

Chiltern District Welsh Society

Winter Newsletter 2015



Chairman's Message

As this is a bumper issue of our Newsletter and space is limited, I will limit myself to saying a sincere thank you to everyone who has written a report, helped with or hosted events this last year.

Nadolig Llawn a Blwyddyn Newydd Dda.

Kay Day

Summer Lunch in Chesham Bois.

And the sun shone on Kay and Peter's lovely home and garden.

The Bois in Chesham Bois comes from the de Bosco family (the French version of which was 'de Bois') as far back as 1213 when a William du Bois was holding the local manor.

Of the 47 people who turned up, approximately 20 had been involved in



preparation for it in one form or another: from the erection team who magicked the gazebos, table and chairs, to the ladies led by our President Ann Evans who prepared the lovely table decorations, the committee who scheduled the event, printed notices and published it on the web site, and Maldwyn and Gwyndaf who collected and delivered the

equipment a couple of days before, and returned it a couple of days afterwards. Thank you all.



We arrived at 9:30 to put up the equipment. There has to be something in management training about 5 leaders telling 3 subordinates what to do. This saw us getting everything



installed in record time and allowed everyone to return home, dress up and appear as guests! And fine we all looked too.



Someone wanted to know where to put up the Welsh bunting, but bunting was an English Royal Naval term, of course, and therefore inappropriate when used with Welsh.

Our Chairman Kay Day welcomed everyone in Welsh and English and, ably accompanied by chorister Jonathan, led us in our national anthem. Gwyn Owen, Colin Thomas, Jean Owen, Ann Thomas, Ann Evans and John Breese's voices were prominent, so much so that they acted like a homing beacon for Ann and Barrie Reece who were still lost on Clifton Road!!



The garden looked lovely – Colin Thomas said you wouldn't get a garden like that in Gerrards Cross because they would have sold half of it for development.

Two eminent members of the society took opposite views as to who should take credit for the garden – one said it was due to Kay's hard work, whilst the other said it was Peter's. I think it was a joint effort. This year's 30 question quiz was to find, from 30 places in the garden, where the fishpond had been – and that's how the Welsh became good at the loose maul!



Conversation flowed as we caught up with hwn ar llall. Each table developed its own

personality: Margaret and John Edwards' table was consumed in lively, humorous and energetic conversation with science and technology as a probable theme. Our table talked holidays, golf, theatre and opera and, the upcoming Brecon trip in September.



I heard conversations about food and restaurants from another table. And laughter came from all tables.



Eager to catch up with others, we meandered at leisure amongst the other tables.

Our caterers this year were "To Dine for Catering". They provided us with Salmon en croute, chicken breast wrapped in Parma ham, new potatoes, roasted mediterranean vegetables, asparagus/mixed leaf salad, lemon tart, fresh fruit salad, cream and tea/coffee with mints. Pryd perffraith!

And the sun shone all day.

Then a gust of wind saw me frighteningly and single handedly, on the wrong side of the gazebo trying to keep it from flying off! For a few brief fleeting seconds everything seemed

to go into slow motion and appear longer as it does in accidents.

That was until others leapt at the trailing legs. Had we not had such brawn as Gwyn Owen, Ralph Broomby, Jonathan Pegler and Peter Day leap into action, we could have seen the gazebo carving a path across tables and garden, and then taking off with me still hanging on to a leg as if in a take for Mary Poppins. In the event we had 6 men offering various pieces of advice on how to get one of the struts back into place.

Di Thomas was serenaded to a happy birthday by the mixed voice choir of the Chiltern District Welsh Society. Barrie Reece demonstrated how to sing the “soh lah te doh” to a climax on the final line of the verse!

And although Gwyndaf John had come to help us in the morning, he and Janet couldn't be with us. They'd just become grandparents and hadn't yet seen their grandson as they'd been on holiday in Ireland. Likewise David and Irene Powell had a granddaughter on Thursday. We missed them all. Congratulations to both families on their new arrivals!

Later in the afternoon Jonathan and Kay distributed the 2015 Summer Newsletter which had been prepared by David Powell.



It reminds us that we've been going for 15 years, and with nearly 130 members makes us one of the largest Welsh Societies in Britain – could be even 2nd according to one scholarly research.

And then Jonathan, saving our chairman's embarrassment of giving the host (herself) a thank you gift, presented Kay and Peter with flowers and a bottle of wine respectively to thank them for opening up their lovely home and garden to us.

What I learnt was how many of us spoke Welsh, and yet we don't so much at our society's events. For example, I didn't know that Maldwyn spoke such excellent Welsh. Kay, who comes from Dwygyfylchi near Penmaenmawr, and I spoke Welsh for the first time together. Cadwch yr iaith yn fyw!

Ceiriog – one of Wales's greatest poets in the mid 19th century – wrote of the Welsh's shyness when living in the land of the English (or saeson from the word Saxon). Our summer lunch showed another side, a thriving confident true community and society, working together and enjoying each other's company.

And with a 1, 2, 3, down the gazebos came, and everything was packed for next year.

What a heart-warming, thoroughly enjoyable day! Many thanks to our hosts and the volunteers.

Ac ymlaen!

Bill Jones

Golf Day at Oakland Park 28th August

After rain for the previous two days our Golf Day took place with our usual good weather!



Twenty four golfers took to the course in the sunshine and enjoyed 18 holes with varied success and good team spirit. Seven non-playing members joined us for an excellent lunch after which Ann Evans, our president, presented the prizes.

Pam Britton, John Riglesford and Chris Thomas won the Team Prize.

Stan Griffiths won the Stableford Prize with 37 points. The nearest to the pin prizes went to Jane Morris and Mike Green and the longest drive prizes to Cherri Shadbol and Bob Ford.



Thanks to Pam, Rob and Chris for organising the event and thanks to the staff of Oakland Park for providing us with a successful and enjoyable day.

Rob Britton asked for

suggestions for next year. It was unanimous that we book the same Friday next year at Oakland Park.

Bob Ford

14-18th September – The Brecon Trip

Colin, our coach driver, picked each group up at the allotted time and we set off for our five day trip to Brecon. We made good time and were able to stop in Burford for a quick look around and a coffee. Then on to Monmouth, which proved to be very rain swept, for a longer lunch stop. The local conveniences proved to be an excellent place for us to shelter, while waiting for the coach to return to take us to Tretower Court and Castle. This

was a beautiful medieval building, all the more atmospheric in the swirling mists. We were given a lively talk and then allowed to stroll around for a while before heading off to the Castle Hotel, Brecon, where we were booked to stay.

During the coach journey, Jonathan began to enlighten us with the varied stories of some of the historic families we would be following during our tour, in particular, Sir David Gam and his lovely daughter Gwladys.

Not everyone knew of The Castle Hotel's illustrious past, it having been chosen by Alex Polizzi of Hotel Inspector fame to turn it around! The most infamous room was Number 18 and by coincidence, Colin and I were the lucky guests to be allocated this room! All however, was well!



Early morning view from Castle Hotel - Brecon

The following morning, after an ample breakfast, we set off for Hereford Cathedral, where we had the opportunity to see the famous Mappa Mundi, the Chained Library and a copy of the Magna Carta. We had also all been given the chance to choose either the tower tour or the garden tour, both of which were wonderful. Whilst here, we had the opportunity to listen to an organ recital or to continue looking around the cathedral.

From there we travelled to Talgarth Mill for a tour of the working flour mill and an opportunity to have afternoon tea. Here the guides were both very enthusiastic and knowledgeable but at times had to admit defeat due to the 'Barry effect', when one of our group, who was just so curious to know all about the mechanical workings, plus accurate measurements, made them struggle for answers!!



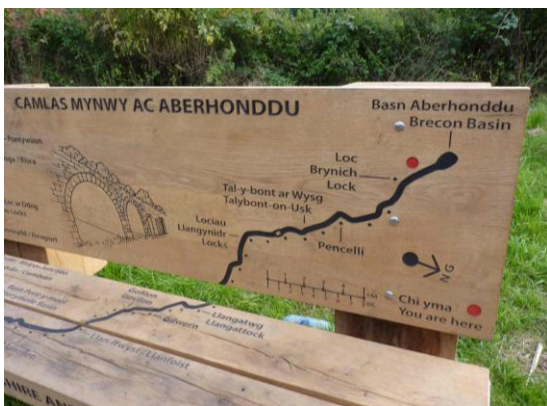
The following morning we departed for Hay on Wye where we had ample time to explore the town with all its many retail opportunities. From there we travelled back to the Regimental Museum of the Royal Welsh

in Brecon and we had a lengthy talk by one of the resident regimental historians.

On Thursday morning we set off for Aberglasney Gardens, via Llandeilo, which happened to be the birth place of one of our party, strangely we couldn't find the blue plaque!

Aberglasney Gardens were beautiful in their early autumn splendour. To begin with, we had an enlightening talk from one of the guides, then were able to explore at our leisure before continuing to Newton House and Dinefwr Castle.

Here we had two enthusiastic young guides who, with their lively repartee, informed us of the history of the house, the castle and grounds. The brave, or foolish, were allowed to climb up onto the roof of the house to get a wonderful view of the estate, including the famous white cattle and the deer. Some even managed the climb to the top of Dinefwr Castle, which was close by, for more wonderful views.



The route of the Canal trip

Most of the group then walked down to the Monmouth and Brecon canal to the narrow boats where we cruised part of the way along the canal, through peaceful countryside at a very gentle speed! For the return journey several of the group decided to walk swiftly back, to work up an appetite for dinner!!

Our final day took us to Abergavenny, where we visited St. Mary's Priory and saw the remarkable carved Jesse Tree and the Millenium Tapestry and finally put a face to the name of Gwladys, as she lay serenely carved in marble, in the chapel. The next stop was Raglan Castle, where we were able to climb towers, explore dungeons and enjoy the wild, windswept scenery and take many photos.



Maldwyn, having conquered Raglan Castle

The final visit which Jonathan had organised was to a wonderful vineyard, Ancre Hill. Here the owners gave interesting talks about growing grapes, wine tasting and their vision, which has allowed it all to happen. Extremely interesting plus the wines and cheeses were quite delicious.

So back on the long road home which became even longer due to local accidents and excessive Friday traffic. However everyone was agreed that we had enjoyed our Brecon trip due to excellent planning by Jonathan and the friendly company of the Chiltern Welsh members who attended.

Di Thomas

Visit to the BBC and the Fullers Brewery

Early morning, 16 October 2015: a party from the Society set out for London to visit both the BBC and the Fullers Brewery. The coach



dropped us in Portland Place, outside the BBC, in good time for security checks and

a coffee; and in New Broadcasting House we formed two groups to start our tour.

The first stop was above the news floor, a familiar view for TV watchers. Having seen how UK and World news services are produced, we moved to the One Show studio, which was much smaller than it appears when the TV show is transmitted. It's quite amazing how they get so much done in this limited space.

In contrast to the TV facilities we visited the beautiful Art Deco Radio Theatre, which not only is the venue for many music concerts but also has been the home for famous comedy programmes ranging from The Goon Show to the News Quiz.



CDWS on the One Show couch

In order to encourage us to participate in "live TV" our guides allowed volunteers to present news reports and weather forecasts. And then, to ring the changes, we saw some items of historical and artistic interest; and were reminded of some past events which highlighted the BBC's important place in UK history. By this time we had been outside in the impressive courtyard and had now reached the creatively named "Old Broadcasting House"!

Back to participation, we took roles in a scary radio play, with sound effects and a gruesome climax. It gave the volunteers a chance to experience microphone technique and instant acting.

Overall the time seemed to go quickly although our guides always seemed to have time to answer our questions and give us

context. At lunch afterwards there was general acclaim for the enjoyable tour.

We left Central London for Chiswick in order to do our tour of the Brewery.



Again, in two parties, we saw how water, barley, hops and yeast are skilfully combined to produce London Pride and a range of other beers, exported now to over 60 countries. Fuller Smith and Turner, the full name of the company, is still a family run business which recently acquired Gales Brewery in Sussex.

Inevitably the tour ended in the bar for a trial of the products – what a hardship! It was then left to Derek our coach driver to cope with the Friday evening rush hour traffic and get us safely back to the Gerrards Cross and Amersham drop-off points. Well driven; and the tour was very well organised and led by Graham Beavan, who certainly deserved all our thanks.

David Bevan

Young Welsh Singer of the Year



This competition is held biennially at the London Welsh Centre (“Y Canolfan”) at Gray’s Inn Road in central London. It is open to promising singers who must be aged under thirty and with strong Welsh connections,

either from Wales, of Welsh descent or studying in Wales. They compete for cash prizes as well as the prestige of winning.

A small band of members made their way there by car to be joined by others already up in town. We met up in the large lounge bar upstairs for drinks and platters of sandwiches before making our way into the small concert hall for the main event.

Six outstanding young singers had made it through to the evening’s final round. They included Rhiannon Llewellyn, who many members will remember for entertaining us so well at the Society’s St David’s Day Dinner back in 2014. The three previous competitions were all won by young men but unusually on this occasion the finalists were two mezzo-sopranos and four sopranos. But what beautiful voices we enjoyed. Each sang three pieces including one song in Welsh. Every member of the audience had been given a voting slip to choose our own favourite based on the singing of the Welsh song, which singer would win the Audience Prize.

As the judges retired to make their decisions, we were entertained by the winner in the “best newcomer” category. This was a young baritone, Lukasz Karauda. A native of Poland, he is a recent graduate from the Royal Welsh College of Music & Drama.

We all agreed how difficult it was to judge the overall winner, yet all of us voted for Carly Owen to receive our “Audience Prize”. This Soprano from Bangor duly won not only the Audience Prize but the overall First Prize too. Our very own Rhiannon Llewellyn, who went to school in Chalfont St Peter, won the second prize; with third place going to Celine Forrest, who featured in the final of the BBC Cardiff Young Singer of the World competition on TV in June this year.

Afterwards we were invited to retire to the bar once more to enjoy a drink with bara-brith and welsh-cakes. This gave us the opportunity to chat to the contestants. Rhiannon told her fellow contestants how much she had

enjoyed singing for our Welsh Society last year. She is now married and an "Army wife" living in Germany. Celine Forrest had been scheduled to sing at our 2016 St David's Day Dinner but apologised that she couldn't now make it due to sponsor commitments. However she assured us charmingly that her replacement is just as good! If so we are in for another treat on March 1st.

Gwyndaf John

Mike Stythe

In appreciation of his active and enthusiastic membership of the Society over the years Mike Stythe has been made an Honorary Member.

A former Lieutenant Colonel in the Army and for many years an Outward Bound instructor in North Wales, one of Mike's specialities has been organising walks for us in his beloved Snowdonia. Most recently his idea of climbing Snowdon by train and walking down resulted in the Society's trip to North Wales in May 2012.

That inspired idea was typical of Mike. He had already made 106 previous ascents, but he was determined to climb Snowdon one more time despite health issues. He found a solution, and it was one that suited many others in the Society too!

He is now to be found in Buckingham House Care Home in Gerrards Cross, where he continues to play Bridge regularly and enjoy visits from friends.



2016 Programme

January 22nd 2016 - Quiz Night.

At Coleshill Village Hall. Jonathan will organise the Quiz, and there will be supper.

Tuesday 1st March - St David's Day Dinner

To be held at Gerrards Cross Golf Club. This year soprano, Alys Roberts will be the soloist, accompanied by Iain Ledingham at the piano.

April/May Spring Walk

Details to be confirmed.

Friday 6th May 2016 - AGM

With supper and entertainment provided by Mary Medicott, who will be telling tales at Coleshill Village Hall.

June 6th to 10th Trip to North Wales

Jonathan is organising a trip centred on Caernarfon.

26th June Summer Lunch 2016

This year we will be returning to Beth & Peter Sykes home in Gerrards Cross.

26th August Golf Day at Oakland Park

Non playing members also welcome to join us for lunch.

8th September Cambridge Trip

A guided tour around the colleges of Cambridge and hopefully some punting.

October/November Theatre Trip

Details to be confirmed.

11th December Christmas Drinks

Venue to be confirmed.

MEMBERSHIP

New members are always welcome.

Please contact our Membership Secretary, Ann Lawrence on:

01494 727207 or

membership@chilternwelsh.com