



Fall NewsLetter Issue – 2006 Calgary Welsh Society



Cymdeithas Gymreig Calgary

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Suddenly, one of the best summers ever again finished in mid-September with a foretaste of things to come - that is, cool temperatures (cooler than normal we were told) and where, in some parts of our fair city, a little more than the threat of a few flakes of the inevitable (and usually disruptive) winter 'white-stuff' were encountered! Despite this well-known 'par for the Calgary course' our enthusiasm remains undiminished for our adopted home - and the undoubted wisdom of that choice, eh?

Executive Changes This newsletter heading shows a few changes from our last issue. Please note that Kathleen Giffin has found it necessary to resign as Social Secretary. We are fortunate that Trish Coulson and Pam Hicks have volunteered to jointly undertake the onerous task our hard working Kathleen addressed so expertly during her tenure. The Society is indebted for the unselfish dedication she always applied to her administrative responsibilities in all the roles undertaken on our behalf! So, from all of us Kathleen, 'Thanks a Lot!'

Welcome, Trish and Pam to your new challenges - and, equally, to Carolynne Hewison who has stepped into the breach as our in-house mistress of the Webmaster function! Good luck ladies, your gestures are much appreciated!

Our Summer Events Both the annual summer picnic (in July) and the Gwent MV Choir concert (in August) were notable successes. The picnic, at the Lake Bonavista community facility, was favoured by fine weather and a turnout of some 44 enthusiastic members of all ages! At the Grace Presbyterian Church, the 60 choristers from Gwent (not forgetting Society soloist Laura Styler) gave outstanding concert performances! An appreciative Calgary audience of nearly 300 music lovers again enjoyed the occasion. Readers will recall that last year's Cambrian MV concert attracted an audience of similar size at the same venue! Both choir and Society coffers again benefited from the event!

We are indebted to all who contributed time and effort to ensure the success of these two Society activities!

Forthcoming Events You are reminded that two more activities have been planned to complete our 2006 social programme!

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 21st. **ANNUAL POEMS & PINTS SOCIAL EVENING!**

Venue: **IRISH CULTURAL CENTRE**
6452 - 35th Avenue NW [in. the Bowness subdivision]

Meet 6.30 pm for 7.00 pm! Main-course foods are provided! If possible, bring a sample of Welsh-cakes or baked goods. Entertainment will consist of good conversation, a quiz and a joke or two with Welsh film *Coming Up Roses* ending the evening's programme!

FREE PARKING Admission \$10.00 PER PERSON (GST incl.) **CASH BAR**

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 10th. **ANNUAL CHRISTMAS DINNER!**

Venue: **FORT CALGARY**
9th Avenue SE – downtown [DUE EAST of City Centre BEFORE Elbow River bridge]

Gather from 6.30 pm - for a prompt 7.00 pm start. Formal Dinner and entertainment!

FREE **COST to PAID-UP MEMBERS \$35.00 each (GST incl.)** **CASH**
PARKING **NON-MEMBERS \$40.00 each (GST incl.)** **BAR**

THE PLEASURE OF YOUR COMPANY IS REQUESTED - PLEASE NOTE THE DATES!

We've Been Awarded A CASINO
DRAW DATE For February 7, 07

time-slot from the end of June 2007.

Dave Matthews' hard work to secure the Society's recognition by the Alberta Gaming Commission - have finally come to fruition. We have been formally advised of a draw date next year following which an actual Casino Date could occur within a 3-month

Fall NewsLetter Issue – 2006 Calgary Welsh Society

The Casino Date, from which the Society would benefit substantially, could enable us to meet many cultural sponsorship objectives in future years! In the past, we have literally had to scratch around for mere peanuts in order to keep our heads above water without ever having a real ability to embark upon projects enabling us to promote visits by Welsh artists, choirs, sportsmen and personalities - or provide help to deserving Calgarians to enhance their talents in those very same fields!

The achievement of this significant financial opportunity means that **we have to be prepared for the challenge of providing bodies** so as to give operational assistance at the casino assigned to us for our date - that is, **A COMMITMENT INVOLVING TWO SUCCESSIVE DAYS OF CASINO OPERATION ON A 3-SHIFT BASIS!**

Members who may be prepared to assist when this date is awarded are asked to indicate their willingness to participate. As yet, we cannot provide definitive information relating to actual calendar dates, week day or weekend casino slots - except that our objective would be to provide a total of 25 people on each day to cover shift times - **from 10 am to 6 pm, 6 pm to 3 am and 10 pm to 3 am!** **PLEASE PHONE DAVE AT 249-5483 TO SAY YOU ARE INTERESTED** and, if you can, mention any friends (or colleagues) **YOU ARE CERTAIN** would be prepared to help us out!

While there appears to be adequate time between now and June of next year - there is a distinct possibility that our time slot could be advanced! **IMPORTANTLY THEREFORE - WE NEED TO KNOW THE NAMES - OF THOSE WHO COULD BE RELIED UPON TO PARTICIPATE AT THE APPOINTED TIME!**

How Could It Happen It has often been said, 'a little knowledge is a dangerous thing!' - which can be the only reason why the translation into Welsh of a harmless English road sign could have assumed such profound diagnostic proportions for cyclists pedaling the roadway between Penarth and Cardiff! As we are aware, all road signs in Wales must be in both official languages - however, should that task be given to a computer literate (?) council employee (especially one without a proper command of the language spoken in heaven) - you could get the surprise of your life!

So it happened in that part of the Vale of Glamorgan when, what would have been a simple road sign saying 'Cyclists Dismount' - ended up as a much grander instruction bearing the imposing words, 'Llid Y Bledren Dymchwelyd'! Very roughly, 'Bladder Inflammation Overturn' became the 'classic' translation - without mention of a bike or a cyclist - or the latter having to throw a leg over the saddle to get off the confounded thing! [Depending upon the context, 'Llid' could mean *wrath* or *irritation* or *inflammation*: 'Y', simply 'the': 'Bledren', *bladder*: and 'Dymchwelyd', *overthrow* or *upset* or *subvert*]

The above-described idiocy, it seems, resulted from seeking an online translation with the answer going through all review stages without a second thought! Hopefully, a few reputations suffered much more than just wrathful 'irritations'!

Where it all began Researchers documenting the history of the Welsh language have traced it back to the plains of south-west Russia, some 6,000 years ago. An equally intriguing claim also suggests that some 4,500 years after that, the Scottish borders represented the 'cradle' from which our language grew! 'The Journey of the Language' (*Taith yr Iaith*) is a TV programme to be featured on S4C in the 'old country' describing a project that took the researchers to the crossroads of Asia and Europe (between the Caspian and Black Seas) to start their investigations!

Linguistic historians believe the so-called 'Indo-European' group of languages first developed among a tribe of nomadic farmers to eventually spread and give rise to such diverse tongues as Welsh, German and Sanskrit. Some similarities do still remain - as in the word '*dant*' (Welsh for '*tooth*') and '*danta*' the Sanskrit equivalent!

The S4C programme further traces the language's westward journey through Germany before crossing the North Sea into Scotland. The Rhine and Rhone rivers (and, incidentally, the Danube) still bear Celtic names. It is believed that the language first flowered in the hinterland between Glasgow and Leeds during the 6th Century. A Welsh-language poem of that era (*Gododdin*) describes a battle between the early Scots and the early English at Catterick (Yorkshire) - a town still well known for its military heritage. Only after spreading into Scotland did the language eventually make its way to its final destination!

Despite being one of Europe's oldest tongues, the four-part S4C series portrays Welsh as a living language that continues to be vibrant in the 21st Century!

A Guinness for the Joneses On November 3rd next, at the new 1,600-seat Millennium Centre in Cardiff, it is hoped that as many people as possible bearing the 'Jones tag' will be on hand to create a new Guinness World Record - **for the largest ever same-family-name get-together!** The record is currently held in Sweden by the 'Norberg' name that recently took top honours with 583 souls of that ilk being registered in the country's effort for the title! Of course, 'Keeping up with the Joneses' is an unrivalled universal expression - so what possessed the Norbergs' to mistakenly believe they could make a serious challenge? Little did these ill-informed Scandinavians know of the strength of the Jones clan - other than being aware of the two Jones girls in the Canadian curling fraternity! But, the REAL Jones world is much larger than that!

Back where it all began, it is pretty certain that the Norberg 583 number will be knocked into a cocked hat in the Cardiff challenge! Even if the Davies's gathered for that purpose, the same would result - and, in truth, not even the Williams's or the Lewis's or the Thomas's would likely fail to beat the Norberg tally - certainly not in their traditional hunting grounds!

To help break the record, production company *Cwmni Da* (Good Company) will be staging a Joneses extravaganza on S4C. The show, *Jones Jones Jones* will trace the family name through music, dance and comedy with guest appearances by famous Joneses! Leading up to '*THE NIGHT*' - there will be a 5-night 'Jones Tour' of Wales with tour guide and bus driver both appropriately named Jones! The tour starts in Llandudno, continuing on to Conwy, Snowdonia, Beaumaris, Caernarfon,

Fall NewsLetter Issue – 2006

Calgary Welsh Society

Portmeirion - and to the slate quarrying town of Blaenau Ffestiniog where there are more Joneses per capita than in any other town in Britain! The tour goes on to Hay-on-Way on its wye to Pontypridd (pun intended), the Swansea area (lovely Zeta country) - and ends up in the capital city! If you fancy the tour - call Undiscovered Britain toll-free at 1-866-508-8804.

The New Batman - Born In Wales Christian Bale, a child star that successfully made the transition to adulthood in the film world, was born in Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire. He was raised in England, Portugal and in the United States and had his first taste of acting success with a stage debut in Rowan Atkinson's *The Nerd*. After getting a part in a US mini series (*Anastasia: The Mystery of Anna*) he got the lead role as the young hero of the Spielberg film *Empire of the Sun* - where the music theme featured the beautiful Welsh lullaby *Suo Gan*! The film story relates to the WW2 Japanese invasion of Shanghai and its impact upon members of the British diplomatic corps and other Europeans: the separation of families under horrific circumstances: and their struggle to survive during the Japanese occupation of China. The opening scenes of the film take place, prior to the invasion, in a very English church where a boy-soprano member of the church choir sings (in Welsh) the theme's haunting refrain. The well-known John Williams - of *Boston Pops* fame - directed the music!

The new Batman film is not Bale's first role with that Hollywood studio. He was considered for the part of Robin in the 1995 *Batman Forever* production and that of the caped crusader in the *Batman v Superman* film that never made it in 2002!

And The New Maria, too Coincidentally, the part of *Maria* in Andrew Lloyd Webber's London stage revival of *The Sound of Music*, is to be played by Connie Fisher - another talented product of 'Little England beyond Wales'! This 23-year-old from Hayscastle (Pemb.) was voted into the part in a recent BBC1 reality TV show. Two million viewers cast votes in a nation-wide audition for the prized part made famous by (Dame) Julie Andrews. It should be noted her parents, Ted and Barbara Andrews, were well-known Canadian music-hall entertainers in Britain during WW2!

Connie Fisher, a military officer's daughter, was classically trained from the age of 12 and won a full scholarship to Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts from where she graduated with first-class honours! She always dreamt about playing a part like that of 'Maria' and spent the previous couple of years seeking auditions for West End roles - without success! It was a friend who secretly submitted her name to audition for the BBC1 show - and, surprise upon surprise, she suddenly found herself queuing with hundreds of other Maria 'potentials' for the initial audition in Cardiff!

Lloyd Webber had earlier decided to cast Hollywood actress Scarlett Johansson in the principal role but when she backed out he opted to go for an unknown - hence the BBC show. West End veteran Emma Williams will share the role because of the exacting demands of such a stage production - scheduled to feature eight shows a week for an indefinite span of time!

Improved Welsh Rail Services An improved passenger train service has helped bridge Wales' notorious North-South divide. Last year, *Arriva Trains Wales* introduced the best-ever rail service between Holyhead and Cardiff with a 2-hourly daily schedule in both directions! Another recently introduced 'Arriva' service also provides an hourly (each-way) daily schedule between Carmarthen, Swansea and Cardiff!

Resulting traffic patterns, on both runs (and in both directions) have shown significant improvement but there are still a few rough spots to be straightened out - like the need for newer rolling stock and (at times) cleaner toilet facilities (what else is new - eh, ex-UK fellow railway commuters?) - and a more aggressive promotion of the services by the operating company!

Visits by North-Walians, especially by school children to the Welsh Assembly in Cardiff: or by patrons to the Wales Millennium Centre entertainment complex: or by rugby and other sporting enthusiasts to Millennium stadium - such excursions are very popular on both routes! A by-product of the North-South venture is a better service for Wrexham and the north Wales coastal towns! Obviously, the Principality has become a much smaller place due to these innovations!

More Genealogy Data From a recent visit to the UK, member Margaret Kuyt brought back a wealth of information relating to where her life began in that part of the world. She is from Hirwaun and maintains a close interest in the history of the area that closely borders on to the Neath Valley, Merthyr Tydfil and Rhondda Valleys. Interestingly, and a sign of the times perhaps, the literature she acquired mentioned many useful Websites and E-mail addresses for a number of local *Family History Societies* (f h s). They are listed below for your information:

www.rootsweb.com www.familyrecords.gov.uk www.genesreunited.co.uk

www.ancestry.com www.heritagehunters-wales.co.uk

www.bbc.co.uk/wales/southeast/sites/familyhistory

aberdare@glamfhs.info

pontypridd@glamfhs.info (includes Rhondda Valleys)

library@merthyr.gov.btinternet.com

Yet another source of assistance has materialized that is available through www.welshfamilyhistory.co.uk. Greg Howes and his wife operate this site in Llandeilo - specializing in Carmarthenshire and West Glamorgan family and local history. Greg teaches on the subject for the local Council and is a qualified (Oxford educated) Local Historian. He has appeared on all six episodes of the 'Family Detectives' programme on *Radio Carmarthen* and *Radio Pembrokeshire*!

Once - Iron Capital of the World In the historical literature Margaret found on her trip, a brochure about Merthyr Tydfil caught the eye. Legend has it that Merthyr Tydfil was named after a 5th Century princess named Tydfil, a daughter of the Chieftain Brycheiniog (Brecknock) - who died in prayer as pagans battled to take over the town.

Fall NewsLetter Issue – 2006 Calgary Welsh Society

Within the UK, Merthyr has since become better known as one of the most significant towns of the Industrial Revolution - a period that brought wealth and power to South Wales the likes of which it had never seen before! But Merthyr also experienced the cruel 'other' side of that coin by becoming a notoriously depressed area during the infamous 'Thirties' - when its traditional industries, coal and iron ore mining related, failed to sustain the local economy!

However, the past jewels of Merthyr's historical crown remain very much in evidence - the old Iron Age forts overlooking the valley; the Cyfarthfa and Ynysfach ironworks; Cyfarthfa Castle, the extravagant home of the Crawshays - the most powerful family ever known in the town; the restored Chapel Row, some of the original row houses built by the iron baron for his key workers - one of them once being the home of Dr. Joseph Parry, composer of 'Myfanwy'! Even farther back in time, the nearby football ground happened to be the site of a Roman fortress!

Merthyr Tydfil received its Royal Charter and Incorporation in 1905! (A memorable year for the Province of Alberta too!)

Actor Kenneth Griffith This well-known performer and film director died in June of this year at the age of 84. He will best be remembered as a character actor who often portrayed eccentric Welsh roles. A native of Tenby, (there seems to be no getting away from Pembrokeshire people in this NewsLetter) Griffith also had the reputation of being a frustrated maker of radical films with many axes to grind! Often outspoken, he once declared it was obscene for Sir Laurence Olivier to be paid a thousand times more for a performance than other actors - because he could not possibly be worth it! Typically, he took unkindly to the fact that impresario Lew Grade (also the one-time head of the ATV commercial television channel) suppressed his documentary about Irish republican leader Michael Collins - because the 'cowardly so and sos' of the Independent Broadcasting Authority believed the film could inflame passions in Ulster!

Griffiths grew up in hard circumstances; abandoned by his parents, he was raised by a grandfather, a poor stonemason. He went to local council and grammar schools and was an intensely lonely person. At the age of 16 he became an actor at the Festival Theatre, Cambridge; was called up to serve in the RAF at the outbreak of hostilities in 1939 and spent some time training in Thunder Bay. Post war, he joined the Old Vic theatre company where he turned out performances that made him a reliable supporting actor in many distinguished British films - *Lucky Jim (1957)*, *A Night to Remember (1958)*, *Only Two Can Play (1962 - with Peter Sellers sporting a wonderful Swansea accent)* and *Very Annie Mary (2001)* amongst a host of others!

For Canadians, he is best known for his part as the unsympathetic school inspector in the 1977 movie version of Max Braithwaite's *Why Shoot the Teacher?* During his stay in Canada at that time, he was featured in a radio interview with Betty Kennedy and voiced his protest to Canadians about the banning of his documentary on Michael Collins. The show brought a phone call to CFRB Toronto from an irate Irishman - who threatened to show up at the radio station and beat him up!

In his boyhood, Kenneth Griffith played rugby at halfback and, in later life, loved to support the Welsh national team. He was described as, 'an enthusiastic, impossibly idealistic, explosive individual who never wanted to age into conformity - but always sought to challenge and provoke!' He was thrice married and is survived by five children. What a character!

Society Weddings It is our pleasure to bring to your attention the two notable events that took place during the summer.

Both Susan Drayson and Laura Styler chose to forsake their maiden statuses in favour of the blissful way of life that can only be fulfilled by matrimony! Susan returned to Ontario where she and Don Petker exchanged vows - since when both have taken up residence in our fair city! So, Don, a sincere welcome to Calgary is extended to you as well!

Laura and fellow member Steve Jones did likewise at Lake Louise - and only a few days after our August choral concert!

The Calgary Welsh Society therefore extends its very best wishes to both happy couples!

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THE DATES
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**Saturday, October 21, 2006
and
Sunday, December 10, 2006**