

CYMDEITHAS GYMREIG CALGARY

CALGARY WELSH SOCIETY

JANUARY – 2009

NEWSLETTER ISSUE

Your Present Executive

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Alberta phone numbers are now 10-digit. Please use the 403 AREA CODE when calling any of the above persons!

CINIO NADOLIG 2008 Despite unusually frigid weather, our annual Christmas Dinner (on Sunday, December 14th) was highly successful. Some 50 hardy adults and children attended! We were again indebted to **Trish & Pam** who took charge of the organisation, **Dianne Williams & Susan Petker** for their music and song, the **Wayne & Alun Show** for some humorous interludes - and the staff at *Fort Calgary* for the quality of their service! We hope the occasion was a good start to the enjoyment of a **Merry Christmas** by one and all - and the **Happiest of New Years!**

WELSH FILM NIGHT *Fort Calgary* will again be the venue for the **New Year's FIRST** social get-together on **FRIDAY, JANUARY 30, 2009**. A film, set in Wales, will be featured for your enjoyment! The showing will be preceded by a review of the Society's finances and the approval of our *2008 Financial Statement* for submission to the Alberta Government by early February. Attendance will be **FREE** for members (from casino funds) but a nominal **\$10.00** charge will be made for the planned supply of snack foods! **A GOOD ATTENDANCE BY MEMBERS IS URGED!**

DYDD GWYL DEWI 2009 The celebration of **St. David's Day**, this year, will be on **SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 28th**. The chosen venue will be **THE BLACKFOOT INN, 5940 Blackfoot Trail SE** - a central location with easy access from all city quadrants with ample free parking. It is a choice that has served us well in the past! Our programme will be a traditional one in honour of our Patron Saint and with appropriate entertainment. Costs have been maintained at **\$35.00 each (paid up members)** and **\$40.00 each** for non-members. **Cocktails at 6.30 pm for Dinner at 7.00 pm**. Pay at the door (cheque or money order made payable to the CWS) or by cash! **NOTE THIS IMPORTANT DATE!**

OUR WEBSITE (see heading) ***This is now up and running!*** Information will be posted on it as details are known!

INTERNATIONAL RUGBY The long awaited November 2008 fixtures with *South Africa, Canada and New Zealand* initially failed to raise *Wales's* ranking in world rugby to higher than **#6**. Although far from humiliated in fixtures with SA and NZ, the *Wales XV* still failed to successfully address the two challenges. Further, a less than adequate performance in a win against a weak *Canadian* contingent was also a disappointment! However, success against *Australia* (by 21 points to 18) in the last of the autumn fixtures did provide some redemption *Wales's* status thereby moving up to **#5** and bettering *England's* position but not *Argentina's*. The *IRB* award for **WORLD PLAYER OF THE YEAR** went to **SHANE WILLIAMS** of *Glanamman, a Neath and Osprey* team member - won in competition with the likes of *Daniel Carter* (the NZ out-half) and *Richie McCaw* (the NZ captain) who both enthusiastically supported the *IRB* choice! In the 'draw' for the next *Rugby World Cup* (New Zealand, 2011) *Wales* faces a tough task that includes the *South African* (the present holders) and *Fijian* teams. Other *Pool D* members could be *Samoa* and *Namibia!*

A WELSH WASHINGTON More than a million visitors to *Washington DC* this coming summer will attend a festival that celebrates our home country. The event is hosted by one of the most famous names in museums, the *Smithsonian Institute* where *Wales* will be the only nation featured at this *2009 Smithsonian Folklife Festival* held on the *National Mall* area in front of the *US Congress* building! The date of the event coincides with the *July 4th* holiday and will showcase Welsh technology as well as documenting the revival of the Welsh language and will

introduce Americans to our nation's craft, dance, food and culture. The *Smithsonian* runs 19 major museums including the *National Air & Space Museum* and the *National Museum of American History* both of which line the mall. The curator, *Betty Belanus*, wants to introduce visitors to a nation that has always fascinated her while, at the same time, acknowledging that so many of her compatriots have only a vague understanding of *Wales*, its location in the British Isles or any of its history! The event is a 10-day festival with a potential, maybe, for providing a surprise to both local and visiting natives alike if, at the same time, it can be proven that the words '*Cymru am Byth*' (Wales for Ever) are actually inscribed or carved or etched on an inside wall halfway up the *Washington Monument*? We also wonder if that feat of masonry graffiti was perpetrated by an early US President? However, a little research into the history of the third US President (*Thomas Jefferson 1743-1826*) as the likely culprit (as was once reported) and the period when the famous Washington obelisk was actually built - it appears there could be serious doubt about any connection existing between them! In fact, *Jefferson* did not succeed to the presidential office until 1801 and actual construction on the famous landmark did not start until 1843! It is therefore very likely it would have been difficult for *Jefferson* to have 'made his mark' - unless, of course, he descended from the heavens as an angel and be suitably armed with a hammer and chisel at the same time. The only certainty in such an event would be that he would not have needed an elevator to accomplish his task! Examining *Jefferson's* family history as to whether he had been blessed with Welsh heritage (also previously suggested in these columns) it also appears unlikely! Until an opportunity presents itself sometime in the future permitting freedom of access into the famous memorial and then, elevation to its observation level, the substantiation of any Welsh connection will have to wait for more settled times!

DANIEL CRAIG YW'R ENW (*Daniel Craig's* the name) Was it inevitable that the most recent '*James Bond*' actor should be revealed to have a Welsh heritage? Consider his qualities too: a little on the short side with hairy legs and a rugged front row forward appearance - plus an ability to run like a *World Class #11 Welsh 'winger*! *Daniel Craig* has really given a *Taffy* trade-mark to the latest version of *Ian Fleming's* classic 007 hero! 'Rock' by name (as in 'Craig') the choice could not have been more appropriate - a factor North Wales tourism gurus intend to capitalise upon! Bear in mind too, Daniel's paternal grandfather, *William John Craig*, (a grocer originally from Suffolk) moved to *Colwyn Bay* where Daniel's father, *Timothy Craig* was born. He also grew up not too far away, in *Hafod-y-Gan* near *Prestatyn*! The paternal grandmother, *Rosalinda Craig (nee Jones)* was a *Llandudno* girl. On the other side of the family, the maternal grandfather was *Olwyn Williams*, born in Wales and ending up in Chester as a publican. Daniel Craig was *Chester* born and grew up in the *Wirral* area of *Cheshire*! What more proof do we need? As with *Sean Connery*, when the trace of a Scottish accent would sometimes emerge - with *Daniel Craig*, could a Welsh one possibly 'leek' out in an unguarded moment?

WONDERS NEVER CEASE A *Conway* man on an *Everest* climb was intrigued to find a signpost for his home town of *Llandudno* in the middle of nowhere - on a remote virtual lunar landscape! A painted wooden sign, inscribed *LLANDUDNO 3995m*, was spotted by *James Thomas* as he trekked near the *Mount Everest* base camp used by the *Sir Edmund Hillary* expedition in 1953. At an elevation of some 18,370 feet above sea level, the camp was at the foot of *Everest*, on its southern side and deep into the *Himalayas*. The finding of the signpost was part of an amazing trip by this Welsh climber who was forced to deal with a number of challenges and further dangers before he and his party could return home. Coming off the mountain on a 'high', they discovered all flights from the camp had been cancelled because of bad weather - resulting in a trek of 26 miles per day for three days compounded by the presence of jumping leeches adding to their discomfort. A further eight-hour car journey was necessary before finally arriving back at *Kathmandu* for a flight back to civilization! Despite all this, *James Thomas* felt the finding of the sign was a remarkable coincidence - and know that someone else from *Llandudno* had even been there before him. Finding out who would have been responsible for the sign being at the foot of *Everest* would have been a

perfect conclusion to the adventure! However, no semblance of a clue has yet appeared - or any comment made regarding the accuracy of the mileage statement featured on the sign itself!

A PWLLHELI PENNY A rare coin dating from 1666 has been presented to the *Gwynedd* town where it had been in use back in the 17th century. In those days all coinage was made of silver, minted in London and used by companies as vouchers that were given to their employees - for purchases, usually, made at company owned shops! Two of the three known issuers of the coin in those early years were *Richard Preece* and *Hugh Lloyd Rosindale* - the latter described as a 'gentleman and mercer' – a respected member of the 'rag trade' in current parlance! As silver became more expensive, copper was later introduced and the right to issue coins sold to entrepreneurs and where, in Wales, about a hundred businessmen had that right. The scene changed in 1670 when *HRH Charles II* decided to produce formal coinage with the image of his head imprinted on one face! Token coins were re-called and melted down but bags of them did survive to be today's rare finds! Ten *Pwllheli Pennies* are known to exist!

A RARE DYLAN FIND A newly discovered and previously unknown play by Dylan Thomas will now shed light on his wartime career as a political propagandist. The play, *The Art of Conversation*, was recently unearthed by Thomas's biographer, *Andrew Lycett* (in Texas of all places) - the very first time for the actual script to be examined in 40 years. It dated back to the WW2 years when Thomas spent much of his time writing film and radio scripts for the *Ministry of Information* - having failed his military service medical examinations! The subject of the play addressed the theme of 'careless talk costs lives', a message the government eagerly promoted throughout those years of conflict. Even in the Principality, it was believed a '*Davies the Spy*' could have been lurking around every corner! The format for the play allowed audiences to eaves-drop on a range of encounters based upon a concept of a decline in English conversation. Likely exchanges between *Oscar Wilde* and *Aubrey Beardsley* were parodied with self-deflating bouts of verbal sparring between other writers and of imagined chats between ordinary people! The script probably related to the period before D-Day and, most probably, would have been intended as a radio play. His biographer believed it was an intriguing vehicle for Dylan Thomas' talents - his wit, dramatic timing and gift of dialogue! *BBC Radio Drama* recently introduced it as a 30-minute play at the *Swansea Dylan Thomas Centre*!

From a historical perspective, the circumstances leading to *Dylan's* premature death are examined in a recent book by Welsh author *David Thomas*. Published on the 55th anniversary of his death, the book ***Fatal Neglect: Who Killed Dylan Thomas***, traces contributions from his personal life-style and the inaction of agents, assistants and doctors who were aware of his illness – and, for selfish reasons, virtually conspired to do nothing about his failing health. *David Thomas* has written widely about his famous namesake! The book's publisher is *Seren* and the book is available either directly from www.seren-books.com or from the usual internet suppliers. The UK price is 9.99 GBP.

MARIA GOING ON TOUR *Andrew Lloyd-Webber's* version of the '*Sound of Music*' with young Welsh star, *Connie Fisher* in the lead role, is planning a national tour which appropriately starts at the *Wales Millennium Centre* next August. The 25-year-old former call-centre worker from *Pembrokeshire* was propelled to stardom two years ago after triumphing in the hit *BBC* show to find a new *Maria von Trapp* for the *London Palladium* production! Since then, *Connie Fisher* has played a leading role in *They're Playing Our Song* at the *London Menier Chocolate Factory* and recorded a debut album, *Favourite Things*. At Christmas she starred in the *ITV* drama, *Caught In A Trap*. The producers have shown concern for the present economic UK downturn so as to ensure ticket prices will be set at a realistic level for the tour. Where a 55 GBP cost would be the West End price - 40 GBP will be the top Cardiff price!

THE ASSEMBLY RESPONDS The ***Welsh Assembly Government*** recently announced a plan to both protect existing workers and create new jobs in a positive response to the economic threats now being encountered by local industries. A \$140 million financial package is being made available to ensure Wales will be in a stronger position to exploit a future upturn in its economy! Within these initiative there is a ***Business Growth Plan*** creating 6,000

new jobs; more capital to boost the construction industry; added support for small works and refurbishment programmes for schools and colleges; a **Social Housing Grant** expansion; assistance in adapting the homes of vulnerable people; and aid in alleviating fuel poverty through the **Heads of the Valleys** low carbon economy programme. The *Assembly* believes its initiative will enable employers facing difficulties to retain skilled workers while also enhancing their skills in anticipation of an economic upturn! The *Assembly's Basic Skills Pledge* will also be expanded to enable 10,000 workers to share in its benefits over the next two years! The *Welsh Assembly's* action is having a good impact upon the rest of the United Kingdom! Hopefully it will **NOT** be, '**Too little, too late!**'

SELF-SERVING AM's But what else is new! Details of the expenditures of **Welsh Assembly Members** were recently published and, inevitably, it came to pass a couple of unthinking ones had made an unfortunate error of judgement in using the country's money, rather than their own, on trivial personal purchases! The *Assembly's* Conservative leader, **Nick Bourne** and colleague **Alun Cairns**, each purchased **iPods** from their office cost allowances (some \$500 and \$350's worth of goods respectively) being thus charged. It caught the eagle eye of the local press and subjected both **AMs** to severe pressures when their stupidity was exposed to the world - and rightfully rebounded in their faces! Both have '*apologised to the people of Wales*' - and the *Assembly* reimbursed! Other charitable gifts, to appease their miserable consciences, have also been made. '**Resign, we say, eh?**'

PLEASE NOTE THESE FOUR FUTURE EVENTS OF SPECIAL INTEREST

CWRS CYMRAEG 2009 As was previously advised, *Cymdeithas Madog* will be holding the next **Welsh Language Course** (their 33rd annual one) at the **Augustina Campus** of the **University of Alberta** in **Camrose, JULY 19 to 26**. *Cymdeithas Madog* is a clearing house for information about Welsh language resources and can help find Welsh literature, publications, books from Wales (about Wales and things Welsh in both official languages), Welsh music and available internet resources. **SOCIETY SPONSORSHIP MAY BE AVAILABLE** for a number of members to attend the course and **INTERESTED MEMBERS MUST contact our Secretary, Kate Coolidge, AS SOON AS POSSIBLE!** For full information please refer to the enclosed leaflet, **Insert - Page 1**. The <http://www.madog.org> website may also be checked while **Ceri Jones** at ceri_owen@mac.com will have information of a more local interest!

THE NORTH AMERICAN FESTIVAL OF WALES Every year, the **Welsh Gymanfa Ganu Association of North America** organises a cultural event under this given heading. It includes a variety of activities - music performances, a Gymanfa Ganu, lectures and language instruction - all designed to maintain or stimulate interest in Wales and its culture with many performers brought from Wales. In **2009** it will be held in the city of **PITTSBURGH, Pennsylvania** from **September 3rd to 9th**. The festival venue is in a different location every year - either in Canada or the United States! **SOCIETY SPONSORSHIP MAY AGAIN BE AVAILABLE** for a number of members to attend and **THOSE INTERESTED MUST CONTACT our Secretary ASAP. Refer to the enclosed leaflet for details, Insert - Page 2.**

DAVID THOMPSON HOUSE The **Edmonton St. David's Society** project, described in our last newsletter issue, will be officially opened in early **May, 2009**. Accordingly, the Society has applied to the **Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission** for funds to charter a 50-seater coach enabling interested members to attend this memorable occasion. If approved, the trip will be **FREE** to our members. It is also planned that, during the journey, a stop will be made at the **Wood River Historical Settlement** - just a few miles east of **Ponoka**. Details on how you may be included on this trip will be available by the time of our **St. David's Day Dinner** scheduled for February 28th next!

ROSEBUD DINNER THEATRE This well established Alberta theatre group is planning to perform Dylan Thomas's **A Child's Christmas in Wales** in **December 2009**. If a sufficient number of members are interested in attending a weekend performance of the **Rosebud** production **PLEASE MAKE IT KNOWN** to the Society executive - it could be another appropriate opportunity for organising a charter coach to a special event!