

Y Ddraig Goch

Llythyr Newyddion Cymdeithas Gymreig Canberra Gorfforedig



The Red Dragon – Newsletter of The Welsh Society of Canberra Inc

The Society's Aim is to Promote Welsh Culture

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Mai 2010 May

Calendar

May 3: 'First Monday' Lunch at Ainslie Football Club, 12 noon. Also June 7, July 5, etc.

May 14: Friday 7pm, Welsh/Cornish Folk Dance. See report in this newsletter.

May 15: (Saturday) Festival of Song, St Andrews Church, Forrest at 2pm. See notice page 10.

May 27 and June 24: Committee Meetings, Irish Club, Weston, at 7pm.

June 30: Annual subscriptions are due, please use (or print off) the form in this newsletter.

June 30: Last of Term 2 Welsh Lessons. Third term starts on Wednesday, 21 July.

July 4: (Sunday) Our Mid-winter feast, Gungahlin Lakes Club. 12 for 12.30. Tables booked, please purchase your own meal from the club's menu. ☺

July 31–August 7: Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Cymru. Yr hen waith dur ar gyrion Glyn Ebwy yw cartref Eisteddfod Blaenau Gwent a Blaenau'r Cymoedd eleni. *The National Eisteddfod is held at The Works, Ebbw Vale, this year. Next year Wrexham and district will host it.*

August 13-14: Australian National Eisteddfod choirs competitions at Llewellyn Hall. The 12 years and under section will require all choirs to sing one Welsh piece. If choirs choose to sing it in Welsh, a further \$250 Prize is offered by the ACT Welsh Society for the best Welsh pronunciation. Further information at www.nationaleisteddfod.org.au

September 23: Society Annual General Meeting. Irish Club, Parkinson St Weston, 7pm.

November 14: St Saviours Cathedral, Goulburn, 2-4pm. Cantorion Sydney Male Voice Choir.

END of FINANCIAL YEAR APPROACHES! We value your interest in Welsh affairs and in our Society in particular, and invite you to subscribe again for 2010-2011. Please use or copy this form.

Note that there is a new fee structure, with REDUCED fees in most categories.

APPLICATION for Membership / Renewal Canberra Welsh Society

Please complete the information below and mail with payment to: The Treasurer, The Welsh Society of Canberra Inc. PO Box 1034 CANBERRA ACT 2601

Subscription Rates for 2010-2011 (Tick amount enclosed)

- | | |
|--|---------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family | \$25.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Single | \$20.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Single (Concession) | \$10.00 |

Annual Subscriptions are due by June 30 each year. Family covers both partners and dependants under age 25. Concession: Pensioner, Full-time student.

I,
(full name of applicant, please print)

of (mailing address).....

.....Postcode:.....

Ph. Home: Ph. Work: Fax:.....

Email:

Hereby apply to join/renew (delete one) membership of the above incorporated association. I agree to be bound by the rules of the association for the time being in force.

Signature:

Date:

Family Membership: please supply full name of other member(s) below:

February and the Mari Lwyd

The Mari Lwyd gang have been strutting the streets again, literally, as a street performance during the Multicultural Festival in Civic on February 6th. Then we accepted an invitation to perform on February 28th at The Old Cheese Factory, Reidsdale, near Braidwood, NSW.



Both Mari Lwyd performances went well, to appreciative audiences (well, they clapped, anyway), and we are getting more skilful at adapting our performance to suit the occasion. So we catered to the different audiences by including more English in the singing for the Multicultural Festival, and had to streamline our act into a shorter time to suit the needs of the St David's Day Concert at Reidsdale.

One noteworthy aspect is that by the second concert we were able to use our own Mari, a horse's head kindly on permanent loan to us from Jennifer Collins who attended our Mid-winter performance last year. It still needs some work to function well, and not create back problems for its bearer, but it is almost there!



The Old Cheese Factory is about 15 km beyond Braidwood, but we found it a pretty easy drive. And it was worth it, it's a delightful spot. The Annual Celebration of St David's Day is an event to be recommended. The promoters, Gary Watkins-Sully and Tony Shepherd, have started a tradition, and this year a few hundred locals turned up in spite of the weather. Not even the rain and thunder could dampen the enthusiasm of the crowd and performers, in fact the sweeping mist added a distinct Welsh atmosphere! We were made to feel very welcome, the performances were both musical and witty, and there was food and beverage on hand, or you could bring your own. All I spoke to in our group were keen to go again next year - so we will have to prepare something other than the Mari Lwyd by then!

- Margaret Evans



**Images from
the Reidsdale
visit of Y Fari
Lwyd**

Au revoir Hilda

Bill and Hilda Howard were foundation members of our Society, formed under the name Welsh Cambrian Society of the ACT. They attended the discussions on the formation and structure of the Society and all its early meetings and functions, many of which were at the Ainslie Football Club, then a very modest establishment.

When Bill passed away Hilda moved from their Downer home to a purpose-built cottage behind her son's house in Deakin. She kept up her interest in the Society and went to almost all events, but it was by no means Hilda's only interest. She was an active member of the View Club and regularly attended the Uniting Church in Northbourne Avenue. With these and other interests Hilda made many, many friends.

When the Monday lunches started some 15 years ago Hilda was one of the very small group which came along to the Ainslie Club, often travelling from Deakin by bus. She has been a regular ever since, seeing the growth of this Society activity from the initial group of three or four to the current twenty or so. With her great sense of humour, Hilda could always be relied on for lively conversation.

One particular lunch many will remember was in March 2001 when we celebrated Hilda's 90th birthday. As a surprise we had organised a cake and presents, and she was quite overcome, having always found it difficult to understand the high regard we have for her. In January this year we were delighted to welcome Hilda to Monday lunch, at the same time sad that she would not be joining us in the coming months. As convenor of the lunches from their beginning I said a few words to convey to her our affection and appreciation as well as our regret that she would no longer be joining us.

At the end of January Hilda moved into a retirement village in Towradgi, near Wollongong. Never one to let the grass grow under her feet, Hilda has joined the View Club and made friends there, and attends mid-week services at the Uniting Church. She does miss all her Canberra friends very much, and was touched to receive cards from many of them for her 99th birthday on March 6.

We hope to be able to help Hilda celebrate next year when she turns 100. In the meantime she would be pleased to hear from her friends and her address is included below.

I am sure I speak for all of us in the Society in wishing Hilda all the best for the future. Here is a person who is small in stature but great in heart and personality, a modest and unassuming lady we can be proud to call "friend".

— *Pamela Morris-Kennedy*



◀ At the Ainslie Football Club on January 4, 2010, a gathering of members said farewell to Hilda.

Among her friends of many years were Phil Jones, Shirley Williams, Iris Campbell, and Pamela Morris-Kennedy ▶

*Hilda's address is:
Unit 65, Towradgi Park
Village, 17A Murranar Rd,
Towradgi, NSW 2518
Phone: (02) 4284 1742*



St David's Day Dinner

This event was held in the Orion Room, The Southern Cross Club, Phillip, on Monday night, the 1st of March, 2010.

The MC, Richard Jones, thanked the committee and society members who had been working behind the scenes to prepare for the night. They had set up the table and room decorations, printed programs and music, and organised for raffle prizes, food, speakers and guests to be present and correct on the night. Greetings from other Welsh societies were acknowledged, several from New Zealand, which seems to have very active Welsh communities.

After toasts to Australia and St David, and *gofyn bendith* said by Dai Davies, a medley of Welsh airs was played by pianist Sue Edwards, who also accompanied Iris Campbell and John Williams, and played the anthems of both countries.

Forty people attended, at five appropriately decorated tables, and an excellent smorgasbord was provided. Following the main course, past presidents of the Welsh Society gave reviews and recollections of their terms, and spoke of characters from the past no longer with us.

The speakers were Dai Davies, Jean Metters, Iris Campbell, Jill Dempster, Mal Davies, Peter Haddon and David Lucas.

This was an experimental format that gave the opportunity for an overview of the Society's history, but was rather too ambitious in its scope for the time available. It would be nice to have more detailed reminiscences under the title 'Atgofion' in this newsletter!

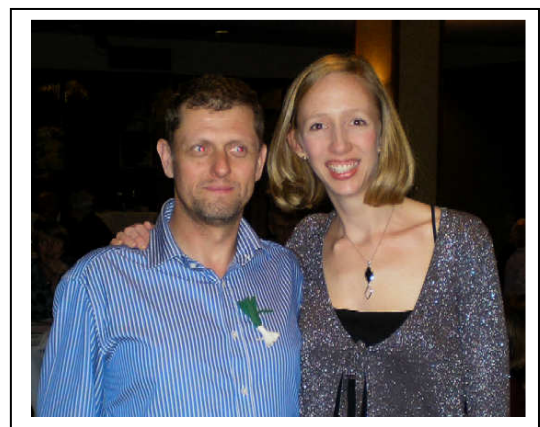
The Davies Raffle Tradition was upheld, with Carolynn selling and Mal winning. How do they do it? In the end, there were quite a few happy winners. Our thanks go to the donors of items for the raffle, to Peter Haddon for handling the financial negotiations, and to the club for making the room available.

Below: The Campbell, Crompton, Davies-Swayne and Davies table with Peter Haddon



Huw Rowlands and Jenny Eastmead

Humphrey and Shilo, just arrived from Wales



REVIEW:

Neighbours from Hell?

The book of this title, by Mike Parker (*Y Lolfa*, 2007), examines the attitudes of the English over the centuries towards Wales as a geographic entity, and to its people.

Apart from giving an historical survey, it has some incisive comments to make about the contemporary social and economic situation. The author quotes research showing that 81% of people working in tourism in the Benllech area of Anglesey were English incomers, and that "three quarters of those... in this most

Welsh-speaking of areas had no knowledge of the language. It is a deeply unhealthy, divisive situation.” Tourism itself is a poor economic base: “providing largely seasonal and often badly-paid jobs.”

The Centre for Alternative Technology near Machynlleth he regards as a well-meaning project which nevertheless attracts supporters whose remarks and assumptions “reveal, beneath all the internationalist bluster, a disconcerting arrogance...”

Some might wonder why there is a question mark in the title. Take it as a hint that *we* should not make sweeping generalisations about the English. The point is brought home by the fact that the author is English, an in-comer to Wales, but one who is more aware of the damage being done to the identity of that country than many native-born. In fact some of the worst cases of bigotry are found among deracinated Welsh. The multilingual poet Patrick McGuinness, born in Tunisia of English and Belgian parents, told interviewer Giorgia Sensi (Planet Aug/Sept 2006), “I also believe that people who move to Welsh-speaking areas ought to learn a respectful amount of the language. That’s the sort of thing you get called ‘racist’ for by Labour Assembly Members these days”.

If there is one underlying thread throughout the examples given of put-downs and outright racism, it is the role played by the media, from picture postcards to talk-back ‘shock jocks’. It is significant that when a remark Parker made about the English in Wales and about discrimination was picked up by the UK media, he was inundated with phone calls for interviews about the nasty Welsh. When they learned that he had been misquoted, and was actually referring to discrimination *by* the English, they suddenly lost interest.

The author adds light touches to his serious theme and therefore the book, which is virtually a primer on the subject, may reach a wide audience. The pervasiveness of the attitudes referred to by Mike Parker is not often realised by people who are not directly affected. For example, the media, as well as giving full rein to the prejudices of their in-house pundits, have a more sinister effect on the Welsh themselves. Just as the imposition of the English language has had linguistic effects which made necessary the publication of a series of articles (in Welsh) called ‘How not to speak English in Welsh’, so do the Anglo-centric UK Press and TV have mental effects, creating an English way of looking at the world. Typical was the naming by Wrexham town council some years ago of a new hall. They were scratching around for a Welsh translation as an afterthought instead of naming it in Welsh in the first place.

One can hardly avoid coming across examples of what Mike Parker deals with, as shown by some quotes given below from my own reading. They may convince you that the subject is not inconsequential.

From ‘The Earliest English’ by Cramp and Gummer, Edward Arnold, 1963: *‘And so we come to the arrival of the first English... soon they saw that the Britons were cowards and that the land was fertile and easy to conquer.’*

Quoted in Melbourne Museum gallery (Craniometry exhibit): *‘John Beddoe, author of The Races of Man (1862), claimed that black people, the Irish, the Welsh and the lower classes all had protruding jaws, a sign of lower development.’*

Odhams Child’s First Encyclopedia in Color Vol 6 1964: *“To the east of Glamorgan is the English county of Monmouthshire”.*

House advertisement in ‘Dalton Weekly’ (1970’s): *‘Freehold, near Aberystwyth. Stone built detached property (in) a pleasant rural community where nearly half the inhabitants are English’.*

Chambers’s Encyclopaedia Vol X, 1874: *‘The Welsh affirm that their language is exceedingly harmonious... but foreigners generally fail to realise the fact... [the language] exhibits a certain stateliness, or even grandiloquence, characteristic, indeed, of uncivilised nations’.*

[Needless to say the entry on ‘English’ contained a straightforward account without any sarcasm or feeble witticisms.]

A writer to The Guardian, 19 Sept 1997, hoping that following the ‘Yes’ vote for an Assembly, *‘it will be made illegal to speak the unintelligent gibberish called Welsh outside Wales’.*

In a Welsh farmhouse: *‘This is to certify that [Name] was awarded the Certificate of the Central Welsh Board in July 1943 having satisfied the examiners in ENGLISH LANGUAGE and in the following seven subjects’* [none of which was Welsh; English was compulsory].

From the venomous Bernard Levin in The Times (1980s): *‘The fact that only a small proportion of Welsh people speak Welsh has brought into existence yet another form of the single issue fanatic; this one demands that all the children of the principality be taught Welsh. Incidentally, Owen Glendower... was a singularly absurd figure, not above giving himself toy titles, starting with Prince of Wales. The English mopped him up in no time’.*

Brian Sewell in Evening Standard 15/01/2007: *‘...their low church moral superiority, their matchless skills in music, song, poetry and all the business of the confounded eisteddfod.’*

The editor of **Planet** magazine commented (May 2007): “Both Peter Lord in *Words with Pictures* and Mike Parker in his new book *Neighbours from Hell?* are right to see such hackneyed stereotypes in the long perspective of armed conflict and empire, rather than as the schoolyard tit-for-tat we are often assured they are”.

– Glyn Myfyr

POOR WELSH: Cymraeg sâl, Cymraeg druan

Both the English and the Welsh languages are at risk of losing their value as means of communication. George Orwell, writing about the assumption that nothing can be done about careless and inaccurate use of language, commented: 'Underneath this lies the half-conscious belief that language is a natural growth and not an instrument which we shape to our own purposes...'

The need to take the latter view is all the more pressing in the case of Welsh, as I will discuss later; but first, consider Orwell's remark that 'Modern English, especially written English, is full of bad habits which spread by imitation and which can be avoided if one is willing to take the necessary trouble. If one gets rid of these habits one can think more clearly'.

Orwell was not concerned with grammar or non-standard usages 'so long as one makes one's meaning clear'. In short, language is instrumental in forming clear thought and clear meaning. To the extent that an understanding of grammar (a formal description of how a language works) serves these purposes it assumes importance, particularly for adult learners. When one considers the subtleties of meaning which can be conveyed by a language it is difficult to know, as a teacher, how much grammar can be dispensed with without risking ambiguity, impoverishment and imprecision.

Calling a language an 'instrument' sounds rather dismissive. It is not a case of any means to an end. Bernard Levin (*Times* 5.5.75) wrote of English that it is not a tool, ornament or even a conduit, "It is us, and we are it... if it perishes, we have perished."*

This social and cultural aspect of language was understood when a call for the continuance of Welsh was written into the Welsh national anthem.

James Cochrane, in his book *Between you and I*, distinguishes between educated speakers, uneducated, and those who have been educated after the late 1960s. The first and second categories were likely to speak well, either from formal education or by natural use of traditional patterns. The last group are nervous because they are vaguely aware that 'grammar' is important, but are not quite sure what this requires of them, hence the title of his book. The Press is full of illiteracies, under the by-line of people who are supposed to be professional users of language; errors such as 'the ship sunk', 'he laid on the road', 'a phenomena', and 'peddle-radio'. Presumably the last is commercial radio.

Orwell's main concern was with the substitution of waffle for plain words. Canberra generates a lot of this stuff. Road works signs don't tell us the pavement is being repaired. No, it is being *rehabilitated*.

The dangers for Welsh are more serious. It, like English, 'is full of bad habits which spread by imitation...' The main danger of course is the all-pervasive presence in every home of English media. This, added to a shameful history of failure by the education system to insist on a Welsh education even for native speakers, has produced a linguistically fragmented country.

The first two of Cochrane's categories have been severely weakened: educated use and natural traditional use; creating a situation where it is

remarkable not that Welsh is spoken so badly, but that it is spoken at all.

When a Welsh speaker seeks a word, it is the English word that is at hand. In these circumstances imitation spreads not merely inaccuracies, but alien expressions, as English words, idioms and even grammatical structures infiltrate. There is a difference between word borrowing, which takes place between all languages, and word substitution, which supplants native speech unnecessarily. A point is reached where one might ask, 'Why not just speak English?' This is because failure to take the necessary trouble brings the language to a point where it sounds like a pidgin speech and becomes an object of ridicule to those already disposed to be hostile to it. If it is worth doing, it is worth doing properly.

An example of how the easy path is taken is the use of the low-value English word 'nice' which can mean pretty well anything. 'Neis' is used instead of these possibilities: *dymunol*, *hoffus*, *annwyl*, *rhadlon*, *caedig*, *tlws*, *pert*, *braf*, *da*, *deniadol*, *gwerthfawr*, and others, but to use them would require making some nice distinctions of meaning.

The necessary effort in the case of Welsh is therefore of a greater order than that needed to use English correctly. Courses teaching Welsh to adults often try to make it easier by using the Wenglish words heard in the street. This saves learning new vocabulary, but there is another reason. If a learner uses correct language they may be regarded as 'having swallowed a dictionary' or the listener may think they are being shown up as ignorant. They may then switch to English because they are using a different language register and have a sense of inferiority. By using English both are on common ground. That is the greatest danger to Welsh.

This is the reason, I think, for WJEC courses being run in either north or south Welsh versions. The intention is that you speak like the locals and avoid the angst. However, since the variations between north and south are minor, they could be assimilated within one course. Since the invention of the bicycle people do not need to confine their contacts or their vocabulary to one parish. If we say *dyfod*, *dod* or *dŵad* we are able to be understood in speech, so also with *gen i* or *gyda fi*, *rydw i*, *rwyf i*, *dw i*, etc. To institutionalise dialect differences when a unified national version would be richer (by absorbing them) and in the long run more beneficial to the status of the language, is not a smart move.

There have been controversies about the type of Welsh to be taught. Cymraeg Byw has been criticised as artificial, but similar debates about English have also taken place. James Cochrane, while illustrating the misuse of 'privilege' as a verb, mentioned a letter to an Education Minister by the National Association of Teachers of English requesting that standard English

should not be granted greater importance than non-standard English (regional and working class dialects).

He referred to 'the questionable wisdom of this advice, which would in effect limit the command of a universally comprehensible version of the language to a privileged minority'.

The misplaced egalitarianism of that teachers' association seems to be an influence in Welsh teaching, where students may be short-changed by not having the full resources of a standard language taught. The 'standard' could at least eliminate some ambiguities that exist in speech as a result of indiscriminate soft mutations, and the over-use of 'Fe' and 'Mi'; while some of the redundant and lesser-used varieties of verb inflection could be rationalised.

Students of the early lessons in the WJEC course will notice an emphasis on drill and say, with minimal grammar. That cannot continue, for reasons explained by a language teacher writing in *Ninnau* (15.12.91). I summarise her main points:

1. Adults cannot learn by osmosis and contrary to popular belief children do not either.
2. It takes a child approximately 15 years to reach 'O-Level' fluency in their native language, so don't expect too much too soon.
3. For an adult, success requires analysis of structures of the language before fluency can take place.

The writer, Darhon Rees-Rohrbacher, attended a Welsh course in Wales where the lecturers avoided grammar and seemed to think that "... the student should pick up the language in a 'natural' way (whatever that means) as a 'small child does'. Frankly, the only way I was able to learn anything ... was by applying what I had learned about language acquisition during my training as a Spanish teacher".

This criticism does not apply generally. Many of the residential courses available are excellent and well structured to get the best results in the short time that most students can afford to spend. After the course comes the persistence and practice which leads to success. Also, there is a place for learning by imitation and drilling speech. The excellent website, www.saysomethinginwelsh.com rightly emphasizes frequent practice and list memorization while concentrating on the oral/aural approach.

For linguists of a 'post-structural' persuasion there is no right or wrong speech. Grammatical rules are 'sedimentation' of past social constructs, and speech is a 'negotiation of meaning'. Interesting insights into why people speak as they do are obtained by such sociolinguistic analyses, but for the class teacher there is no choice but to apply rules, bearing in mind that Orwell's 'clear thinking' is as important as clear meaning.

Grammar is but a stepping stone to competence, just as learning to operate gears facilitates forward motion in a car. Once understood, but more importantly practiced thoroughly, it becomes automatic, and true fluency in such matters as functional mutation rarely requires conscious referral to the rules ('What gear am I in?')

Children who are learning Welsh in schools are coming home with an enhanced vocabulary not always

familiar to their parents, whose own vocabulary has not kept up with technology, just as English words such as 'cobbler' and 'whetstone' are less useful in daily life than 'electronics' and 'blog'. However, the older language was often more idiomatic and structurally richer than current usages, diluted by the effects of English mass media.

Schools, by putting hundreds of children together, are educationally counterproductive in that they create a sub-culture where the loudest and crassest are role models for the immature. This creates a herd-speak which more or less consciously rejects the adult standards.

Recently I heard a parent say, 'My sister and I went shopping', followed immediately by their offspring: 'Me and my friends did too'. They obviously didn't pick it up from their parents or, one hopes, from teachers. Similar and worse solecisms are propagated within Welsh language schools.

It has been pointed out that at the establishment of the state of Israel the Hebrew spoken was the same as the Hebrew of two thousand years ago. It is now a language able to function in the modern world because of a social contract to renovate it. The question was asked, 'What sort of language do we want it to be?' It was not left to the random 'negotiation of meaning' made between speakers and listeners. It required universally applied rules, and deliberate construction of words.

This renovation naturally draws on the riches of the existing language, and if these riches are largely in the literary language, the process will draw the spoken and written registers closer together. It also makes the store-house of literature more accessible. While this makes sense from a functional point of view, it has another advantage. In its present state of 'diglossia', where Welsh becomes hybridised with English, it invites ridicule and, for those with animosity towards it, an excuse to oppose its use in public life.

That such animosity exists must be faced up to. In its more socially acceptable form it consists of a jokey 'What a funny language' commentary. In its more virulent manifestations it makes speaking Welsh a subversive act. An editorial in *Y Faner* of 22.08.75 described the response of the organiser of a cycling rally in Leicester to Gwyneth Barnes, a leading Welsh cyclist, when she applied to compete.

Her sin was to send a bilingual cheque and a self-addressed envelope using the Welsh place names. Her request was denied as follows: "With your obvious nationalistic and bad-mannered approach I suggest you confine yourself to riding in Wales. After all, you might find yourself contaminated by English imperialism."

In most countries this dimension to speaking one's own language doesn't even occur to people. It is not thinkable. In Wales it is just part of the burden that is required to be borne in order to maintain one's identity. Therefore, to insist on using one's own language, and in particular, to make an effort to speak it correctly is unavoidably a political act.

Learners inevitably tend towards word-for-word translation of their native sentences. This means that

they risk speaking English in Welsh if they fail to recognise idiomatic constructions, which do not translate easily. There are also fundamental sentence structures that do not match across languages.

For example, an Urdd Eisteddfod 'learner of the year' told an interviewer, "Dw i'n gobeithio ffeindio pobl ym Mryste i ymarfer fy Nghymraeg gyda." Literally, "I am hoping to find people in Bristol to practice my Welsh with."

Whereas in English it has become unfashionable to say "with whom to practice my Welsh", it is still alien to the structure of the language to finish a Welsh sentence with a preposition. The statement also illustrates the use of English words where good Welsh equivalents exist (ffeindio). Musk** gives other examples: *so* "so", *jyst* "just", *oreit* "alright", *ddo* "though", *eniwê* "anyway".

The BBC produces weekly scripts that are supposed to help learners, but they produce their interviews verbatim, and therefore do not serve the purpose of presenting a good model, but rather act as an illustration of how not to speak Welsh. A recent example: "*so rhaid inni witchad tan tro nesa lly!*" One of their interviewees said of a controversial law, "Mae ddim yn mynd i helpu efo..." ('It's not going to help with...'). This exemplifies the fundamental error of using 'mae' instead of 'dydy' in negative statements, yet it is sent to unsuspecting learners by the BBC.

'Mynd i' is often an anglicism. In English, 'Going to (do)' indicates intention to do, or being about to do. In Welsh, 'It's going to fall' (about to) is 'Mae *ar fin* syrthio.' 'I am going to go to the post office in a minute' is not quite the same as "I'm going to the post office in a minute". It expresses a plan to go. Idiomatic Welsh would do this by saying "Dw i *am fynd* i'r llythyrdy mewn munud" not "Dw i'n mynd i fynd i'r llythyrdy".

The above examples touch on the matters of sentence structure and idiomatic expression. There are other factors to consider. In Welsh, grammatical distinctions are made which English speakers may not be aware of. For example, the inflected Perfect and the Imperfect: 'She was walking in the garden when she fell'. This falling is a once-only completed action; that is, Perfect tense, and would translate as 'Roedd hi'n cerdded yn yr ardd pan *gwymmodd*'. 'A waterfall fell over the cliff': This falling is a continuous uncompleted process at the time mentioned (Imperfect tense) and the translation is '*Disgynnai* rhaeadr dros y clogwyn' (not *disgynnodd*). Note also the selection of different words for 'fell'.

This analytical approach is necessary because one cannot depend on 'picking up' correct speech from conversations when the standard of street Welsh has deteriorated to the extent illustrated by BBC interview scripts. (Note that I dared to write "correct speech". This is dealt with further on).

English is famous for its rather indiscriminate assimilation of foreign words. 'Uber-chic' seems to be a current example. To some extent all languages need to do this to accommodate the massive flow of ideas. They nevertheless need to maintain their individuality

and 'genius', otherwise the world will be impoverished.

There is a clear parallel between the destruction of languages and the extinction of natural species in the last hundred years. Concern that species are being lost through hybridization are matched by concerns that languages are being denatured due to cultural imposition. The replacement of endemic species (or languages) by invasive introductions is harmful because fundamentally it involves loss of information.

It is significant that the examples Francis Pryor gave in his book *Britain AD* to illustrate the process of acculturation (the adoption of another culture) actually involved destruction of the local cultures by violent invasion and economic take-over, in South America, Cornwall and Ireland. In such situations there is always a power imbalance.

Recognition of imbalance in social spheres has led to 'affirmative action', and in a few cases this has applied to languages, such as Quebec French. In the absence of affirmative action, the belated and not yet fully implemented equal status of Welsh and English leaves the power balance untouched. (The 1993 Act does not encompass the private sector). Since affirmative action is always politically unpopular with the comfortable majority it seems that language survival must continue to depend on personal commitment until the majority can be brought to understand its importance. Even within the weak policy of 'equality of status' there is plenty of slack to be taken up in the public use of Welsh by individuals. (If they don't show willing, why should anyone else?)

Meanwhile, the Inuit language, or 'Greenlandic', under a self-government agreement with Denmark, will be the official language of Greenland, a country with a population less than that of Wagga Wagga. No fudging of the issue there, with a pretence of equality between the indigenous and the colonial language, because they know who would hold all the cards in that situation. An imaginary equality of status is glory without power unless a language is made a functional necessity.

By choosing which language to use one can consciously decide where to weight the scales, but most speakers are unconsciously influenced by the immediate situation. They assume, for instance, that the default greeting of a stranger must be in English when they see English dominating their environment, so two Welsh speakers may initiate conversation in English. The situation has been described by Musk thus: 'In a British context, there are relatively few explicit regulations to enforce the norm of English monolingualism, and it is seldom named, yet most of the time it operates invisibly without being questioned.'

As mentioned, in the broad sense of the word, the deliberate choice of Welsh must be regarded as a political act, since it is an assertion of right and of identity. For a speaker of a dominant language this aspect simply does not arise. Their language is taken for granted. So much so, that they often expect everyone else to accommodate their monolingualism. Ironically, lack of knowledge is power.

The earlier part of this essay drew attention to the debate on 'correct' use of language. The majority of linguists favour an approach that takes the language as it is spoken, warts and all, as the proper subject for their study. They make no judgments as to appropriateness, no appeals to tradition or authority, no references to quality or consistency.

This approach seems to be in the sound tradition of disinterested scientific investigation, but unsurprisingly it is also in tune with the modern ideology of non-discrimination. The ability to discriminate, on the other hand, may be considered a mark of civilization. As C. S. Lewis wrote, "certain things, if not seen as lovely or detestable are not being correctly seen at all."

How can these inherent qualitative differences be identified? Perhaps 'correctness' can be defined by its social results. Taking care with a language and respecting its forms and idioms is not simply one choice among others. It has consequences.

A few years ago, a person auditioning for TV who could not express themselves without obscenities would have been shown the door. Now we have discussions about the rights and wrongs of a program that promotes such a 'celebrity'. One consequence of this lack of discrimination in the media and in public life is a generation of foul-mouthed children who are at the same time ignorant of the rich storehouse of expression that should be their birthright. Language is not just a mirror held up to society; it also influences society's expectations of itself, and that is even more significant. In Wales, of course, generations have been totally deprived of knowledge of their language. In restoring their birthright, it should not be an impoverished or corrupted version that is offered, but a sound inheritance, because there will be consequences.

Some linguists have described Middle English as being a creole derived from Old French and Old English, a meeting place for separate language groups. Another proposition is that French was, to its Middle English speakers, not "a discrete, self-contained language entirely separate from English, but ... part of the common stock of linguistic material available for use ... either in the form of complete lexical items or as components that could be combined with English elements".

A participant in that debate also mentioned several indicators of language death, including the relaxation

of linguistic rules as a result of the devaluing of the language, and its restriction to informal or private functions. This is relevant to the situation of Welsh. Since creoles arise from a need to communicate between members of mutually unintelligible languages, pidgin Welsh will never become a creole. English serves that communication purpose, and because it is obviously regarded by many Welsh speakers as 'part of the common stock of linguistic material available for use' it is simply a threat to the survival of Welsh. This code-mixing, where lexical items and grammatical features from two languages appear in one sentence, must lead to disintegration and language death.

A devalued language, which is neither fish nor fowl, will not be appropriate for formal or public occasions and serves no practical purpose that cannot be supplied by a functional native language.

The Canadian author Jane Jacobs, in *Dark Age Ahead*, claimed that writing, printing, and the internet give a false sense of security about the permanence of culture: 'Instead, cultures live through word and mouth and example.' If so, the quality of the spoken word is a primary indicator of a culture's health, and if language is just a tool, it is one that must be kept burnished otherwise it ceases to function properly, and the culture it bears decays with it. The word 'culture' implies it is the product of active cultivation of music, art, science and literature. Why not language?

Some linguists refer disparagingly to 'the sediment of usage' called grammar, and speak of its constant erosion and replacement, but natural evolution must be distinguished from unnatural rapid disintegration. In spite of attempts by linguists and educationists to downplay the importance of understanding grammar, it just won't go away, and for very good reasons. Apart from helping one to appreciate literature and cultural history, it is essential for renovating and giving social status to a language, transmitting clear meaning, forming clear distinctions, and for guiding those who wish to understand a language's real character and attributes.

. In the present situation of Welsh usage, seeing things as 'lovely or detestable' is not an aesthetic issue, but a prerequisite for language and cultural survival.

-- P. H. E.

*Levin, as a chauvinist, denied the same status to Welsh.

**Musk, Nigel. *Performing Bilingualism in Wales with the Spotlight on Welsh*. Linköping University, Studies in Language and Culture No 8. 2006

Contributions specifically for the newsletter may be sent to the editor at cymroz@netspeed.com.au or PO Box 4105, Weston Creek, ACT 2611. [The Society's business address is on the front page.]. Disclaimer: The views of contributors are not necessarily those of the Society.

► Thank you Iris Campbell and John Williams for organizing the Festival of Song on 15 May. Helpers with the publicity are also thanked. Mark this event in your diaries, and the Goulburn Cathedral performance on November 14 by the Cantorion Sydney Male Voice Choir, conductor Dr John Lloyd. Refer to page one Calendar for the many events coming up.

Welsh/Cornish folk dancing

Our dancers were involved in the performances of Mari Lwyd during February.

We continue to meet on the second Friday of the month. In March we had a 'Saints day' dance. Our next dance will be Friday May 14 at 7pm at Folk Dance Canberra Hall, 114, Maitland Street, Hackett at 7pm. In April our 'After the folk festival' dance was held on Tuesday evening. Margaret Kenning of Newcastle and Hunter Welsh folk dancers, and Derek and Louise Williams, Welsh folk dancers from Auckland, shared some new dances with us. Also friends from the USA visiting ANU have given me a dance to the tune of Bugeilio'r Gwenith Gwyn. Margaret and Derek were also able to attend the Welsh Society's First Monday lunch at Ainslie Football Club. Twenty people were present at the lunch.

Instead of our usual Friday night dance in April a small number of us went to Dr John Garden's talk on *Dance, Dancing and Dancing Masters in the Baroque Era* at the Civic Library.

We have a good response from our dancers to an invitation to join a team of dancers for the TEA (The English Australian) Club May Day afternoon dance. Date: Saturday 1st May, 3pm - 7pm (meet at 2:30pm to set up). Location: Senior Citizens Hall, Woden (just across from the Southern Cross Club)

-- Winifred Maindonald

A request is made for readers to assist in locating five white folk dance aprons embroidered by Pamela Morris-Kennedy, which are the property of the Society. The decoration may be Celtic knots or daffodils. Any information about their current whereabouts would be appreciated. Ph. 6230 4937

TAFLU GOLAU

Ym mherfeddion prysglwyndiroedd Awstralia bu Edna ar fin esgor mewn caban heb drydan. Trwy wyrth, yr oedd meddyg wedi cyrraedd o bell. Cydiodd ei gŵr, Ken, mewn llusern olew tra'r oedd y meddyg yn cynorthwyo'r enedigaeth.

Wedi i'r baban gael ei esgor, aeth Ken i roi'r llusern i lawr. 'Aros,' meddai'r meddyg, 'Rwy'n credu bod un arall ar ei ffordd. Codwch y golau eto.'

Ac yn wir, daeth baban arall i'r byd. Unwaith eto gofynnodd y meddyg i'r gŵr godi'r llusern, am ei fod e braidd yn disgwyl ymddangosiad epil arall.

Daeth y trydydd yn eitha prydlon. Crafodd y gŵr ei ben gan ddweud, 'Ydych chi'n meddwl bod y golau'n eu denu nhw?'



Pension Equality Denied

An appeal to a European Court of Human Rights by British pensioners has failed. Jim Tilley, chairman of British Pensioners in Australia said the ruling meant the UK Government would continue to discriminate against its aged pensioners depending on where they had chosen to live. Those in the United States, for example, receive indexed adjustments, those in Australia do not. Community Services Minister Jenny Macklin said the UK Government's decision was discriminatory. The Australian Government's consequent extra social security payments were estimated at about \$100 million per annum.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING:- *Preliminary notice is given of the AGM, which takes the place of the ordinary committee meeting on September 23. There will be a reminder in the August newsletter. Please consider nominating persons for the committee. The meeting starts at 7pm at the Irish Club in Weston, unless otherwise notified in the August issue.*

Good Wishes: Society members send best wishes for improved health to several people who have recently been unwell. We are glad to hear that Joan Wilson is recovering. We were happy to see twenty attendees at our First Monday Lunch in April (see Folk Dance report).

FESTIVAL OF SONG

AT ST ANDREWS PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, FORREST, ACT.

**2PM SATURDAY 15 MAY. PARTICIPATING CHOIRS: CON BRIO, CANBERRA
CELTIC CHOIR, AUSTRALIAN RUGBY CHOIR**

(and you – please come in good voice)

GOLD COIN DONATION AT THE DOOR

Please publicise this event. Use the above notice on your local shop or church noticeboard!