



December NewsLetter Issue - 2005 Calgary Welsh Society



Cymdeithas Gymreig Calgary

President: Dr. Wayne Davies (403) 289-3478; V-Pres: Maurice Benson 258-2588; Past-Pres: Alun Lewis 247-2267; Secretary: David Matthews 249-5483; Social Secretary: Kathleen Giffin 720-8127; Treasurer: Philip Morris 398-8331; NewsLetter & Membership matters: Roly Thomas at betrol@sprint.ca or 246-5093 at 134 Country Hills Gardens NW, Calgary, Alberta. T3K 5G2. If more information is required, don't forget our Website - www.calgarywelshsociety.com

Again, sadness precedes Christmas 2005! The Society regrets to inform members that Gwen Elizabeth Johnson (nee Roberts) devoted wife of Don and dear mother of Dawn and Kim passed away peacefully at the age of 62 on the afternoon of Sunday December 4th. Gwen, born in Bangor in 1943, moved to Canada at the tender age of 17 first to Montreal then to Alberta - where she met and married Don in 1968. As well as raising a family, she always maintained an active role in her community and as an enthusiastic volunteer in other activities and interests. She was a talented crafts person - a seamstress and a doll maker. Latterly, despite a succession of cancer related challenges Gwen courageously maintained a positive and optimistic outlook - in defiance of the problems that so unfairly plagued her over the last while. A staunch supporter of the Calgary Welsh Society, Gwen will be missed! She will always be fondly remembered for wearing traditional costume and, at Christmas events, for donning a Santa outfit and distributing candy canes! Heartfelt condolences are extended to Don and his family in their grief!

Our Latest Society Events Two items concluded our 2005 social calendar - namely the October 2nd **Poems & Pints Night** and our **Annual Christmas Dinner** on December 4th. Happily both were entertaining and well attended! The P&P function attracted some 35 members where the main feature was a film describing Owain Glyndwr's battles and his 10 turbulent years of glory. The film had been well researched and had previously been featured on the PBS channel. However, in your Ed's humble opinion, a very English production by a couple of well known UK/TV personalities regrettably perpetuated some rather prejudiced opinions in their characterizations of people from that blood-thirsty era. At a time when so much of today's world problems continue to be tribal (or ethnic) and religion related - the audience could have been spared the often unnecessarily bitter and fabricated dialogue of the presentation! During the evening, Jane Alabaster read a Dylan Thomas work and Derek Lewis recited an amusing monologue. Another well conceived quiz by our 'quiz whiz' Dave Matthews again tested our knowledge (or lack of) of things Welsh! Kathleen Giffin again excelled in the catering department while Beth Davies introduced us to her talents with the 'Welsh Cake' dessert. Both ladies deserve our gratitude!

Our '**Annual Christmas Dinner**' was an outstanding success! Sixty-nine members attended - amongst whom there was a reassuring inclusion of the younger generation - even some newly arrived from 'Yr Hen Wlad' (The Old country). We extend a warm welcome to these new Calgarians in the persons of Charlotte Evans and partner Alan who join us from Prestatyn. Coincidentally, their Prestatyn home was in the same street as that of old Society friends Stuart and Helen Aitken - reminding us that our world can be small indeed! Musical accompaniment (and entertainment) during the evening was provided by David Hewison's trio of talented young musicians - David himself featured on tenor-sax, Shannon Hansen on trumpet and Arlene Link on flute. Appropriately, Jane Alabaster again read from a Dylan Thomas classic, the amusing '**A Child's Christmas in Wales**'. President Wayne Davies amiably chaired the proceedings and, with the able assistance of raconteur Derek Lewis, displayed rare knowledge of a well-known rugby-club-locker-room 'anthem'. Really, did you ever see such a funny thing before - or, indeed, after? The Fort Calgary catering effort was again first class - both for quality and quantity!

Our 2006 Centennial Attention must next be focussed on the New Year and upon the celebration of the Society's singular achievement - as (probably) Calgary's oldest ethnic association. Two formal events are already on the celebratory stocks - The **St. David's Day Gala Dinner**, set for **Saturday February 25th 2006** at the **University of Calgary 'Blue Room'** - and a choral concert by the **Gwent Male Voice Choir** that is already scheduled for **Friday Evening, the 18th August 2006** at the **Grace Presbyterian Church** on 15th Avenue SW. It is likely that the Gwent choir will be over 70 voices strong - comprising choristers from a number of established Monmouthshire male voice groups. The **Gwent** calls Pontypool its home! Note that these two events will be dealt with more fully in a **NewsLetter** planned for January next! Other Society activities are being pursued to ensure that **2006** will be a year to remember in our fair city!

Advance Notice It is possible that the renowned **Morrison Orpheus Male Voice Choir** can be persuaded to visit Western Canada **sometime during 2007!** On a recent visit to South Wales, Wayne Davies and Philip Morris had the opportunity to meet with them - at which time the choristers wholeheartedly favoured such a tour. The '**Orpheus**' is the 'crème de la crème' of Welsh male voice choirs with a worldwide reputation! When your Ed. lived in Montreal, a 1975 summer visit by the choir is still fondly remembered - including a post-concert 'get-together' at the Black Watch Regiment Officers Mess that is still vividly recalled! At the time the choir was under the direction of Lynn Harry - who remained in Canada to assume a teaching appointment in Hamilton (Ont.) after that Montreal visit!

December NewsLetter Issue - 2005

Calgary Welsh Society

Membership Renewal You are respectfully reminded - **2006 renewals** become due on **January 1** next. To ensure the task will be relatively painless, a **RENEWAL FORM** and a **STAMPED ADDRESSED ENVELOPE** are included with the NewsLetter - this time mailed via Canada Post to all membership households! Your cooperation is solicited to make the renewal procedure a smooth one! Valid 2006 membership cards will then be promptly sent to you!

Fond Recollections Member Kit Duckett has fond memories of a very special place in Wales, the Carmarthenshire village of Laugharne (pronounced 'LARN') a unique little coastal hamlet situated in beautiful countryside with clean fresh air - in stark contrast to her Rhondda Valley birthplace, where she spent her early years! Kit had this to say:

'My paternal ancestors lived there for generations and, as a child, I spent many summer holidays there. I remember staying with my great aunt, Auntie Lizzie - a rosy-cheeked maiden lady who lived in a small cottage on Horsepool Road. She had a withered arm and dragged one leg but always had a ready smile. There were no 'mod-cons'; water came from the village pump in the main street and the 'ty-bach' (the 'little-house' or 'out-house') was way down the garden, past an apple tree with delicious apples. In the early mornings my cousins and I gathered mushrooms in the dewy grass and picked hazel nuts along the way. We went down to 'The Grist' and saw Laugharne Castle, then the home of Richard Hughes, the writer. We walked along the cliffs (Laugharne is on the estuary of the River Taf) and we looked across it towards Llansteffan - a coastal village also located farther up the adjoining (and larger) River Towy estuary. The rivers were tidal - so when the tide was 'out' we looked across a vast area of mud! We also looked down on the **Boat House**, later made famous by Dylan Thomas. It was once thought that the village of Llareggub in **Under Milk Wood** was modelled on Laugharne - but that was later refuted! Did you ever try to read the word 'Llareggub' backwards - could this have been a bit of 'DT' humour?

I left Wales in 1953 for Canada. While visiting the principality some twenty-five years later I was able to spend a brief couple of hours in Laugharne. I had such a feeling of nostalgia - hoping that the place had remained as I remembered it. In spite of the attention brought upon it by Dylan Thomas, I did find it relatively unchanged! Before leaving, I visited the village churchyard and had my photograph taken by Dylan Thomas' grave - a plot that was simply marked by a white cross!

I will always have a special corner in my heart for Laugharne - and I whole-heartedly agree with Dylan Thomas when he said, 'There is no place like it, anywhere at all!' (Thanks Kit for sharing your memories with us!)

A Lost Town - Found Archaeologists claim to have discovered the remains of a large medieval town that vanished some 700 years ago. Two of the 370 houses that belonged to a Norman settlement built in the 13th century were unearthed near the village of Trellech (or 'Trelleck' according to a current 'AA' road atlas) in Monmouthshire. The area is known to have been the location of one of the biggest settlements in Wales and comparable in size to Cardiff at that time! Trellech is located about halfway between the towns of Chepstow and Monmouth in the scenic Wye Valley.

Rebecca Riots Revived Wales has a long history of civil disobedience in times of social unrest - from the Merthyr Tydvil rising of 1831 - to Chartism, which found its most forceful manifestation in Newport (Mon.) during the U.K. Reform Movement of 1837 - 48. At the same time, rural Wales was also subject to social unrest - when, between 1839 and 1843, the Rebecca Riots (directed against the exacting of road tolls) occurred to demonstrate the problems of the tenant farmers of West Wales. The legacy that started more than 250 years ago when rioters (all dressed as women) rallied against tollgates, apparently lives on today with the ongoing U.K. fox-hunting 'row' - so historians believe! This particular interest has become part of something called 'the Bro Beca project' - with the intention of reminding people in South West Wales about the importance of the Rebecca Riots and the determination to make government rethink its policies. Supporters of fox-hunting, by denying access to their estates for military drills or essential maintenance of electricity pylons, railways and water supplies, are prepared to face prison terms for their actions! While the Rebecca Riots were essentially non-violent in nature, those apprehended were still despatched to Tasmania, regardless - a form of punishment probably not contemplated at this time! However, with an evident mass exodus of 'natives' from the U.K. now underway (and seemingly in all directions) a 'new-born Rebecca' could wish for the old 'Tasmania option' to remain - so as to gain an assisted passage!

On the fox-hunting issue, many believe that the rural Welsh are certain to stand up for themselves again - especially since the matter has not been discussed in the Assembly - or on Welsh soil! A 'native' rights problem - if not a Chartist one, eh?

2006 Six-Nations up for Grabs In a series of rugby international games against southern hemisphere teams in November, the **Wales XV** failed to impress - despite its earlier European 'Grand Slam' success! New Zealand and South Africa both beat Wales convincingly - while, on the credit side, Welsh wins against Fiji and Australia were just marginal! It would appear that the team to watch this coming year - could well be France - who succeeded in beating Australia, Fiji and Argentina - all from the other side of the equator. France also trounced a team from Canada!

Many of us remember how France ran rings around Wales in the first half of last year's 6-Nations game - Wales eventually winning by miraculously turning the tables in the second half, thankfully! However, the '06 European competition again promises to be a challenging one for Welsh hearts. We shall see if '**Our XV**' are again able to assert themselves!

Another WRU Reshuffle Due to the stepping down of chief executive, David Moffett, the Welsh Rugby Union has been obliged to make changes in its administrative structure. Moffett, English by birth, emigrated to Australia 40 years ago. The WRU hired him in 2002 and, under his stewardship, set about reducing a debt of \$150 million. In

December NewsLetter Issue - 2005

Calgary Welsh Society

previous roles, Moffett was chief executive of the National Rugby League of Australia, executive director of the New South Wales Rugby Union and chief executive of the New Zealand Rugby Union. His appointment to the WRU came just two weeks after he quit as the head of Sport England - citing frustrations with excessive bureaucracy while driving through a modernization plan. His task with Welsh rugby was a similar one, tackling head-on the outdated structure and self interest that was holding Wales back. Without question, Moffett made a huge difference to the WRU Group and to the fortunes of Welsh Rugby both on and off the field. He is not being replaced - his responsibilities are to be shared by two other managers! David Moffett's premature and sudden departure (to live in New Zealand) is for family reasons - despite, in March of 2004, signing a 4-year contract extension with the WRU thought to be worth more than \$500,000 a year! Moffett stated that he did not have a job to go to, that New Zealand was a lot like Wales - but their families happened to be in New Zealand!

A Message from Our Own Rugby Experts Greg and David Hewison wish to advise interested members they will be producing weekly updates of results and scores from Welsh and UK games, local and Canadian rugby fixtures and international matches. If you pass on your E-mail or mailing address to them, they would be happy to keep you informed. Contact either - at 1148 Falworth Rd. NE, Calgary T3J 1L6 or, daibach1@telus.net . Greg coaches locally at the under 14 level for the CCIAC - and for the winners of the 2005 Challenge Cup. David has been playing locally for 6 years, was a member of the Alberta under 16 Championship team and has played for both provincial and city representative teams!

'Rostad Tours' of Calgary This local travel company, operated by David and Margaret Gilchrist, is planning a conducted tour of England and Wales in July of 2006 - July 3rd to the 13th . Their Wales itinerary includes visits to the Llangollen International Music Festival and to the resort town of Llandudno and its scenic environs. The tour in England will encompass Chester, Stratford-on-Avon, the Stoke pottery towns, Coventry, the Cotswolds and London. Should anyone be interested in finding out more about the inclusive tour package - they are asked to contact the Gilchrists by mail or E-mail or phone/fax as follows: Box 1111 (1313 - 23 Avenue), Didsbury, AB. T0M 0W0 or gilx@telusplanet.net or (403) 335-3012. The outward overnight flight July 3 is Calgary/Manchester - returning London/Calgary July 13.

Hotels of Distinction 2005 Attendees at our Christmas function will recall that your Ed. was handed a booklet that listed a host of first class hotels in the Principality - from north to south. A total of 46 such hostelrys are now listed by an authority on the subject, Emyr Griffiths, who commenced his 'Welsh Rarebits' hotel catalogue in 1985. His latest listing of 'the best places to stay in Wales' are not your conventional AA or RAC recommendations - they represent those he has personally chosen that are capable of offering the kind of personal service that charm schools of the big corporate hotels find impossible to provide. The strength of his choice lies partly in its offered variety - from historic inns to top country house hotels. The website is www.welsh-rarebits.co.uk and the associated E-mail address info@rarebits.co.uk . Should anyone require any more information - please contact Roly at the addresses given at the heading of this NewsLetter!

Welsh website contacts Members who enjoy surfing the net may be interested in the following contact addresses that have been sent on to us since our last NewsLetter issue. They relate to - firstly, a Welsh Expats Club at: <http://icwales.icnetwork.co.uk/0750expats/register/> - and secondly: www.welshladies.com, a site dealing with Welsh keepsake antiques - their E-mail address being: contactus@welshladies.com).

Welsh North America Chamber of Commerce An E-mail from Vice Pres. Gareth Jones introduced us to the fact that this organisation now exists to strengthen business or professional links between Wales, the US and Canada and help promote and facilitate industry and business by offering a range of services to Welsh and North American companies. Chamber Members also develop their own networks and effectiveness as ambassadors of Wales. A website is provided with a view to providing information on this new facility: <http://www.waleschamber.org> .

Seasonal Welsh Oddities Would you be surprised to hear about these weird superstitions from over there - or would you? For Christmas starters - did you know that holly was a symbol of eternal life: or that mistletoe was a magical plant to keep away evil spirits and enhance your love life: or that you had to keep the same Yule log burning throughout the 12 days of Christmas: that it was bad luck to light another one - even worse to throw green holly leaves on it: or that your plough should be kept under the dining table the entire holiday: or you should 'bleed' your cattle on Boxing Day: or if a lighted candle were taken into church - it had to be extinguished before leaving and left with the vicar for good luck?

For the New Year - did you know it was considered unlucky if the first New Year visitor to your home should have red hair: or, that ending a year in debt meant a whole new year of debt: or, unlucky to lend anything on New Year's Day: or, if a Yule log was burnt at Christmas, you should have kept the ashes to bury along with plant seeds in the spring to be assured of a bumper crop: or, that you should take down every bit of Christmas decoration before midnight on January 5th?

A Million Pound Property It has been reported that Wales is the best place to get value for money when contemplating the purchase of a million-pound (sterling) dream home! With the recent booming property market, more and more millionaires are living in homes that may be plush but do not compare favourably with the sprawling country

December NewsLetter Issue - 2005

Calgary Welsh Society

estates of moneyed predecessor - as in the case of a property in Wales, once owned by royalty and from which you would get some change out of a million! With around 425,000 people in Britain considered to be millionaires, the number of homes with a seven-figure price tag has also rocketed - but many of these nouveau millionaire 'pads' are, in fact, far-from-grand semi-detached houses in the south east of England.

Penylan Manor in Ceredigion (Cardiganshire) is different - and it is on the market for 950,000 pounds - a magnificent property near the villages of Llechryd and Llandygydd (just a couple of miles outside the town of Cardigan itself) that literally drips with the sort of history you could not find in the suburbia of London or Eastbourne. With massive sweeping driveway and cavernous reception room, it was a house that must have been very important amongst the local gentry! The house was built originally by a Edward Heycock of Shrewsbury and demolished in 1852 when inherited at that time by a Morgan Jones in 1844. It was rebuilt and the interior extensively redecorated in fine Italianate style around 1900 by Morant & Co. of London. For some 'crachach' (snob) value, it had once been owned by minor royalty, a distant cousin of the Queen!

The present owner, Janet Bray, has used the property for a variety of purposes over the years - as a family home, a prep school and as a venue for charity balls. Ms. Bray is a soprano singer, originally from Swansea!

An interested purchaser could even buy a Welsh title to go with the mansion. For just \$10,000 the Lordship of Scurlage, daing from the Middle Ages, is situated close to Rhossili Bay on the Gower peninsula and happens to be up for auction. It has benefits that can be derived from becoming Feudal Lord of Scurlage with the right to appoint a Lady Scurlage and entitlement to be addressed as 'your excellencies'! Scurlage, located at the junction with the Port Eynon road, was originally a fortified manor house (Scurlage Castle also known as Scorlayges Kaestel) built by Sir Herbert Scurlage in the 14th century. It was similar to other Gower castles, Oxwich, Landimore and Weobley - that successfully survived the ravages of time!

Unwaith Eto Mae sawl un wedi gofyn am ddechrau Cylch Cymreig. Hyd yn nawr mae'r ateb wedi bod yn siomedig iawn. Dewch ymlaen, chwiri siaradwyr, dewch allan o'r goedwig! Ffonwch Beth Davies (289-0574) neu Morfydd Jones (243-4925) i ddechrau cyfarfod - er mwyn parhau eich gwybodaeth a'r hen iaeth!

Once Again A number have asked about starting a Language Circle. So far, response has been very disappointing. Come on you Welsh speakers, come out of the woodwork! Phone Beth Davies or Morfydd Jones to start meeting - and protect your (probably) diminishing knowledge of the language! (Fluent speakers only are invited at this time!)

Our Casino Eligibility Over the last while, Secretary Dave Matthews has been busy with all the detailed chores associated with the pursuit of our 'Casino Eligibility' application with the provincial Gaming & Liquor Commission. Our application is submitted - and hopefully, it will only be a matter of time before we are able to use this resource to more adequately benefit our cultural objectives. It appears the mills of God (Ralph, that is) grind exceeding slow!

Seasonal Activities at Irish Cultural Centre Our sister Celtic Society in Calgary would like to draw attention to activities that they have planned. On **Saturday, December 31st** there will be a **New Year's Eve Dance Party** at the Centre - located at 6452 - 35 Avenue NW. Cocktails @ 7.30 - Dinner @ 9.00 pm. Tickets \$45.00 each. Tel: 258-0957. Regularly, on the 1st Saturday each month, a Whist Drive is also held at the Centre from 7.30 to 11.00 pm. Admission \$5.00

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS Please take the fullest advantage of the generous discounts offered by these local businesses by renewing your Society memberships without delay!

GOOD TASTE
of
BRITAIN (1985) Ltd.
at
Eau Claire Market
and Market Mall

WHO'S WHO
in the
ZOO
at
Int. Airport: Eau
Claire & South Centre

TEA
TRADER
at
Inglewood
1922-9th Ave. SE.
Over 100 blends

MYSTIQUE
HAIR
STUDIO
at
4006 - 16th St. SW.
in Altadore

NADOLIG LLAWEN a BLWYDDYN NEWYDD DDA
I CHWI GYD!

A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to Everyone!
