

CYMDEITHAS GYMREIG CALGARY

CALGARY WELSH SOCIETY



MID-NOVEMBER – 2008

NEWSLETTER ISSUE

Society Executive for 2008

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All local phone numbers are now 10-digit. Please use the 403 Area Code when calling any of the above numbers!

PEIDIWCH A ANGHOFIO - DON'T FORGET

CINIO NADOLIG - SUNDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2008 - CHRISTMAS DINNER

The pleasure of your company is requested at FORT CALGARY, 9th AVENUE SE downtown, where there will be ample FREE PARKING. A CASH BAR will be available plus appropriate entertainment for your enjoyment. DINNER COST is STILL \$35.00 each for MEMBERS and \$40.00 for Non-members! Pay at the door! YOUR FIRM COMMITMENT IS REQUIRED BY DECEMBER 7th. YOUR PROMISES WILL BE NOTED by our phoning committee so, regardless of weather - DO MAKE A SPECIAL EFFORT TO ATTEND! COCKTAILS @ 6.30 pm / DINNER @ 7.00 pm.

SENIORS' TEA-PARTY The *DOVE'S NEST* at *Glenmore Landing* did an outstanding job of hosting this well attended (one-time regular Society) event on September 21st. Forty-one party-goers' enjoyed a well presented menu of tea-time delicacies that even included 'Welsh Cakes'! *Wayne Davies* presided and gave an inimitable address that related to our ever-apparent ethnic modesty despite significant contribution to the development of our adopted Canadian homeland! The Society is indebted to *Elaine Westlake* who did the 'leg work' for the get-together!

2009 MEMBERSHIPS The Society's 103rd year commences at the turn of the present one and, as all members will realise, membership periods extend from January 1st to December 31st each year! Accordingly a *Membership Renewal Form* is again enclosed for your attention WITH a *Stamped/Addressed/Envelope* for your convenience! *Canada Post* plan to 'UP' POSTAL COSTS in the New Year - so save *EVEN MORE* money by RENEWING PROMPTLY!

A POET FROM PONTY The town of *Pontypridd* - apart from producing bridge builders, pop singers, top lawyers, geographers and national anthem composers - can also add the words '*National Poet of Wales recipient*' to its honour roll. *Gwynedd Lewis*, a maiden of the parish and a successful author, became the first to be awarded that title! She was brought up in a thoroughly Welsh environment - first language, home tongue and Welsh language comprehensive school secondary education and was bilingually proficient from an early age. She graduated from *Girton College (Cambridge)* in 1978, the very last year it was solely a women's domain! From her own words, describing her college life, she was obviously 'quite a lad(y)' - spending her time mostly socialising, drinking, talking and cooking! She knew many students at the adjacent *Pembroke College* (including boy-friends) and mentioned falling in love had become a full time activity. She even took an obvious 'pride of accomplishment' in her ability to scale the back wall of that particular seat of learning - when necessary! Poetry was not an interest during those student days although having written a lot at school it had become something of a daunting task because of other more compelling academic interests. When she first entered Cambridge University she found it to be quite a

culture shock - she had never before met anyone who spoke with a so called 'posh' English accent that she and her school friends always jokingly mimicked. Later, doing her *D.Phil* at **Oxford University** she wrote her doctorate thesis on the subject of literary forgeries - because Wales had produced the best forger in the business in the person of **Edward Williams** (aka **Iolo Morgannwg**) whom she greatly admired. He had earned this dubious distinction from his forgings of eighteenth-century bardic rituals. Coincidentally, **Ms. Lewis** was herself elected to the *Gorsedd of Bards* quite recently and is author of a number of books including *Chaotic Angels* and *Zero Gravity* (also turned into a BBC documentary) and a non-fiction work, *Sunbathing in the Rain*, a supposedly 'cheerful' book on depression!

IOLO MORGANNWG Having mentioned him in the previous story it would be appropriate to learn a little more about this man! A poet and antiquary, **Edward Williams** (1747-1826) was born in *Llancarfan* near *Cowbridge* in the *Vale of Glamorgan*. While working there as a stone mason for the greater part of his life he also became a poet in both Welsh and English languages. With connections to 18th Century radicalism, he mingled its ideas with romantic exaltations of the Welsh past and of established neo-Druidic cults and celebrations practiced in Wales at that time. He published collected poems purportedly composed by **Dafydd ap Gwilym** in the 14th Century which, in fact, were his own works. A brilliant forger in that field, his deceptions outlived his own era and helped significantly in the revival of Welsh culture! He became a noted figure in his community and had the distinction of holding the first *Gorsedd* ceremony, *Gorsedd Beirdd Ynys Prydain* (Bardic Circle of the Isle of Britain), in 1792 at *Primrose Hill, London*! Morgannwg's philosophy represented a fusion of Christian and Arthurian influences comparable to those of **William Blake** and the Scottish poet (and forger) **James MacPherson**. One of his pet peeves, also, was a dedication to the conviction that the Welshness of the South, particularly in his home region of Glamorgan, equalled the purest survival of Welsh traditions - popularly attributed to the North Wales region of the Principality!

YET ANOTHER MORGAN This one again from **Morgannwg** (*Glamorgan*) in the person of **Rhodri Morgan**, First Minister of the Welsh Assembly - and Leader of the *Welsh Labour Party*. Since most of us have been out of touch with Welsh and UK politics for a long time, we probably know little of the people who may now dominate that political arena. **Rhodri Morgan** is Cardiff born, educated at *Whitchurch Grammar School, Oxford University* and then gaining his final credentials, his Masters Degree in political science, at *Harvard University*. He was urged to enter UK politics by **Professor Samuel Beer**, a leading American commentator on British life who was also a prominent '*Democrat intellectual*'. He advised young Morgan that the Labour Party needed people like him and it was his duty to get stuck in to it - to not teach politics but to do it! Prior to his *Welsh Assembly* election in 1999, Mr. Morgan had been the MP for *Cardiff West* for 13 years. His wife is now MP for *Cardiff North* at Westminster.

AND EVEN ANOTHER ONE A recent '*Globe and Mail*' obituary reported the passing of **William (Bill) Austin Morgan** at his Hamilton, Ont. home. Bill Morgan was from *Blaengarw*, Glamorgan, and came to Canada in 1953 to settle in the Ottawa area. A metallurgist by profession, he was the first from his village to earn a university degree - a BSc. at *UC Cardiff* which he later followed with a *D.Phil* at *St. Catherine's College, Cambridge*. An avid rugby fan it was partly due to his enthusiasm and initiative that Ottawa got its first rugby team, **The Bytown Beavers** - a name derived from that of a local hostelry, the *Bytown Inn*! The Ottawa club continues today as the *Beavers Rugby Club*!

WHO WERE WE Continuing in an historic vein, if you believed that we Celts originated in west-central Europe during the Iron Age - from Germany, Austria and eastern France due to evidence that Celtic languages were spoken there and from similarities in place names and people's names - you may now have to revise your thoughts! According to the *University of Wales, Centre for Advanced Welsh & Celtic Studies* (in the UC Aberystwyth campus), it now appears that we can trace our ancestry to the general area of the Iberian Peninsula thereby debunking that old belief! Evidence now exists in both Spain and Portugal that Celts were there some 500 years before the beginning of the Iron Age. One key piece of evidence is that the earliest written language of Western Europe,

Tartessian, has been found inscribed on stones in the countries of Portugal and Spain. The inscriptions dated back to between 800BC and 400BC and have been deciphered as being Celtic in origin. Supporting this evidence, history and archaeology experts from UC Bangor say there are also biological and genetic markers from a number of DNA studies to indicate that the population of much of the western part of the British Isles is related to other communities bordering the Atlantic - including Brittany, northern Spain, Portugal and the French Atlantic coast!

FAREWELL STRADEY A proud chapter of Welsh rugby history came to an end on October 24th when the 'final whistle' blew at **Stradey Park, Llanelli**, after nearly 130 years of operation! There was a heightened sense of occasion about the evening as fans circled the ground and filled local pubs hours before the official closing ceremony which, among other celebrations, featured a showing of the famous **Scarlets** victory over **New Zealand** in 1972. As was reported in an earlier newsletter, the once historic site has been sold to facilitate a local housing development. A new 15,000 seat stadium, **Parc y Scarlets**, is now ready for business on the opposite side of town!

HELLO TROUBLE Now that the sport of Rugby Union has entered the professional ranks inevitably, it seems, problems quickly emerge to accompany such a change! In promoting the *Millennium Stadium* development, the *Welsh Rugby Union (the WRU)*, parent body of Welsh rugby) incurred a huge debt which, happily for them, the popularity of the new stadium for a multitude of other sports and entertainment events has largely eliminated their financial discomfort. However, the regionalisation of the game in Wales (and done with the full support of the WRU) has introduced another dimension into the oval ball equation! A battle between the WRU and its four affiliated regional clubs (**Cardiff Blues**, Neath and Swansea **Ospreys**, Llanelli **Scarlets** and Newport Gwent **Dragons**) ended up in the high court to resolve an issue because regional clubs were refusing to release key players to meet national squad training demands. **Judge Havelock Allan QC** ruled in favour of the WRU ensuring that players selected for the Wales 32-man autumn Test squad would be released for training. A dilemma for the regional clubs is that they also happen to be involved in other very demanding high-profile competitions, associated high player salaries, new stadium plans and costs plus the burden of extensive travel expenses - as incurred for the *EDF Energy Cup* (between English & Welsh clubs), *Magners League* (Celtic clubs) and the *Heineken* (European) competitions. In addition to international and regional demands it must be realised that all the involved quality players also belong to long-established town and city rugby clubs to whom they also have obligations! It would be unfortunate if the new rugby regimes were to adversely impact upon star players and the achievement of favourable results in international competition! The **FOUR November** international fixtures, on the **8th (South Africa)**, the **14th (Canada)**, the **22nd (New Zealand)** and the **29th (Australia)** - will surely provide an answer!

PSYCHIC HAUNTINGS As the *Globe and Mail* recently reported, were it not for a back-breaking, drunken fall off a Welsh castle wall, award winning Canadian author **Tristan Hughes** may never have penned his first novel! Born in *Atikokan*, a small town in northern Ontario, at the age of 4 **Tristan Hughes** moved with his parents and a sister to Wales where his father was born. For the next 10 years he regularly returned to Canada on 3-month summer trips - but it was the Welsh landscape that comforted him most and influenced his writings! His recent novel, *Revenant*, is the first to be published in Canada but, like his previous novels, *The Tower* and *Send My Old Bones Home*, the setting is in Anglesey where he still lives. The word 'revenant' means something or someone who comes back to haunt you as related in that story where three childhood friends return to the island (*Ynys Fôn*) some 10 years after one of their friends was involved in a drowning tragedy! Mr. Hughes explains there are 'psychic geographies' connected to one's imagination and they charge it! Wales he admits to being under his fingernails while northern Ontario is also under his skin or in his blood! The next novel will be set in a northern Ontario town because of its connection with his childhood - childhood being something that transfixes many writers! *Beaumaris Castle* on the Isle of Anglesey was where he came to grief - on an edifice, he remarked, 'built by the English to keep out the Welsh' in the 12th Century. With regard to his own accident, it is something that obviously still works, he believes!

ALMA MAMGU A little play on words - to use the *Alma Mater* phrase in the context of the granddaughter of one of our members choosing to follow in grandmother's (*Mamgu's*) academic footsteps. *Alison Duckett*, granddaughter of members *Tony and Kit* plans to complete her education at *UC Aberystwyth* and is set upon taking a condensed 2-year law degree course (for graduates) at *Aber*. *Alison*, from *Powell River B.C.*, got her initial degree at *Victoria University*. She taught English in Russia for a year and then decided on a vocational change! Welsh colleges, especially in the pursuit of law degrees, are popular with Calgary students to our knowledge where *Aber*, in particular, has an enviable reputation in that field! Good luck *Alison* - another honest lawyer in the making, eh!

Y TY DAN Y SER (*The House Under the Stars*) The *St. David's Welsh Society of Edmonton* is playing its part in recognising a particular influence (that of *Welsh culture*) and its contribution to western Canada's history and development. In showcasing it, the Edmonton Society embarked upon a project which also recognized *David Thompson's* unique exploration and map-making exploits at the turn of the 18th century. Appropriately, in 2007, to commemorate the bicentennial of *David ap Thomas's* most famous journey through the *Rocky Mountains*, *David Thompson House* was erected at the *University of Alberta's Devonian Botanical Gardens*. The cultural, historical and horticultural elements of the project were designed to provide a significant addition to the *DBG* and, when complete, would provide an opportunity for tourists (and all Albertans) to gain a wealth of knowledge in those three spheres of interest. Visitors to the garden would not only learn about *David Thompson's* work - but also about botanical specimens, crops and animals, all part of the *Welsh heritage* scene! The *DBG* is a perfect setting for the cottage and garden and will be open throughout the spring, summer and fall seasons - with easy access (and available transportation) for school groups and senior citizens. The project has been a major undertaking for the *Edmonton Society* where project costs have exceeded \$140,000. A matching grant from the *Community Facility Enhancement Program* was also obtained for the project. The *Edmonton Society* has also made a commitment to assist with the long-term maintenance of the site! *Da iawn, Edmonton! The facility opens in mid-May, 2009!*

FUTURE PLANS Work is underway on a number of projects envisaged for next year! (1) Our *2009 St. David's Day* function is already booked for the *Blackfoot Inn, 5540 Blackfoot Trail SE, Saturday, February 28th*. Please note the date! (2) Regrettably, a sponsored stage event involving Vancouver actor *Russ Roberts* (for late October/early November 2008, at the *U of C*) had to be cancelled. (3) Volunteers are required to be delegates at the next *North American Gymanfa Ganu* in late August 2009. The Society will provide some financial assistance to accepted attendees. If anyone is interested, please make your name known to our secretary a.s.a.p. (4) *CWRS MADOG July 19-26, 2009*. The Society will provide financial assistance for those wishing to attend this *Welsh Language* course at the *U of A* campus at *Camrose*. Interested persons should make their names known to *Alun Lewis* a.s.a. possible so that applications can be submitted in a timely manner! (5) What about *Max Boyce* paying Calgary a visit? This possibility is in the process of being explored! (6) The planned Society initiative of a Calgary visit by the '*Tri Tenors*' Welsh vocal group is now tentatively scheduled for *August 2009*. Concert appearances at other Alberta locations need to be fixed to make the visit worthwhile! A firm commitment by the Edmonton Society, at least, is sought!

Those with ideas on how we could better make our presence and culture known in Calgary NEED TO SPEAK UP!

A COSTLY SENATE EDIFICE The *Welsh Senate* building in *Cardiff Bay*, it appears, has cost millions more than estimated - many millions more in fact! But these days, what else is new? In 1997 the final project cost was estimated at a mere \$25 million which, upon final delivery in 2006, had escalated by almost a factor of six - to a horrendous \$140m total! If that is the price these days for an iconic landmark, anyone who has recently visited the *Cardiff Bay* area will find its transformation a source of great pride! Gone is the old and questionably 'romantic' *Tiger Bay* image and no longer evident is its associated dusty dock scene dominated by towering coal handling facilities! Finally a very new Bay area complements an image that the Welsh capital city's renowned administrative centre always proudly displayed to locals and visitors alike. This represents a tremendous achievement in our time!