



Y Bwletin

Gwasg y Nant – Valley Press

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DIGWYDDIADAU - EVENTS

OWS Potluck Supper & AGM..... Thursday May 19

POTLUCK AND AGM Thursday 19TH May

6 pm Potluck supper
7:30 pm Annual General Meeting.

If you would like to see new events taking place in the OWS, come and let us know. After the AGM, we will have a new slate of officers who want to bring your ideas to the forefront!

Westminster Presbyterian Church, Roosevelt Avenue.

CONCERT BY MERCHED DEWI AND THEIR OTTAWA FRIENDS

SUNDAY, MAY 29TH 3 P.M.

WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
ROOSEVELT AVE
Freewill offering

Merched Dewi is a women's choir attached to Dewi Sant Welsh Church in Toronto. This is the very first time that they have come to Ottawa to give a concert so let's give them a big welcome from the Welsh community by coming out in large numbers. The concert will be a feast of Welsh music, not to be missed.

For more information, please phone Alison Lawson at 613-725-2704 or e-mail at alisonlawson@rogers.com

ONTARIO WELSH FESTIVAL GOLD AWARD

The Ontario Welsh Festival has established an annual award, the GOLD AWARD, to be given to a person who has contributed greatly to the Welsh Community in Ontario. An awards committee, comprising a representative from the Ottawa Welsh Society, the Toronto St David's Society, Dewi Sant Church and chaired by the President of the Festival, and with input from the Welsh community of Ontario, is currently making a decision on the matter: Lezlie Wood is the Ottawa representative.

This year's recipient will be announced at the banquet to be held on

Saturday evening, April 30th at the Festival in Niagara Falls and will be presented with a plaque at that time.

For more information, please contact Lezlie Wood at ldwood7@sympatico.ca or phone 613-225-8845 (evenings only).

Post scriptum: it was announced that the winner of the 2011 Gold award is Hefina Phillips of Oakville. We send her our warmest congratulations!

A TRIBUTE TO TAL by Myfanwy Davies

On Monday, January 17, 2011, I was saddened to hear that Tal Griffiths had passed away in Carmarthen, Wales. He was 85, and I had known him for over 40 years. While I was aware that he had been ill for a long time, his sudden death came as a shock. As we all know, bad news travels fast, and soon there was a flurry of emails and phone calls sharing the sad news. But everyone I spoke to had happy memories of their friendships with Tal.

There are many wonderful adjectives that describe Tal, but cheerful, witty, generous, talented, persuasive, and musical come to mind most quickly. He loved his family, and was loyal to his many friends. He believed in education and sharing knowledge and music with the world.

Talfryn Henry Griffiths was born in Carmarthen to David and Sophia Griffiths. He was brought up in Ffynnonddrain where his family, the Chapel, music and school were all important factors in his life, and influenced his character.

He attended the Queen Elizabeth Grammar School in Carmarthen, before leaving for the Wireless College in Swansea. His first job was that of Chief Radio Officer in the British Merchant Navy which had him travelling the world. After the war, he was co-opted into the Royal Signals where he worked a two man mobile unit in Germany, chasing Nazis. Following that he joined the GCHQ at Bletchley Park, and then signed up with the Radio Corporation of America which stationed him in Morocco from 1952-1957.

On his way to Tangier, a switch in Daylight Savings Time caused Tal to miss his train and he had to take a later one. Luckily Shirley had caught an earlier train than she had planned, and the rest is history. They were married in Tangier in December of 1953, and while still posted in Africa, their first daughter, Julie, was born. A second daughter, Sian, followed several years later.

From Morocco, Tal moved to a tent on Baffin Island where he worked for nine months as a radician on the DEW Line. In Tal's words, he was "Keeping an eye on the Soviets". Throughout his life he collected other Welsh people, and while in Frobisher Bay he met up with a chap he'd gone to school with at the Wireless College in Swansea.

The next move was down south, to Montreal. Shirley and Julie had been living in North Wales and joined Tal in Quebec, where he went to work for Trans Canada Airlines, the precursor to Air Canada. His job was to service and test radio equipment for airplanes, often while in flight.

While in Montreal, Tal continued his formal education and earned a degree from the Thomas Moore Institute which is part of the University of Montreal. He then explored various options such as working for External Affairs and teaching but didn't find anything suitable in Montreal. In the meantime, Tal and Shirley had become friends with Vaughan and Meg Lewis, and when the Lewis's were transferred to Ottawa, Vaughan suggested Tal try the Ottawa Boards of Education as they were hiring. Tal was offered a job teaching Geography and spent the next two summers taking teacher training courses in Toronto and Kingston.

Eirian Williams, son of former Society members Cyril and Irene, gave a eulogy at the funeral. In it, he recalled that the first time he met Tal and Shirley was when they were moving to Ottawa. He was assigned to help move a 3 ft. wide piano down a flight of stairs that was 2 ft. wide. As you might expect, the piano got stuck, and while they were trying to free it, Tal gave Eirian a history lesson, convincing him that every Pope since Pius the VIII in the 19th century was Welsh. Eirian quickly learned that Tal was a teaser, humourist and story teller par excellence.

Julie recalls that while her Dad loved to teach, he also told some tall tales with a twinkle in his eye. Like the story he told his Grade 10 geography class when they were learning about Wales. Tal explained that in Wales there were two breeds of dogs that were specific to that mountainous country. One breed had left legs shorter than their right ones, and the other breed had right legs shorter than their left. This was so they could run around the side of the steep mountains and remain level. Unfortunately, these dogs used to run in opposite directions and were constantly crashing into each other! Many of the students actually believed this scenario and regurgitated the facts on a subsequent exam. But Tal, being a fair-minded man, was obliged to give them full marks.

Sian remembers Tal's love of knowledge and his belief in education. He supported and encouraged the girls and also helped them, once staying up all night to type an essay that Sian had written. They also found him to be a great sounding board.

After teaching Geography for several years, Tal then became a Senior Administrator with the Ottawa Board of Education, jokingly saying it was his own OBE. He was a Director of Placement and Special Services which was a perfect fit as he could guide students into courses that fit their ability.

Throughout his life, Tal continued to learn, and he was able to converse in several languages including Welsh, English, German, Spanish, French and Arabic. Vaughan Lewis recalls being surprised on many occasions when Tal would launch into a foreign language without batting an eye, or missing a beat. After retiring, he signed up for Russian classes, but soon discovered he shared a love of singing with the teacher and the class became a folk song course instead.

In the 1970's Tal was instrumental in starting Welsh language classes

that were held at the High School of Commerce on Saturday mornings and ran for several years. He also strongly supported efforts by the Welsh Society to help establish the Celtic Chair at the University of Ottawa.

As I've mentioned above, music was an equally important part of Tal's life. But to share this passion, you had to be very adaptable as he loved to change key, whether he was playing the piano, or the squeezebox (accordion), or even when he was singing. Quite often the sopranos would have to stand on a chair to hit the high notes called for in Tal's variations. He was also accomplished on the organ and guitar, but could not conquer the cello. Tal did not always remember the words to songs so he improvised. Usually the made-up words were funnier than the original. One of his favourites was the Ballad of Harry Pollitt, and it was never sung the same way twice!

Tal and Shirley turned the basement of their home into a Welsh pub, complete with Felinfoel pumps, and that became a gathering place for the Welsh community in Ottawa. They hosted many parties, as well as Welsh Society functions like the Noson Lawen, and Poems & Pints nights, in addition to their own social events. Tal was a bit like an Ambassador for Wales and once was invited to Parliament Hill on July 1st to represent the Welsh, where he called out "Penblwydd Hapus Canada". At one time he was also on the call list for the police and the airport in case they needed someone to act as a Welsh interpreter.

My family arrived in Ottawa in 1961, and we soon joined the Welsh Society. In those days there were a lot of young families in the same situation. Mills, Morris, Griffiths and Davies, to name just a few. We had left our relatives in Wales to start a new life in Canada. Very quickly the Welsh Society became our new family, and most functions became family events. It was cheaper than babysitters!

Tal served three terms as President of the Ottawa Welsh Society during his years in the capital. He was on the committee for several more years and was involved in most of the events run by the group. Sian recalls the Society picnics and the water bucket contraption Tal built at Bernie Gooding's farm. One person sat in a wheelbarrow holding a long stick, and while they were being pushed by a partner, they tried to poke the bucket suspended above them. If successful the bucket tipped and both parties were soaked. This was definitely popular on the hot days. Sian said he was like Caractacus Potts, the inventor in Chitty Chitty Bang Bang as he was always in the garage working on something. At another picnic, Tal and Sian (who was about 10 at the time) competed in a sack race. Unfortunately Tal fell and punctured a lung, but as a result he quit smoking.

Clive James, a former President of the Ottawa Welsh Society shared this memory of Tal with me. After John Diefenbaker left the office of Prime Minister in the early 1960's, he often visited Wales to go trout fishing. During one of these trips he was injured, was hospitalized in Wrexham, and received a blood transfusion as part of his treatment. Upon his return to Canada, Clive, Tal and Don Mills in their capacity as officers of the Welsh Society, visited Dief in his office on Parliament Hill to invite him to be our guest speaker at the upcoming St. David's Day Banquet. It was Tal, with his usual quick wit and winning ways, in a fairly lengthy Welsh invitation/sermon, who told Diefenbaker that since he now had Welsh blood in his veins, he really had no choice but to accept the invitation. The former Prime Minister agreed, was given a Welsh love spoon, and became a lifelong friend of the Ottawa Welsh Society.

In my experience, the Welsh Society has always been hospitable and welcoming to all comers, and the story of our friend, the Russian spy is a good example. In the late 60's a couple of members of the Welsh Society (Ron Lord, former drummer for the Edmundo Ros Orchestra, and his wife Julie Milton, an actress who starred in A Run For Your Money among other titles) befriended the Cultural Secretary of the Embassy of the USSR. Mr. Uri Usati had a lovely singing voice and enjoyed the music and friendship of the Welsh Society for several years. He attended many Society functions and visited the homes of our members, including my family's and Tal's where he dined and partied. In our case he came for dinner, and we had a very enjoyable evening discussing our various countries, backgrounds and interests. Like Tal, my father enjoyed intelligent conversation and was eager to learn as much as he could about other cultures & places. Meanwhile the RCMP tails were sitting outside in their cruiser. My parents, generous as always, were concerned & my father asked the cops to come in & join us. When they refused, my mother took them out plates of dinner & hot coffee.

Not long afterwards, an announcement was made by the government that 17 Russian spies had been expelled from Ottawa, and Uri Usati, was one of them. Tal's reaction? "What a shame. He loved our Welsh singing and besides, Duw he had a really good voice!"

In the fall of 1968 the Ottawa Welsh Choral Society was born, and many members of the Welsh Society, including Tal, joined to sing & perform the songs of their homeland. Very quickly Tal, along with Don Mills, became anchors for the Bass section. They also joked and teased, causing the back row of Altos to frequently miss their cues.

I joined the choir in 1976 and remember several amusing examples of Tal's wit and quirky sense of humour. One night at practice, Roy asked Tal to read out the Welsh words of a new and very difficult piece. Tal mimed "Who me?" and Roy insisted. Tal began speaking, but we could only hear a garbled mess of sound. Roy asked what was wrong, and Tal grinned and humorously said, "I forgot my teef!"

During rehearsals for a trip to Wales in 1978, we were asked to memorize some of the pieces. After several weeks of work, Roy instructed us to put down our music and sing from memory. Not long into the piece, nearly everyone had flubbed the tune or the lyrics, but not Tal. He was singing with gusto. Roy halted the cacophony and remarked that Tal seemed to be the only one who had learned the piece. We were all astounded and turned to Tal who shrugged and said "I was singing Calon Lan. It fits to everything!" And he was right. We've sung those words to all sorts of music, including The Battle Hymn of the Republic.

But my favourite "Tal" memory came at a choir party. Like the Welsh Society, the choir was a very social group and we would get together at the drop of a hat to sing and enjoy each other's company. On one such occasion, Tal called out that we should sing "Assholes". Most of the choir stared at him in astonishment as they had never heard of a song with that title. So Tal started singing "Assholes we raise in grateful praise....." We all collapsed in laughter when we realized that he was singing After the Storm and the real words were "Our souls we raise....." Needless to say, we never sang that song in public again!

Tal was the first President of the OWCS and continued to sing with the group until 1985 when he left to join the Gwalia Singers. During his time with the choir he was also a member of the folk song group which featured Welsh born singers.

Each Labour Day weekend the North American Welsh gather for a weekend of singing and Welsh culture, informally called the National Gymanfa. Several of us regularly travelled to these Gymanfa

weekends and in the mid 1970's, the suggestion was made that Ottawa should hold the festival in 1977. The Ottawa Welsh Society voted Don Mills and Tal as co-chairs, and pledged their full support, as did the Ottawa Welsh Choral Society. Our delegation travelled to New York and Philadelphia to apply to host the festival, and then promote the event, and when the time came we put on quite a show. We used the National Arts Centre opera house for a wonderful concert featuring the Ottawa Welsh Choral Society and the Band of the RCMP. We also held two Gymanfa sessions there on Sunday to finish the weekend off in style. Tal and Don, along with Jeannette Hudson and many others, worked long and hard on this festival and it is still being talked about today as one of the best Nationals ever. About 1970 Tal was elected as a Trustee of the WNGGA and later was awarded life membership.

Tal & Shirley (occasionally their daughters also) attended many Ontario Welsh Festivals & made many friends. Tal served for a time as trustee on the OGGA Board of Directors.

Tal's sense of humour was evident when it came to naming one of their pet dogs. The name Happy was chosen although this was the most miserable creature ever to walk on four legs. My father referred to it as Hapus, and I guess that had some effect, as he was never nipped.

Julie also tells of her father's improvisational skills and how they were used at the most opportune times. Like during a blizzard and power outage in 1959. Julie recalls sitting in a friend's second hand Cadillac to keep warm, when the door opened, and Tal, surrounded by blowing snow, handed her a plate of hot bacon and eggs. It seems that Tal, along with a friend named Derek from BOAC (and married to a girl from Llanelli), had found a BBQ and had made breakfast on the grill. An amazing feat considering how few BBQs there were in those days, and the terrible weather conditions. But as she said, he never did anything in half measures.

In addition to all the accomplishments I have already mentioned, Tal was a member of the Rotary Club and HMCS Bytown. He was an internationalist, an environmentalist and had an immense social conscience. In his own humorous way, he would give counsel, provide sobering advice, display immense tolerance and was a good listener.

Tal and Shirley decided to retire to Wales and left Ottawa in 1996. But they returned several times to visit, including in 2003 when they celebrated their 50th anniversary with a party for their friends and family. While living in Carmarthen, Tal and Shirley were not idle. Tal joined various organizations from the Carmarthen choir to the Antiquarian Society to the Friends of the Museum, amongst others.

They also toured all over Europe, especially while Julie was living in Germany, and visited behind the old Iron Curtain once the Berlin Wall came down. Fortunately, Julie, Sian and Shirley, along with his granddaughter Anna-Caitlin, were able to spend a lot of time with Tal before illness necessitated him being confined to hospital.

Tal's funeral was held in Y Priordy Chapel in Carmarthen on January 28th, 2011. Julie, Sian and Eirian Williams gave eulogies. The chosen hymns were Sea Hymn, Calon Lan and Cwm Rhondda.

While Tal was working on Baffin Island, he started to see the first signs of global warming and the reduction of polar ice. As

the problem intensified, Tal became more concerned. In keeping with Tal's philosophy of encouraging education for young people, Julie and Sian would like to sponsor a Welsh youth (14-19) to visit the North or South Pole and study this issue, then report back to others in the UK so they raise awareness and help find solutions.

The Students on Ice Foundation has already taken 1,500 youth from 47 countries on these trips, along with research scientists, educators and journalists.

If you would like to contribute to this worthy cause, donations can be made to the Talfryn H. Griffiths Fund - Students on Ice Foundation, c/o THG Polar Fund, Natural Heritage Bldg, 1740 Chemin Pink, Gatineau, Quebec. J9J 3N7 website www.studentsonice.com

In writing this tribute, I hope I have conveyed some of the essence of who Talfryn was as a person and friend. I'm sure these stories will bring back fond memories to those who knew him, and I hope they will enlighten those who were unfortunate enough not to have met him. As Eirian said, Tal had a Heart of Gold - Calon o Aur.

I would like to thank Shirley, Julie & Sian, as well as Clive James, Eirian Williams & Vaughan Lewis for sharing memories with me.

Shirley told me that she has been inundated with cards and emails of sympathy and she appreciates them all very much. She thanks you all for your kind thoughts and condolences.

Local News

The OWS regrets to announce the death of three members or former members. The following information is from Obituary notices in the Ottawa Citizen.

GRIFFITHS, Talfryn Henry

Monday, January 17, 2011 after a long illness, Tal passed away, aged 85, in Carmarthen, Wales.

Chief Radio Officer British Merchant Navy, WWII Veteran, DEW line radician Baffin Island, educator Ottawa Board of Education.

Past President of the Ottawa Welsh Society, Member Central Lodge Rotary, Ottawa, member HMCS Bytown.

Musically gifted, witty raconteur & entertainer, multilingual, world traveller and mentor.

Adored by his wife Shirley, daughters Julie and Sian & granddaughter Anna-Caitlin. He will be deeply missed by them and extended Welsh family & Canadian friends in Ottawa and across North America. In lieu of flowers, donations to the Talfryn H Griffiths Polar Expedition Fund for Welsh Youth. Payment to 'Students on Ice Foundation c/o THG Polar Fund' (charitable number: 83664 8766 RR0001) Natural Heritage Bldg, 1740 Chemin Pink, Gatineau, Quebec J9J 3N7

JONES, Ellen Margaret Kathleen (nee Jeremy)

Peacefully in Ottawa, at the Grace Manor, on Friday, February 18, 2011, after a prolonged illness.

The youngest and last surviving child of Thomas Davies and Ann (Thomas) Jeremy she was born April 1926 in Carmarthen, South Wales.

Her husband, Dr. John Dewi Jones, predeceased her in 1991. She had lived and raised her 4 children in Ottawa for the past 45 years, living previously in Kingston, ON (where her eldest child was born) and Kent, England where her 3 youngest children were born. Margaret leaves 3 sons: Sion Roger Huw; Jeremy Alun Thomas and Dr. David

Stephen Rhys (Donna) and 1 daughter Ann Sian Wynn Jones to mourn her loss.

The family thanks all the staff at the Grace Manor for their kind and compassionate care during her brief stay, and all friends and family for their warm thoughts and sympathies. Donations to the Salvation Army, Grace Manor or Ottawa Humane Society, in lieu of flowers, appreciated.

JONES; KATHLEEN (nee Hurley)

Peacefully and surrounded by family after a sudden illness, on Friday, April 1, 2011 in Ottawa at the age of 73. Beloved wife of 51 years to Howell. Loving mother of Angela and Andrew.

Predeceased by her parents, Daniel and Dilys Hurley, sister, Elsie & by brothers, Donald, Arthur & Marshall. She is survived by many nieces & nephews and their children, both in Canada and in Wales. A member of the Ottawa Welsh Society. Loved by all who knew her, enjoyed spending time with her family & friends, time in her garden and travelling. Received very exceptional care from the medical staff at the Montfort Hospital.

WATKIN, John Emrys M.A., Ph.D.

Beloved husband, father and grandfather died on February 7th, 2011 at the Ottawa Civic Hospital at the age of 81.

Born in Aberystwyth, Wales, the eldest son of Dr. & Mrs. E.E. Watkin, John was a State Scholar.

After military duty he attended St. John's College Cambridge followed by a Ph.D. in Biochemistry at the University of Wales. He arrived in Canada with wife Gwyneth in 1955 where he began his career as a scientist at the National Research Council, first at the Prairie Regional Lab in Saskatoon then later at the NRC in Ottawa. After initial research in plant chemistry he went on to make significant contributions in the field of forensic science in the area of fingerprint identification making several discoveries and holding several patents. John was called as an expert witness in several important cases where his evidence was instrumental in the cause of justice.

He was an avid mountain climber in his younger days and enjoyed cross-country skiing and hiking in the Gatineau Hills. He and his wife travelled extensively visiting their extended group of friends around the world.

John also was very proud of his Celtic heritage being very involved for many years in the Ottawa Welsh Society, serving as its president and other supporting roles. He dedicated many years to the dream of establishing a Chair of Celtic Studies at the University of Ottawa and was gratified at its success.

He leaves his wife, Gwyneth, daughters, Sian and Cara, grandchildren, Olivia, Eleanor, Virginia, John-Alan, and Rees. His sister, Anne and brothers Peter and Edward overseas. Many thanks to the exceptional staff at the Ottawa Civic Hospital especially Drs. Ellen, Khoury and Power and the dedicated nurses of the Geriatric Unit. After a lifetime dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge through scientific research he donated his body to the University of Ottawa Medical School. A memorial service will be held at a later date. Donations in his memory may be sent to The Chair of Celtic Studies, 70 Laurier Ave., Rm. 134, Ottawa, ON. K1N 6N5.

Captain Peter John Ady a former member, passed away in Halifax in March.

June 28, 1928 - March 27, 2011