

Chiltern District Welsh Society

Summer Newsletter 2021



Chairman's Introduction

I have lived in the Chilterns for nigh on 40 years but it has been a circuitous route to get here.



I was born and grew up in Aberdare, a son of a miner, a valleys boy who remembers Aberdare, Queen of the Valleys, at its best when Welsh was spoken on the streets and the chapels were still busy.

My journey to the Chilterns with my wife Kate crossed from Cardiff to Leeds where I met Kate, to Seattle, Dundee and then the Chilterns, with a two year period in Japan along the way. I am retired from the Pharmaceutical industry, and have spent the last three years learning the Welsh that I have forgotten since I was a boy.

I am honoured to be the Society's chairman, and will endeavour to meet the leadership of our previous Chairs.

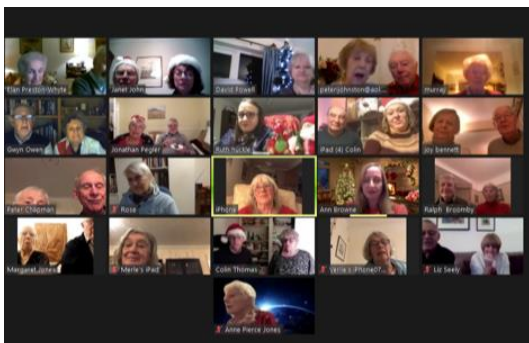
Colin Picton

Christmas Drinks

This year's Christmas Drinks party was quite different, and at least it didn't mean a discussion about who was going to drive home.

Janet John acted as the technical host of the Zoom-based event, with about 45 members present.

David Powell welcomed everyone and



explained how the meeting/party was going to be organised. Peter and Pat Chapman spoke from Brecon about the joys of living in the country and the fear of the rising river level!

Elan & Robin Preston-Whyte joined us from Englefield Green and we had a quick glimpse around their new flat.

It was great to see Bridget Murray (with a backdrop of outer space) and Helen Hall again.

Founder members, the Owens and the Broombys also gave their updates. Colin and Di Thomas said that their house was a lot quieter this year than when they hosted last year's get together!

Janet and Gwyndaf then assigned us to break-out rooms where we met in groups of 6 or so, so that we could chat informally amongst ourselves. This worked surprisingly well and it seemed no time until Janet called us all back into the main room and then assigned us all to different groups with new people to talk to. These sessions lasted about 8

minutes each.

Jonathan Pegler then took over as master of ceremonies. Everyone's microphones were muted and



Jonathan played a selection of carols with Janet showing us the words on the screen. In effect we were all signing duets with Jonathan!

Finally, Jonathan played the National Anthem and we said our farewells to each other at about 7pm.

I think that everyone thought that the event went well, and our thanks go to Janet, Gwyndaf and Jonathan for making the evening go so smoothly.

Quiz Night Friday 22nd January 2021

Considering the circumstances our Annual Quiz Night went very well.

Of course, this year was rather different – there was no fish and chips, we stayed at home rather than travelling to Coleshill, and there was less opportunity to socialise, but it was still great fun.

Jonathan Pegler did a tremendous job, in fact several tremendous jobs in setting the quiz, running the quiz and handling the Zoom meeting.



There was a very good turn-out with 40 members split up into seven teams.

We were arranged in groups of about 6 and all signed into the Zoom meeting. By 7pm, Jonathan had given each team a colour as its name and arranged who went into which team.

There were 6 rounds of ten questions and at the beginning of each round Jonathan revealed the password to reveal the set of questions. Each team then went into a break-out room and discussed whether any of us could give an answer.

After what seemed to be no time at all, Jonathan called us back together and revealed the answers. The first round was about people ranging from Barbara Windsor to Napoleon.

The questions were up to Jonathan's usual taxing standard, and after rounds two or three it soon became apparent that the White Team – Team Gwyn – was pulling ahead, scoring almost full points on the rounds concerning balls and tables. The rest of us also wondered where they were playing as the Zoom backgrounds kept changing!

Team Gwyn (appropriately consisting of Gwyndaf and Janet John, Bill Jones, Ruth



Huckle and Ann Brown) were too far in the lead and

won comfortably.

I think that we'd all like to say a very big 'Thank you' to Jonathan for all his work in making the evening such a success.

St David's Day Dinner

This year our St David's Day Dinner was a bit different. There was no dinner!

On Friday 26th February, we were very fortunate to have Dr Rowan Williams, the previous Archbishop of Canterbury, address our St David's Day gathering.

Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, we were unable to meet in person. So, our meeting was the 'Not St David's Day Dinner' as it wasn't St David's Day, and there was no dinner, but we had an excellent meeting anyway.

Janet John acted as technical host for our



Zoom meeting and we met at 7:30pm with two 10-minute breakout sessions where we were able to chat to about half a dozen other members and catch up on local news.

At 8pm David Powell then introduced Dr. Williams.

Dr. Williams spoke on the subject of 'The Age of the Saints in Wales: Fact or Fiction?', a very suitable subject for St David's Day.



Dr. Williams told us about the early church in Wales and how there was a surprising

amount of movement of people and ideas between Wales, Ireland, Cornwall and Brittany. The Christians of the time (500 to 700 AD) considered themselves the successors of the Roman tradition, as opposed to the largely pagan influx of Angles and Saxons. Gravestones of the time frequently contain complex Latin verses and Hebrew Christian names.

He spoke of Welsh saints such as St David, St Gildas, St Samson St Asaph and others.

There were very many Saints in Wales. One of the reasons for this was that at the time, there was no central control from Rome and sainthood was determined locally in Celtic churches and was often given to the founder of an ecclesiastical settlement.

Dr. Williams then joined us in two further breakout sessions.

We finished off the evening with Jonathan Pegler playing the National Anthem and a selection of hymns.

Dame Cheryl Gillan

It is with great sadness that we report the death of our local MP and honorary CDWS member Dame Cheryl Gillan on 4th April 2021, after a long battle with cancer.

2021 Spring Walk

On Thursday 29th April Gwyndaf and Janet



John organized a Spring Walk around the woods at

Hedgerley.

Due to the fact that we hadn't been able to meet in person for so long, there was a great deal of interest and 24 people signed up for the walk. The Johns organized us into 4 groups of 6 so that we could be properly socially distanced, and recruited Colin Thomas and David Powell to lead the other two groups.

We were able to give our orders at the pub and set off, aided by handouts from Janet showing us the difference between Spanish and English bluebells and pictures of other wild flowers to look for on the walk.



Both Gwyndaf's and Janet's groups had the advantage of expert wild flower knowledge, but the two other groups were supplied with pictures of plants to look out for – a bit like the old I-Spy

books we had as children. The early purple orchids were not out yet, but the cowslips made a great display in the Glebe Meadow by the church.

Three of the groups went for a slightly longer walk covering the trip to Hedgerley Green as well, but David's group just covered the



woods and then headed straight back for the pub.

The food was good and so was the beer, and

the bluebells were almost at their best (a cold dry spring had delayed them a bit).

Thanks to Gwyndaf, Janet, Colin and Di Thomas and David for leading the groups.

2021 AGM

Our 21st Annual General Meeting on Friday 14th May started as a Zoom meeting at 7pm with Jonathan Pegler acting as host to approximately 40 members. Before the serious business of the evening, we were randomly divided up in breakout rooms to talk to people in groups of 4 or 5.

David Powell opened the formal part of the evening with apologies for absence, and approval of the Minutes of the 2020 AGM (with one correction!). As it would have been difficult to see a show of hands, Jonathan used a Zoom-based voting system, which allowed one vote per device (two people sharing a screen only had one vote).

David then gave the Chairman's Report for 2020/21, saying that little did we think that when we had to hold the AGM by Zoom last year, we would be doing the same in 2021.

David added that it is a pity that this year's AGM is only a virtual one, as it marks 21 years since Ann Evans established the Society and proposed a vote of thanks to Ann. He then went on to give thanks to the Committee members for their work over the last year, and especially to Peter Chapman, who is now standing down as Treasurer after moving to Brecon.

Covid permitting, the Committee plans to hold a Summer Lunch on 4th July, courtesy of Peter and Beth Sykes-Johnston, a Christmas Drinks party courtesy of Ralph and Margaret Broomby, the Golf Day and hopefully another event in the Autumn.

Membership numbers have fallen slightly from 119 to 114.

Peter Chapman then gave his final Treasurer's Report, a very short one. Our balance as of 31st March was £3239.06. The report was accepted by a Zoom vote.

It then came to the election of the Committee. Jonathan Pegler has taken on the duties as Treasurer. We also have a new Committee Member to welcome – Dr Barrie Reece.

A single unanimous vote was taken for the committee and the results are as below:

Chairman

Minutes Secretary

Treasurer

Membership Secretary

Secretary

Committee Members:

Colin Picton

Merle Davies

Jonathan Pegler

Ann Lawrence

Gwyndaf John

Barrie Reece

Kay Day

David Powell

And of course, Ann Evans, who remains on the committee as founder and Lifetime President.

David then handed the meeting over to Colin Picton, as our new Chairman.

Colin and Ann both thanked David for his chairmanship over the past 3 years and went on to introduce our speaker – Neil Rees.



Neil Rees, local historian, presented a fascinating insight into the life of Aneurin Bevan, so well-loved for his Welsh roots and above all for his work in establishing the National Health Service - a topic so much in our minds in the current

climate. His political career is legendary, but it is possible that his connection with our local area is not quite so well known.



We enjoyed hearing about his move to

Asheridge Farm outside Chesham, where he and his wife Jenny Lee became enthusiastic farmers, relieving the stresses of political affairs with the charms of rural life.

The presentation was much enjoyed and appreciated by members.

The evening ended with further meetings in break out rooms.