

# Chiltern District Welsh Society

## Summer Newsletter 2014



### Chairman's Report

The past six months or so have been a busy and very pleasing period in the life of the Society.

We have welcomed several new members, and membership numbers have climbed to 120 – as many as I can remember and a healthy position.

Over 50 members attended our AGM at Coleshill in May, and the formal business of the evening was over very quickly. I am grateful to the committee members who have served over the past year and were unanimously reappointed; they have done an excellent job both in running the Society and in providing such a varied programme of events.

The Christmas Drinks party is always an enjoyable event, and Christmas 2013 at the home of Bill and Sue Jones was no exception – and everyone was in fine voice for the carols, with over 50 participants.

We were nearly 50 people for the quiz and fish and chip supper in January. Much to their own surprise, the winning team contained the spouses of the two quizmasters – who can assure you that the result was not fixed!

Our St David's Day dinner was very special, with our highest-ever attendance, first-rate entertainment and a wonderful atmosphere. Reaching those heights next year will be a challenge, but one that a senior politician (we hope to welcome the Secretary of State for Wales) will relish.

Our trip to the theatre at Sonning ended up being delightful, despite the tense journey. I gather those who took part in the walk in May



managed, on their way to the pub, to find one or two bluebells still out!

After our AGM, Glenys Groves entertained us in her own inimitable style!

What do we have to look forward to?

Well, our next event is a conducted walk around the South Bank – please note the revised date of 26<sup>th</sup> July; our golf day is on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> August at Oakland Park; we

have the trip to the Festival of Male Voice Choirs at the Royal Albert Hall on 18<sup>th</sup> October; and Colin and Di Thomas will be hosting the Christmas drinks party on 7<sup>th</sup> December.

This year sees the anniversary of Dylan Thomas's birth. Our Swansea-based trip (8<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> September) will be visiting places associated with him; we still have places available if anyone is interested – please contact me.

We also have an additional event to add to our calendar: on the evening of 7<sup>th</sup> November at Coleshill Village Hall, Prof Tony Curtis (Emeritus Professor of Poetry at the University of South Wales) will be presenting his very entertaining talk "My Life with Dylan Thomas" – not to be missed!

Mwynhewch yr haf! Enjoy the summer!

Jonathan Pegler

## **Nadolig Llawn a Blwyddyn Newydd Dda! Xmas Drinks Party 2013**

A warm Welsh welcome was provided by Bill and Sue Jones for the Christmas Drinks Party which they hosted at their wonderful home in Camp Road, Gerrards Cross on Sunday 8th December.



The wine and beer flowed and an excellent turnout of over 50 people enjoyed a fine and plentiful selection of canapés from a new caterer, while they mixed with old friends, met new members and discussed their plans for Xmas and the New Year.



After an hour or so, when the canapés were eventually all consumed and the sound of chatter had begun to subside, it was time for the ever popular carol singing.

Bill Jones warmed up his electric organ with a solo virtuoso performance but it was John Pegler once again who was called on to provide the accompaniment for the carols.



Despite the fact that by then some members had already departed, the thirty or so remaining members joined in the singing of a traditional selection of carols in wonderful Welsh harmony before finishing the proceedings with a gusto performance of Maen hen wlad fy nhadau.

A fitting end to another successful year of events for CDWS.

Colin Thomas

## **Friday 24th January - Quiz Evening** with Fish & Chip Supper at Coleshill Village Hall



Jonathan Pegler & Gwyndaf John conspired to set a testing 100 questions. Forty seven brave members in teams of up to eight

tackled questions ranging from Welsh anagrams to a question relating to the death of Elvis Presley's twin brother.

The evening was most enjoyable and this year's larger teams encouraged greater participation.

After a hard fought quiz, the winning team was announced. It happened to consist of (from left to right) Jayne Pegler (wife of our Chairman), David & Irene Powell (Committee Member & wife), Anne Evans (President), Janet John (wife of quiz setter) and Rose Alkins (innocent bystander?).



No charge of collusion has ever been proved!

David Powell

### **Saturday 1st March - St David's Day Dinner**

This year's St David's Day dinner was the best attended yet, and what an enjoyable evening!

Eighty four people attended our event on 1st March at Gerrards Cross Golf Club. We all gathered about 6:30 for a glass of bubbly and this year Gwyndaf John provided name badges, which were particularly helpful for our newer members (or people like me who can always remember a face, but not always the name to go with it).

The meal included a really delicious Welsh lamb steak, preceded by a prawn tart and

finished off with a good old fashioned sponge pudding with custard.



After the meal we were entertained by the lovely Rhiannon Llewellyn accompanied at the piano by Peter Foggit.

Rhiannon told us tales about her background (including in Wales & Chalfont St Peter) and the fact that she used to be taught by Jayne Pegler.



A wonderful operatic soprano, Rhiannon will this year be the guest soloist for the London Welsh Festival of Male Choirs at the Royal Albert Hall. She gave a charming and captivating

performance covering a varied programme, which ranged from Puccini's La Boheme to Gershwin's Summertime. I think that most of the men in the audience liked the pieces where she played the 'vamp' and teased various gentlemen in the room



singing amorously at them ("soprano/lap dancer" she later said in a tweet).

Jonathan Pegler thanked them both, Rhiannon was

presented with a bouquet of flowers, and Peter with a bottle of wine.



Afterwards everyone gathered around the piano where song sheets were distributed and Jonathan played many of our old favourites.

Overall – an excellent evening of singing!

### 3rd April Theatre Visit to The Mill at Sonning



This was to be an evening of drama; but perhaps the drama came earlier than planned.

We were to be at Sonning by around 6.30PM in time for a pre-booked meal at the theatre before the play started. A coach had been booked, to pick-up in Denham, Gerrards Cross and finally in Amersham. Those of us waiting in the Amersham Community Centre car park became increasingly concerned as the 5:00pm collection time went past and no half-full coach had appeared on the road outside. An empty executive bus was parked down by the Drake Hall, but only Ann Evans had the eventual inspiration to seek out its driver and ask her about her why she was there. Ann is not our President for nothing!

This was indeed our bus, but somehow there had been a misunderstanding about the pick-up order and it was now clear that those due to board from the first two locations must already have been waiting for almost an hour: poor things.

Our lady driver made good time to Gerrards Cross but the traffic heading for Denham was almost at a standstill, and Margaret Payne deserves an award for patience after waiting near the Shell garage for an eternity – how glad she must have been to see Chairman Jonathan, who had rushed to find her and explain the mess-up.

Every good dramatist knows that one disaster must be heightened by several others and once we were on our way, up the M40, the next instalment became clear. Due to a major accident further up the motorway, our coach was once more crawling and the prospects of our meal were vanishing into the distance. And there was the dilemma: if we could leave the motorway at all where should it be (there were jams all around).

The theatre had been alerted to our lack of progress and problems continued until beyond Bisham. Eventually we were able to speed up and our driver, calm throughout, got us very efficiently through the last part of the journey. The sprint into the theatre, at just before 7PM, didn't create any time for drinks but at least it got us into buffet queue for our (late) first course. Phew!

The play that evening was Enchanted April, by Matthew Barber. Yes, we were going in April; but to call the evening so far "enchanted" was a bit of a stretch! Yet as the first actress started to set the scene it became clear that we were to be treated to a feast of good acting, and an intriguing plot.



The story follows the adventures of four British women who rent a villa in Italy for the month of April. They arrive with their problems and their anxieties, but flourish in the sun and the beauty of their castle location. For those not knowing the story (like me) there were surprises to come and, although the audience numbers were disappointing, the production was certainly not. The applause at the end showed how well the cast had portrayed the characters and why it was worth the effort to get there to see it.

And the happy ending?....Our journey back was uneventful!

Many thanks to those Committee members who arranged this enjoyable evening for us.

David Bevan

### Friday 9th May 2014 A.G.M. & Supper

AGM's are often dry, tedious affairs, but not with CDWS!

Our chairman, Jonathan Pegler welcomed over 50 members to the AGM held in the village hall in Coleshill. Jonathan described some of the highlights of the previous year, including the trip to Highgrove, our St David's Day dinner, the perfect weather for the Summer Lunch, the Golf Day, the four day sightseeing trip around Cardiff, visiting the Magic Circle and the Christmas Get-together.



A quick straw-poll revealed that there was sufficient interest in a visit to see the London Welsh Festival of Male Choirs at the Albert Hall on October 18th.

Graham Beavan briefly explained the intricacies of the Society's funds, reassuring the membership that we still had some.

With the formal part of the evening over Ann Tennant and her staff provided a delicious choice of hot dishes and desserts – so difficult to choose between that I had to try several of them.



Finally, we were entertained to a wonderful performance by Glenys Groves, accompanied at the piano by Francine. Glenys ran through a selection of songs from opera and musicals, some well known, others a new treat. I had never heard Cole Porter's song about the Little Oyster before!

Glenys finished to well deserved and enthusiastic applause.

We then quickly restored the hall to order and said our farewells at about 10:30 pm.

David Powell

### **17th May - Visit to Church Wood, Hedgerley**

A small, but elite party met by the village pond in Hedgerley on Saturday 17th May. We knew that our search might be in vain, but we were prepared to overcome many hardships in our search for late bluebells.



In fact the weather was perfect, the going easy, and yes! – we did find some late blooming bluebells. We were told that if we kept our eyes peeled, we might see some rare wild orchids growing next to the path – but no-one spotted them.

We meandered around the wood, with Gwyn and Jean Owen striding out ahead acting as pathfinders while others admired the wild flowers and tried to identify them.

After an hour or so we reached the church with an interesting churchyard, indicating that we were arriving back in civilisation – and there would be a pub nearby!



And what a pub – the journey was rewarded with a visit to The White Horse in Hedgerley, well known for both its food and beer. We sat in the garden talking of previous more adventurous escapades while enjoying one of a variety of beers from the cask and a great selection of hot & cold dishes.

David Powell

### **15th June Summer Lunch**



The Chiltern District Welsh Society Summer Lunch is always something to approach with eager anticipation but also with a degree of trepidation. Will it rain or won't it? Will all the pieces of the gazebos be there? Will there be a quiz?!

15th June started as usual with the ultimate male bonding exercise – forget rugby matches, days at the cricket or stag weekends: erecting the gazebos beats them hands down! It sounds easy enough, but there's always a pole missing at a crucial moment, or poles spring out of connectors unexpectedly; until, that is, the covering goes on, when all seems to bind magically

together. This year our dedicated group of chaps managed the feat in only a little over an hour, which is, I think, probably a record.

Many thanks to all who participated, and also to the ladies who provided our table decorations.



We had our usual luck with the weather. It didn't rain, and while it certainly wasn't particularly sunny or warm, the temperature was probably more tolerable than last year's blazing sunshine. Jean and Gwyn's beautiful garden provided an idyllic setting. The Summer Lunch is one of our main purely social events, and it was hard for me to persuade our 51 attendees to tear themselves away from chatting and/or exploring the garden and admiring the fruit and vegetables on display. Nevertheless, we managed to eat our way through a delicious buffet lunch, without a quiz to distract us this year!



The food was provided by the ever reliable Ann Tennant. This year she had an unexpected assistant in the form of a very cheeky Robin with designs on the croutons!



Apart from this, nothing very much happened – it was just one of those days when everyone seemed to enjoy each other's company.

I must thank Gwyn and Jean Owen for being the perfect hosts. The Society's first ever Summer Lunch took place in their garden 14 years ago. I found myself wondering why we had not returned sooner!

Jonathan Pegler



## 2014 Programme

### **26th July London Walk**

This will start and end in the London Bridge area and be led by Caroline James, a qualified London guide. There will be lots of things of interest to see and Caroline will add a few special Welsh items for us. She will be asking for a payment of at least £5 per head, the proceeds of which will be donated to the London Welsh Centre's refurbishment Appeal.

### **Friday 29th August Golf Day**

The Society's annual trip to Oaklands Park. This has always been a very successful golfing event – especially for the Broombys!

As always, non-players are welcome to join us for lunch.

### **8th to 12th September Swansea-based trip**

The trip includes an afternoon in Porthcawl, National Waterfront Museum, Georgian Swansea, Brangwyn Hall and a meeting with the Mayor, a scenic train ride from Swansea to Carmarthen, National Botanic Gardens, an afternoon in Laugharne, a boat trip up the Tawe, an afternoon on the Gower ending with dinner at the King Arthur, Neath Abbey, and Margam Castle and Abbey.

### **18th October 2014 - trip to The Royal Albert Hall**

Seats have been booked for The London Festival of Male Choirs at the Royal Albert Hall on Saturday 18th October 7:00pm.

The tickets are all together in the Rear Circle. They are in Row 7, so further back than last year for those who suffer from vertigo!

A coach has also been booked. The total cost is £50 a head, including both the seat and coach travel.

We have a limited number of places available so please let Gwyndaf know if you want to go. It will be first come, first served for this ever popular bi-annual event.

### **7th November - Dylan Thomas Talk**

A new event has been added to the Society's 2014 programme. Jonathan has persuaded Professor Tony Curtis (Emeritus Professor of Poetry at Glamorgan University) to present his talk "My Life with Dylan" to us on the evening of 7th November at Coleshill Village Hall.

Tony is a very entertaining speaker and a distinguished poet in his own right and we have been lucky to secure him in what is, for him, understandably a very busy year.

We have not yet decided what catering or other refreshments to provide, but please add the event to your cards/calendars and reserve the date in your diaries!

**My Life with Dylan** is an entertaining account of the influences and interactions felt by the Welsh poet Tony Curtis whose early years growing up in Carmarthen overlapped with Dylan's last years.

He was taught at university by Dylan's best friend Vernon Watkins; and has won the Western Mail's Dylan Thomas Prize as well as the Dylan Thomas Prize for Spoken Poetry.

Tony Curtis has taken the great American beat poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti to Dylan's Boat House and has talked with many who knew Dylan – Dannie Abse, John Pudney, Raymond Garlick, Stanley Moss, Glyn Jones, John Ormond and Dylan's daughter Aeronwy.

### **7th December 2014 - Xmas Drinks**

Make a note in your diaries for this popular event, kindly hosted by Colin & Di Thomas at their home in Gerrards Cross.

See the latest programme at:

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

### **MEMBERSHIP**

New members are always welcome.

Please contact our Membership Secretary, Ann Lawrence on:

01494 727207 or

[membership@chilternwelsh.com](mailto:membership@chilternwelsh.com)