



July NewsLetter Issue - 2005 Calgary Welsh Society



Cymdeithas Gymreig Calgary

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Welcome to summer which in typical Calgary fashion should arrive during the next few months but don't hold your breath! Our city is nicely green for a change so, as the song goes, 'The Rains in Alberta Fall Mainly in the South' - eh?

UP-COMING EVENTS PLEASE NOTE - THREE ITEMS are planned for your interest and support during August!

1. **The 67th ANNUAL PONOKA GYMANFA GANU - SUNDAY AUGUST 14** - again held at the Ponoka United Church. **The Gymanfa commences at 2.00 pm!** CWS members are asked to support this unique cultural celebration. As always, a sumptuous tea hosted by the Ponoka Society will follow the Gymanfa!
2. **CONCERT BY THE CAMBRIAN MALE VOICE CHOIR - FRIDAY AUGUST 19 - at the GRACE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, 1009 - 15th Avenue SW, Calgary. TICKETS @ \$15.00 each are available from Dave Matthews (249-5483), Roly Thomas (246-5093) and Alun or Katharine Lewis (247-2267). Tickets will be available for purchase at the door from 6.00 pm - THE CONCERT BEGINS AT 7.00 pm SHARP! PATRONS ARE URGED TO PRE-PURCHASE tickets in a TIMELY manner!**

**** DISPLAY THE ATTACHED POSTER IN YOUR SHOPPING CENTRE, RUGBY CLUB, **
COMMUNITY HALL or CHURCH - and should you require any more - LET US KNOW!**

3. **ANNUAL PICNIC - SUNDAY AUGUST 28 - LAKE BONAVISTA COMMUNITY PICNIC AREA.** Most will be familiar with the location at rear of the shopping centre on Lake Bonavista Drive & Acadia Drive SE. Ample parking is available at the rear of the **SAFEWAY STORE** - adjacent to a security-controlled park entrance. Bring a '**POT LUCK**' dish - **DRINKS WILL BE PROVIDED** - some games will be organized - and if you wish, you can swim (or paddle) in the lake - but do mind the alligators!

The picnic starts at 3.00 - and continues until 6.00 pm! Bring picnic chairs, plates and eating irons!

The events happen to be close together - which is how it works out sometimes! **GET INVOLVED REGARDLESS!**

OUR YOUNG ACHIEVERS The last NewsLetter mentioned, without too much detail, accomplishments by young CWS members at the Kiwanis Music Festival 2005. We can now add more information on their achievements - by congratulating **Emily Lewis** for a **Gold** Award in her vocal solo '**Canadian Art Song**' competition. In the fall Emily will be attending the University of Winnipeg to follow a degree course in music. We wish her every success in her studies! Also, to **Desiree Gilbertson**, granddaughter of Brent and Margaret Gilbertson, we add our congratulations for winning **Gold** in the '**Sacred Duet**' for 14 year-olds and under - as well as contributing to a Gilbert & Sullivan light opera song (from '**The Pirates of Penzance**') that also achieved a **Gold** award. Earlier in the year Desiree won a **Bronze** Medallion at the 2004 Royal Conservatory Vocal Examination of the Music Teachers Association held in Calgary! Well-done Desiree!

MEET LAURA STYLER It is the Society's good fortune to have yet another talented member in the person of Laura who, with partner Steve Jones, joined us in Calgary at about the time of our AGM earlier this year! Members will soon see Laura in action as guest soloist with the Cambrian MV Choir in their August concert! She is a Mezzo-Soprano, an honours graduate of the Royal Welsh School of Music where, in 2002, she further took a 2-year post-graduate vocal diploma course! In her young career, Laura has extensive experience - beginning her interest in singing as a member of the National Youth Choir of Wales and latterly maturing as a soloist with a great deal of operatic experience! She has a number of BBC appearances to her credit! Laura hails from Church Village (near Pontypridd) and, as coincidence would have it, studied music under Fred Nicholas (the conductor of the Cambrian choir) at Bryncelynog Comprehensive School!

Partner Steve (a Jones from a long established Birmingham family of that name, we understand) is also warmly welcomed to our midst. Steve is on a two-year post-doctoral contract at the University of Calgary!

NEVER TOO OLD TO LEARN Your Ed. recently spent an interesting four weeks travelling the UK from top to bottom. In so doing, a great many memories were recalled - and new ground broken - regarding parts of the country (ie, in Scotland, Wales and England) - never before visited. In North Wales, the Menai Strait area was of

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particular interest, fulfilling a long time engineering ambition to see at first hand the Thomas Telford suspension bridge (opened in 1826) and the Robert Stephenson tubular railway bridge (opened in 1850)! The two structures were historic 'engineering firsts' that have survived - and enhanced - to accommodate today's more demanding traffic conditions!

Few may be aware of the fact that **Telford's was the first (and probably loveliest) major suspension bridge in Britain and the world!** As architect and engineer he personally designed every element of the work - even to the toll-gates! Situated on the 'A5' trunk road (the old London-Holyhead coach road - in which he was also much involved) the bridge remained tolled until 1895! Thomas Telford first made his mark as a canal builder - when that era preceded the *Railway Era* as the major transportation means in the country! His canals also survive and are still widely used - both for work and pleasure!

Stephenson's 'Britannia' bridge provided a connection for a train line that had already been built on the Isle of Anglesey in 1848 serving the port of Holyhead. However, prior to 1850, passengers arriving at the Menai Strait were obliged to disembark so as to cross that narrow stretch of water to the mainland by boat - or on Telford's tolled road bridge! Regrettably, the original 'tube' structure has been significantly altered - due to enforced repairs following severe fire damage in 1970 and a major upgrading designed to incorporate a new roadway level above the original rail track level!

LMS versus GWR In the fast paced developments that accompanied the industrial revolution in Britain - as typified by the building of the Menai bridges - it is worth noting, competition between the major railway companies of the day was never more evident than in Wales. In North Wales, Robert Stephenson's L.M.S. railway (the London Midland & Scottish Company) had chosen Holyhead, Anglesey, as its gateway to Dublin and Ireland - because sea traffic had existed between the two seaports since the 1700's! With the close proximity of the developing northern English industrial centres (Liverpool and Manchester in particular) a further dimension was being added to London's commercial and political interests across the Irish Sea!

In South Wales, the G.W.R. (the Great Western Railway Company) became the dominant railway developer under the direction of another great engineer, I.K. Brunel. Like Telford and Stephenson, Brunel was a master of his craft who also drew his designs in the greatest detail. It was he who first recognised Milford Sound's potential as a deep-water harbour. He planned that coaling jetties be built there serving his *Great Eastern* steamship and other steamers to be engaged on the trans-Atlantic run. The *Great Eastern's* maiden voyage took place in 1860 - a year after Brunel's untimely death at the age of 52!

Milford Haven never became the seaport that Brunel had envisaged within the interests of the Great Western Railway. The Milford Haven harbour development came into reality a century later (in the 1960's) - at the start of the oil super-tanker era!

Interestingly, considerable rivalry and jealousy had always existed between Telford and Brunel - both submitting designs for the Clifton (Avon Gorge) Suspension Bridge. The younger Isambard Brunel won the day - with a design, ironically, that strongly resembled Telford's Menai Strait classic structure - built some ten years earlier! Happily, the two railway company engineers, Stephenson and Brunel, always had a friendly and supportive professional relationship: they respected each other's talents - and their (often times) original and practical responses to the profound engineering challenges of the day!

In 1898, the G.W.R. Company focussed on the development of Fishguard Harbour (at Goodwick) as a railway terminal for a shorter sea route to Ireland. Two million tons of cliffs overlooking the bay were dynamited forming a breakwater and harbour facility that took eight years to complete. Since, it has grown with the times - becoming a busy car/truck ferry terminal linking South Wales with the port of Rosslare (for Cork) in the Irish Republic - and with a direct rail link to London!

The scenic Fishguard Bay Hotel above the harbour was, at one time, a railway hotel managed by the G.W.R. It is now under local ownership and surprisingly (for a class joint) sports a bar menu featuring home made *faggots and peas!* Take it from yours truly, the joys of touching base with his old railway and oil engineering past could not have been more fittingly celebrated than with such a tasty meal that went down so wonderfully well - and with a pint of Felinfoel Ale too!

Further development is on the cards for Fishguard with plans for a new \$30 million marina funded by the European Community. But, a snag has arisen due to the intervention of a person, a Mark Roberts, who uses the title Lord Marcher of Trelleck and who claims to own the land between high and low-water marks around the North Pembrokeshire coast from Newgale to Fishguard. Roberts apparently purchased the 'title' in 2000 and hit the headlines when he charged villagers in Peterstone, near Newport, a fee to cross a grass verge into their driveways. He argued the grass verge was common land he owned according to an ancient law. Happily, he lost the subsequent court battle - but not before some villagers had responded to his demands for a percentage of the value of their homes - and actually paid him! What a SOB, a Shrewd Owner of a Bay!

OUR NEW CANADIAN Congratulations are extended to our Treasurer, Philip Morris, who recently 'graduated' from the Calgary Citizenship Court - on '*THOMAS DAY 2005!*' Known also to the masses as JULY 1st - Canada's National Day - back in 1974 it also happened to be the day your Ed. landed in Montreal (believe it or not) as a fresh faced 'landed immigrant'! Hitherto, it had always been called '*DOMINION DAY!*' - so, realizing he had arrived in La Belle Province (as a bilingual Quebecer, speaking English and Welsh of course) - it appeared politically correct that he should not be insensitive to the *Quebécois* ideologies that prevailed at that time! Voila - the introduction of '*Thomas Day!*'

FEAST OF SUMMER RUGBY In June, a Wales International XV came to North America and demolished the national sides of the USA (by 77 points-3) and Canada (by 60-3) - the achievements being accomplished with eleven key Welsh players unavailable while on the British & Irish Lions tour of New Zealand. The Welsh coach is now set on getting his squad prepared for a fixture with New Zealand later this year. We recall, last November, the

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Wales XV failed by the slimmest of margins (two points) to beat a touring All Blacks team at Millennium Stadium. Since that time, Wales won *The Grand Slam* against the European teams in the Six Nations Championship - such that hopes are high for a better outcome to the next All Blacks encounter. A favourable decision is long overdue - the statistics being that Wales won the very first game - back in 1905 - and New Zealand all subsequent 17 meetings!

The Churchill Cup was held in Edmonton this year [**AND AGAIN IN 2006**] where England, Argentina, the USA and Canada competed. The England XV won the final against Argentina (45-16) having beaten Canada earlier (29-5) with Argentina just managing to beat the USA (34-30). In the consolation game for 3rd place, Canada surprisingly lost against the USA (20-19)! In Calgary recently, Canada improved on a poor international record by beating Argentina (22-15)!

MIGHTY LIONS HUMBLLED The recently completed British & Irish Lions tour of New Zealand ended disappointingly for the European visitors - with the home team successful in all three Test Matches - and convincingly so! However, considerable argument will surely ensue - as to whether the erstwhile successful England coach did the best possible player selection job prior to setting off on the tour: or even regarding his team selection during the tour: or whether the quality of officiating at key games was of the highest possible standard that the International Rugby Board could reasonably warrant? In a game that has now progressed to unquestioned professional status embodying unique player qualities of tactical knowledge, supreme physical fitness and individual capability - the greater incidence of unchallenged 'professional fouls' that are committed intentionally on the field of play appear to occur far too frequently! Regrettably, it is as if fundamentalism has even entered the realm of sport - to win by fair means or foul but win, regardless!

In the old days when an amateur player had to first work for a living - where often times he would come off shift at the local steel works having sweated out his heart in front of a blazing furnace; then called at the pub for a couple of pints before game time; changed into his 'togs' and gone on to the field and seemingly play a 'blinder' of a game! Was that not the essence of honest sportsmanship? Maybe, money is the root of all that is worst in sport - even more so when a referee 'suffers poor vision' and just one canny player can 'twig' it - and capitalize on it! OK Wales, let's repeat the 1905 triumph, but fairly!

THE LOVE OF RUGBY Singer Charlotte Church is now nineteen - having experienced international promotion, exposure and considerable success at a very young age! Maturity has now changed everything for this talented young lady: her music affections changing from classical to 'pop' - while in the affairs of the heart, the transition has been from 'dolls and teddy bears' to international rugby players! A great deal of recent press in the UK has been devoted to both these events - where the sanctity of her private life now appears to be somewhat compromised by the sensational gutter journalism that afflicts British newspapers! When her present promoters persuaded her to call a recent CD album, 'Crazy Chick' - one wonders however, 'Did the egg or the chicken come first' or 'What goes around must come around', eh?

On the romantic side of her life, Welsh international centre Gavin Henson is the new beau - the two meeting after the Irish 'Grand Slam' game in Cardiff earlier in the year. During the recent Lions' New Zealand tour, Charlotte even flew out there for a few days to be with her man - and was there to meet him when he flew home! Clearly, romance must be in the air!

Welsh rugby pundits are disappointed that the talented (match-winner) Henson played in only one of the three test matches. What also upset our hero, earlier in the tour, was that he did not appear to be in Woodward's 'good books' at any time! On his return, did Charlotte ask, 'Hey Gav, was it the spiky coloured hair - or your shaved legs that put Sir Clive off?'

DID YOU KNOW The Welsh Rugby Union was formed in Neath in 1881. By the turn of that century Wales were almost invincible and were crowned unofficial world champions in 1905 (- need it be said why?). By 1979 Wales had won the Five Nations title 5 times, achieved the Grand Slam 3 times, won 5 Triple Crowns and beaten Australia twice! The next 25 years were largely disastrous - but we now know that there has been a significant 'reawakening'!

WIND-FARMS IN WALES Those who have travelled down to the Pincher Creek area, to the south of us, will have seen an extensive wind-farm comprising a hundred or more elegantly slender wind turbines that generate electricity for the City of Calgary. Indeed, Enmax, the city's electricity provider, has plans for further substantial development of this capability in the province! However, the acceptance of this form of power generation has taken at least a couple of generations (no pun intended) to come into reality! There continues to be a strong lobby opposing it!

Very much the same conflict exists in Wales between its 'pro' and 'con' lobbyists. But, things have happened there as well - and, seemingly, in the most unlikely places to us land-lubbers!

In the North Wales seaside town of Prestatyn, a few miles east of Rhyl, a battery of some thirty wind-turbines (in an orderly layout of five rows of six) have been installed out in the bay - some three or four miles off shore! Again, in Porthcawl, on the South Wales coast, a tall free-standing mast has been erected off shore - so as to house metering equipment for the examination of wind patterns in that area of the Bristol Channel - off Sker Point, just beyond Rest Bay. Plans are obviously in hand for the possible installation of another off shore wind-farm at that spot! Would author R.D.Blackmore be happy with such a development - adjacent to the lonely old house where his heroine, '*The Maid of Sker*', once lived?

CAN GHOSTS HELP A ghost trail is one of the marketing ploys the City of Swansea is pursuing to bring more tourists into the vicinity. Tourism Swansea, the association representing the city's holiday businesses is

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considering establishing a *Swansea and Gower Ghost Trail* to accompany the popular *Dylan Thomas Trail*. Ghost stories abound in the area: The ghosts and fairies of Pennard Castle: The ghosts of Rhossili Rectory: and The Phantom of Oystermouth Road - a haunting white figure - the culprit who may have removed all the garbage bins that should have been at the old Oystermouth (Mumbles Train) station area - now a car park littered with ice-cream wrappers and like tripper waste!

There is one good Swansea tale relating to a devilish wooden effigy that can be seen in the downtown Quadrant Shopping Centre. It possesses a supernatural look and is known as 'Old Nick'. The carved wooden sculpture with piercing eyes was ordered by an architect who lost out on a contract to redesign St. Mary's Church in the centre of the city back in the 1890s. Apparently peeved at losing out to rival Sir Arthur Blomfield, he erected another building opposite the church and put the Old Nick effigy atop of it - as if glaring at the redesigned edifice! The displeased architect supposedly said at the time, 'My devil will be able to leer and laugh, for at some time in the future he will see St. Mary's burned to the ground!'

During February 1941, for three successive nights, the skies over Swansea were filled with German bombers. St. Mary's Church and surrounding buildings were destroyed - but Old Nick, and the building he was placed on, remained unscathed!

Up the valley, a couple of 'Ghostbusters' from Treboeth say they were injured 'in the line of duty' - claiming to have been 'thrown to the ground by unseen forces' while in the Carn Llechart stone circle near Pontardawe! Pull the other leg, eh?

A BIT ABOUT MINING Coal was needed in great supply by the second half of the 19th century to smelt iron. Demand grew for it in the South Wales valleys - as it was also used for driving steam engines, power generation and heating purposes. During the industry's peak over 250,000 miners were employed in Wales - more than 40,000 in the Rhondda Valley alone. The miners' strike of 1984 was the beginning of the end for that proud industry and when the confrontation ended, Margaret Thatcher had her excuse to kill the Miners' Union and start closing the coal pits!

WHAT WOULD NEU SAY - about the goings on in Alberta regarding our health service over the last while? It was Welsh politician Aneurin Bevan who struggled against fierce Conservative opposition to bring in free medical treatment for all as Minister of Health in the UK Labour Government between 1945 and 1951. All his life he had fought to end inequality - by getting the state to intervene in this important social sector. The British National Health Service, created on July 5, 1948 - was a testament to his endeavours! The son of a miner from Tredegar (Rhondda Valley) he resigned from office in 1951 when angered by the introduction of charges for dental care! What if Neu happened to be in our Legislature - it is certain Ralph and company would have a real battle on their hands because they would have to be so very certain of their facts before opening their mouths - and making even more shocking mistakes?

VERY PRETTY - BUT Gardeners and conservationists join forces in 'The War of the Rhododendrons' - an alliance that could, maybe, border on nimbyism! Just a few years after gardeners campaigned to stop the 'slash and burning' of rhododendron on Welsh mountains, they have apparently changed their minds. All now agree that the weedy yet pretty 'blot' on the Welsh landscape is now encroaching on their own back yards! Environmentalists believed that the colourful plant was killing trees and small animals in its path - from the top of Snowdon down to the sea at Porthmadog.

The large pink and purple flowers are spectacular in bloom - but, according to expert opinion, deadly to other plants if left unmanaged. This has been the case in large areas of Turkey, North America and parts of Scotland and Ireland! The species common to North Wales comes from Portugal - where it is now endangered!

For the non-green-fingered, the Rhododendron was introduced to Britain in the late 18th century. It spreads invasively - especially in the damp climate of the Principality. A short while ago, sixty world experts converged on Snowdonia in a bid to stem the destruction it causes and visited the National Trust's new training and residential centre in Beddgelert - where a 'Rhododendron War' was officially declared! Turkey has three million hectares of 'Rhodies' invading its Beech forests - the equivalent of driving from Cardiff to Anglesey through a forest of Rhododendrons - and not seeing a blade of grass or a tree!

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS Please take the fullest advantage of the generous discounts offered by these local businesses!

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
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and **DO NOT FORGET THE PONOKA GYMANFA ON AUGUST 14TH.**
or **THE CAMBRIAN MV CHOIR CONCERT ON AUGUST 19TH.**
or **THE SOCIETY PICNIC ON AUGUST 29TH.**