

October Newsletter - 2003
Calgary Welsh Society
Cymdeithas Gymreig Calgary

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Greetings President Alun Lewis and his committee extend a hearty 'Hello' to everyone. After a surprising start ('but only in Calgary' you could rightly add - remembering the late April snow that forced the postponement of our AGM) but Mother Nature eventually got herself sorted out and made amends for her particularly unkind climatic lapse. During the summer a couple of activities, apart from vacations, were of interest to Society members - our own picnic beside the Bow at Baker Park and the 'Festival of Wales' held in Richmond BC. Both were reasonably well attended by Society members.

The August 10th. Picnic Dave Matthews reports that if you weren't among the twenty-five or so members who attended this function in the new Baker Park - you missed a 'fun' afternoon - all the Fun of the Fair, in fact! Our three 'Carnies' were Dave Elson, Tom Williams who, with another friend, successfully tried a new approach that persuaded just about everyone to leave their chairs and become actively involved - as well as meeting other members in the process. The formula was a simple one of dividing the group into two teams, team 'Coch' (Red) and team 'Gwyrdd' (Green), where members were appropriately identified with coloured wristbands.

Three games were then set up (and later, three more) including 'Horseshoes' (and not as easy as it may look); croquet, (have you ever tried this in 6" long grass?); Golf Chipping, using plastic balls and equipment! Following each game, the winner's colour was recorded and, in the end, was it the Reds (or the Greens) who won by a narrow margin? Members were having so much fun that the games had to be 'called' around five o'clock in order that all could enjoy their tea and sandwiches. Well done Dave and Tom! Who said professional engineers cannot be practical when put to the test?

The Richmond (BC) Festival of Wales This Labour Day (Weekend) event including the annual North American Gymanfa Ganu were well attended by Society members who made a big effort to participate. Among them were Brent and Margaret Gilbertson (and granddaughter), Ross and Pam Hicks, Cledwyn and Ennyd Jones (Medicine Hat), Dave Matthews and Veronica Everton Williams. Veronica prepared a 'Personal View' of her first visit to this celebration - and writes

"The festival offered many interesting, enjoyable and unforgettable events in an excellent venue. Favourably located in the Richmond Inn and the adjacent Hilton Hotel, a great number of activities were planned to please a variety of interests. These included an opening ceremony, a market-place of Welsh/Wales wares and information, many 'workshops' (topics from corgis to pirates and saints, and more), a BBQ, an eisteddfod, tours to Victoria and around Vancouver, a folk music concert, a grand banquet, a grand concert, evening hymn singing and Poems and Pints nights and (of course) a Sunday Welsh/English church service and Gymanfa Ganu. You could choose to be busy from dawn to dusk, or simply enjoy relaxing moments visiting with old and new friends in the casual atmosphere of the tearoom or patio. Five of the activities that I enjoyed were:

Welsh Language Workshops: Many had registered for the 'beginner' class under instructor Gaynor Samuel who did an excellent job of teaching a few phrases and some language basics in an hour-long session. The energy was high and the mood positive as the class practiced the linguistic challenge in a fun and supportive atmosphere. An 'intermediate level' workshop was attended by about a dozen people of very varying skills and which would have been of greater benefit if the level of required ability had been clarified. Walkabout sessions (Teithiau Cerdded) were also arranged for those who opted for a scenic stroll with an opportunity to chat in Welsh.

Dance Workshop: A ninety- minute session was very well attended and a great time had by all. The Welsh folk group 'Mabon' provided not only the energetic live music but also the instruction. After a brief demonstration of Welsh country dance by the Vancouver Welsh Folk Dancers, all tried out their talents (or lack thereof) in a 'fun' and fast moving swirl of country dancing that made spirits soar.

Mabon Concert: Definitely different! Not everyone's taste but certainly enjoyed by many. Putting an exciting twist on traditional Welsh melodies and creating a few new Celtic pieces, Mabon thrilled their audience with their energetic and entertaining talents. No gimmicks, just good music and a great sense of humour!

Banquet: Well catered in a pleasant ambience enhanced by the remarkable skills of harpist Bronn Journey and soprano wife, Katharine (from Calgary) - with trophy winning singer Paul Kawabori. A very relaxing and enjoyable evening!

Grand Concert: Truly a night to remember with the famous prize-winning Duvant (Swansea) Male Choir and baritone soloist Jason Howard captivating a full house at the elegant Orpheum Theatre. Magnificent renderings of traditional favourites and a few popular modern songs resonated their way into the hearts of a spellbound audience. Tears of 'hiraeth' flowed as the evening culminated in a roof-raising performance where the audience joined the choir in singing old favourites! The Welsh National Gymanfa Ganu Association of North America organized a wonderful and memorable Welsh week-end!"

Did you Know that the Society's formal association with the City of Calgary started in 1906 as the local St. David's Society. In the intervening years membership interest and enthusiasm for Welsh cultural activities fluctuated widely. However as the southern Alberta economy developed after WW2 it did so to the accompaniment of a marked population growth along with the recognition of Calgary's many advantages and its resultant importance within that region. A renewed interest in things Welsh (along with many other diverse ethnic identities) also grew. Now, in an environment where at least 15,000 Calgarians claim Welsh heritage - it would be difficult to believe that the Society's fortunes should be anything but sound or successful in the years to come!

Calgary's development has not been without its share of Welsh influences over the years - since even before the birth of the St. David's Society. Notably, Dowlais (Merthyr Tydfil) native R.C. Thomas came to the city in 1883 and homesteaded some 17 miles down river. As a successful teamster during the time of the Riel Rebellion (a brief two years after settling in the area) he quickly developed his entrepreneurial talents - starting a downtown livery stable on the corner of 8th. Avenue and 2nd. Street (SW) that soon developed into a highly profitable coal and timber business. Thomas ultimately built the Wales Hotel on the very same site - and which, in the early days of the city's 'boom years' (late 1970s and early '80s) made way for the present Toronto Dominion Square complex. There appears to be some Welsh/Canadian history under that popular edifice!

Another expatriate, Cardiffian Leonard Brockington, began his association with Calgary (in 1915) as a lowly clerk in the city's Land Titles Office. Studying law in his spare time he graduated into the profession and joined the renowned law practice of (Senator) James Lougheed and R.B. Bennett. In 1921, Brockington became City Solicitor and remained in that office until appointed by MacKenzie King as an 'Advisor to the War Cabinet' at the outbreak of hostilities in 1939 and at which time he moved to Ottawa. Not content with that particular bureaucratic office, he later served as a war correspondent in Europe and ended his varied and illustrious career as Rector of Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario.

The name of Ernie Starr also became recognized as a Calgarian of note. Born in Caerphilly he arrived in Calgary in 1920 and first found employment as a medical orderly at the General Hospital. He progressed to become a civic institution and served for 25 years as a city alderman and another 7 as a School Board trustee. He founded Starr's Ambulance Service in 1931. A popular sports arena on 14th. Avenue and 48th. Street NE now honours his name!

These three influential early Calgarians were staunch Society members and became Society Presidents in their day!

Our Remaining 2003 Social Programme There are two events on the cards for our enjoyment during the fall and winter.

EVENT ONE SATURDAY, OCTOBER 25th. -- 'POEM & PINTS' and WELSH FILM NIGHT!

**Venue: Irish Cultural Society,
6452 - 35th. Avenue NW T3B 1S6**

This location can be approached from Bowness Rd. from both east and west directions. Note that the Bowwood Drive and 67th St. (NW) turn-offs both intersect with 35th. Ave. from the east and west approaches respectively.

At this social evening we are happy to offer you a Welsh comedy film (in English) with the inevitable rugby background. It promises to be a varied fun evening where, for the 'Poems & Pints' component, you are invited to participate with a song or a poem or a (tasteful) story or joke - along with the enjoyment of a tasty 'pint' or whatever else may take your fancy. Food is provided and there will be a cash bar! **A CHARGE OF \$10 PER PERSON** will be levied to cover the cost of food and hall rental. **MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO ATTEND!**

The programme will start at 7.00 pm. sharp!

EVENT TWO SUNDAY, DECEMBER 14th. -- OUR ANNUAL CHRISTMAS DINNER

**Venue: The Coast Plaza Hotel,
1316 - 33 Street NE (Just off Trans Canada & 36th. Street NE)**

This hotel with a well appointed dining room and facilities for our social needs together with ample free parking has become a regular location for our major functions over the last couple of years. This Sunday date makes it a more timely Christmas occasion. **NOTE THAT TICKET PRICES WILL BE \$32 for PAID-UP MEMBERS and \$37.00 FOR NON-MEMBERS!**

Cocktails: 6.30 - 7.00 pm: Formalities & Dinner: Entertainment & Dancing from 9.00 pm: Cash Bar.

Rugby World Cup-2003 This is it, folks - from October 10th through November 22nd, in Australia - and 'Sportsnet' TV (Channel 27, Shaw Cable) plans to show all 48 games. However, since Sydney (Aust.) is some 16 hours ahead of Mountain Time, we Calgary mortals will have to get up early or stay up late or get the old VCR tuned in. Kick-off times range 10.30 pm to 2.00, 4.35 & 6.00 am - similar to our experience during the last Soccer World Cup in the Orient! Both Canada and Wales happen to be in *Group D* along with Italy, Tonga and New Zealand - a tough draw for both 'our' teams. Currently The 'Old Enemy' (England) is # 1 in current world rankings, New Zealand # 2, Wales # 9 and Canada # 11. UK bookmakers believe the All Blacks are most likely to win - and that they (the bookmakers) will 'lose their shirts' should England lay claim to the Webb Ellis Trophy! We shall see, so keep that overworked old coffee pot 'perking' - eh?

Our Own Website Finally we have this creation pretty well 'off the stocks' with a name www.calgarywelshsociety.com that should not present difficulty regarding ease of finding on the World Wide Web. In the early days of development, members Carol and Rachel Cooper did much of the research work within their own business and systems - so the Society is indebted to them for their time and effort on this project. Anyone latching on to our website will be able to find out everything they need to know about the Society - its history: its executive with contact information: the Society's aims and objectives: membership information: access to the latest Society Newsletter: an updated programme of activities - and all this in 'brilliant technicolour'! Your Ed was very impressed - and so will you be! It will be fully active in four weeks!

A Legend in Her Own Time Dame Shirley Bassey recently celebrated half a century in show business with the sale of 50 of the glittering gowns that dazzled her audiences over the years. Shirley is now 'around 66' (or thereabouts) - for when your Ed. moved up to the big city in '53 she was already firmly entrenched in the West End as an 18-year-old sensation! Regardless of that particular age privilege enjoyed by all ladies, it's still a long way from Park Hall (Cardiff) to the London Palladium such that a few years could have easily been lost in transit. This recent auction at Christies in London netted over half a million \$'s Can. for two of her charities. She told a packed saleroom crowd that she had cried after seeing the dresses on display. 'Fifty years came rushing back to me. My gowns and I have had a wonderful affair,' she said, before singing the opening lines from her classic song, 'Hey Big Spender'. A 'diamond dress' encrusted with thousands of crystals fetched around \$100,000 Can. She was perhaps the most expressive artist of her time - in your Ed's opinion!

A.G.M. Minutes The records of the two last annual general meetings (2002 & 2003) are to hand. Anyone still wishing to read them can do so at the 'Poem & Pints' night on the 25th next - but please don't spill beer over them!

The CWS Celtic Choir Rehearsals resume in earnest (or will have done so) on Tuesday October 14th so Choir Director Susan Drayson wishes to advise all interested members and friends. Regular Tuesday evening practice sessions will be held at the University of Calgary, Craigie Hall, Room F 202 - commencing 7.15 pm sharp! Susan is anxious to see an increase in the number of voices this year so please interest your family and/or friends in this traditional and enjoyable pastime. Should any one wish to know more about the choir, Susan can be reached at (403) 246-0604.

In the News Again Readers will remember the mention of a group of scallywags (including one from 'That Ponty' place) who attempted to cheat in the UK version of 'Who Wants to be a Millionaire? Well, that name has reappeared in the news; Tecwen Whittock (the man with the 'well informed' cough) has registered his name as a trademark with the Patents Office. The former lecturer at Pontypridd College took this action when he discovered that a pharmaceutical company was preparing to launch a cough medicine called 'Tecwen Relief'. In the 'cheating by coughing' court case, this character got a suspended sentence - which would have also been a great judicial relief to him personally!

Are You Welsh Enough A Welsh county council has been branded as 'racist' after blocking the sale of a remote cottage to buyers whom it deemed were not local enough. Gwynedd County Council was accused of running 'a local apartheid system' for political advantage when it rejected a number of offers (for a wreck of a cottage) in Snowdonia, despite some of the interested buyers being Welsh. The dispute had been ongoing for a couple of years after the cottage was inherited on the death of the owner. The cottage name is, 'Argrraig', which (roughly translated) could mean, 'On the Rocks' - more in reference to its location than the financial status of its current owner. The building had once been a council house during its history and, since the council got involved, had fallen into a state of disrepair so as to reduce its resale value by a substantial amount. Two English priests, a Welsh couple living in England and a woman from mid-Wales were all turned down on the grounds 'they did not have a strong enough local connection!' Perhaps the county council will next introduce a language law to further entrench its position, just like Quebec you could say - eh, boyo?

Volunteers Needed In the periodical segment of this newsletter that gives our members the opportunity to describe some interesting or notable personal experiences in the 'Old Country' - or of a particular location you think worthy of mention for any reason (historical or hysterical), **THE NEWSLETTER WANTS YOUR CONTRIBUTION.** So please do a bit of head scratching, put on your thinking hats - **and pass your ideas and words on to the editor!**

NOTICE TO ALL MEMBERS and POTENTIAL MEMBERS

In past years, Society activities have mostly run between successive AGMs - where those meetings (generally held sometime in April) effectively became 'the kick-off event' for a new session. You will recall that this year's planned April AGM got shunted some four weeks (to May 24th) because of an untimely snowstorm. It had also been customary for membership fees to be due for payment from the AGM date and would certainly have been the case this year. However, for greater consistency with accepted accounting practices, please be advised that each new year of Society activities will henceforth commence on January 1st. Appropriately, the traditional St. David's Day Banquet would then generally become the first formal Society function in a new year - with the AGM relegated to being the second calendar event!

However, some five months have already elapsed since the May AGM and many members (and prospective ones) have still not paid their dues. For these reasons the Society's executive has decided that the duration of 'paid up 2003 memberships' will be extended to December 31st, 2004 - by which gesture, it is hoped, 'delinquent members' may also be persuaded to fulfil their obligations as soon as possible. In addition, all new subscriptions will be valid until the same 2004 end date!

We are sure you know that the Calgary Welsh Society is committed to the expansion and enhancement of its cultural role in the Calgary community. The dedicated support of everyone with an interest in their Welsh heritage or in Wales and in things Welsh is a necessary prerequisite for the achievement of these objectives!

The Society fee structure remains modest - SINGLE memberships at \$15.00 each: FAMILY memberships at \$25.00: and SENIOR (65 plus) and STUDENTS (18 plus) at \$10,00 each. Annual membership subscriptions pay for room rentals at Society functions, often subsidize meal costs and certainly cover newsletter printing and mailing charges! You will note that membership benefits will apply to future ticket prices for formal Society events and will also qualify members for discounts with a number of local merchants! Regrettably, those who fail to respond to this reminder (by December 31, 2003) will be removed from all Society contact listings!

MEMBERSHIP and RENEWAL APPLICATION 2003 CALGARY WELSH SOCIETY

Name: Mr/Mrs/Miss _____ Date: _____

Address: _____ Phone: _____

_____ Post Code: _____ e-Mail: _____

Memberships sought: Single @ \$15. Family @ \$25. Senior @ \$10 / or Junior

Please send cheque or money order to: Mrs.Kathleen Giffin, 152 Riverbrook Road SE, Calgary, AB. T2C 3P3
Tel: (403) 720-8127 e-mail: tricywoo@hotmail.com

