

Chiltern District Welsh Society

Summer Newsletter 2026



Christmas Drinks 2025

This year Ann Evans not only hosted our Summer Lunch, but our Christmas Drinks too! On Sunday 7th December, 40 members turned up at her house to celebrate the festive season. This year it didn't snow. It was rather drizzly,



but this didn't stop us enjoying ourselves.

Kay and Ann Day welcomed everyone and gave each a name badge,

which was useful as we had a few new members (also handy if you couldn't remember someone's name).

Colin & Diane Thomas served drinks as guests moved into the conservatory, and Ann Tennant's daughter-in-law, Jagger, was in the kitchen preparing canapes for everyone.



Volunteers acted as waitresses coming round with what seemed like an endless stream of food.

It was great to see so many old friends again.



Time seemed to whiz by and soon Ann and Gwyndaf John were handing out carol sheets while Michael Owen led us through a number of our favourites. Everyone joined in singing with gusto and we finished with the National Anthem.

Many thanks to Ann for being such a gracious and welcoming hostess.

The Magic Circle

On Monday 12th January 15 of us set off to discover the Magic Circle, which we found near Euston station.



The first magic show was performed by Chris Wood who recruited various members of the audience to join in his close up magic involving coin, card and ball tricks.

None of us had any idea of how any of the

tricks were performed.

We then moved to the museum, which showed the history of magic and conjuring, starting with stories from ancient Egypt. There was also a book dating from medieval times showing how some of the tricks were performed, demonstrating that magicians were 'honest tricksters' and not witches or in league with the devil.

Members of the Magic Circle include many top magicians, such as David Copperfield, Dynamo and Penn and Teller. Amateur members include King Charles III, Stephen Fry – and Sooty, the only non-human member of the circle, and who demonstrated his skills by cutting a 'lady' (Barbie) in half, live on TV.

Upstairs, we were baffled by magician Paul



Reagan with a show involving cards, ropes and a handkerchief that seemed to get bigger and bigger. You may recognise

one of his assistants in this photograph.

We all thoroughly enjoyed the experience, and there was talk of repeating the trip to another of their shows in the future.

St David's Day Dinner 2026

This year we held our St David's Day Dinner on 27th February.

We all met for a pre-meal glass of fizz at 6:30 and caught up with old friends. It was very encouraging to see so many new members there too, including our local MP, Sarah Green, who was our speaker last year.

We had 62 in total, so it was a good turn-out.

Ann Evans had arranged for the golf club to be decorated with lots of Welsh flags and there were bouquets of daffodils on each table.



At just after 7 we all took our places in the dining room and were

welcomed by Gwyndaf John, as chairman. Ann Evans, as President, said grace.

Our dinners were lovely. Kay Day had chosen a



delicious selection of food including Welsh lamb, leeks and Welsh cheeses.

After the dinner, Gwyndaf introduced two of our members, Gwion Thomas and his wife, Chloe Willson-Thomas who would sing for us, accompanied by John Breese on the piano.



A baritone, Gwion was born in Gorseinon, South Wales. He has been a wide-ranging opera and concert soloist, taking many leading solo operatic roles.

Chloe is a Soprano, and has been the Rector of Farnham Royal with Hedgerley since 2020.

Gwion and Chloe sang a variety of solos and duets starting with pieces by Handel and Mozart, as well as Welsh songs and some by Andrew Lloyd Webber.

A Victorian song – 'The Spider and the Fly' was very funny as Chloe tried to lure an innocent fly (Gwion) into her parlour.



John Breese was excellent as accompanist, especially considering the wide range of music and how little time he had to prepare.

We are truly very lucky to have three such excellent musicians within our membership.

Gwyndaf thanked our entertainers and we then concluded with the National anthem, followed by communal singing of some old favourites.

A big thank you to Mike Owen for the photographs.

2026 AGM

We met at 6pm on 8th May at a new venue this year – at the Fitzwilliams Centre in Beaconsfield Old Town.

Gwyndaf welcomed everyone and gave his Chairman's Report, running through the events of the previous year.

He continued by saying that Ann Lawrence, who has been our Membership Secretary for almost every year since the Society started in 2000, is going to step down from the committee this year.

Gwyndaf thanked Ann for her many years of service and presented her with flowers and a bottle of champagne.

Alan and Diane Longshaw, who although not Welsh, have been great supporters of the



Society are also leaving due to ill health. They have hosted many functions and lent their gazebos over the years.

Membership of the society has remained constant at 121.

Lloyd Jones's Treasurer's Report showed that the Society made a loss of £429.90 over the year 2025/26. This was expected, as the 25th anniversary AGM was a free event.

We then came to the election of the Officers of the Committee. Ann Browne has offered to stand as Membership Secretary in place of Ann Lawrence, and all the other committee members have agreed to stand again.

The vote was taken and the present committee was unanimously voted in.

So our current committee consists of:

Ann Evans	Life President
Gwyndaf John	Chairman
Michael Owen	Minutes Secretary
Lloyd Jones	Treasurer
Ann Brown	Membership Secretary
Kay Day, David Powell & Colin Thomas	Committee Members

Gwyndaf then told us that David Powell has said that this would be his last year on the committee and so we do need others to volunteer to help with the running of the society.

We then broke for a meal provided by Ann Tennant. This was up to her usual standard – delicious – with a choice of chicken or salmon and lots of different deserts.

After the meal, Gwyndaf introduced our



speaker, Wendy Blythe, from the Council for the Protection of Rural Wales.

Being new to the location, we did have some tense minutes trying to set up the overhead projector, but then Wendy was

able to start her talk.

Wendy told us about the Council and its current campaigns, including campaigns against onshore windfarms, protecting the endangered red squirrels and against the pollution in our rivers, particularly the Wye and the Usk.

The evening finished at about 10pm with Gwyndaf thanking Wendy for such an interesting and informative talk.

A Tudor Walk in Amersham

We all gathered at the Amersham Museum where three guides dressed in Tudor costume were ready to lead us.

To our surprise, one of our guides addressed us in fluent Welsh. To the relief of many, Peter Borrows then repeated the introduction in English.

Peter was our lead guide, dressed all in woollen clothing with a cap on his head, britches over his legs, and the ensemble finished off by a codpiece, an essential item of male Tudor garb.

The tour was very informative and full of surprising insights into life in Amersham during Tudor times.

The first surprise was to discover that so many of the buildings we could see dated from Tudor times. The Kings Arms with its timber beams was one fine example of a Tudor building, but others were less obvious as they had been updated with more modern (Georgian) facades. If you look down the alleys and passageways at the side walls of the buildings many reveal their Tudor origins.

As we approached the church we met three more women dressed in Tudor costume. These ladies all had their heads covered, to protect



them from itchy debris and lice when living under thatched rooves. Their

bodices were laced up – some were “straight laced” but crossed lacing indicated a different standard of behaviour!

Inside St Mary's, we discovered the origin of more everyday expressions. Services were in Latin and for Communion services the priest would emerge from behind a screen, say a few words of Latin, then pop back out of sight again. The locals knew little if any Latin so the priest's unintelligible incantations were referred to as Hocus Pocus, a parody of the Latin phrase “hoc est enim corpus meum” (this is my body).

Therefore the priest was doing the Hokey Cokey!



We met with three other women. One was the Wise Woman, who sold herbs and potions for medicinal purposes. She trod a fine line between providing a health service and being accused of witchcraft.

The Martyr's Memorial was a reminder of

harsher times. The Lollard's crime was to read the Bible in English, an act seen as a challenge to the authority of the Church. Several were burned at the stake, with the daughter of the first victim made to light the fire. Ironically, within less than a century English language bibles were to be found in all Anglican churches.

We thanked Peter and his team for leading such an informative walk for us and our party dispersed with a number of us retiring to the Elephant & Castle for a welcome lunch.

Gwyndaf John

Hodgemoor Woods



On Thursday the 18th June, a number of the Society were treated to an historical and archaeological walk around Hodgemoor Woods led by Nigel Rothwell and his wife Janet.

Nigel had done a great deal of preparation and we were all supplied with booklets

containing maps, photos and diagrams for reference during the walk.

We started with Roman times – a Roman road from Verulamium (St Albans) runs right through the wood. The woods had been mapped using Lidar, a technology that uses laser pulses to generate highly accurate topographic maps. With this map Nigel was able to show us parts of the Roman road. The same map revealed an Iron Age farmstead and field system through which the road later passed. Then on to an Anglo Saxon homestead and medieval field patterns with their characteristic ridge and furrow system.

Walking through the woods we were at the edge of the Parish of Seer Green. In the Domesday Book Seer Green was part of the Manor of Farnham and was governed by a companion of William the Conqueror, Bertram de Verdun. This is where a Welsh connection comes in. De Verdun was also a Marcher Lord!



The woods were at one time fields which gradually became wooded through the Middle

Ages. Names of fields such as Further Brickmill Field gave evidence of the brick making industry that took place, together with the huge pits in the wood where the clay was dug out.

It was fascinating to hear of the local "Pest House", most parishes had one for locals with contagious diseases. It was situated on the very limit of the Parish and was only demolished around the end of the Second World War.

During the war, the woods served as temporary billeting for various units and after the war it served as a Polish Resettlement Camp for allied soldiers and their families. The Camp only closed down in 1962.

To quote a member of the group after the event: "I thought the talk today was amazing. I loved every minute of it!" Indeed it was.

Our thanks to Nigel and Janet.

The morning was rounded off with a very pleasant lunch at The White Hart in Chalfont St Giles.

Janet John

Remaining 2026 Programme

Friday 11th September – Golf Day

At Oaklands Park Golf Club, Chalfont St Giles. If you don't play come and join us for lunch!

Sunday 6th September Vache Baroque

We have a limited number of tickets to this musical event in Chalfont St Giles.

Sunday 6th December Christmas Drinks

Kindly hosted by Colin and Diane Thomas in Gerrards Cross