

Chiltern District Welsh Society

Autumn Newsletter 2008.



The Society has continued to promote a number of activities during the last few months. Reports on these follow:

Chairman's Report.

This half year has been packed with events and experiences.

We finally reached our place in the queue for the visit to Highgrove House. The enjoyable event was worth the wait.

The Summer Lunch proved once and for all the Welsh can handle 'rain'. There was that 'Close Encounters of the Third Kind' moment as Gazebo 3 took flight. Our grateful thanks to Eryl Morris for hosting the event.

Another Royal Residence tour to Clarence House, organised by Janet and Gwyndaf John, was a successful last minute injection into the programme.

Our thanks to Pam and Rob Britton for organising the Golf day at Oakland Park.

Surprisingly three of these four events found those rare gloriously fine days of this summer. The fourth, just a blip!

The members' reports for this newsletter are much appreciated.

We look forward to Christmas drinks with Ann at 'The Tuft' in December.

Sadly, I have to report the passing of John Payne in May, a member since 2004. We offer our condolences to wife Margaret and family.

Hugh Griffith.

Visit to Highgrove House - 6th May 2008

What a perfect day to visit such an exciting venue! At 9.30 a.m. in glorious sunshine and a clear blue sky, 24 of us set off from Amersham, wondering just what Highgrove had in store for us. Unfortunately, because of the high security, two of our party were unable to replace others who were unable to come, they did, however, have an interesting day in Tetbury. At noon we were met by security who checked our passports or

photographic driving licences. We were shown into the Orchard Room situated at the entrance and although being built within the last decade, it blended in perfectly with its surroundings. Here many pieces of His Royal Highness's private art collection adorn the walls. Shortly after this we were introduced to the garden volunteer, Mrs. Matthew, who was to be our very informative guide.



The Estate as a whole had some wonderful surprises, with each 'garden' layout being different from the previous one. One of the most eye-catching features was a yew hedge which had incorporated some amazing topiary - this, incidentally, takes around three months to trim! Near this stands a statue of the Borghese Gladiator, a copy of the one at Houghton Hall, Norfolk. In the wild flower meadow were profusions of camassia which made a majestic show, being much taller than the other wild flowers.

An interesting fact about the Walled Garden is that the planting area is marked out by box hedges in the shape of the crosses of St. George and St. Andrew. The wide range of vegetables is organically grown in keeping with the ethos of Highgrove.

Prince Charles has a super collection of ceramic and earthenware pots from around the world - both large and small, some which contained plants, others were empty but lying in interesting positions. He also made excellent use of many artefacts which he had been given by incorporating them very effectively into a dry-stone wall. The National Collection of hostas was wonderful - not a slug or snail bite in sight, apparently Weetabix is used as slug bait; I must give this a try! All the plants looked very healthy, no doubt due to the fact that all the compost is manufactured on the estate from recycled waste products. Lastly, I would mention the chicken house or 'palace' as our guide jokingly said. This is constructed in a cruciform shape with a steel cockerel on its roof. The chickens, too, looked very healthy scratching around in the soil and grassy areas.

After the two hour tour, we were treated to a cup of tea in best floral designed china, and biscuits. There was of course the inevitable shop for souvenirs, preserves, chocolates etc. and a small area selling plants - the temptation to buy was too great for most of us!

On our departure our driver, Keith, decided to take us home the 'pretty way' via Cirencester, Bibury, Burford etc. It was a most interesting drive in the late afternoon sunshine with an intermittent commentary by Keith. So ended this excellent day out, arriving back at 6 pm. Our grateful thanks to Maldwyn for the organisation of this trip.

Ann Payne.

A.G.M. 9th May - Coleshill Village Hall.

49 members attended and there were 15 apologies for absence. The Chairman Bob Ford welcomed everyone and then gave a brief outline of the events that had taken place during the past year.

In her report Ann Lawrence, the Membership Secretary, reported that the total membership stood at 105.

In the absence of Eileen Mitchell, the Treasurer, copies of her report were circulated at the meeting and showed the healthy state of the Society's finances.

With Bob Ford standing down, Hugh Griffith took over as Chairman. Mrs. Anne Browne was voted on to the Committee as an additional member.

Hugh Griffith outlined the future events already planned, which included the Summer Lunch in July, the Golf Day in September, and the Royal Albert Hall concert in October, and asked members to provide suggestions for future events by means of the questionnaire recently sent out. After the business side of the meeting ended, those present enjoyed a Ploughman's Buffet Supper, ably arranged by the ladies, followed by fruit salad and ice cream.

The evening was finished by a very enlightening and illustrated talk on the National Parks, with emphasis on those in Wales, by Adrian Thornton from the Council for National Parks. A fitting end to a very pleasant evening.

Maldwyn Pugh.

Summer Lunch - 6th July

Wimbledon Men's Finals Day and the Welsh Society's Summer Lunch: so it couldn't possibly rain. Believe that, and you'd believe anything! As we arrived at Eryl Morris' house in Amersham it was already raining heavily and the dedicated team of "erectors" had already put up the gazebos to cover the tables and chairs set out in the lovely garden.



The heavy rain was clearly going to settle in certain points of the gazebo roofs, so the Griffith broom team were soon in evidence. But the surroundings were beautiful, Morreen and Glyn's food was excellent and people were cheerful and determined to enjoy the occasion.

But the weather tried just as hard to have its way. Apart from the rain (which subsided occasionally) there were some really strong gusts, one of which lifted a double gazebo clean into the air. Diving diners leapt to the rescue and the gazebo's maiden flight to Chesham was quickly curtailed!

So we were able to progress to the after-lunch picture quiz. No team had perfect knowledge of the various Welsh peaks, rivers, bridges, castles etc. but, as Ralph announced the answers, some creditable performances were revealed: not least the winning answers of the Bill Jones team. For their efforts they were rewarded with (warming) Jägermeister miniatures: and Miles Griffith demonstrated the "Austrian Way" of consuming them.

In one of the sunnier interludes our Chairman started to update us on the Society's planned events, and he stuck to his task for a while after more "Welsh weather" resumed. He could not however compete with the deafening thunder storm, which then bombarded the gazebos and all activities were suspended whilst sheets of water were dispersed from the gazebo roofs. Hugh did manage eventually to finish his summary, despite the more distant thunder rumbles, the laughter of the hardy members and the squelching of feet if anyone moved out of the dry zone.

The organising group did a wonderful job, before, during and after the event. And we are so grateful for Eryl's hospitality and we hope his lovely garden will not have suffered from our eventful presence. It was a great occasion, and there was no way that a bit of bad weather was going to spoil it for us!

David Bevan.

Visit to Clarence House - 31st August.

36 Members and friends were treated to guided tours of five of the rooms at Clarence House, the official London residence of HRH Prince of Wales, and former home of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother.

The rooms are where The Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall undertake

official engagements and receive guests from around the World.

They contained some of the Queen Mother's collection of works of art and furniture in their former positions.

Those who were lucky enough to go on the visit enjoyed an insight into the life of a member of the Royal Family.

Thanks go to Janet and Gwyndaf John for their efforts in organising the tours.

Maldwyn Pugh.

Golf Day - 19th September.

We had a change of venue this year, holding the event at Oakland Park Golf Club in Chalfont St Giles. It was just about the best day of the summer, the sun shone all day.

After bacon rolls, 20 of us teed off, playing four ball better ball, and we all managed to return by 2pm. We acquired a couple of extra ladies with Welsh connections from Oakland Park, just to even up the genders! The numbers increased by 6 for lunch, which was great. As in previous years the bonhomie continued.



Prizes were awarded to Bob Ford and Margaret Broomby (first), Alan Longshaw and Ceinwen Lyons (second), nearest the pin for the men was Ralph Broomby (just returned from injuries!) and the ladies prize went to Sue Jones. Congratulations!

Pam Britton.

London Welsh Festival of Male Choirs - 18th October

We set off, as on previous occasions, anticipating a wonderful evening of music and song - and we were not disappointed.

The festival featured fifteen male choirs - a number of Welsh and English choirs and others from as far afield as Hong Kong, Melbourne, New Zealand and Slovenia. The British Open Championship Cory Band from the Rhondda accompanied the choir, whilst the Albert Hall organ was beautifully played by Jeffrey Howard. Dr. Haydn James conducted the Festival choir again and the evening was compèred by Frank Lincoln who amused us with his little stories and anecdotes.

The programme for the evening was both varied and uplifting, and the sound of 800 voices was just wonderful. The men sang Welsh songs and hymns and some from well-known musicals. In between choir items we were entertained by professional soloists - a young Welsh soprano, Gwawr Edwards, whose voice soared to wonderful heights and a Welsh-born tenor, Gwyn Hughes Jones, whose rendition of Nessun Dorma brought the house down. The soloists were ably accompanied by Annabel Thwaite and Jeffrey Howard.

This marvellous occasion of music and song culminated with everyone, including the audience, singing the Festival Hymn, Love Divine, and finally our National Anthem - a fitting end to a wonderful evening.

Gill Wills.

Walking with the Society.



Since 2003 a number of members have arranged walking breaks in parts of Wales from where they have originated or are

familiar with - Chris Thomas in Carmarthenshire, Gwyn Owen in Pembrokeshire and Bob Ford the Brecon Beacons. Cecily and Mike Stythe, over this period have organised many walks in Snowdonia. 'Sherpa' Mike has led parties totalling 200 person days climbing 4 peaks of over 3,000 feet and Cnicht, 'The Welsh Matterhorn' with: no injuries- no lost members (all counted out and back!). There has been snow, a high jacking of a TV Crew Land Rover and the 'cheat' with the train ride back on one of the walks. They even celebrated their Ruby Wedding Anniversary at Betws-y-Coed with fellow climbing members. We are most grateful to both of them for their organisational and leadership skills, including the tough task, rounding us up for each trip.

Forthcoming events.

- **Sunday 7th December 2008** - Christmas drinks at The Tuft.
- **Friday 30th January 2009** - A quiz evening based on the 'Who Wants to be a Millionaire' format, followed by a Fish & Chip supper, at Coleshill Village Hall.
- **Saturday 28th February 2009** - St. David's Day Dinner at the Hazlemere Golf Club, with Wyn Calvin as guest Speaker.
- **Friday 8th May 2009** - A.G.M. at Coleshill Village Hall, followed by Bonhams Valuation Night and Quiz.
- **Sunday 12th July 2009** - Summer Lunch hosted by Keith Harris in Beaconsfield.
- **Late Summer 2009** - 'A London Walk' with Welsh connections is planned
- **September 2009** - Golfing Day will be organised.
- **October/November 2009** - A theatre night out at Windsor.

Details of these events will be advised as they become available.