



# Gair y Ddraig

*The Word of the Dragon*

Mis Mehefin, 2021  
June, 2021

CALGARY WELSH  
SOCIETY  
FOUNDED: 1906



**~ OUR GREATEST WISH IS THAT THINGS CONTINUE TO IMPROVE SO WE CAN GET TOGETHER AGAIN!! ~**

**Some things to look forward to if provincial health restrictions allow:**

- i. an outdoor gathering of members**
- ii. a Noson Lawen in the Fall**
- iii. A Christmas celebration [already booked]**

**The last 18 months have been a challenge to everyone. Many of us have family or know of people who suffered from Covid. But with the current increasing rate of vaccinations, and the consequential loosening of restrictions, we can soon, with care, return to enjoy and celebrate our Welshness together.**



**Canadian Flags in the City of Windsor will fly at half-mast today, and for 215 hours, following the discovery of the remains of 215 children at the site of a former residential school in Kamloops.**

**This is in memory of the thousands of children who were sent to residential schools, for those who never returned, and in honour of all the families whose lives were forever changed.**

**May we never forget. May we learn.  
May we do better. May we be better.**

## THE CWS BOARD

### **Officers:**

*President: Margaret Freedman*

*Vice-president: Tracy Burr*

*Secretary: Sandy Keating*

*Treasurer: Gwenda Raymond-Jones*

*Newsletter Editor and Website Manager: David Matthews*

### **Directors At Large:**

*Membership Sec.: Jean Kuhn*

*Jane Thomas*

*David Matthews*

*Past President: Elaine Westlake*

## GREETINGS FROM YOUR CALGARY WELSH SOCIETY BOARD

Annwyl Ffrindiau, Dear Calgary Welsh Society Friends.

We hope you enjoy the latest edition of our Newsletter.

Now that many of us are fully vaccinated, and there seems to be an end in sight to restrictions, we can look forward to getting together once again.

Thanks to everyone who joined in our Zoom meeting 'AGM'. While an unofficial AGM, it was a good meeting and great to "see" you all.

Our newsletter editor, David, has decided to step down as editor. We want to thank him for the great job he has done over the years. He says 'It is time for 'new blood' to perhaps bring a new approach to the job'. If there is anyone who might be interested in taking on this task, David would be willing to assist in the transition.

Wishing you all a wonderful summer-time.

On behalf of the Board

*Margaret Freedman* (President)



## 'In Passing' by Brian Harris

To be born in Wales,  
Not with a silver spoon in your mouth,  
But, with music in your blood  
And with poetry in your soul,  
Is a privilege indeed.

Your inheritance is a land of Legend,  
Of love and contrast.  
A land of beauty so bright it burns the eyes.  
Of ugliness that scars the Spirit  
As the Earth.

Wales is an old land with wounds  
That weep in hills.  
They wept before in the bodies of men  
And in the hearts of women  
And time will never heal them.

The stigmata of sorrow,  
Of pain and poverty,  
Of lonely crucifixion in the dark,  
Remain our lives to feed.

This Land of our Fathers was built on coal.  
Its rivers of mingled blood and sweat  
Have forever darkened it,  
Relieved only by death.

We are a sad people.  
Our sadness being wrapped in harps and music  
And praise to God,  
For the lovely, yearning light  
That feeds the Spirit as well as the eyes.

Text sourced  
from [http://www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~scrol/pws/  
miscellany.html](http://www.users.globalnet.co.uk/~scrol/pws/miscellany.html)

Jenifer Stott's brother, Keith Isaac, recently shared this poem online from his present home in London to the church of his and Jenifer's childhood which is Bethesda, Llangattock near Brecon.

## Sir Tom Jones becomes oldest man to top UK album chart



SIR TOM JONES has become the oldest man to top the UK album chart, after his new record *Surrounded By Time* went straight in at number one.

The 80-year-old Welshman has overtaken Bob Dylan, who topped the chart last June aged 79 with *Rough and Rowdy Ways*.

The late Dame Vera Lynn holds the overall record after her 2009 greatest hits collection went to number one when the Forces' Sweetheart was 92.

"I am thrilled beyond words," Sir Tom told the Official Charts Company. Setting a new chart record, he said, was "tremendous, just unbelievable".

His fourth number one album - and his first since 1999's *Reload* - knocked last week's chart-topper, *Californian Soil* by London Grammar, off the top spot.

Earlier this month, the singer told the BBC's Mark Savage how he kept his vocals in such good shape.

"It's luck. It's a God-given gift," he said, conceding that cutting back his alcohol intake and working out every day might have helped too.

"I've got an exercise bike in my bedroom. And I've got this inversion table, where I hang upside down for about five minutes every day. It gets the blood rushing to your head, which is great, and it elongates your spine as well - so if you've got any problems with your back, I highly recommend it."

Courtesy of Cymdeithas Gymreig Wellington

## Calgary Welsh Society Annual General Meeting - May 1, 2021

DUE TO THE CORONA VIRUS, the meeting was by Zoom and phone-in. Members were asked to provide their own at-home snacks in lieu of our usual potluck. David Matthews chaired the meeting. Margaret Freedman welcomed the members and read the President's report. Gwenda Raymond-Jones followed with the financial statements. Jean Kuhn gave the Membership report. Minutes of the meeting were taken by Secretary Sandy Keating. A CWS 2020/2021 activities report was summarized by Elaine Westlake, Past President, and Jane Thomas, Member-at-Large for activities that were cancelled or rescheduled from March 2020. It was decided to extend the status of all Board Member positions to AGM 2022.

Calgary Welsh Society's last physical gathering was on March 7, 2020 at the Calgary Winter Club to celebrate St. David's Day. We are looking forward to our next event. Activities will take place once we are allowed to meet safely.

<b>2020/2021 CWS Activities</b>	
Feb 29 and Mar 1, 2020	Y Ddraig Goch was raised at City Hall and Calgary lit up with Welsh colours.
March 7, 2020	St. David's Day Luncheon took place at Calgary Winter Club just before the start of the pandemic restrictions.
April 14, 2020	A 'non-voting' AGM was done by email. Decisions were emailed to members. Board Members in their positions were extended to 2022.
March 1, 2021	Y Ddraig Goch was raised at City Hall and Calgary lit up with Welsh colours. A St. David's Day card was designed and sent out. Many Canadian and International Welsh societies exchanged greetings with CWS.
	St. David's Day online events were available to us: February 27 - March 12 the <u>Welsh North American Association (WNAA)</u> Gymanfa Ganu of Welsh talent
	<u>Undeb Cymru a'r Byd</u> broadcast a live concert from Wales. <a href="https://walesinternational.cymru/en/">https://walesinternational.cymru/en/</a>
	<u>The Welsh Government</u> also had many facts about Wales and things Welsh on their website.
May 1, 2021	CWS AGM was held online by Zoom and phone-in.
July 2021	Stampede picnic is pending a decision.
September 2-5, 2021	2021 NAFOW New York (Utica) is the new date and location. 2020 NAFOW Philadelphia and 2021 NAFOW Ottawa were cancelled due to Canada US border closures. See <a href="http://festivalofwales.org/index.html">http://festivalofwales.org/index.html</a>
December 6, 2021	Christmas Brunch at The Royal Hotel was rescheduled from December 2020.
Feb 26, 2022	St. David's Day 2021 luncheon rescheduled for the Calgary Winter Club.
June 28, 2022	Visit of Cor Cymru Gogledd America Choir at Grace Presbyterian Church Calgary was rescheduled in 2020 and 2021.
	Spring is Singing, Cwrs Cymraeg, Afternoon tea and Noson Lawen were all cancelled and will be rescheduled depending on the pandemic restrictions.

*Submitted by Jane Thomas*

## Norm Lewis and Friends Sing for the Prince of Wales

WHEN IT WAS ANNOUNCED THAT PRINCE CHARLES, the Prince of Wales would be visiting Yellowknife in 1975 Norm Lewis and a group of his talented Welsh friends knew they had to form a small group to sing for him. They named the choir of six, 'NEVAR' (Raven backwards.....there are *lots* of ravens in Yellowknife!) and Norm, who had belonged to many choirs, including the Morriston Orpheus Choir back in Wales, stepped up as conductor. Four of the group were tenors and two were basses. All six hailed from Wales and they brought with them to the NorthWest Territories a love of singing and beautiful voices.

Just before the big event, Norm was hospitalized with an eye infection, but the show had to go on, so he was released from hospital for the performance! Norm is recognizable as the only member of the group wearing sunglasses! They sang 'We'll Keep a Welcome in the Hillsides' and 'God Bless the Prince of Wales' to great acclaim.

Three of the choir members have been members of Calgary Welsh Society, namely Norm Lewis, Brian Lewis ( the tall gentleman on the right side of the picture) and Andy Jones from Stettler (who passed away almost two years ago). He's standing next to Brian. Andy Jones son, Ceri Jones is a good friend of CWS. He and Elsa Davies entertained us at our Dylan Thomas centennial celebrations and they also came from Wales to present seminars at NAFOW 2016 as well as entertaining us with lovely harp and violin music. Merlyn Williams, on Norm's left, and his wife Joyce were also in Calgary for NAFOW 2016. They still live in Yellowknife. You might remember them presenting an excellent session on the Aberfan disaster at the North American Festival of Wales held in Calgary in 2016?

The other choir members were John James, on the right end - he has since returned to Wales - and Roy Williams , Merlyn's brother, who is between Norm and Andy. Joyce Williams was pianist for Nevar's performance.

Brian Lewis was recently reminiscing about their performance for the Prince of Wales. He has a fond memory of the open bar after the performance that was also enjoyed by Prince Charles!

Sadly, Norm Lewis passed away quite suddenly a few weeks ago. Norm still had a beautiful singing voice and sang for CWS on a few occasions. Most recently he sang at our Noson Lawen in the fall of 2019. Our sincerest condolences go to Norm's wife Melba and their five sons. We will miss him at society events.

*Respectfully submitted by Elaine Westlake*



## REMEMBERING ROLY THOMAS

LONG TIME CALGARY WELSH SOCIETY MEMBER J.R. (Roly) Thomas passed away on January 1, 2021 at the age of 93 years. He was born in Alltwen, in the Neath area of South Wales. After completing 3 years of National service, he graduated from Swansea University in 1952 with a degree in civil engineering. After graduation, he worked in the UK until he emigrated to Montreal, Canada in 1974. In 1976 he relocated to Calgary and, along with his wife Betty he made Calgary his home for over 40 years.

After joining in 1977, Roly became the heart and soul of our Calgary Welsh Society and was active in many capacities. He served two terms as CWS President, two terms as Secretary and was a board member for many years. He was editor of the newsletter in 1980 and from 1984-86 and 2001 - 2010. He was also editor of the North American newspaper, *Ninnau*. When the Calgary Board of Education sponsored the



Welsh language lesson project, Roly became the teacher for the 10-week course. He was involved in planning the Salute to the Commonwealth at the Stampede Grandstand in 1978, organized car rallies and was even 'wardrobe master' for the society's traditional Welsh costumes!

Roly had many interests, but he was completely passionate about one - Rugby. His family say that he would set his PVR for all hours of the early morning to watch international rugby games. Of course, he was happiest when Wales won! In the 1970's and 80's touring rugby teams would visit to play against the Calgary Rams. Roly initiated a rugby challenge trophy in the name of the society - The Calgary Welsh Trophy. In May 1979 Porthcawl Rugby Club won the competition against the Rams. Before it could be inscribed with the Porthcawl name the trophy vanished never to be seen again! It became known as the trophy that disappeared and I remember Roly saying he should have kept a more careful eye on it!

Roly's later involvement included organizing trips to Ponoka for the annual Gymanfa Ganu, helping with the progress of setting up a society website, auditing the society's financial statements, conducting the formal election process at the annual AGM and performing our traditional County Call at the annual St David's Day dinners. For a number of years he was our Membership secretary and collected society dues, kept society records, sent out cards etc. He was active on the Development subcommittee that was working to obtain a higher profile for the society, to increase membership numbers and to provide events reflecting Welsh Heritage. Roly loved being involved with the planning for touring Welsh Male Voice Choirs and I remember how proud he was when the Cambrian Male Voice Choir visited in 2005 and Gwent Male Voice Choir in 2006.

Roly was a very proud Welshman. He loved speaking Welsh with a small number of Welsh society members who still spoke it. He told me how pleased he and Betty were to attend our St. David's Day luncheon in March 2020, the last event we were able to gather at together before COVID prevented face to face meetings.

Thank you for welcoming me when I came to my first CWS meeting in 2004 and for continuing to befriend me after that, Roly! Thank you for the many ways you helped our society. You will be missed! Sincerest condolences to Betty and to Roly's family!

*Respectfully submitted by Elaine Westlake*

**A DEAR OLD DAME or  
THE DAME, THE PASTOR AND THE COW**

In yesteryear when things moved slow  
and life was simple here below  
There lived nearby a country town  
a dear old Dame named Betty Brown.

She had not much but anyhow  
she got along, she and her cow.  
This bovine beast could oft annoy  
but still was Betty's pride and joy.

On Sundays it was off to town  
In feathered hat and finest gown.  
She loved God's word and naught would do  
but Sunday find her in a pew.

She loved to hear the pastor preach  
and listened breathless when he'd teach.  
But the thing that really made her day  
was when she'd hear her pastor pray.

His words of warning and earnest pleas  
could bring a Sinner to his knees.  
But the crowning moment of Betty's day  
Was when the pastor said "let's pray."

When strangers she would chance to meet  
while walking down a hometown street,  
She'd smile, greet them, and always say  
"Come hear my pastor preach and pray."

One wild and windy winter night  
poor Betty's heart was filled with fright  
The cow got tangled in her rope  
almost strangled, little hope.

She called her pastor, the good man came  
wishing to please this dear old Dame.  
He viewed the scene that before him lay,  
while Betty pleaded "Pastor, pray!"

Now pastor knew not what to do  
praying for cows was something new,  
but as she put him to the test,  
he promised her he'd do his best.

He closed his eyes and bent his head  
and these are the words the pastor said:  
"You poor old beast, you look so bad,  
and your poor old Mrs looks so sad.  
If you live you live, if you die you do,  
and that will be the end of you."

The pastor left, the cow got well,  
and ever after Betty would tell  
of that winter night, explaining how  
her pastor's prayer had saved that cow.

Time marched on and then one day  
no pastor at church to Betty's dismay.  
He had an abscess, very bad.  
Poor old Betty felt so sad.

She made her way to pastor's house  
where she was met by pastor's spouse.  
She led the way to pastor's bed  
where Betty grasped his hand and said:

"Oh, pastor, I remember now  
when I needed you for my sick cow.  
I never really learned to pray  
but I learned the words you said that day.

They worked for my cow and saw her through  
I'd like to say them now for you."  
She cleared her throat and bent her head  
and these are the words that Betty said:

"You poor old beast you look so bad,  
your poor old misses looks so sad.  
If you live you live, if you die you do  
and that will be the end of you!"

A chuckle started in his belly.  
His whole frame shook like a bowl of jelly.  
He laughed until he thought he'd choke  
and all at once his abscess broke.

Betty left, the pastor got well  
and ever after he would tell  
How when in his hour of pain and strife  
Betty's prayer had saved his life!

*Anonymous*

*Megan Williams, executive secretary to the WNAA recently shared this news....*

## **North American Festival of Wales Moves to Utica, NY. September 2-5, 2021**

IT HAS BEEN 14 MONTHS and we are all ready to take a step toward normal. This message is to update you on plans for the 2021 North American Festival of Wales. We realize the COVID situation is ever-evolving and, for the first time, it looks like we are on the right side of this fight. The board of the *Welsh North American Association* feels strongly that the best course of action for the organization is to take a small step forward and hold an in-person event in September for those who are comfortable attending.

We realized several months ago that our biggest obstacle was the U.S.-Canada border closure. Unfortunately, we just learned that it has been extended another month. As a result, we are unable to move forward with planning an in-person event in Ottawa. We plan to return to Ottawa in 2025. We have decided to relocate the 2021 festival to **Utica, New York**. Utica has strong Welsh roots and the 'national gymnanfa ganu' has been held there many times in the past, most recently in 1996.

Plans are under way and we ask that you bear with us as we navigate these new times. We assure you that in every stage of the planning we will follow guidelines from the CDC and New York State Department of Health. If you feel comfortable, we hope you will join us as we continue to preserve and promote our Welsh heritage.

Hotel booking will be available early May and we are working to get a tentative schedule out as soon as possible. We anticipate the event will start on **Thursday, September 2, and end on Sunday, September 5**. At this time, we do not plan to run auxiliary tours. However, Utica and the surrounding area have a lot to offer if you plan to extend your stay and explore on your own. We want to eliminate as many variables as possible before opening registration, and therefore aim to do so by July 1.

Please reach out to me with questions and I will do my best to assist: [wnaahq@gmail.com](mailto:wnaahq@gmail.com).

**Key Dates: May 4: Hotel reservations available; July 1: Registration opens; Sept 2: Festival starts**

**PLEASE NOTE THAT, THIS YEAR, THE CALGARY WELSH SOCIETY WILL NOT BE APPLYING TO AGLC FOR FUNDING FOR THE USE OF MEMBERS WHO WISH TO ATTEND THIS NAFOW! THIS IS BECAUSE THE TIME FOR THE APPLICATION PROCESS WOULD BE LIMITED BY THE LATE CHANGE OF NAFOW VENUE AS WELL AS THE UNCERTAINTY AROUND THE TIMING OF CWS'S INVOLVEMENT IN FUTURE CASINOS.**

### **The Original Middle Earth**

New Zealand's dramatic backdrops are the stuff of Lord of the Rings legend, but Wales stole Tolkien's heart long before anyone had even dreamed of making a movie. The land of dragons and castles par excellence, Wales had a profound effect on the author over the years. He went on holidays to the wild Llŷn Peninsula as a boy, and the moody mountainscapes of the Brecon Beacons ([breconbeacons.org](http://breconbeacons.org)) inspired his writings. So much so, in fact, that he named the Hobbit settlement of Crickhollow after the pretty riverside village of Crickhowell. Tolkien was also proficient in Welsh, which strongly influenced one of his Elvish languages, Sindarin.

[ *Courtesy of Cymdeithas Gymreig Wellington, N.Z.* ]

### **HIRAETH**

Hiraeth conjures up emotions  
But its true meaning, hard to guess  
Some say it means belonging  
Or a sense of wistfulness  
Some say it means a yearning  
For a home you've left behind  
Others say nostalgia  
For those ties that won't unbind  
Or is it a doorstep your ancestors once  
passed over  
Many years before?  
Or a regret for something strangely lost  
Centuries ago?

*Anonymous*