

Chiltern District Welsh Society

Winter Newsletter 2013



Chairman's Report

Either I've had a very busy first six months as Chairman or our members have become more loquacious (is that possible?!), because, as you will see, we've had to expand the Newsletter!

Actually, we have been very active and there's a lot to talk about. Others have provided detailed reviews of our recent events, so I shall confine myself to just two brief observations.

The first is that we continue to be lucky with the weather: we had a glorious Sunday afternoon for the Summer Lunch so ably hosted by Di and Colin Thomas; the Golf Day was fine and not too hot; and we escaped the rain during our few days in Cardiff, the valleys and the Vale – just as well, since I didn't have a wet weather plan!

The second is that I am always struck by how friendly and considerate we are to each other. At recent events I have noticed a particular spirit; each group of attendees seems to gel instantly and to revel in each other's company – whether on a morning (golf), afternoon (summer lunch) or evening (Magic Circle) event or when we're away for a few days together. Long may things continue that way.

Bill and Sue Jones deserve our thanks, not just for hosting the Christmas Drinks this year, but also because Bill has been instrumental in securing some excellent coverage in our local newspaper, courtesy of our new friend Lorcan Lovett of the Advertiser, who will be joining us for drinks on December 8th.

Your Committee has put together what I think looks a very exciting programme of events for 2014.

We have been particularly fortunate to secure for our 2014 St David's Day Dinner an

exciting young musical talent who is doubly qualified to entertain us, being Welsh and having grown up in Chalfont St Peter: soprano Rhiannon Llewellyn. Her website is <http://www.rhiannon-llewellyn.co.uk/>

Later in the year, from 8-12 September, we shall be running another trip to South Wales, this time based in Swansea since this year sees the 100th anniversary of Dylan Thomas's birth.

Of course, there are plenty of other events, and details are set out, as usual, on our website and event card.

It's been a successful six months; I hope we will all find the next year as enjoyable.

Nadolig Llawen a Blwyddyn Newydd Dda
Jonathan

Summer Lunch

Cymru ar Wasgar yn y Chilterns 2013



What a scorcher! The weatherman said 30C, whilst one person leaving the lunch said her car recorded 33C. It was probably the hottest day we'd ever had for our annual summer lunch. And weren't we all grateful for it. I'm sure that the committee had planned the marquees in case it rained, but weren't we grateful for their protection from the sun? Not that we complained – it made us all feel very good.

And as people arrived we saw a large array of hats on display, topping lovely summer outfits. Had we had a best hat parade I would have given my gents vote to Bob Ford's – what style! The ladies too had brought hats but most carried them in so I didn't see too many being worn, but Pam Britton wore hers with grace. We mingled over drinks to catch up on gossip, using "ein hiaith" where we could, whilst Jean Owen and Muriel Knight distributed small posies of flowers which they'd brought along to brighten up the tables.

Janet John had brought along a bubble making machine which created a party spirit as the bubbles danced their way through the tents until their all too



brief existence came to an end as they drifted into more solid things. Irene Powell said one can get square bubbles these days! What good are the corners?

The day had started at 9:45 when a team arrived to erect the marquees, set up the tables etc. What team work! Thanks go to Colin Thomas, Alan Longshaw, Peter Johnson, David Powell, Maldwyn Pugh, Gwyndaf John, Jonathan Pegler and Bill Jones. Di Thomas too was busy making sure everything was as she wanted it (including laying down some more grit!).

Let's go further back.....the committee must have been preparing this day for many months. Di and Colin had kindly volunteered their lovely house – The New House - back in the Summer of 2012 so that the program could be printed. Maldwyn Pugh had secured the loan of the marquees from Little Chalfont Parish Council, whilst Gwyndaf John and David Powell had collected them a couple of days before. The ladies in Ann Evans's Welsh class had prepared the posies of flowers for the tables.

Colin also had his Moore and Moore pedal-powered harmonium carried out to help with

the singing later on if required. It's not far from a hundred years old (since M&M finished trading in 1921) and of course being pipe-based can't go out of tune! Memories of the chapel flooded back.



Anyone passing The New House would have wondered why Welsh Flags were so prominent on the hedges on Windsor Road, but for us they were welcoming homing beacons! And so at 12:30 we came from far and wide to our annual summer lunch. Jonathan Pegler (our chairman) welcomed us and gave us the order of the day and thanked the caterer, Jill Mayo, and her team. She had also arranged the supply of tables and chairs. He then passed over to Gwyndaf to introduce the dreaded quiz. Don't quizzes make you realize how little you know?

It was a quiz about the Lions – given his birthplace, height and weight, identify the Welsh member of the squad. If you got them right you got points and if you needed clues you lost points. As Gwyndaf explained how the cunning points system worked, over on my right Jonathan Pegler was gaily sauntering through the list and filling in the names all by himself, such that by the time Gwyndaf returned to the table, Jonathan had done all of it by himself! Most of the other tables were too proud to sacrifice points for clues – with dire consequences. When it came to marking, Jonathan had got them all correct whilst the next nearest score was around 60%. So the Quizmaster, exercising the great powers vested upon him, disqualified Jonathan's table for spurious reasons, and declared the other table winners.

As for me I'd declare the whole thing void since one of the correct answers was Sam Warburton whereas Sam Warburton is in fact Sam Kennedy-Warburton and it's on such things that reputations are made and lost. Despite rugby fan Margaret Payne's sterling efforts at her table, there was a heartfelt plea from some of the ladies to have a quiz more suited to their gender. Maybe a lady will set a quiz the next time?

The lunch itself was a selection of quiche and cold meat, salad and delicious summer desserts – ideal for the weather. Colin's collection of Welsh CD's played at low volume provided suitably "hiraethog" background music.



After the meal Jonathan expressed our gratitude to Di and Colin for graciously hosting us and presented them with flowers and a bottle of good wine. Gwyn & Jean Owen can hardly wait until it's their turn next year!

Gwyndaf also had a cricket game lined up in the further part of the Garden but we never got to try that since it was far too hot for such activity and everyone was so engrossed in their conversations, although some had been practising in the morning – did they have an inside edge?

This "wilder" part of the garden had interesting features such as the mirror on the wall as a "through the looking glass", a ladder up the tree and, an old arch over which draped lovely roses. Colin explained to me that this latter arch (and it was old!) was one of 3 original ones from the Manor House on whose grounds The New House was built.

And as we were winding down, Barrie Reece – with his wife Ann, new members attending their first Society event - decided to have a go on Colin's organ. And good he is too! Watch out John Breese and Jonathan Pegler, there's competition about.



So we had a few songs to finish with. Colin led the singing with laser-like precision on the top notes, whilst Jonathan - recently returned from an operatic course in Italy - provided the harmony.

Then those staying behind helped with dismantling the marquees and tables, packing everything and leaving it as we found it, so that Di and Colin could get back to normality quickly. Liz Seely showed us how to fold the cloths and tents to perfection.

Thank you Di and Colin for hosting us and thanks to all who made the many hands



make light work. Diolch o galon i bawb a ddoth i wneud diwrnod atgofiadwy i'r gymdeithas.

Maldwyn gave me a lift back in his gleaming new car, telling me that he's planning an over 200 mile walk from Swansea to Aberaeron. Maybe that's what growing up in Soho does for you! A lovely end to a lovely day.

Bill Jones

Annual Golf Day Friday 30th August 2013

Another lovely day for our golfing visit to Oaklands Park, Chalfont St, Giles. I cannot remember poor weather for this event which has been running for a number of years, firstly at Harewood Downs and latterly at Oaklands Park. The course has been especially good this year and did us proud again.

We were fewer in number this year, 21 as against 30 last year, and as usual a couple of guests came in at the last moment to make up the numbers. Eight non-playing members joined us for an excellent lunch after which our President, Ann Evans presented the prizes.

Jane Morris, Alan Longshaw and Ralph Broomby won the Team Prize. Ann Lawrence, with an amazing 41 points, won the individual Stableford Prize.

The nearest the pin prizes went to Margaret Broomby and Ralph Broomby, and the



longest drive prizes to Brenda Adams and Colin Thomas.

Note the frequency of one family in the results; rumours that a new trophy cabinet has been ordered by Ralph have not been substantiated.

Chris Thomas

Trip to Cardiff 9th to 12th September

As we left on the M4, the heavens opened and rain washed the coach! As we approached the majestic Severn Bridge, the heavens cleared, the sun shone and we were in God's country, Cymru, once again!



First stop Dewstow Gardens, Caerwent. We were not disappointed. Fortified by soup and/or other foods we explored the Edwardian gardens, complete with remarkable grottos and waterworks put there by Henry Oakley in the early 20th Century, but covered up with soil ca 1940 until rediscovered by the Harris family in 2000; a truly great experience of magnificent trees, lawns, flowers, water features and plants in an undulating landscape and in excellent sunshine under a blue sky! Then, back on the coach, we turned in the direction of Cardiff for a visit to the Senedd scheduled to start at 3.00pm.



At the Senedd, we were met by Gareth Coombes, a young enthusiastic Welsh Guide who enthralled us with the efficiency of the 61 seats of the Assembly, the marvellous architecture of the Chamber, debate in the Welsh language, educational policy for teaching Welsh, accompanied by a

knowledge and wit which successfully parried the diverse questions about the Assembly and its business fired at him by us. And then on to central Cardiff and a modern Premier Inn; well chosen, comfortable, excellent breakfasts and totally co-operative Staff.



The next day saw a martial start for a visit to Caerphilly Castle built by Gilbert de Clare over just 3 years in 1260/70 at a then cost of £19,000. Jonathan provided an excellent running commentary on everything we saw from the coach and what we were about to see with considerable historic detail (at all times we were travelling in the coach!).

The Castle did not disappoint with its ramparts, towers, 500 year old gates, green lawns, fantastic views of the surrounding hillsides, the massive moats, and visions of a green lady ghost!! We were conducted around the Castle by a lovely Scottish Lady who pointed out architectural detail, an open garderobe complete with seated man and sound effects (!!), and the significance of the Castle to protect the South from an advancing army of Llywelyn ap Gruffydd, which threat was removed in 1282 when he was killed. Not even with the assistance of men in the party could the massive leaning tower be pushed back into a vertical position!!

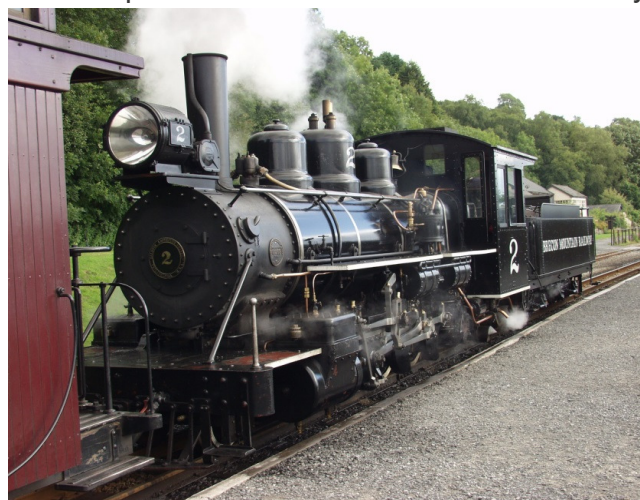
And then on to Penderyn Whisky Distillery with a stop for light Lunch at the charming Country Hotel "Ty Newydd" near Hirwaun. Here "Ken", the coach driver, showed his experience by safely negotiating the narrow gate and road up to the Hotel, a skill he

repeated magnificently at the Glyndwr Vineyard and Castell Coch!



At the family-run rapidly expanding Penderyn Distillery we were treated to an excellent account of the process by the daughter of the owner, followed by a delightful tasting of the different products convincing us all of the merits of the Whisky, and purchases of this liquid Welsh gold!

Next stop was the Brecon Mountain Railway:



carriages drawn by a 4-6-2, 47 ton American Narrow Gauge steam locomotive "No 2" (2 foot gauge, made by the Baldwin Company of Philadelphia in 1930) complete with bell and two-tone whistle steaming through part of the Brecon Beacons National Park alongside the large Taf Fechan reservoir. This experience was topped with a cornet of Sidoli's Ice Cream on the return journey!

We ascended the coach once again and arrived at the Fig Tree restaurant on the sea front at Penarth with a view of the Severn, the Holmes and the Pier, for an excellent meal

and further camaraderie before returning to our Hotel in Cardiff.



A relaxing start to the next day at 9.30am saw us in the Market Town of Y Bont-faen (Cowbridge), again in great weather, to enjoy the picturesque buildings, the fine Physic Garden with its herbs and medicinal plants, and antique memorabilia.



Soon we were on our way to the family run Glyndwr Vineyard for a fascinating talk on grape culture and husbandry, an explanation of how semi-dry champagne is labelled "brut(e)", a walk in the vineyards, pest control



for the grapes, and a sample of some of the

wines that are produced there topped with a quality buffet lunch. More bottles were added to our collections for consumption in safer surroundings!



In the afternoon we went to Dyffryn House and its splendid Gardens and Glasshouses to appreciate this property of John Cory; its wilful dilapidations but colossal potential now being dealt with by the National Trust. The evening was free: some went to distant eating places in the City, some to the Theatre and the weather held up!

Early morning start on the last day saw us up and about, and with the Coach fully loaded, a drive up the valley to Castell Coch, created by the 3rd Marquis of Bute at the end of the 19th century. Decorated somewhat similarly to Cardiff castle with painted walls and gilded ceilings, it was a truly fairy tale chateau nestling in the woods with great views.



Then back towards home, but firstly a stop at



Chepstow, and in sunshine and under a blue sky we visited the Castle, had tea, coffee and lunch in the delightful array of shops, and bought strawberries from a barrow on the concourse whose sellers were ably assisted by the vocal powers of Eilwen!!

A delightful, educative and enjoyable tour well



organised and led by Jonathan, with camaraderie between members of the group that formed a firm base for success!! Diolch!

Barrie Reece

Evening visit to The Magic Circle

Tuesday 5th November 2013



This can't be the place!

Many of us thought that we were lost when the coach dropped us off in North Gower Street and we made our way down Stephenson Way. We walked down a dark quiet cobbled street with no sign of a theatre, just offices and goods entrances. Then, near the end of the street, there was a small entrance with people going in – we'd found it.

We signed in and climbed a steep spiral staircase to a large room with many displays of props and accessories of famous magicians – David Nixon, Tommy Cooper, Paul Daniels, Houdin and Houdini were all represented.

Chairs were set out in groups of 20 around small tables, and our party was split into 2 with 20 in one group and 6 in another.

Soon the first magicians arrived – one to each table – only a foot or two from the audience. We had a series of 4 magicians demonstrating their close-up magic skills, and each selected at least one member of the audience to assist!

Patricia Payne was persuaded to demonstrate a finger guillotine and was very brave as the blade descended without any ill effect.

Gwen Finnerty and Irene Powell proved to be able assistants – Irene demonstrating a levitating card.

Rob Brett and Liz Seely showed that they could not keep hold of cards in their hands as they mysteriously moved from one person's closed hand to another.

We then had a talk on the history of magic from Egyptian times to the present day, including the formation of the Magic Circle in 1905.



A light meal was provided and we all looked for somewhere to sit and were joined by some of the magicians who continued to amaze us with tricks which seemed to be just impossible.



We then went back to the theatre where we watched acts by four different magicians, a couple of whom were familiar from the Penn & Teller television programme.

The show went on until almost 11:00, but our coach driver didn't seem to mind that we were late and we got back home before 12:00.

The universal feeling was that the whole experience was simply Magic!

David Powell

Provisional 2014 Programme

Friday 24th January 2014- Quiz Evening

with Fish & Chip Supper at Coleshill Village Hall

Saturday 1st March St David's Day Dinner

Gerrards Cross Golf Club, with the soprano
Rhiannon Llewellyn

3rd April Theatre Visit

Visit to the Mill at Sonning to see *Enchanted April*

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

Followed by entertainment at Coleshill Village Hall

17th May Bluebell Wood walk

Hedgerley Woods - date may change depending
on when the Bluebells are out!

15th June Summer Lunch

at Gwyn & Jean Owen's home in Gerrards Cross

12th July London Walk

Conducted tour around the South Bank

Friday 29th August Golf Day

Oaklands Park

8th to 12th September Swansea-based trip

with visits to places associated with Dylan
Thomas centenary. Numbers limited to 20

October 2014 - trip to Albert Hall

Male voice choirs. No details available yet.

7th December 2014 - Xmas Drinks

See the latest programme at:

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