

Chiltern District Welsh Society

Summer Newsletter 2013



Chairman's Report

At our recent Annual General Meeting, I took over as Chairman and my first task was to thank my immediate predecessor, Gwyndaf, for all that he did during his (somewhat extended) tenure – thanks that I am pleased to repeat here. Performing the role as ably as the illustrious individuals who have filled it in the past is a considerable challenge, but one to which I hope I shall rise!

The AGM also saw the retirement of Eileen Mitchell, Bob Ford, Hugh Griffith and Maldwyn Pugh from the Committee. We shall miss their wisdom and experience on the Committee but, of course, will continue to enjoy their company at the Society's events! We are, though, lucky to be able to welcome Jean Owen as a new Committee member.

We have an interesting and varied programme of events for the remainder of 2013.

Now is the time to let us know what you would like us to organise for 2014 in addition to the "usual" events: a word in the ear of a committee member (or an email, if you prefer) would be greatly appreciated because we are always anxious to receive suggestions, however unusual or unrealistic they may seem! Next year marks the centenary of the birth of Dylan Thomas, so one likely event will be a trip - probably Swansea-based - that incorporates places with which he was associated.

We have always been a very happy group, but it is important to recognise that all societies need new members and new ideas if they are to continue to thrive. We are no exception. In our area there are many more people whose company we would undoubtedly enjoy and benefit from - if only

we could identify them and reach them. Please spread the word!

Jonathan Pegler

Outgoing Chairman's Report

It is hard to believe that three years have elapsed since I took over as Chairman. It seemed a daunting role to be taking on at the time, but the time has flown by and remarkably it has proved an enjoyable experience!

The task was made easier thanks to the support of my predecessor and the experienced members of the Committee who served throughout the period. My thanks go to all my colleagues who have helped to plan and organise the activities of the Society.

It's remarkable how our use of technology has changed.

Today almost all the members can be contacted by email, and we now have an informative and well maintained web-site at www.chilternwelsh.org. I'm sure it will become an increasingly important means for members, both current and prospective, to keep themselves well informed about the Society and its events.

The Society exists "to provide a meeting place for people with Welsh connections or interests", and of course the key to a thriving society is the membership. What makes our events successful is that they are enjoyed in good company. It's particularly pleasing that the Society's membership has risen to well over the 100 mark during the last three years and it continues to increase. Strong membership numbers ensure that we can support a varied range of enjoyable activities. I've particularly enjoyed the exceptional



entertainment at our recent St David's Day dinners. Last year we appreciated the good humour of the charismatic Roy Noble, and this year the harpist Claire Jones was delightful.

I am pleased that the Chairmanship is now in Jonathan's capable hands, and look forward to enjoying future events with you all.

Gwyndaf John

Gill Wills

At the end of November 2012, the Society learnt the sad news that Gill Wills had passed away.

Gill and her husband Colin were founder members of the Chiltern District Welsh Society. Gill was the one with the strong Welsh connections and she served as the Society's Treasurer for several years.

Ann Evans recalls the first meeting of the friends who had responded enthusiastically to her suggestion to establish the Society. It was decided to contribute £10 each to a fund for initial activities and publicity. It was Gill who collected and counted the money and became the Society's first Treasurer.

She was an active and popular member of the local Community and it is noteworthy that the flag was flown at half-mast at her Golf Club. She will be greatly missed by her many friends.

Gwyndaf John

Christmas Drinks 2013

The Christmas Drinks lunchtime event was a great success.

Our special thanks go to Jonathan and Jayne Pegler, who once again hosted the event at their lovely home in Chalfont Heights.

Jonathan proved an enthusiastic wine waiter and also provided the music to accompany our enthusiastic carol singing.

Welsh Quiz Evening 25th January 2013

Twenty four brave members of the Welsh Society braved the winter weather to venture to the Coleshill Village Hall on a dark night in January.

We arranged ourselves into 5 teams of between four and six people.

Mr Jonathan Pegler set the fiendish questions in 7 rounds with subjects such as General Knowledge, 2012, Quotations, Chilterns & London and a Welsh round.

Fish and chips arrived to great acclaim about 8:30pm and gave a brief break from the questions. Jonathan reassured us that the questions were really very easy; it was only finding the answers that was difficult!



Competition was fierce, with each team trying hard not to be last. After a challenge to the electronic scoring system and a

re-count a team called 'the Odd Group' declared themselves the winners and rushed to claim the glory and prizes.

We finished about 10pm and it was amazing how quickly the hall was cleared of tables and chairs with so many volunteers.

Thanks to Jonathan for all your hard work in preparing and running the quiz.

David Powell

St David's Day Dinner

About 55 members and their guests gathered at Gerrards Cross Golf Club on Friday 1st March to celebrate Saint David's Day.

The evening started with the usual welcoming drink at 6:30. On taking our seats at the tables our Chairman Gwyndaf John greeted everyone and our Life President, Ann Evans, said grace. This was followed by the meal of prawns, lamb and bread and butter pudding, well prepared and efficiently served by Ann's staff, during which conversations flowed freely.

The meal really was incidental; everyone awaited the entertainment, harpist Claire Jones.



A slip of a girl off stage away from her harp, turned into a colossus on stage with it.

Her programme included traditional Welsh tunes and modern compositions, each accompanied by

comments on the piece, some historical, others personal, some of her experience as the official harpist to the Prince of Wales. She told us of her career, playing for the Prince, and, on one occasion, a private session for the Queen herself. She described her tours around the world, including the time when she played Men of Harlech on the arrival of the Welsh Rugby team at one official function. She showed us many photographs to illustrate these occasions.

She played like an angel, the audience was enthralled. Unfortunately it had to end, but not before a question and answer session on the harp and its intricacies.

Many of the audience were so impressed that they bought some of Claire's CDs.

No Saint David's Day evening is complete without the traditional singing around the piano. John Breese was in good form on the ivories, and helped bring a very memorable evening to a rousing end.

An evening all those present will never forget.

Jayne Pegler

2013 AGM Friday 17th May

We had a tremendous turnout for the 2013 AGM, over 60 people travelled to the Coleshill Village Hall.

Outgoing Chairman, Gwyndaf John welcomed everyone and remembered all the events that had been organised over the past year. Membership at the yearend was 109

paid-up members (plus a few honouree ones).



Our Treasurer, Graham Beavan, explained that we made a slight profit for the year and the books are looking quite healthy.

Jonathan Pegler then took us through the proposed amendments to our Constitution. The original Constitution was drawn up over 10 years ago when the Society was first proposed and the actual running of the group has slightly deviated from that over the course of the years.

What may have been a dry subject was brightened up by some lively questioning from the floor, but with a couple of very minor revisions, the new Constitution was unanimously approved.

Gwyn, then turned to elections to the committee. This year, four members of the committee are standing down, after many years of really fantastic service, these are: Bob Ford, Eileen Mitchell, Hugh Griffiths and Maldwyn Pugh. Bob and Hugh are past chairmen, Eileen was our Treasurer for many years, and Maldwyn was secretary and did most of the administration behind the scenes for many a year.

Gwyn congratulated them all, and presented them with small tokens of the Society's appreciation and also announced that after three years, he was standing down as Chairman, and would be succeeded by Jonathan Pegler.

Jean Owen is a welcome new addition to the committee. The remaining officials were re-elected for the following year.

Ann Tennant's team then provided an excellent hot meal with choice of puds and coffee.



The entertainment for the evening was provided by Maldwyn Pugh, who gave an interesting and amusing talk about his childhood growing up in a Welsh dairy business in Soho. Maldwyn described his family memories and those of wartime London

and Wales.

Visit to Highgrove 12th June 2013

On a somewhat overcast day, 26 of us visited the Prince of Wales' Highgrove Estate (15 acres of garden tended by 12 gardeners as well as the Prince when he has time). In a short video made by HRH he explained the garden's development and his organic principles. He incorporates lots of the gifts he receives into the various estate gardens. Camilla must be relieved the urns etc. do not end up in the house!

Reclaimed ecclesiastical stone is used in landscaping the gardens. The gardens also show that bind weed and ground elder are no respecters of princes and can only be got rid of organically by constant digging and weeding.

There is a large walled garden which incorporates a semi circle of apple trees pruned into the shape of coronets with the yellow crab apples in season to provide the golden balls.

The Arboretum includes the National Collection of 70 different specimens of Birch. Behind is the Sanctuary where HRH often goes to contemplate (his shed at the bottom of the garden).

In the next garden are 3 beautiful large olive oil jars sculpted out of Welsh slate chippings.

The famous Wildflower Meadow Garden started with a seed mix nicknamed the 'Gloucestershire Farmers' Nightmare'.

The tree house built for young Princes William and Harry has Welsh slate stairs and is on four Welsh slate pillars.

The Prince's Thyme Walk has 20 varieties of Thyme and shrubs clipped in to all sorts of geometric shapes. This is Charles's pun that visitors walk through time along it!

HRH has a statue of a child donated by Latch (a children's cancer charity in Carmarthen who are invited to visit Highgrove every year).

Finally we entered the Turkish Carpet Garden designed by HRH and others and which won silvergilt at the 2001 Chelsea Flower show. The garden and central mosaic water feature were based on a Turkish carpet in Highgrove.

Many thanks to Anne Thomas for organising a wonderful day out with impeccable timing, organisation (and weather).

Peter & Eirwen Sykes

Forthcoming events

Annual Golf Day Friday 30th August 2013

Oaklands Park Golf Club

Four ball followed by lunch

Trip to Cardiff 9th to 12th September

Including magnificent Caerphilly Castle, the Brecon Mountain Railway, the National Trust's Dyffyn House & Gardens, visit to the Penderyn Distillery and a lunch at the Glyndwr Vineyard.

London Walk, Late Sept/ Oct

Soho revisited (following Maldwyn's talk)

Details tbc

Evening visit to The Magic Circle

Tuesday 5th November 2013

Evening trip to London Magic Show

Christmas Drinks 8th December

Details to be advised

See the latest programme at:

<http://www.chilternwelsh.org/>