

Chiltern District Welsh Society

Winter Newsletter 2012



Chairman's Report

In the short time since our last Newsletter the Society has enjoyed a number of events.

The Annual Golf Day at Oakland Park at the end of August was held in glorious weather, despite it being one of the wettest years on record. It was decided by acclamation that we would seek to repeat the event at the same time and the same place next year.

For the two events in September, most members restricted themselves to just one choice so attendance was widely spread and both were much enjoyed. Thanks go to Anne Thomas for her inspiration and detailed planning of the Buckingham Palace trip. Hugh Griffith's daughter studied at Jesus College and thanks to that connection he started organising the Oxford event. The attendees took lunch in the panelled dining hall at Jesus College and enjoyed the rare privilege of a tour of the Fellows' Library. There we were allowed to read and touch some special books of great historical significance. These included a first edition of the Bible in Welsh dating from the reign of the first Queen Elizabeth. The two official guides who then took us around central Oxford added to the pleasure by their humour as well as their knowledge.

A coachload of members travelled in for the biennial London Welsh Festival of Male Voice Choirs at the Royal Albert Hall Concert. On this occasion we sat in the front rows of the balcony - an excellent position for the concert except for Kay Day's guest who suffers from vertigo! We heard exceptional Brass Band music as well as the wonderful singing from the massed choirs. As usual several choirs had come up from Wales and also one from as far away as Glasgow.

Looking ahead, Christmas drinks will be held at the home of Jonathan & Jayne Pegler for the second year in succession. The catering will again be in the capable hands of Ann

Tennant, this time with the assistance of a couple of young helpers to serve. The wine and canapés are provided free of charge but members are required to come prepared to join in some carol singing!

A highlight of our 2013 programme will be the presence of the renowned harpist Claire Jones at our St David's Day Dinner. We have been fortunate that our President, Ann Evans, knows Claire personally. Until recently the Official Harpist to the Prince of Wales, Claire performed for the newly married Duke and Duchess of Cambridge at their wedding reception in Buckingham Palace and she is now ready to perform for our Society. The Dinner will be on March 1st. Get ready to book your tickets soon.

A suitable venue is required for our Summer Lunch next June. Could you provide one?

And finally thanks to all who have chosen to pay their subs by Standing Order.

Gwyndaf John

Golf day at Oakland Park - 31st August

Perfect sunny weather and an attractive, well maintained and not-too-strenuous course helped to make a very enjoyable event with a record turnout of 31 players.

The format this year was in the form of an Arizona Shuffle with a somewhat controversial ruling that men played off the white tees. Ten teams of three competed, with one player's score counting on the par 5 holes, the two highest scores on par 4's and all three scores on the par 3's.

Overall Team winners with 85 points were Brenda Adams, Jane Morris & Colin Thomas. Second were Pat Whitworth, Gwyndaf John & Gwyn Owen with 81 points and third Pam Britton, Marilyn Evans and Emyr Davies with 80 points.

Pat Whitworth won the prize for the Best Female Score of 37 and Emyr Davies the

Best Male Score with 38. The prize for Men in 'Nearest the Pin' at the 6th hole went to Brian Evans, who also took the prize for the Longest Drive at the 16th. Sue Mills took the prize for 'Ladies Nearest the Pin' on the 14th, and Rowena Gimson won the Longest Ladies Drive on the 4th hole.

The day concluded with several non-playing members joining us for an excellent lunch of steak and kidney pie or salmon, and fruit salad.



A vote of thanks was given to Chris Thomas and Rob and Pam Britton for organizing the event. We all agreed to reconvene at Oakland Park again next year on the same Friday, with the same format.

Jane Morris

Buckingham Palace State rooms and Gardens

Tuesday 4th September was a glorious day. Some twenty five of us met at Buckingham Palace for our tour of the State Apartments.

Equipped with our earphones we were guided through the Throne Room, the Picture Gallery, the Dining Room, the Music Room and the Ballroom, to name but a few; and instantly became absorbed into the lavish and historic world surrounding us. Elaborate cornices, lanterns and domes rose resplendent above us encrusted with symbolic motifs such as shamrock, rose and thistle (where was the daffodil or the leek?) whilst regal red and gold engulfed us. The great masters from Titian to Van Dyke graced the walls and Andrew Lloyd Webber's manuscript of the anthem he'd composed for the Diamond Jubilee was a centre-piece in a

calm blue, lapis-lazuli pillared Music Room. The Ballroom, much loved by Queen Victoria, was home to eleven foot high and almost six foot wide English crystal chandeliers which apparently are lowered and sprayed with water before being hand dried with a soft cloth and raised into position. Did anyone recall that particular episode in "Only Fools and Horses?!"

Nash had a field-day when he transformed Bucks House into Buckingham Palace. No wonder he was relieved of his duties for exceeding the budget!

The dazzling diamond display of royal crowns, tiaras, necklaces, earrings and brooches was truly spectacular. When you read this, Jonathan, I particularly like the necklace



Our afternoon was spent in the gardens with a highly informative and entertaining guide. We strolled along the Queen's Walk admiring the champion trees, shrubs and the design of the borders. Apparently, only ten gardeners attend to the vast grounds! The roses were still in bloom and we viewed the particular rose bed the Prince of Wales had laid in memory of the Queen Mother. The tennis court on which Fred Perry played, and later McEnroe and Borg, gave rise to some interesting tales and all too soon we finished our delightful visit on a peaceful note beside the lake.

Many thanks to Anne Thomas for organising such a wonderful outing for us. How ever did she manage to get even the weather right?!

Jayne Pegler

Oxford Tour & Lunch at Jesus College, 20th September



The first sign of Jesus College's Welsh connection is at the top of the left hand entrance gate in Turl Street, where a tiny Welsh Dagon is reading a book, waiting to welcome us: "Croeso i'r Colleg Iesu"!

After brief introductions, we were shown into the Library, where the Librarian, Owen McKnight, began by explaining the College's Welsh connections. The College was founded in 1571, and, until the 1870s, students at Jesus were overwhelmingly Welsh. Today the College draws its students from all over the world.

Jesus College's traditional connection with Wales is supported with early books in the Celtic languages. The Librarian showed us a first edition of Bishop Morgan's translation of the Bible into Welsh, and a 1730 bilingual Welsh/Latin edition of *Cyfreithiau Hywel Dda* (the Laws of Hywel Dda). Seeing our surprise that he handled the ancient texts with his bare hands, he explained that the latest expert advice was that old books should not be touched with the white cotton gloves beloved of TV documentaries! The Library's books were originally chained, but they were "set free" in the 18th century.

After the tour of the Library, we made our way downstairs to the Hall for lunch. Jesus has what is generally acclaimed as the finest college hall in Oxford. As we ate the 2-course lunch, we were looked down on by portraits of Queen Elizabeth 1, co-founder of the college, (workshop of Nicholas Hilliard), benefactors Charles I and Charles II, painted by van Dyck and Lely, respectively and, one of the College's best-known Old Members, TE Lawrence ("Lawrence of Arabia") a copy of

Augustus John's portrait, with a certain likeness to Peter O'Toole!

After coffee, and a breath of air in the "quad", we moved to the Chapel, where we were introduced to our two Official Oxford Tour Guides, Bill Leonard and Ted East, who led us in two groups on a further walking tour of neighbouring colleges and sights. Each guide, whom we can strongly recommend, provided his own colourful and insightful commentary which added greatly to the pleasure of the experience.



Among the sites were: Exeter College, All Souls' College and Wadham College. Pictures can show the interior of Sir Giles Gilbert Scott's neo-gothic chapel at Exeter College, but only by being there is one able to appreciate the sheer exuberance of the interior. The highlight of the tour was probably the William Morris tapestry, designed by Edward Burne-Jones, "The Adoration of the Magi", which was to be found in the Gothic Revival chapel, built by George Gilbert Scott, of Exeter College.

From the walls of the Fellows' Garden at Exeter we looked down on Radcliffe Square (as have Morse and Lewis before us) and took in the harmonious composition of the buildings – the Radcliffe Camera at the centre, Hertford, All Souls and BNC, the University Church of St Mary and, to our rear, Exeter itself and the Bodleian. When we entered the First Quad of Lincoln College, one of our number whispered to me doubtfully "Is that real grass?"

Diolch yn fawr to Hugh & Gwyndaf for arranging such an interesting and entertaining tour.

Meic Lloyd Ricketts & Jonathan Pegler

London Welsh Festival of Male Choirs Royal Albert Hall, 13th October

A massed choir of five hundred voices: an evening of glorious, uplifting music.

Joining host-choir London Welsh Male Voice on stage, with Edward-Rhys Harry as conductor, was The Cory Band from the Rhondda and, as compere, Frank Lincoln, who steered us through the evening with humour and aplomb.

The music took off with some real favourites like "Speed your Journey", John Rutter's rousing arrangement of "When the Saints go Marching in" and the obligatory hymn-tune arrangements with their loud "Amen", all as a nod to tradition. However, a different atmosphere prevailed with the performance of a new work by Karl Jenkins called "The Hero's Journey" - specially commissioned by the London Welsh M.V.C. to celebrate the 2012 Olympic Games. We were now in new territory. Bold harmonies and persistent rhythms lashed out by the brass-band had taken over, with the composer raising the bar and putting great demands on the choir.

The soloists, Caryl Hughes (soprano) and Wyn Davies (tenor), gave us some fine, expressive singing. Full credit goes to Annabel Thwaite on the piano, who demonstrated real sensitivity to nuances and colouring in all her playing. She really was a delight to listen to – and to watch.

Next, a short diversion as Huw Edwards was installed as the President of the L.W.M.V.C. to succeed the late Philip Madoc. Yet another commitment for Huw who, with his zest for all things Welsh, will surely be a good ambassador for the choir.

Then some more music, culminating in a wonderful rendition of "Y Tangnefeddwyr" ("The Peacemakers"), a work of great appeal and, by now, one of the cornerstones of the male voice choir repertoire. The broad, expansive phrases in the final refrain, with the organ piling sound upon sound and lifting the music to new heights, were truly wonderful.

Finally, to round off the evening, another great Welsh hymn-tune, "Bryn Myrddin" and "Hen Wlad fy Nhadau", both rendered in stirring manner with the audience joining in and again with the organ on full throttle,

enough to rock the Hall's foundations. All in all, a great Festival.

A big "Thank you" to Maldwyn for arranging the coach and getting us seats high up in the Balcony, though some of us vertigo-sufferers could have done with some seat belts!

Noson fythgofiadwy! Diolch Maldwyn.

John Breese.

Forthcoming events – Provisional Programme for 2013

Quiz Evening - 25th January

Coleshill Village Hall

7 for 7.30pm with Fish & Chip Supper

LV Cup Rugby - 3rd February

London Welsh vs. Newport Gwent Dragons

Kassam Stadium, Oxford

St David's Day Dinner - 1st March

Gerrards Cross Golf Club

Entertainment by harpist Claire Jones.

AGM - 17th May

Coleshill Village Hall

A Dylan Thomas evening

Summer Lunch - 23rd June

Venue and date tbc

Visit to Highgrove - May/June (date tbc)

Restricted to 25 members with priority given to those who did not go on previous trips

Details to follow in February

Golf Day - late August (date tbc)

Oakland Park Golf Club

South Wales Trip - September (date tbc)

A 3 night mid-week visit - full itinerary to be advised

Other possible events - October/November

Magic Circle

Olympic Park Walk

Theatre (local)

Christmas Drinks - 8th December

Venue and date tbc