

# Chiltern District Welsh Society

## Spring Newsletter 2011



### Chairman's Report

The Society has been busy since the last newsletter.

Bill & Sue Jones did a grand job hosting the Xmas Drinks in December. Special thanks to those whose keyboard talent enabled the rest of us to exercise our lungs on the Carols.

The Quiz Evening was presented by a delightfully quirky Quizmaster. I discovered his cousin was a well-known character in my home town. Isn't Wales a small country!

It's pleasing that the Society was able to support young Welsh talent in the form of Osian Gwynn, the excellent baritone who entertained us at the St David's Day Dinner. And as Pat reports, we had a wonderful sing-song to round off the evening. I'm sure we won't have seen or heard the last of our guests from Slough Welsh Society.

At the AGM it was reported that the Society maintains a healthy cash balance and that membership had risen again. Supper was well arranged by our very own ladies, and was followed by an engrossing talk from the Rev. Richard Brunt.

The Houses of Parliament Tour and Dinner was a special event and a great success. During the tour Emyr Davies sat on a bench in the House of Lords but managed to avoid punishment! At the excellent meal the Rt. Hon. Cheryl Gillan MP entertained us with an informative off-the-cuff speech.

The Ramble in the Chilterns was a new and different locally based event. We are fortunate to live in or near the Chilterns, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. A break in the weather enabled us to enjoy some of that beauty and the interesting flora and fauna of our locality. And all rounded off by a convivial pub lunch.

Looking forward, varied events are planned. We want to maintain an active, involved membership with events of broad appeal. It's your Society and if you can please consider joining the Committee to help develop and organize our yearly programme of events.

Gwyndaf John

### Christmas Drinks at the White House

The well attended final event of 2010 was the Xmas drinks party hosted by Sue & Bill Jones in Gerrards Cross. Ann Tennant did the catering. The highlight of the event was the typical Welsh sing song organized by Bill.



### Quiz Evening – 28<sup>th</sup> January 2011.

46 members and friends attended our Quiz Evening at Coleshill Village Hall.



The Quiz Master was Graham Penn, a retired dentist from Milford Haven, now living in

Cardiff. His Welsh Themed Quiz was based around photographs of Welsh scenes. He introduced each photo with either a personal anecdote or some history of the site.

Graham's novel presentation of the quiz was a refreshing change in format and made for an enjoyable evening.

A fish & chip supper arrived on time and was soon devoured. The evening passed quickly. The winning table, including Jonathon Pegler as usual, were presented with their prizes by our Chairman.

Maldwyn Pugh

### **St. David's Day Dinner 2011**

The annual St. David's Day dinner took place on Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> February at Gerrards Cross Golf Club.

After the Welsh victory over Italy in the Five Nations, the seventy or so members and their guests, including five from Slough Welsh Society, were in cheerful mood as we gathered together to celebrate our Patron Saint's Day with an evening of food, wine, conversation and music.

The evening began with a welcome drink and time to catch up with old friends and meet new members before moving into the dining room. We were made extremely welcome by the staff and enjoyed a good dinner. Conversation flowed, and, feeling relaxed and satisfied, we settled comfortably to enjoy the next part of the evening.

Gwyndaf introduced the young Welsh baritone, Osian Gwynn and his accompanist, Adrian Kingsmill. Osian treated us to a wonderfully varied repertoire which included arias from operas by Mozart and Puccini, songs from musical theatre and some much loved traditional Welsh songs, ending with a magnificent rendition of "Aros Mae'r Mynyddau Mawr". The performance, judging by the volume and duration of the applause, was greatly enjoyed and appreciated.

Osian and Adrian were presented with gifts as a mark of our appreciation. We then sang the National Anthem before gathering around

John Breese at the piano for the traditional finale of the evening.

The song sheets were passed round and we sang our hearts out, no doubt inspired by the wonderful music we had heard earlier.



Two of our guests from Slough Welsh society are members of the London Welsh Male Voice Choir and Geraint and Gareth's fine performance of Myfanwy left us with tears in our eyes and lumps in the throat. What a way to end a truly memorable evening!

Pat Whitworth

### **AGM 6<sup>th</sup> May**

45 members attended the AGM in Coleshill Village Hall.

The Chairman welcomed everyone and reviewed the previous year's events. He thanked all the committee for their help over the year, and the ladies for arranging the buffet supper.

Membership Secretary Ann Browne advised that membership now stood at 109. Then Treasurer Eileen Mitchell presented her financial report, which showed that the Society had healthy balance. Members were advised that the membership fee was being maintained at £10.

Maldwyn, Anne and Eileen had decided to step down from their roles. They were each thanked by Gwyndaf for their considerable efforts on behalf of the Society and presented with small gifts.

Graham Beavan was elected Treasurer and Kay Day Minute Secretary with membership

duties reallocated. David Powell will look after the Society's website.

Under 'Any Other Business' the indomitable Mike Stythe suggested that he lead a walk in Snowdonia, using the train to get up so that several peaks could be climbed without too much strenuous effort!



After the formal business, we enjoyed a buffet supper prepared by a number of the lady members. That was followed by a fascinating talk from the Rev. Richard Brunt on how he, an English farmer's son, came to study in Aberystwyth, learn Welsh, work in China for 6 years then became responsible for the Presbyterian Welsh Chapels in London, based at Jewin, in the City of London.

Maldwyn Pugh.

### **Tour & Dinner at the Houses of Parliament**

Early afternoon Friday 10<sup>th</sup> June: members of the Society and guests boarded a coach bound for the Palace of Westminster.

The Rt Hon Cheryl Gillan, MP for Amersham & Chesham and Secretary of State for Wales, had facilitated this visit for us and would be our host for the dinner. But, our first stop was the Jewel Tour, a surviving part of the original palace, built in 1365. Its three floors now house a small museum, linked by a spiral stone staircase. Fortunately all our members survived the hazards and progressed to the tour of the Houses of Lords and Commons.

We were reminded that "Parliament" comprised three elements: The Lords, the Commons and The Queen. Our route would

follow the Monarch's path for the State Opening of Parliament.

We assembled in the huge Westminster Hall. Almost 1000 years old, it has the largest hammer-beam roof in Europe and has been the scene of Coronation receptions, famous trials and the lying-in-state of historic figures. From there we progressed to the Queen's Robing Room, where she prepares for her procession to the House of Lords.

The House of Lords was very impressive, with red and gold everywhere and many historic features. We learned how Lords and MPs were fitted in for the State Opening and how the membership of the Lords had evolved over the years.

The route to the Commons showed a sharp contrast. Things were not so ornate and the contrast between the two Houses was part of the original design intention (or perhaps the Victorian architects ran out of money!).

It's clear that 650 MPs would not fit into the available space in the House of Commons. Green upholstery covers the limited seating and backbenchers can use a "prayer card" to secure a much-demanded space. But they must be in place early, in time for prayers!

We also visited areas where MPs congregate to vote or to be lobbied. Our tour leaders were both informative and entertaining: giving us a historical and contemporary feel for how our democracy has operated and developed.

Our venue for the Dinner was a long thin private dining room with a very long table, set to accommodate our 46 diners. The "River View" was temporarily obscured but, as Cheryl joined us, we were all set for a great evening. Our President Ann Evans said grace in Welsh, heralding the start of a splendid meal with House of Commons wine and very pleasant comradeship. Cheryl circulated to chat to everyone during the meal. And she gave a really informative talk afterwards, highlighting Welsh issues and progress, as well as telling us about her own career and background. Her stamina is amazing and she was very receptive to



questions, giving full and open answers with very entertaining insights where appropriate.

The time went quickly and the dinner marked the end of a superb visit which was really appreciated by all. We are very grateful to Cheryl for her organisation and time; and to Gwyndaf for his painstaking arrangement of a trip which will be remembered by all.

### **Warburg's Wonders and Wanderers**

Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> June at 10.30am. No rain, private parking, knowledgeable guide (free), and a mystery trail!

This is what 17 hardy souls turned up for on a bright, fresh June morning at the Warburg Nature Reserve. Owned and managed by the Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust, it nestles in a tranquil valley near Henley-on-Thames. Its mixture of chalk grassland and ancient woodland ensures an ideal site for birds and butterflies in particular.

A stone's throw from the cars found us peering like excited children into a large reedy pond, trying to spot elusive frogs and newts; others solemnly studied the plant life, consulted the reference books and in hushed tones identified the 'alisma-plantago-aquatica' – the water plantain to you and me.

Ambling through beech woods dappled with sunlight we called out with surprise as we spotted pink and white orchids and Helleborines. However, we needed the skill of the Reserve Warden (his full-time job!) to show us the rare Yellow Bird's Nest Orchid hidden underfoot midst golden-brown leaves.

The Visitor centre's excellent resources answered our queries and delighted us with its 'wild garden', exhorting us to plant for the bugs and the birds and not just for our own satisfaction. It was here that we glimpsed the Marble White butterfly.

Another surprise was to discover random pieces of rusting metal scattered along the woodland perimeter as we strolled across open grassland. Cautious lifting revealed SLOW WORMS – fantastic. Now I know what

do with the old dustbin lid in the shed – stick it on the compost heap, a prime reptile location!



After pleasant ramblings of the foot and vocal variety, we adjourned to the brilliant 'Rainbow Inn at Middle Assendon' – what a splendid name and venue. The Sunday roast and mouth-watering treacle pudding satisfied the rumblings of an empty stomach. Both conversation and wine flowed freely and well after 3 o'clock it was agreed that a great time had been had by all.

Thank you Gwyndaf for guiding the event, and stroll on next year!

Sue Jones

### **Forthcoming events**

#### **Summer Lunch - Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> July 201**

At the home of Margaret & Ralph Broomby, founder members of the Society.

#### **Annual Golf Day - Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> September**

At Oakland Park Golf Club, Chalfont St. Giles. Non-players are welcome to join the golfers for drinks, lunch and the prize-giving.

#### **Christmas Drinks - Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> December**

Kindly hosted by Jayne & Jonathon Pegler.

#### **Some other dates and events for 2012.**

- Quiz Evening, January 27<sup>th</sup>.
- A.G.M. 4<sup>th</sup>.May
- Visit to Llangollen International Eisteddfod early July.