

Cymdeithas Gymraeg



Victoria Welsh Society

Cylchgrawn - Mai, 2006. Newsletter - May, 2006.

Board Members

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

<i>Trustees</i>	Catherine Gillion	853-6017
	Gordon Gillion	853-6017
	Peter Murphy	383-4350
	Vivienne Phillips	361-0040
	Gwerfyl (Taffy) Richards	592-7842

<i>Newsletter E-mail</i>	Richard Adams	370-0937
	richardadams171@shaw.ca	

<i>Information</i>	info@victoriawelshsociety.org
---------------------------	--

<i>Address</i>	P.O.Box 30201, Saanich Centre, Victoria, V8X 5E1
-----------------------	---

<i>Website</i>	www.victoriawelshsociety.org
-----------------------	--

Dates, Directions, Developments



The Trustees of our Society recently received a formal request from members of the Historical Club of Bagillt, in Flintshire, to consider giving them the bardic chair that we have in our possession; the word “*Bagillt*” is engraved on the shield that forms the

chair’s backrest. As was the custom, the chair had been made in anticipation of being awarded to the winning poet in the National Eisteddfod that was held in Bagillt in 1889. However, the chair was not conferred on anyone because no poem was deemed to be of sufficient merit.

It is not clear how the chair became part of the exhibits in Craigdarroch Castle, but when the Province assumed responsibility for the Castle, the chair was put up for sale and was bought by our Society.

At a Board meeting on April 4th, trustees gave full consideration to the request from the Historical Club of Bagillt and, in a unanimous vote, agreed that the chair be returned to its place of origin. The proposal by the Historical Club of Bagillt involved receiving the chair on behalf of the village and ensuring that it would be safeguarded and displayed within Saint Mary’s Church in perpetuity. Also, assurances were given that the transference would not involve our Society in any financial cost.

In addition to being perceived as a generously appropriate act, the relocation of this significant historic artefact will allow it to be viewed by many people in a pleasant setting - something that cannot be achieved in Victoria.

If you have any comment on the decision to “repatriate” the chair, the Board would like to hear from you. Please contact the Society’s

President, Denis Brown, either by e-mail: fulbro@telus.ca, or phone: 658-8701.

This year, the North American Festival of Wales and the 75th National Gymanfa Ganu, 2006, will run from August 31st to September 3rd. in Cincinnati, Ohio. All activities will be held in the Hilton Netherland Plaza Hotel, which is 12 minutes from the airport and within walking distance of shops, restaurants and museums. Features will include the *Penrhyn Male Voice Choir* and a rich variety of singers and musicians, including the renowned Welsh harpist *Sian James*. There will be the usual competitions in music, song, and literature, plus seminars, folk dancing, a film festival and – as we would expect – lots of informal singing. Society members might recall that in the October’s issue of this newsletter, *Les and Marion Richards* reviewed last year’s event, which they attended in Orlando, Florida.

The National Assembly of Wales is inviting anyone who is interested to participate in a survey designed to help upgrade its existing web site. The Assembly is planning a major re-development of its Internet presence. Consequently, it wants to know, from those who are willing to respond, what they think of the current website and what improvements could be made. It is hoped that the results will ensure that government will be more effective in meeting the needs and expectations of the nation. The survey will take about 15 minutes and can be found at:

www.wales.gov.uk/feedback

Even though you might not choose to be involved in the survey, this website is worth a visit because it gives interesting insights into various current Welsh issues.

In the last three newsletters there have been appeals for renewal of membership in our Welsh Society. The Board has now decided that the newsletter will no longer be sent to anyone who has not paid the membership fee for 2006. If there are circumstances that deserve consideration, please contact Denis Brown, the Society’s President.

Letters to the Editor

Here are two responses to the article on Baragami in the **April 1st** issue of the newsletter.

Dear Sir,

Your article on the ancient Welsh art form known as Baragami brought back a flood of childhood memories. During Harvest Festival in the Valleys we used Bara Brith not toast to build very elaborate structures. These were placed in the very centre of the Harvest Festival table. The table was situated prominently at the front of the church in the Set Fawr (this was one of the few occasions when the Deacons were obliged to sit among the common folk). The table was laden with produce from the four corners of the Earth and also a piece of coal to remind us of the beneficence of the Marquess of Bute.

The Bara Brith sculpture was usually in the form of the cross. Carefully crafted pieces of Bara Brith were held together with old-fashioned hatpins. Children had to be warned not eat it. I remember one very pious man of God - the Rev. Pritchard Elias Pryce-Price -who refused to have "this ungodly creation" in his Chapel. He said it was a form of idolatry and the sort of thing one could expect from Methodists not Welsh Baptists. My memories of him smashing the cross into a pulp with Y Bibl are still very vivid to this day.

David Lintern, Sooke

Anwyl Sir,

I have tried to keep alive the art of baragami here in Victoria. However, when my grandsons visit, they prefer to play computer games rather than join me in a friendly baragami competition. At times they even laugh at my careful toast arrangements and joke to their Mam saying "Look, Grandad's playing with his food again". Do you have any advice for me?

At a Loss in Oak Bay

Editor: can help be offered to this Oak Bayer?

Welsh Rare-bits



The nickname of Gareth Thomas, last season's Welsh rugby captain, was "Alfie", and as a result of Wales winning the Grand Slam there was a surge in the popularity of that nickname – it rose from 77th to 40th place in national rankings. However, the top five names for boys born in Wales last year were the more traditional ones – Joshua, Jack, Dylan, Ethan, and Thomas. The five top ranking girls' names were Megan, Chloe, Emily, Ellie and Ffion.

You can buy your underwear in Welsh, if you shop in Marks & Spencer's in Bangor, North Wales. This is now an option as a result of the provision of a totally bilingual service for customers at this Marks 'n Sparks store. All signage within the store is bilingual, Welsh leaflets are available, and shoppers are greeted in Welsh and English. This development reflects the Welsh Assembly's encouragement of language promotion in a positive way.



The Commonwealth Games

were originally called the British Empire Games and were first held in Hamilton, Ontario in 1930. In March of this year, they were held in Melbourne, Australia and involved 4,500 athletes from 71 countries. As the four Home Nations sent separate teams to participate in the Games, Wales competed as a separate entity from the UK. In the final medal ranking Wales stood thirteenth, having won 3 gold, 5 silver and 11 bronze medals. Canada (which has approx. eleven times the population of Wales) ranked 3rd, having earned 86 medals.

Do you remember

those Sioni Onion men from Brittany, who rode around Wales in the summer with poles balanced on their shoulders from which long strings of onions dangled? For those who do recall these sights, they will be pleased to hear that Siõni Winwns are still selling their produce in this way, though now they are supported by vans. Many folk take special pleasure in chatting with these fellows in Welsh, because they have a working knowledge of the language as a result of its similarities to their own Breton language.



Many believe

that Wales has the greatest



concentration of medieval castles and ancient monuments in the world. If this is the case, it's no wonder that castles are so closely

associated with stereotypical images of Wales. Some of the over 400 castles are amongst the most magnificent in Britain – including Caernarfon, Conwy, Pembroke, Harlech and Kidwelly. They are set in spectacular land and seascapes because there were built to be strategically commanding. To confirm that Wales is rightly called *The Land of Castles* check the web site: www.castlewales.com

Taffy was a Welshman, Taffy was a Pirate?

It is claimed that Wales produced more pirates per mile of coastline than any other European country. It seems that the Welsh excelled at plundering and warfare on the high seas, as proven by the exploits of men like Henry Morgan, Black Bart, and Hywel Davis. A popular account of these renowned scoundrels is found in the recently published book "*Welsh Pirates*", written by Dafydd

Meirion, who lives in Pen-y-groes, near Caernarfon. It features some gripping tales about pirates' bloodthirsty, violent and drunken exploits. As one would expect, it features stories about Henry Morgan, who led piratical exploits in the Caribbean for ten years before being appointed Deputy Governor of Jamaica - he later died as a result of drinking too much rum. Black Bart, another famous Welsh pirate, though more moderate in his drinking and savagery, was just as interesting.



He was the first to fly the skull and crossbones and yet insisted that his crew swore an oath of obedience on a Welsh Bible.

The book also discusses pirates such as Tomos Prys of Plas Iolyn, and Prys Gruffydd, the heir of the Penrhyn estate near Bangor. Its author has written several other books, including *Welsh Cowboys* which describes the Welshmen who played pivotal roles in the making of the Wild West.

Hiking in South West Wales

The Pembrokeshire Coast Path is a magnificent trail between the villages of St Dogmaels and Amroth follows the coastline of the Pembrokeshire National Park through some of the most spectacular coastal scenery in Britain. For much of the time the path keeps clifftops, providing superb views of the beaches, offshore stacks, and islands with abundant bird life. Each turn in the path reveals something different - a little harbour, an attractive village, a Neolithic cromlech, Bronze Age standing stones, Iron Age promontory forts, a church or chapel of the Celtic saints and their followers, or a castle built by Norman invaders. The Pembrokeshire Coast Path begins near Cardigan. From here to the pleasant little city of St Davids, the trail

passes through some of the wildest and most ruggedly beautiful parts of the National Park, including the Witches' Cauldron.

Other sights include impressive limestone cliffs, and stacks and arches of the Castlemartin Peninsula; Pembroke Castle, with its vast keep and commanding views; the attractive village of Angle with its historic church, Fishermen's Chapel, dovecote and medieval tower-house; the unique thatched seaweed-drying hut above Little Furzenip; the tiny, ancient chapel built into the rocks at St. Govan's Head; the tiny harbour at Stackpole Quay; prehistoric remains, including Iron Age hill forts and Neolithic Cromlechs; the beautiful lily pools at Bosherton; the great Norman castle at Manorbier; and the ancient walled town of Tenby with its picturesque harbour. And these are just *some* of the highlights!

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

Part III of the reminiscences of Hadyn Lloyd Davies, a Welshman who emigrated from Denbigh to Australia over 50 years ago. This is the final section of his memories about growing up in a farming community in the Vale of Clwyd.

Religion was a significant sociological force up to the outbreak of the Second World War. In the area where I grew up, Non-conformists and Anglicans predominated - there were very few Jews and Roman Catholics. Most people, and certainly almost all children, attended church or chapel every Sunday and I knew of no one who would openly confess to atheism or agnosticism. It was thought that the Church in Wales imposed unacceptable controls in a variety of ways. For example, all churchyard burials, until Lloyd George's reforms in the early 1900s, had to be according to the rites of the Anglican Church. Non-conformist ministers were not allowed to bury the dead according to their own prayer books.

The great Welsh author, Gwilym R. Jones, described it as a church that was never really accepted by the Welsh people. Before the spiritual revivals of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the Church kept people in ignorance, despite being the church of Bishop Morgan who translated the Bible into Welsh in the late 16th Century. Gradually, criticisms were addressed as university graduates became clergy who carried out pastoral duties with sincerity, but the Church of Wales continued to be a significant force in the Anglicization of Wales. Most services were in English and, with a few notable exceptions, these churches did little to maintain Welsh traditions or ways of life. On the other hand, Nonconformist denominations were a major factor in stimulating local Welsh culture. Ministers provided leadership on matters theological, sociological and political; these included Calvinists, Methodists, Wesleyans, Baptists and Congregationalists. In North Wales the Calvinistic Methodists were the most numerous, far outnumbering Anglicans. Contributing to the moral force of religion were the local minister's powerful sermons. They were given on the first Sunday of each month, during morning and evening services in the minister's own chapel. Later in the month, the same sermons would be delivered in outlying chapels that might be up to ten miles from the 'home' chapel. They would often involve direct appeals to emotions, emphasizing sin and sacrifice rather than absolution and forgiveness. References to contemporary issues such as pacifism, trade unionism, temperance, moral standards, and social legislation were common. Sunday Schools held in chapels were also important religious activities. Instigated by the Reverend Thomas Charles of Bala in the mid-19th century, they often included adult classes that provided forums for theological and sociological discussions. In addition, the chapel was the setting for mid-week meetings such as *The Band of Hope* - a junior temperance

movement, as well as the annual eisteddfods. Hence, credit for preservation of Welsh language, development of poetry, and articulation of deep national feelings should be given to non-conformism.

Hadyn Lloyd Davies, Australia

Reverse Flow

The Welsh, who were once among the most devout in Britain, are now going to church in far fewer numbers. Surveys suggest that only 7% of the total population attend church with regularity. One consequence of this decline is the recruitment of ministers from India to compensate for the serious shortage of clergy in the Welsh Presbyterian Church. It is acknowledged that low salaries and a high cost of living have discouraged young people from joining the church. Also, there are admitted difficulties in administering to the needs of isolated communities.

These challenges have not deterred descendents of Indians, who were converted to Christianity by missionaries from Wales in the nineteenth century from coming to Wales to help fill the clerical gap. The converted are now preaching to the converters!

The Diocese of Mizoram, in North-Eastern India, has already sent one minister to South Wales and others are to follow in ensuing months. The Reverend Hmar Sangkhuma not only conducts religious services for two congregations in Maesteg, near Bridgend, but he also volunteers as a prison chaplain, works in a youth club, and runs yoga classes for the elderly.

Wales is now in the forefront of recruiting overseas clergy with historical links to its own churches. This effort is designed to compensate for the 80% decline in the number

of ministers over the last 25 years.

Thanks to Les Richards for drawing attention to an extended article on this topic carried by The Globe and Mail in March.

Connections

Did you know that you can watch Welsh television on line? There is a live magazine program that offers news, views and entertainment from Wales. Just plug in to: www.s4c.co.uk and track through to *Wedi 7*.

Here's a website that might catch attention – *Social, Welsh and Sexy*. It is designed for ex-pats, has been around for 10 years, promotes international connections, and boasts a membership database of over 5000. Be assured that there is nothing salacious on the site, else Bryn Terfel, Sian Philips and CZJ would not be patrons. Full details can be found at www.swsglobal.com

Another Internet effort to promote Wales and encourage interactions between people all over the world – for either business or pleasure – can be seen by visiting Robert Jones' website at www.hiraeth.co.uk. He's from Abergavenny and is encouraging people to contact him at robert@hiraeth.co.uk

Have you heard the one about ...



Dai, who knew that his friend Ianto feared synthetic chemicals and was trying to lead a "chemical-free" lifestyle. To prove that this was an impossible concept, Dai offered his pal a drink of butanol, isomyl alcohol, caffeine, geraniol, 3-galloyl epicatechin and inorganic salts. "What are you trying to do kill me?" Ianto cried out. "No, no, boyo" replied Dai, "I was just offering you a nice cuppa tea!"