

# Cymdeithas Gymraeg



## Victoria Welsh Society

Newsletter: Gorffennaf 2006, July 2006

### ***Board Members***

<b><i>President</i></b>	Denis Brown	658-8701
<b><i>Secretary</i></b>	Marion Kelbrick	250-743-3432
<b><i>Treasurer</i></b>	Jen Pearson	477-2548
<b><i>Ladies' Auxiliary</i></b>	Myfanwy Rutherford	382-9343

<b><i>Trustees</i></b>	Catherine Gillion	853-6017
	Gordon Gillion	853-6017
	Peter Murphy	383-4350
	Vivienne Phillips	361-0040
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## Message from the President

### The Bagillt Chair.

For many years, our Society had been in possession of an ornately carved chair that was made as an award for the winning poem at the 1889 Flintshire Crown and Chair Eisteddfod in Bagillt. It has now been returned to its original location, and its safe arrival was acknowledged in an e-mail received from the President of the Bagillt Historic Club on Friday, July 14<sup>th</sup>. The event had been eagerly anticipated and there was great joy in the receiving.

We too in our Society should be pleased that we have been instrumental in preserving this historic artifact, and donating it to the village of Bagillt where it will be kept on display in St. Mary's Church. But for the decision and action of members of the Board at the time of the sale of Craigdarroch Castle furniture - Bernie Lewis, Helen Steinle and others (apologies for not knowing the names of all involved), the chair might have disappeared into private hands and been lost to public view.

On a personal note I would like to add that I feel a very close connection with the chair. The name Washington Jones appears in a detailed account of the 1889 Eisteddfod. He was the minister of Salem Congregational Chapel and was appointed to the Gorsedd as a Druid at the Eisteddfod. As a child I knew Washington Jones, for he was grandfather to two of my cousins.

Denis Brown

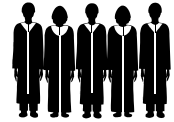
## Dates, Directions, Developments

Our annual summer get-together will follow the tradition of past years – a barbeque. It will be held at the lovely waterfront home of Myfanwy Rutherford - 3038 Admirals Road, (tel. 382-9343). We usually enjoy sunshine for this event, but Myfanwy is never discouraged by



inclement weather, so on **Sunday, August 6<sup>th</sup>** it's a go, from two o'clock on – come rain or shine. We will follow the customary potluck format, but this time there will be no cost because we are not paying for pre-ordered meat or fish. So please bring something to share, be it a salad, a main course, or a dessert – a BBQ grill will be available for those who would like to use it. Tea or coffee will be provided, but if you wish something more stimulating, then BYOB. Let's have a good turn out for this event.

Our Society is delighted to confirm that the **Cwm Bach Choir** will be performing here on Friday, September 1<sup>st</sup>, at 7:00 p.m. in the Alix Goolden Hall, at the Victoria Conservatory of Music on Quadra Street This internationally acclaimed choir sang in Victoria some years ago to a sold-out house, so you are urged to buy your tickets early from either the Society, or the outlet that will be announced in local publications. Admission is \$20 and tickets can be bought from Denis Brown (658-8701) or Jen Pearson (477-2548). Following the concert, the traditional **Afterglow** reception will be held at Ambrosia Catering, in the old Masonic Hall, opposite the Fire Station, on Fisgard Street.



Please circle **October 14<sup>th</sup>** on your calendars, for that is the date of our Annual General Meeting. Once again, it will be held at the CNIB building, 2340 Richmond St, where last year we had a very good attendance. As a variety of significant decisions are made at the AGM, you are encouraged to come, listen, vote and socialize. Involvement in this way is a measure of your interest in the cultural well being of the Victoria Welsh Society.

A significant redesigning of our Society's web site is underway. *Iconic Media*, an experienced local company, has been hired to create a site that is attractive, user-friendly, and up-to-date. If you are interested in being involved in this process, please contact *Richard Adams* by phone or e-mail.

Your opinions and ideas regarding appearance and content would be valued. It might be useful to compare our present website: [www.victoriawelshsociety.org](http://www.victoriawelshsociety.org) with those of other Welsh societies, both in BC and elsewhere; they can be easily found by searching the web, e.g. Vancouver: [www.welshsociety.com](http://www.welshsociety.com) and the St. David's Welsh Society of Edmonton: <http://t27.ca/Cymru.nsf>

### Letters to the Editor



Dear Sir,  
The May newsletter account of the modern day Sioni Onion man brings to mind a tale from my childhood. We lived in Breconshire, in an old farmhouse which was situated well off the rough country road from which the house was accessible only by foot.

Because of our location we had few visitors, but one day my mother's sister, who lived more than a mile away, called in. After the usual cup of tea and (probably) Welsh Cakes, she left to walk home. En route she met a Sioni Winwns man trudging along, probably also pushing a bicycle, and heavily laden with his fare. Apparently there was a small exchange between the two before each continued in the opposite direction to the other. Sometime later my mother responded to a knock at the door.

It would seem that Sioni was even more surprised to see my mother than she to see him, for he immediately told her that he had already seen her along the road. She said that was not so, but he insisted. Again she tried to assure him that was not the case which made him even more insistent – in fact somewhat unpleasantly. By this time she realised he had seen her sister, and laughingly tried to explain his confusion. However Sioni was having none of that, and became rather irate that his observation was being challenged.

“Don't tell lies, don't tell lies”, he sputtered. (My mother was a very good mimic, so his assertion came out as “Don't tell lice, don't tell lice”.) The contretemps evidently ended peacefully as I remember seeing a string of onions hanging in our very cold old pantry.

As an aside, with distances between houses in that area being significant [many farms], business for Sioni was probably meagre at best. His modern counterpart will probably thrive in comparison.

*Author's name withheld on request*

### Welsh Rare-bits

**Tan Y Castell bakery** in Narberth, Pembrokeshire attempted to qualify for a Guinness world record by producing the largest-ever Welsh cake earlier in the year. This family bakery made two huge cakes that were almost four feet in diameter to promote a charity baking competition for the Bobath Children's Therapy Centre in Cardiff. It seems that preparing the mixture was straightforward, but turning the cake was difficult because there was no spatula big enough for the task. Welsh cakes are attaining a newfound fame after years of being considered an old-fashioned treat made by grandmothers. The same firm that made the 4 ft. giants supplies Harrods with biscuit size ones; they are also a best-selling item in Fortnum and Mason. And they are great favourites in Patagonia, which has historic links with Wales, where they are known as Torta Galesa. A key culinary question that has long been debated (outside of the concept of best recipe) remains unanswered however - should they be buttered, sugared, spread with jam or sliced? Perhaps we need to poll the VWS members both about recipes and how best to eat the tasty product, for this has not been covered in a newsletter since April 2003.



**In a Welsh version** of sending coals to Newcastle, an Anglesey firm is selling kayaks to the very people who invented

them – the Inuit. Hand built fibreglass kayaks are being exported by the firm *Sea Kayaking*, in Holyhead, to Iceland and Greenland. It is estimated that this company and others involved in outdoor pursuits are generating over 8,500 jobs and stimulating the economy of northwest Wales. When much of the rest of Welsh industry has been suffering the loss of jobs because of far cheaper Asian imports, this sector has the potential to fight back and sell to emerging overseas markets where customers are becoming wealthier.

***I spy with my little eye*** ..... a remarkable



advert in the Western Mail newspaper. The Secret Intelligence Service (MI6's official name) has begun to advertise openly for the first time in its 97-year history. It is recruiting people who could be trained as spies to counter international terrorism and arms proliferation. They would not be destined for a James Bond type of lifestyle, for the world of espionage is now staffed by analysts, administrators, linguists and those experienced in information technology. Two recent Welsh recruits (who can't be named – *ha!*) report that overseas postings, exposure to different cultures, and acquiring new languages, all provide a buzz but not the glamour associated with 007. There is even a website now that details the work SIS undertakes, its history and the jobs it offers: [www.siscareers.gov.uk](http://www.siscareers.gov.uk)

***This spring a new guidebook*** was published that is designed to help people with no knowledge of Welsh to learn simple phrases. It is called *Street Welsh* and is aimed at tourists and non Welsh speakers who would like to learn the basics of the language so that they can understand some of what they hear around them and also engage in simple conversation with Welsh speakers. Heini Gruffudd, an experienced Welsh tutor and author, believes that by learning a few important phrases in Welsh, visitors will establish a warmer rapport with locals and thereby enrich their vacation. *Street Welsh* is published by Y Lolfa, costs

about £5, and can be purchased at [www.ylolfa.com](http://www.ylolfa.com). The book is in full colour and includes many real life examples of Welsh being used in public places.

***Over recent months***, nominations have poured in from all over the world to a website honouring Welsh people, places and historical events. It is called *The Welsh Icons* : [www.welshicons.org.uk](http://www.welshicons.org.uk). It now lists more than 100 men and women considered worthy of fame in its 500 page site - the cultural categories are: Artist/Designers; Entertainers; Writers; Musicians; Journalists/Broadcasters; Politicians; and Famous Welshmen/women. The site also has a forum section that encourages discussions of all things Welsh.

***Members of the Bangor University*** Mountaineering Society (BUMS) climbed to victory in this year's British University Sports Association Climbing Championship in Guilford by getting the highest score. There were more than 280 competitors in 83 teams attempting to hit the heights, and Bangor won the top spot in the mixed team category. Bangor climbers also won gold in the women's individual championship and two men placed in the top ten of the men's championship. The University is considered to be ideally located for those interested in outdoor activities of this type because of the nearness of wonderfully varied scenery that encourages different climbing styles.



### ***Moving pictures – a questionable Art Form***



Welsh actors such as Anthony Hopkins, Catherine Zeta-Jones and Rhys Ifans are established stars in Hollywood. Consequently, pressures are mounting to set up a Welsh film industry (Wallywood), comparable to that in India (Bollywood). It should receive funding so that it can cash in on the current trend to

remake favourite old films ... though with a Welsh flavour. The following films could be considered:

- *An American Werewolf in Powys*
- *Dai Hard Un, Dau, Tri*
- *Cool Hand Look-you*
- *Dial M For Merthyr*
- *Haverfordwest Was Won*
- *The Wizard of Oswestry*
- *Seven Brides from Seven Sisters*
- *The Bridge on the River Wye*
- *A Fishguard Called Rhondda*
- *Lawrence of Llandybie*

Unfortunately, the following films are not to be considered for re-issue in a Welsh mode: *The Eagle has Llandudno; The King and Mair; 9½ Leeks; Cwmando; Sheepless in Seattle; A Beautiful Mind-you; Austin Powys*

Please contact the Welsh Assembly for actual dates of release and for literal translations where needed.

***Drifting down the slow lane on a Welsh canal***

Less is more on the canals, for at a speed of four miles-per-hour you travel only about 20 miles in three days. But, then you will enjoy the 'secrets' of one of the most beautiful parts of Britain's unique waterway world - the Monmouth and Brecon canal in Mid Wales.

One "movable home" available for rent is *Bronwen* – a 3 year old cruiser complete with home comforts including a fitted kitchen with gas cooker, 'fridge, crockery and cookware; comfortable beds; a shower and toilet; central heating and cosy lounge area with TV and DVD player. It is easy to see how some boaters become so enthusiastic they to live on them for months at a time.

The 35-mile Monmouth and Brecon Canal is a small, isolated part of Britain's 2,000-mile (3,220 km) network of navigable waterways, but it is a real gem. Built to carry coal and iron down to the sea, this 18th-century time-capsule is now used entirely for pleasure. It winds its way south from the market town of Brecon through the rocky uplands of the Brecon Beacons National Park. It passes through no big towns but has everything that makes this type of holiday fun: lovely scenery, friendly people, a few locks, lift-bridges and even a tunnel.

The canal is constantly twisting and for much of its length it is on a ridge, high above the waters of the River Usk. In the distance one will see sheep-dotted meadows and craggy peaks with names such as Sugar Loaf and Table Mountain. Though your pace will be slow in terms of distance covered, it will never be boring.

If you travel in springtime, there will be wild flowers everywhere – bluebells, daffodils, forsythia and primroses, growing in huge bunches along the banks. Sometimes there is so much to take in that passengers could almost forget to duck heads for the distinctive stone 'hump-back' bridges that are so narrow and low they seem to grow out of the banks.



Breakfasts are usually prepared on board, but when you want a more substantial meal there are many good pubs to choose from in canal-side villages such as Talybont-on-Usk. At *The Coach and Horses* in Langynidir, the Portuguese owner, Abilio, might tell you how he arrived here as chef but liked it so much he decided to buy the pub and settle down.

The cost of this type of holiday varies according to size of boat and time of year.



## ***Parking is such sweet sorrow***

Has anyone ever seen such a sign for motorists on quiet, residential streets in a small town in North Wales, or is it just another urban myth?

**Parking  
for  
WELSH  
ONLY  
All others  
will be  
dragoned  
away**

## ***Wealth is not without its advantages.***

How bright is the economic flame from the Welsh Dragon? The answer is difficult to determine because of varying reports from different sources.

In the summer of 2005, Rhodri Morgan, first minister for Wales, talked about the country's painful though successful transformation from dependence on the declining heavy industries in the 1980s to the favourable economic climate of the present decade. Undoubtedly, a combination of modernization and greater political independence from London has changed both the face of Wales and the morale of its almost 3 million people. Not long ago, any mention of Wales would conjure up images of coal mines, sheep farms and God-fearing traditionalism. Now electronics, telecommunications, media, the leisure industry, and willingness to experiment are appropriately typical of the Welsh economy. There are more people employed than in 1999; average earnings have risen; cities such as Cardiff and

Swansea have undergone urban facelifts; and a new generation of home-grown celebrities carry the Welsh flag abroad, while keeping in close touch with the homeland.

In contrast to the positive spin of Rhodri Morgan, a new report released by the European Union gives a very disturbing picture, for according to its statistics the majority of Wales is officially the poorest region in the UK. The hardest hit areas are West Wales and the Valleys where prosperity measured in terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is lower than in both the former East European Communist country of Slovenia, and Cyprus, the most recent EU entrant. All of Wales, with the exception of Powys, is described as having a GDP which is 75% or less of the European average. This is difficult to comprehend, knowing that that former Eastern Bloc countries, with all their various economic problems, have joined the EU, and yet the west of Wales remains below the EU average. As a result of being so disadvantaged, the region falls into the category of *Objective One* - a program set up by the EU to reduce differences in social and economic conditions in Wales by funding small businesses and employment training schemes. The Welsh Assembly offers a glimmer of hope, claiming that the latest Eurostat figures were built on surveys conducted in 2003 and, therefore, do not reflect the continued development of the Welsh economy over the past three years.

## ***The next issue of the newsletter***

Anticipate articles on:

Welsh slang – phrases that might be familiar to many of our readers

A Camosun College course in carving Welsh Lovespoons

A super-condensed and selective history of Wales.

*Members are encouraged to submit to the Editor, Richard Adams, any articles that they believe will interest readers:*

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