

CYMDEITHAS GYMREIG CALGARY

CALGARY WELSH SOCIETY

APRIL - 2009

NEWSLETTER ISSUE

#### EXECUTIVE

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The Society mourns the recent passing of Peggy Loney at the age of 92 years following a lengthy illness. Born in Llandovery, Dyfed, Peggy volunteered with the London Ambulance Service and acted as a driver and paramedic during the horrendous years of the London blitz. At war's end she left the UK for Calgary with her young daughter to be reunited with her soldier and artist husband, Gordon! Over so many years, Peggy was a staunch member of the Society and delighted in wearing her traditional Welsh costume at our functions. She was last able to attend a meeting some 10 years ago at the very outset of her battle with the dreaded Alzheimer ailment that struck her so unkindly! The Calgary Welsh Society extends its deepest sympathy to daughter Anne Walker, son David - and their families! Peggy's enthusiasm and support will be sorely missed!

**WELSH FILM NIGHT** 38 members attended the Fort Calgary theatre facility for this essentially social event. The business end of the meeting covered the review and formal approval of the Society's *2008 Financial Statements*.

**DYDD GWYL DEWI 2009** The annual dinner celebration on the evening of February 28 at the *Blackfoot Inn* was an outstanding success attended by 75 members and friends! Congratulations are due to all who contributed to its organisation and participated in the customary formalities! In particular, we are indebted to our *President* and *Vice-President* for their efforts; to member *Graham (Wrightson) of Monmouth*, for appropriately toasting our abstemious honouree in *Adam's Ale*; to guest speaker, *Peter Sherrington*, the *eagle-eyed Man of Kent*, *'Who soared up to Aber UC as a young man and ultimately alighted as a Welshman'*, and not least, to the talented *Megan Duckett* and her accompanist for their delightful song presentation! *Cledwyn Haydn-Jones* led the gathering in the singing of the National Anthems. Special mention must also be made of a unique artwork donation to the Society by long time member, artist *Barry Marks*. The work, an attractive silk screening, was raffled during the evening - the lucky winner being *Lillian Cutts*, a Society friend! *Barry's* generous gesture is greatly appreciated!

**GUEST ADDRESS** *Peter Sherrington* is an authority on the eagles found in Alberta and has the distinction of being the first to identify the massive eagle migrations that take place every spring and fall on the front ranges of our *Rockies*. He monitors these movements from his home in the *Crows Nest Pass*. Regarding the eagle population in Wales, his observations were that those found in *Snowdonia* and other mountainous areas were probably of the *White-tailed* species and not *Golden Eagles* - historical descriptions seeming to support this view with evidence also suggesting the Welsh eagle population was eradicated some two centuries ago. Eagles identified in more recent times could have been migrating *Irish* ones and again, of the *White-tailed* variety! While the Welsh name for *Snowdon* happens to be *'Eryri'* and that for 'eagle', the word, *'eryr'* - various authorities now argue it is unlikely that there is any connection between the two words! *'Eryri'* could be a word derived from *'eira'* (the Welsh for 'snow') - the English word for an 'eagles nest', spelt *'aerie'* or *'eyrie'*, most likely being of French origin!

**THE MONMOUTH LEGACY** The historic township that gave its name to the thirteenth county of Wales - apart from being the birthplace of member *Graham Wrightson* - played a significant role in British and Welsh history from the very earliest of times! By something of a coincidence, another *classical scholar* from the town, one *Geoffrey of Monmouth*, had the distinction of writing the *'History of the Kings of Britain'* back in the 12<sup>th</sup> century - the work including *The Prophecies of Merlin* and a *Life of Merlin* and both written in Latin verse. They were chiefly

responsible for taking the figures of *King Arthur* and *Merlin* from the world of Celtic legend and launching them on to the broader stage of European culture. *Geoffrey* referred to himself as 'of *Monmouth*' and was, most probably, a Welshman - although in some circles it had been suggested he may have been a *Breton*! Between 1130 and 1150 AD, *Geoffrey* was based in *Oxford* and may have been a canon of the collegiate church of *St. George*. Consecrated *Bishop of St Asaph* in 1152 he died there a very short time afterwards!

Prior to *Geoffrey's* efforts, there was no such thing as recorded British history. Apart from oral tradition, there was just the account of fifth-century Britain written by *GILDAS* (a monk) in the 6<sup>th</sup> century and then a disjointed early 9<sup>th</sup> century compilation known as the ***History of the Britons***! While *Geoffrey of Monmouth* faced exactly the same problem as the anonymous compiler of the latter work, he managed to solve it in a way that achieved a larger measure of coherence. However, his effort was almost entirely a work of fiction despite which it still became the first great work of the *Oxford School of History*! In reality he had invented what only then became known as *British History*! *Geoffrey's* purposes, in writing fiction masquerading as history were much debated; his views actually taunted the leading English historians of the day so as to provide his own people, the 12<sup>th</sup> century descendants of the Britons, with something that resembled a civilized past! At that time the English, shame upon them, were beginning to look down on the Welsh race of people as simple savages! The *Monmouth* area also featured importantly earlier in 1135 AD when the Welsh fought an invading French and English force - a significant triumph being the capture of nearby ***Caerleon and Usk*** by *Morgan ap Owain*, a descendant of the Welsh Kings of Glamorgan! Interestingly, *Geoffrey* made *Caerleon* the seat of both *King Arthur's Court* and that of the legendary *Merlin*, the primate of all Britain! *Caerleon* is probably better known today as the site of a Roman fortress!

**WALES'S WORLD CUP** The scant attention generally given to *7-a-Side international rugby* is likely to change dramatically following the success of the ***Welsh 7's*** team at the ***Dubai UAE*** tournament on March 5, 6 & 7 of this year. A team consisting of talented (yet lesser known) young rugby players triumphed at the first of the ***2009 Rugby World Cup 7's*** competitions. Further meets are scheduled for *Hong Kong* (27-29 March), *Adelaide*, Australia, (4-5 April), *Twickenham* (23-24 May) and *Edinburgh* (30-31 May). The Welsh squad of 12 players included 11 who went to *Wellington (NZ)* two weeks earlier and defeated the fancied home team, the *2008 World Cup* holders! In the *Dubai* tourney they beat them again in a quarter final game (15-14), went on to beat 'sevens specialists' *Samoa* (19-12) in the semi-final and finally, *Argentina* (19-12) for the ***Melrose Cup***! Captained by *Lee Beach (Neath)*, the squad comprised *Rhodri McAtee (Cornish Pirates)*, *Lee Williams (Scarlets)*, *Tom Isaacs* and *Craig Hill (Newport)*, *Aled Thomas (London Welsh)*, *James Merriman* (unattached but a flanker with the *Neath* club at one time and captain of a recent *Wales XV Under 21* team), *Tal Selley* and *Aled Brew (Dragons)*, *Rhys Webb (Ospreys)*, *Richie Pugh (Exeter Chiefs)* and *Dafydd Hewitt (Cardiff Blues)*. It must be on the cards for a number of these players to enjoy even greater honours in the future! Head coach, *Paul John*, is yet another '*Pontypryddian*'! [**Note:** Along with the 'discovery' of *Scotch* and the sports of *golf* and *curling*, the *Scots* can also be credited with the *7-a-Side* format - hence, the *Melrose Cup*, the impressive gold hardware presented to the Welsh team at Dubai. A team from *Scotland* won the '*Bowl*' award and one representing *Zimbabwe*, the '*Plate*'! In their first tournament game, *Canada* defeated *Scotland* (35-14)! In the more recent *Hong Kong* tournament, *Canada* beat *Wales* (19-10).]

**THE 2009 6-NATIONS** The Welsh representation on the *European* rugby scene narrowly failed to fulfill another ***Grand Slam*** this year despite promising (but unconvincing) wins against *Scotland* (26-13), *England* (23-15) and *Italy* (20-15). Unhappily, they managed to lose against a more enterprising ***France*** (21-16) in *Paris* - capping it all in *Cardiff* on March 21<sup>st</sup> by losing to *Ireland* (17-15) - and only minutes from the end of play! The ***Grand Slam*** and ***Triple Crown*** hopes were thereby conceded to *Ireland*! On the same fateful day, *England* defeated *Scotland* (26-12) at *Twickenham* while ***France*** really 'went to town' (*Rome*) and thumped *Italy* (50-8)! The Irish team last accomplished the ***Grand Slam*** in 1948 under the leadership of out-half *Jackie Kyle* who attended the *Cardiff* game!

**A SUMMER OF RUGBY** Through the months of May, June and July of our coming summer, a host of international fixtures are planned by *Rugby Canada!* An *Ireland XV* plays Canada in *Vancouver* on **Saturday May 23**, a *Wales XV* plays them in *York Stadium Toronto* on **Saturday May 30** and a *USA XV* visits *Edmonton* to play them on **July 11**. A **Churchill Cup** series of games with international squads from *Argentina, Ireland, Georgia, England* and the *USA* are also planned within the period **June 06 to 28**. Details of these games are yet to be published by *Rugby Canada!*

**EBBW REBORN** A Valleys landmark is set to be transformed into a \$25 million family history and genealogy visitor centre. Plans have been announced involving the refurbishment of the *General Offices* of the now defunct *Ebbw Vale Steelworks* - converting them into a top historical visitor attraction. The work will include relocation of the *Gwent Records Office* (one of the largest archives in Wales) and moving it from nearby *Cwmbran* to the proposed centre. A priceless collection of records (some dating back to the 1300s), presently housed in five kilometres of shelving in *Cwmbran*, will become the cornerstone of a unique history and genealogy centre at *Ebbw Vale!*

**HE GETS NO RESPECT** An obituary in a recent *Weekly Telegraph* described the passing of a titled Taff in the most disrespectful bit of journalism seen in years (even if deserved) - and even for the British press! A unique piece of writing and frank to the extreme, painted a rather sad biographical picture of its subject in a quarter page screed! A sub-heading, immediately below the deceased's name, read '*Notorious Lothario known as the Conquistador of the Canapé Circuit or simply Dirty Dai*', was the outrageous introduction to the passing of *Sir Dai Llewellyn (David St Vincent Llewellyn)*, at the age of 62! *Aberdare* born, he was the son of Olympic equestrian gold medalist *Col. Harry Llewellyn* (of *Foxhunter* fame) and brother to *Roddy Llewellyn*, paramour of the late *Princess Margaret!* Originally of Monmouthshire *yeomanry* stock the family found coal under the little bit of land they farmed - the *Lloyd George* era baronetcy apparently being 'wangled' (as suggested in the obituary) during *D.Ll.G's* term as PM. *Sir Dai*, the fourth holder of the title, spent his early childhood at *Gobion Manor* near *Abergavenny* and then at *Llanfair Grange* also in Monmouthshire. Educated (partly) at *Eton* he went on to the *University of Aix-en-Provence* (France) then returning to Britain to embark on the career 'of a fully fledged cad and bounder!' [*It is worthy of note, the University of Aix-en-Provence is associated with a Swedish language academy teaching French as a second language. Its status would be far from being comparable to an 'Ivy League' or even a 'Red Brick' seat of learning - the so called 'crachach' (nobility) probably referring to it as a 'Finishing School for young gentlemen and ladies'!*]

After a brief term as a salesman with *Quantas Airways*, *Sir Dai* ran a travel agency in *Cardiff* and then, on the invitation of the owner of London's *Playboy Club*, became its social secretary - an appointment he himself aptly described, '*as being able to sit at a table, drink a lot of claret, eat a lot and have a simply lovely time!*' The *Playboy Club* objective, seemingly (or more seemly maybe), to provide better window-dressing for its business, notably, 'To bring the Arabs in!' He became a permanent fixture in the London gossip columns with amorous associations that included the daughters of *Orson Welles* and Cardiffian *Ronald Dahl* and numerous other 'young gals!' *Dirty Dai* seemed to have few scruples or moral and ethical values! Verbatim quotations in response to the supposed betrayal of his brother's royal 'adventure' prompted him to describe *Roddy* as, 'A snob and a resentful little twerp' and, '... that he had become bored to tears by the little twit!' They were reconciled before *Dai* was finally laid-out by the undertaker! (Blood must be far thicker than claret, eh?) In the reality of the story, only the '*Foxhunter*' name will likely live on - remembered fondly as a stylish and talented stallion by all lovers of equestrian events, of course! After succeeding his father to the baronetcy in 1999, *Sir Dai* purchased a house in Wales but left after a few years claiming he had been driven out by rampant nationalism! Before leaving, however, he injected a little excitement into a *Welsh Assembly* election campaign by contesting the *Cardiff North* seat for the *UK Independence Party*. The poor soul finished last with an unconvincing 3.7 percent of the poll - Britain's withdrawal from the EU being his pet political peeve! If he had been born a US citizen one wonders, with his brand of talent, could he have succeeded to the Oval Office? We know a couple of other like fellows who did - and not too far back in time either!

**DYLAN'S BIRTHPLACE** A stay at this beautiful and faithfully restored Edwardian house, **5 Cwmdonkin Drive, Swansea**, offers visitors with an interest in Wales, Dylan and the '*...ugly, lovely town ... by the side of a long and splendid curving shore ...*' which shaped his works, a unique opportunity to enjoy the famous author's birth house! Society members are offered an introductory rental rate, not available to the general public, at a greatly reduced price - ONLY found by contacting the following dedicated website, [www.5cwmdonkindrive.com/offer.htm](http://www.5cwmdonkindrive.com/offer.htm).

### **FUTURE SOCIETY EVENTS AND INFORMATION**

**2009 A.G.M.** As a registered society it is our obligation to conduct a formal general meeting annually! Please make a date in your calendars that **SATURDAY APRIL 25<sup>th</sup>** has now been chosen for this important event and social get-together - at **THE BLACKFOOT INN (Sundance Room) COMMENCING NO LATER than 7.00 pm**. A charge of **\$10.00 each** will apply for provided snacks and a cash bar! **ALUN LEWIS** will act as **RETURNING OFFICER** for the **ELECTION OF OFFICERS! NOMINATIONS MUST BE IN WRITING** (letter or E-mail) and be **SUPPORTED BY THE NOMINEE!** Please submit them to **7 CITADEL DRIVE NW, CALGARY T3G 3X7** or to [alunlewis@yahoo.com](mailto:alunlewis@yahoo.com) - to be received by him - **NO LATER THAN APRIL 14<sup>th</sup> NEXT!** \*\* **THE ATTENDANCE of ALL MEMBERS IS SOLICITED!** \*\*

**CWRS CYMRAEG 2009** *Cymdeithas Madog* is holding its *Welsh Language Course* at the *Augustina Campus* of the *University of Alberta* in *Camrose* from **19<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> July next!** The six CWS members, who successfully applied for Society sponsorship to attend the course, have been advised!

**NORTH AMERICAN FESTIVAL OF WALES** Two members are representing the Society at this *Pittsburgh* festival from **3<sup>rd</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> September next**. Both have been informed regarding the sponsorship assistance available to them!

**TY DAVID THOMPSON** This *Edmonton St. David's Society* project will be officially opened **May next!** To enable Calgary members to visit the exhibit, a 50-seater coach has already been chartered for **SUNDAY MAY 24<sup>th</sup>**. Note - transportation will be **FREE** for **FULLY PAID UP MEMBERS** on a **FIRST COME FIRST SERVED BASIS** - with **PRIORITY GIVEN** to those **WHO ATTENDED THE APRIL AGM!** Interested participants are advised to make their wishes known to our secretary, **Kate Coolidge!** *Pick-Up* and *Drop-Off* locations will be at **SOUTH CENTRE** and **DEERFOOT MALL** at times that will to be advised in due course! En-route a stop is planned at the **Wood River Historical Settlement**, a few miles east of **Ponoka**, where President *Wayne Davies* will describe something of the background of early Welsh interest in this area of Alberta! The Calgary Society has made a financial donation to help with this commendable sister-society project honouring the *Welsh/Canadian* explorer, **Dafydd ap Thomas!**

**GELLI GYMREIG** In order to give greater exposure to the *Welsh* presence in *Calgary*, an effort is under way to locate a **'WELSH GROVE'** within the newly renovated gardens of the **Calgary Zoo**. The concept is to plant **Evans Berry** bushes and/or daffodils in a designated area along with a suitable plaque describing their *Welsh* association!

**NOTE** News of our **Summer BBQ**, a visit by the **3 Welsh Tenors** and a **Seniors Tea** will be advised in due course!

**ROSEBUD DINNER THEATRE** This established theatre group is performing *Dylan Thomas's A Child's Christmas in Wales* from **November 06 - December 23, 2009**. Plans are in hand to organise transportation (free) and attendance at a matinee performance of the play. This **THEATRE DATE WILL BE IN PLACE OF** our usual CWS Christmas Dinner! Performance and lunch costs will be **\$41.00 per person** - with all final details published closer to the event date!

**LIONS FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS** Negotiations are under way to have the *Welsh* seasonal greeting **'NADOLIG LLAWEN'** added to this Christmas light display at the **Confederation Park Golf Course** section adjacent to **14<sup>th</sup> Street NW**.

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