this Swansea sky-scraper the view all around is spectacular and a bargain at 1 million pounds. ----- these days of course the deal may fall through and it might come on the market again!
- Are the Welsh Rugby XV on the way to another Grand Slam? Let's hope so! They've made a good start with solid wins over Scotland and England – but Ireland and France are yet to be beaten and not forgetting Italy.
- Cardiff City had their F.A. Cup hopes dashed recently when they lost their re-play match with Arsenal. However Cardiff has reasonable expectation of winning promotion to the Premier Division and it's not beyond the realm of possibility that Swansea Town might do so also.

- After defeating American Roy Jones in New York last fall, Joe Calzaghe (Welsh – you may be excused for thinking that Jones is the Welshman) has retired , undefeated, as World champion cruiser-weight for 11 years. Of Italian background , Joe comes from the Cwmcarn valley, near Newport.

Forthcoming Events in Wales

Llangollen 2009

International Festival of Music Song and Dance

July 7—12

Box Office 01978 862 001

www.international-eisteddfod.co.uk

The **National Eisteddfod** will be held in Bala in 2009
August 1—8

Royal Welsh Smallholder and Garden Festival

Llanelwedd, Builth Wells
May 16 and 17 2009

Royal Welsh Show

Llanelwedd , Builth Wells
July 20—23 2009

Forthcoming Events in Canada / USA

Welsh Language Learning Course

Offered by Cymdeithas Madog
Augustana Campus, University of Alberta, Camrose.

July 19—26 2009

Cost (Adult – double occupancy) U\$740

All inclusive, 5 hrs instruction each day
Course materials, evening events.

Scholarships available, contact Mr. W. Roberts , 875 Wilmot Rd., Deerfield, IL 60015 USA.

Address questions to: registrar@madog.org

Victoria Welsh Society celebrate
St. David's Day, February 28 2009 at the
University Club at noon.
Admission \$35
Buffet lunch, Entertainment

Now for a Welsh dish – Cawl Aberaeron, Aberayron broth . (*From Carwyn Edwards' Newsletter*).

Ingredients : 1 ½ lb bacon piece, 1 lb beef, ½ lb parsnips, 1 lb potatoes, 1 white cabbage, 2 small leeks, ½ lb carrots, ½ lb swede, oatmeal to thicken, salt and pepper.

Preparation : Dice bacon and beef, wash and shred cabbage, peel and cut vegetables (not too small).

Place meat and vegetables, except leeks, in a large saucepan, cover with cold water, salt and pepper to taste and heat to simmer for 2 ½ hrs. Add leeks and oatmeal and simmer for 10 minutes more.

Serve hot of course – mae' dda.

And now for a Welsh joke (also from Carwyn Edwards).

An American tourist visiting a large and important church in Washington was intrigued by what seemed to be a golden telephone on a wall. Getting closer he made out a notice that said " Call Heaven , only \$ 10,000." He went away, impressed. A week later landed in London and, taking in the sights, wandered into a large and important church. Again he spied a golden telephone on the wall which also had a notice " Call Heaven, only # 5000." He was intrigued and tried to find someone who could explain how this was possible but there were only tourists there so he left without an answer. Later in his travels he chanced on a poor little church in Wrexham, went inside and there on the wall was a common black phone with a hastily scrawled notice, " Call Heaven, 10 p." Astounded he rushed up to the Vicar, who had just come in, explained what he'd seen and asked why so much cheaper here than Washington or London. "But" said the Vicar, " this is North Wales, it's only a local call from here."



Stand and Stare

We are indebted to “Welsh Country Magazine for permission to reproduce the following article on the Llangollen Canal and we thank them for this.

Mel Doel takes time out to enjoy some of the finer things in life.....The Llangollen Canal countryside here in Wales? The Welsh poet William Henry Davies wrote in his poem Leisure, ‘What is this life if full of care, we have no time to stand and stare?’

As we hurtle about in our cars, do we ever take time to stand and stare? And do we ever really stand back and take in the beauty around us in Wales? I am the biggest culprit when it comes to leaving these shores and jetting off for sunnier climes. Perhaps I have become a little blasé. In my job presenting Country Focus I get to travel to all corners of Wales and witness some of our most beautiful landscapes day after day. So imagine my reaction when the other half says “How do you fancy a holiday on the Llangollen Canal this year?” Before I had even finished choking into my cup of

coffee – ‘aye, aye landlubbers’ – the holiday was booked. I was off to sail the High Seas in a metal boat that was fifty feet long. Well not quite the High Seas. If you fall into the Llangollen canal the most you’re likely to suffer is the indignity, as the water’s so shallow most of the way, you could actually stand up if you fell in!

Now those of you who have taken cover as I have driven into your farm yards over the years may well remember that driving, well, perhaps isn’t my best thing.....and if Jeremy Clarkson was ever to review my driving, he’d probably say, “should come with a health warning!” But hey, who could go wrong in a canal boat? Well it took precisely ten seconds. I kid you not, ten seconds before I was hopelessly out of control and heading for some other hapless holidaymakers and the canal bank. That was it. From then on I was banished to below decks to rustle up bacon sandwiches for the, by now, rather smug other half who’d taken over as Captain, and quickly countered any chance of mutiny by threatening to tie up at night out of the walking range of a pub. But despite my awful navigational skills this was a wonderful journey back in time. The journey was so slow and so meandering that I had plenty of time to ponder the real countryside of Wales.

The Llangollen canal, all 46 winding and twisting miles of it, was built way back in 1805, and was once the lifeline of an industrial revolution that changed the face of Wales. As heavy industry declined, so too did the canal's importance, but luckily Llangollen was a valuable water supply to the Midlands. It remained open and is now a huge tourist attraction for people from all over the world. Soon it's hoped that part of the canal will gain World Heritage status. A campaign led by Wrexham Council is hoping to succeed in a bid to make eleven miles of the canal the third World Heritage site in Wales. It's been selected to go forward to UNESCO as the UK's 2008 nomination. The concept of the World Heritage Site is at the core of the World Heritage Convention, adopted by UNESCO (United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization) in 1972, to which 184 nations belong. Through the Convention, UNESCO encourages the identification, protection and preservation of the cultural and natural heritage sites around the world considered to be of outstanding value to humanity. There are only 27 sites in the UK including Stonehenge and the Iron Bridge. Success would ensure the area is preserved and conserved for future generations and by bringing in more tourists and attention would also boost the local area's economy.

As we chugged along the waterway at 4 miles an hour, oh yes, four miles an hour, I was soon to find out just why this stretch of canal has captured the world's imagination. Suddenly looming in front of our eyes was Pontcysyllte aqueduct. We'd read about it in the brochures, we'd even seen photos of this fantastic structure. But nothing could prepare us for having to actually navigate our 50 foot of steel across this narrow waterway.

It seemed to float in the air, an apparition appearing before our eyes and hovering 126 feet above the ground. The Captain went quiet and, it must be said, a rather peculiar shade of green. The deck hand, thirteen year old Ollie, who was the photographer for this trip, mutinied and suddenly dashed below decks. A silence gripped the boat. Now suddenly the tiller, once the favourite part of the boat, was deserted. It truly is an awesome sight and the thought of wending our way across the narrow aqueduct was gut wrenching. It didn't help when the Captain reminded us that this stunning piece of architecture was held together by a mortar made up of lime, water and ox blood. Built in 1795

by the famous engineer Thomas Telford, the greatest engineer of his day, it's a masterpiece in Georgian engineering.



It took a staggering ten years to build and incredibly only one person died during the construction. On top there's a narrow iron trough which carries the boats across. Then followed more disconcerting news from the Captain. "Do you know," he mused, "just what seal was used on the ironworks? Apparently the joists were caulked with Welsh flannel dipped in boiling sugar and sealed with lead." Great, so all that lay between safely ending this journey and plunging to certain death was a bit of ox blood and sugar!

We waited our turn, carefully peering around the corner to make sure nothing was coming, because on this piece of waterway there's only room for one boat and believe me once we got on there, there was no way we were going to reverse.



Then our adventure began. We floated into the trough. There was no way back. It was fantastic. The captain couldn't speak, or look at anyone or anything as he steered his way bravely across these intrepid waters. Me, I absolutely loved it as I peered over the edge into the beautiful valley below. Even the ship's mate braved jumping on and off the boat to capture some pictures for Welsh Country magazine. Within minutes it was over. We quickly parked up at the other side and had a well earned pint in the next canal side pub.

But as our journey continued we encountered many more fantastic engineering feats. We waved at the trains as they passed above us as we quietly sailed over the Chirk aqueduct and marvelled as we went deep into the Chirk tunnel - all 459 yards of it.

As I reflected on my journey I wondered why we hurtle through life at such a mad pace. We see everything, yet nothing, as we drive our cars at speed through the Welsh countryside. Yet in just a few days we saw some of the most stunning architecture ever built in Wales, if not the World. Good luck to the attempt to gain World heritage status. It's truly deserved.

But you know what was the most impressive sight I saw all week as we slowly slid past fields of rabbits and carefully weaved our way through the ever present ducks? "Look over there," said the Captain as we tied up on a leafy bank for the night. In the field alongside a cow was gently licking its new born calf, blissfully unaware we were even there. Is there any greater miracle? And we had silently witnessed it, as for once in our lives we took the time to stand and stare...

In concluding we wish to remind those members who have not renewed their memberships that dues are now payable , \$16 single and \$24 for a family. Please use the following form when you renew.

VICTORIA WELSH SOCIETY - 2009 Membership dues

Name (s) _____

Address _____

Postal Code _____

Telephone # _____

E--Mail _____

Amount enclosed : \$ 16 (single) \$ 24 (family)

**Make cheque to " Victoria Welsh Society " and mail to
Mrs J. Pearson, 4277 Houlihan Place, Victoria, V8N 3T2**

