

**CYMDEITHAS GYMREIG
CALGARY**
CALGARY WELSH SOCIETY



APRIL - 2008
NEWSLETTER ISSUE

The Society Executive for our 102nd Year.

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SPRING MEETING – AGM on SATURDAY APRIL 26 – IRISH CULTURAL CENTRE, 6452-35 AVENUE NW - 6.30 PM Members are respectfully reminded about this important annual get-together to set the scene on our management and activities over the ensuing year. **Snack foods will be provided along with the usual bar facilities with few formalities to interfere with the enjoyment of an entertaining evening. Cost \$10 per person!**

TC & GS – 2 in 4 For the benefit of the yet uninitiated (if any) this heading draws attention to the recent Welsh rugby **TRIPLE CROWN & GRAND SLAM** accomplishments and to their achievement **TWICE IN FOUR YEARS!** It appears that Welsh rugby is now back where it belongs - at least at the very top of the European ranking and anxious to redeem itself in the eyes of the rugby world! Amazing, really, following a disappointing 2007 World Cup and, soon afterwards, an inglorious defeat in Cardiff at the hands of South Africa the surprising '07 W.C. victors!

In the reality of it all, very little would appear to have changed in Welsh rugby except for the new team coaches installed by the WRU (the governing body of Welsh rugby) who were quickly able to transform a bunch of talented young players into a team of potential world-beaters! All are to be congratulated on a job well done! Throughout the competition never was the outcome of any one 6-Nations game in any doubt with, notably, the second half of every game showing the Welsh XV's superior talent and fitness! VCR recordings are available of each of these encounters should anyone wish to borrow - so as to again bask in the glory of each exciting victory!

In the still ongoing **Heiniken** competition between clubs from five European countries, no Welsh club succeeded further than the quarter final stage - the (Neath/Swansea) **Ospreys** being soundly beaten by the **Saracens** (London) club, surprisingly, and the **Cardiff Blues** likewise falling convincingly to a strong **Toulouse** side. In the **Magners League**, a Celtic competition involving Scottish, Irish and Welsh club sides, the **Cardiff Blues** are the leading Welsh club in a competition that will extend well into the month of May. Not to be outdone, English club sides have not been ignored - a **Guinness** sponsored league serving their parochial competitive interests!

Yet another sporting fact (soon to become a piece of Welsh history) is the decision to convert **Stradey Park**, Llanelli's world renowned 'cathedral of rugby', into a new housing development. Contractor **Taylor Wimpey** has purchased the land for some \$50 million - \$30 million of which the Llanelli club has allocated to a new stadium planned jointly with the local authority for the Pemberton district, on the opposite (or Gorseinon) side of town. The initial business plan was for the rugby region to move debt-free into its new home - but, planning delays and land disputes incurred additional costs. The **Scarlets** will carry a debt approaching \$6 million into the new stadium! South Wales civil construction company **Andrew Scott** anticipates project completion in December of

this year! A state-of-the-art arena for 16,000 fans will have a horseshoe curvature for better viewing plus a bar and restaurant!

JUST LIKE THAT These three words represented a catch phrase attributed to entertainer **Tommy Cooper**, a person few Brits realize to be of Welsh birth! Recently (an appreciable time after his death in 1984) he became recognised, historically (and physically) as a giant among stand-up comedians when a 9ft bronze statue was unveiled in his honour in Caerphilly, his home town! None other than Oscar-winning actor **Sir Anthony Hopkins**, a self-confessed 'Cooperholic', was the principal celebrant who had flown from California to delight the 2,000 fans gathered in 'Cheesetown' for the occasion. Complete with the trademark red fez and with a number of classic Cooper routines Sir Anthony, in true style, impersonated the supreme clown that Tommy Cooper was. He added he was personally delighted to be unveiling a statue commemorating not just one of his own heroes but one of the greatest comics of all time! Certainly, those of us who vividly remember his unique brand of humour would agree!

BRITISH PENSIONS If you qualify to receive one, you should be made aware of the unadvertised scheme available to enhance its value and also find out why its value is frozen if you choose to reside in Canada? The **British Pensioners Association of Western Canada** is a lobby group that addresses the inequities adversely affecting British pensions to many Canadians and landed immigrants who once worked in the UK! It may also be of interest to learn if you happened to be a citizen of the United States your British pension would increase annually with inflation! As an example, an elderly Canadian widow in receipt of a British pension for 30 years would still only receive an unadjusted \$40 weekly - while another living in the USA, who had made identical contributions, would receive \$180 each week! Anyone wishing to follow up on this issue should contact the B.P Association of Western Canada at 245-8541 or at expats@britishpensioners.com.

HMCS SWANSEA This was a WW2 Canadian '**River**' class frigate that sank four German U-boats during the Battle of the Atlantic. A model of the ship happens to be an exhibit at the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa - so an observant member of our society recently found out. Also known as **K 328**, the vessel was built at Yarrow's Esquimalt shipyards - the keel laid in July 1942 and the vessel launched five months later. She was first commissioned in October 1943 and decommissioned at the end of hostilities in November 1945. With the Korean conflict that followed WW2, **HMCS Swansea** was re-called into active service and re-commissioned as a '**Prestonian**' class frigate, Pennant # 306, in November 1957. She was finally de-commissioned in October 1966!

We are indebted to Keith Coulson for this information that also happens to relate to his own hometown - as well as giving him the opportunity to remind us of another Swansea coincidence that relates to the **Munich Air Disaster** of 50 years ago! A Swansea lad, **Kenny Morgan** by name and one of five remaining survivors of that tragedy, was a guest of honour at a Manchester United game earlier this year that commemorated the anniversary!

PRINCE MADOG'S PLAQUE In 1953 a plaque commemorating the theory of a Welsh prince and his followers being the first Europeans to set foot on the North American continent was erected by a branch of **The Daughters of the American Revolution** at the original spot on Mobile Point, Alabama, where these early explorers were supposed to have come ashore! The plaque read, "**In memory of Prince Madog, a Welsh explorer, who landed on the shores of Mobile Bay in 1170 and left behind, with the Indians, the Welsh language**". For some reason the Alabama Parks Department saw fit to remove the marker from its location which also happened to be in an area known (since the early 1800s) as **Fort Morgan** - a name also with a buccaneering Welsh association! Now, of course, the entire continent is in apparent uproar with petitions galore bombarding the unfortunate APD who, with today's inevitable tendency to over indulge in the achievement of political correctness, even an undertone of ethnic prejudice has also seen fit to rear its ugly head! But, in the excitement, are we chasing shadows and ill-founded myths - or did Prince Madog actually get there and, in so doing, was his influence sufficient to convert the native population to the virtues of the Welsh tongue? It is an absorbing story with hints of reality also appearing from other regions of the 'deep south'. Quoting a one-time

Tennessee governor **John Sevier**, Cherokee Indians believed a people called '**Welsh**' had built a fort (in **Fort Mountain State Park, Georgia**) to repel Indian attacks!

A lecture tour of Canada and the U.S.A. by **Howard Kimberley** of Builth Wells, Powys, a leading Prince Madog authority, is planned for the autumn of 2009 and seeks our interest in its local promotion. Presently, a 2008 **Welsh History/Culture Tour** has already been arranged by Mr. Kimberley over a 15 day period (starting in Cardiff on June 25) with a stop at **St. Fagan's Museum of Welsh Life**. This particular visit will feature details of proposed DNA research designed to provide indisputable proof of the Prince Madog theory. At St. Fagan's it will be hosted by **Professor Bernard Knight** (latterly Britain's foremost Forensic Pathologist) and will involve the participation of Welsh DNA expert, **Jane Goodwin**. In due course perhaps - the truth about Prince Madog may be revealed!

KIWANIS MUSIC FESTIVAL In the annual Calgary event that took place from February 25th to March 17th this year, Megan Duckett (18-year-old grand-daughter of Tony and Kit) competed successfully in 5 singing categories and obtained **Excellent** ratings in four of them with a **Superior** rating in the fifth. Megan won a gold medal in the **Light Operatic** classification and was awarded a scholarship on the strength of it! Her **Sacred Solo** choice for the competition was sung in Welsh - obviously the result of some outstanding coaching by her **Aber** trained Mamgu! Interestingly, competition in the last two years has seen the introduction of the harp in the instrumental section as a result of influence exerted by Mount Royal College Conservatory instructor Gianetta Baril. Apparently, harp costs typically range between \$4,000 (for a small one) to \$35,000 for a large concert type - making it almost a prohibitive consideration in comparison with most other popular instruments found in the home environment!

With our Society's new found wealth, would not an active endeavour in the encouragement of young talent - singers, musicians and other promising artists - now offer a commendable future interest and commitment to us?

2008 TOM JONES TOUR The other Pontypridd 'native son of renown' known to the Calgary community is on a tour of western Canada in June. **Appearing in Edmonton at the Northern Alberta JUBILEE Auditorium on June 3rd, the Red Deer CENTRUM on June 4th and, the JACK SINGER Concert Hall here in Calgary on June 6th**. Despite the fact, as with most of us, Tom's getting on a bit these days, he remains a top class entertainer! The only difference now is that the panty throwing fans of his earlier years may find the gesture a little more difficult to execute when also having to be in control of their 'walkers' at the same time! Whatever happened to his old mate, Humperdink?

YESTERDAY'S WELSH ALBERTANS The **Historical Society of Alberta's** Conference and AGM this year is being held at the Red Deer Lodge on the weekend of May 16 - 18 where the Saturday key events recall the exploits of renowned Canadian explorer, David Thompson - with specific reference to his activities in central Alberta. While notice of the conference may be late to meet participation interest and registration deadlines (April 26) it should be mentioned that attendance is open to non-members of the Historical Society. Of note is the fact that, over the last two years, \$3 million has been spent on the re-development of the **Rocky Mountain House National History** site scheduled to be re-opened on Saturday, May 17th. David Thompson, born in London to Welsh parents, joined the Hudson Bay Company in his late youth and made his name as a map-maker and as the very first European to explore the Bow and Red Deer River basins from a fortified trading post he established at Rocky Mountain House.

A second notable Welsh/Canadian was Leonard W. Brockington, a past president of the **St. David's Society of Calgary** and, upon leaving the area, given the title of Honorary President of that Calgary society. Through the efforts of Dave Matthews and his particular interest and initiative regarding things historical, we are now aware that a noted Calgary lawyer, Edward M. Bredin QC (now retired), has been working on a Brockington biography for some time and which, by his reckoning, is now about 75% done. In the Winter 2008 issue of **Alberta**

History, Mr. Bredin contributed an article on 'Brock' (as he was familiarly known) and drew particular attention to the man's impressive writings and speech talent referring to him as 'Calgary's Silver Tongued Orator' with a reputation as Canada's greatest orator to the time of his death in 1966. L. W. Brockington, born in Cardiff, arrived in Calgary as a young man, articulated with the old law firm of **Lougheed and Bennett** and served as city solicitor from 1922 to 1935.

A 50/50 CHANCE FOR BOTH In two vastly different sporting spheres involving Welsh interests, the next few weeks may see the ascendancy of the Principality's talents to the realms of middleweight boxing and the FA Cup!

In international boxing an encounter in Las Vegas on April 19 will see a championship middleweight bout between **Bernard Hopkins** and **Joe Calzaghe!** Who is the Welshman in this matchup you may ask, eh? Joe Calzaghe of course - a Taff with a mid-European 'handle' pitted against an Afro-American with the name, probably, of a disreputable old Welsh slave master! In other words, the father of one had a chain driven bike - while the other's forebears had no option other than to travel by boat in chains! What a confusing world we appear to live in these days! Since 1997 unbeaten southpaw Joe Calzaghe of Newbridge has held three middleweight titles and has a 7 year age advantage over his 43 year-old opponent! In this 50/50 combat - hopefully Joe will come out on top!

The second challenge, to take place mid-May, will be **Cardiff City's** attempt to beat **Portsmouth** at the new Wembley Stadium in the much coveted **2008 FA Cup!** This will very much be a David and Goliath story where a **First Division** soccer team (Cardiff, aka 'Bluebirds') has been matched against an established **Premier Division** (Portsmouth aka 'Pompey') side! Such unequal competition is not unusual in the FA Cup so its outcome may remain very much a 50/50 affair. That fateful day, may there be bluebirds on high other than on the white cliffs of Dover! At this moment though, all is not well back in the valleys where controversy reigns supreme as to whether '**Hen Wlad fy'n Nhadau**' will be or should be sung at Wembley! Welsh sports minister Rhodri Glyn Thomas insists that such a courtesy should be paid to the visiting team from Wales. The Cardiff Club disagrees - believing the Football Association protocol of the occasion should prevail - whatever that means! Of course there is a big difference between being a soccer club from Wales and being a Welsh soccer club! One wonders these days, with so many foreigners seen in English football if '**God Save the Queen**' even would be an appropriate anthem to sing?

OUR FORGETFUL '07 MEMBERS So far, and now well into 2008, some **THIRTEEN** past memberships **HAVE NOT YET BEEN RENEWED** - DESPITE BEING SENT STAMPED ADDRESSED ENVELOPES to jog their memories and ease their burdens! Is it a again a 50/50 chance that these members are either with non-existent filing systems or are lumbered with systems so secure that they are unable to retrieve the paperwork they seek? Come on good people, if you do not yet possess a 2008 membership card **PLEASE CONTACT ELAINE** to remedy your deficiency! Elaine's address is: **# 603 – 10 DISCOVERY RIDGE HILL SW, CALGARY, AB., T3H 5X2. YOUR KIND ATTENTION IS SOLICITED!**

We regret to inform members of the recent untimely passing of **Derek Lewis** at the age of 80 years on March 20th following heart surgery. Derek, Mumbles born and a graduate of UC Swansea, had been a teacher for 45 years - in Wales, the Sudan, Ghana, Nigeria and Canada. Apart from his involvement with our Society, he was a Life member of Lions International and had been an active rugby player in his younger days with Mumbles RFC and latterly, a supporter of the Calgary Irish. He will be missed by all who knew him! The Society extends its sympathies to son Colin and daughters Carolynne and Janet and their families.