

Children's Books



Gordon Jones

The Friends held their annual general meeting in the National Library, Aberystwyth, on Saturday, 18 October, with children's books being the afternoon's topic – the first time this important aspect of our literature has been discussed by the Friends.

Professor M. Wynn Thomas had convened a group of individuals with particular interest and experience in this field, namely Dr Siwan Rosser from Cardiff University's School of Welsh; Gordon Jones, a creative editor with years of experience working with several publishers in Wales; and Caryl Lewis, author of a large number of Welsh-language books for both adults and younger readers.

Dr Rosser gave a historical introduction to children's literature, emphasising the changes seen over the years. The few titles that were available a century ago had strong moral themes and predominantly Christian values. As a result of the work of authors such as T. Llew Jones, the emphasis slowly shifted to the creation of varied reading materials, and the production of titles that appealed directly to the younger readers themselves.

Using his many years of experience in various aspects of children's books, Gordon Jones emphasized the progress achieved in Welsh-language book production throughout the decades by showing examples of titles with which he'd been involved. The importance of promoting both original titles and adaptations was stressed, in order to ensure a variety of titles for all ages and

reading abilities.

The focus of Caryl Lewis's work was the young reader, and although the author stressed that including a moral tone in her stories wasn't her main aim when writing, she recognised that her books did contain basic moral values.

The speakers' zeal and enthusiasm for encouraging children to enjoy reading was felt by those attending the meeting, and although only a glimpse into the world of children's literature was given, all present shared the view that supporting and developing Welsh-language titles for children is essential – they are tomorrow's readers, after all.

New members of the Management Committee

Following the recent annual general meeting of the Friends, new members have been appointed for the 2014–17 period:

Bethan Gwanas
Ian Lloyd Hughes
Marian Delyth
Meinir Pierce Jones
Ion Thomas
Dyfrig Davies

The new members will meet soon to discuss the Friends' programme of events and organise a membership campaign.



From the Chair Tegwyn Jones

This is my last contribution as editor of *The Friend*, which is an opportunity for me to take a backward glance over some happy years in this particular Chair. And as I do, it is a grateful note that I wish to strike. Warm thanks are due for the ready cooperation of the Friends of the Book Council Committee that I hesitantly sought to lead during my chairmanship, and also the cooperation of the Books Council itself. It was indeed a privilege from time to time, when the need arose, to be able to expediate, ease and help the exceedingly important work that is undertaken by the Council from year to year. May this valuable partnership long continue.

Were I obliged to choose which particular event gave me the most pleasure during my spell in the Chair, I would have to refer to our annual general meeting when members (and others) came together – usually in Aberystwyth – to welcome and to listen to a guest from the world of Welsh books, being kindly but astutely interviewed by the Chairman of the Welsh Book Council, Professor M. Wynn Thomas. During my spell as chairman I was privileged to introduce Mererid Hopwood, Gwyn Thomas, Lloyd Jones, Bethan Gwanas and Eigra Lewis Roberts. Two others who shone in their turn were the late – alas – Hywel Teifi Edwards and Nigel Jenkins, both of whom are sorely missed. A very special meeting was that held in 2009 when Gwerfyl Pierce Jones was invited to be our guest, soon after she had retired from her post as Director of the Council – a post which she had filled with distinction since 1987.

I appreciate very much the eight years I spent as chairman of the Friends, and I wish all future success to Elwyn and the able and dedicated crew that he leads.

Summer Reading Challenge



Organised by the Reading Agency, an independent charity, and by public libraries, the Challenge is supported in Wales by the Welsh Books Council and the Welsh Government. Now in its 16th year, the Summer Reading Challenge in libraries is the UK's largest reading-for-pleasure programme for primary school pupils. Last year, a record 42,218 children in Wales – 42% of whom were boys – took up the challenge to read six books or more at their local library during the school holidays, and the scheme was offered by every single local authority in Wales.

Every year the Challenge has a new theme and the theme for 2014 was 'Mythical Maze', illustrated by the award-winning artist Sarah McIntyre. As in previous years, children aged between 4 and 12 were encouraged to read six or more books of their choice, and were given

posters and stickers (including 'scratch and sniff' ones!) and other incentives to complete the Challenge. Teachers commented that children who took part returned to school as more fluent, confident readers.

Support from the Welsh Government is crucial to the success of the challenge in Wales, and Huw Lewis, the Minister for Education and Skills, said: 'You can never overestimate the importance of reading and I'm absolutely delighted to offer my support to the Summer Reading Challenge in Wales. We want to improve the literacy standards of all children in Wales, but wider than that I want children to enjoy reading in whatever form that takes. From books about facts to fantasy filled fiction, if you foster a passion for reading from a young

age it stands our young people in good stead for the future.'

The statistics for this year's Challenge are currently being collected and analysed, but here are some facts about the 2013 Challenge:

- 42,218 children took part in the Challenge in Wales, 42% of whom were boys
- This is an increase of 7.7% on participation in 2012
- 245 libraries across Wales took part
- 25,889 children completed the challenge by reading six books each
- Over 15,500 children attended events as part of the campaign
- Over 3,000 children from Wales signed up as new library members.

For more information on the Summer Reading Challenge in Wales contact Angharad Wyn Tomos (angharad.tomos@cllc.org.uk)



100 Dylan Thomas Booklist Launch

On Thursday, 2 October, and to coincide with National Poetry Day, a recommended reading list of Dylan Thomas's works was launched at the Dylan Thomas Centre in Swansea.

The basic concept of the reading list, entitled *100 Dylan Thomas*, is to highlight and raise awareness of Dylan's work among both library users and potential library users throughout Wales. The project involved all the libraries in Wales

working together, alongside the Welsh Books Council and the Dylan Thomas Centre, with support from the Dylan Thomas 100 initiative.

The brochure also includes information on places to visit, including the new Lottery-funded permanent exhibition at Swansea's Dylan Thomas Centre, one of the legacies of the centenary. We hope the *100 Dylan Thomas* brochure will be a guide to library users as we celebrate the life and work of the Swansea-born writer.

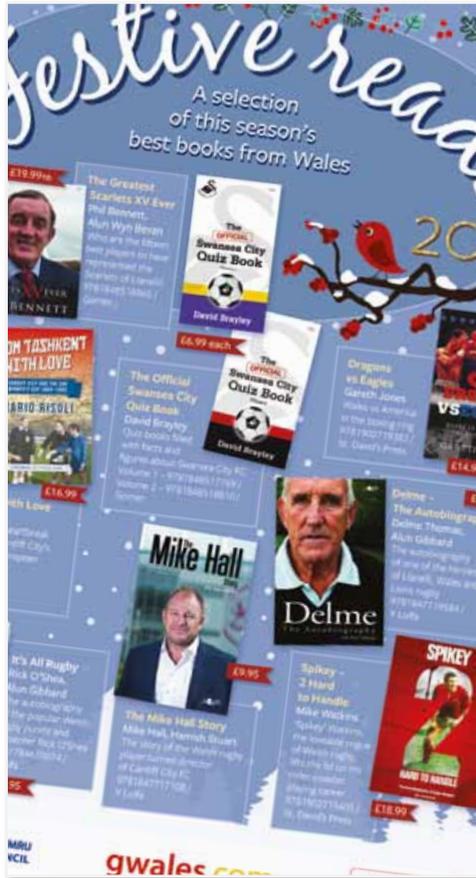


Festive Reads

With Christmas Day on the horizon, I'm sure many of you will have already embarked on the annual unenviable task of buying gifts for family and friends. For some great ideas for presents suitable for all ages and interests, take a look at the selection of titles on offer this year, in the Council's *Festive Reads* leaflet. 90,000 copies will again be distributed via the *Western Mail* and *Daily Post* and the Welsh-language supplement, *Gwledd y Nadolig*, will be distributed via the *papurau bro*. Copies of the leaflets are also available in bookshops and libraries.

'There is an excellent selection of books this year,' said Helena O'Sullivan, the Books Council's Head of Sales and Marketing. 'These will make ideal presents for friends and family, and we're delighted to enclose copies of both supplements to all members of the Friends.'

Remember that all titles featured in both leaflets, and many more entertaining ones, can be purchased at your local bookshop or on gwales.com



Summer Festivals

The summer was extremely busy for the Welsh Books Council, with stands at some of the main national festivals, including the Royal Welsh Show in Builth Wells and the National Eisteddfod in Llanelli. Support was also given to two bookshops – Awen Meirion, who provided an excellent variety of books for sale at the Meirionnydd National Urdd Eisteddfod held at Bala, and Pemberton's in Hay-on-Wye, who organised an impressive stand at the Hay Festival.



Book of the Year 2014 Winners

On Thursday, 10 July, Literature Wales announced that *Pink Mist* by Owen Sheers had been named Wales Book of the Year 2014. The winners were announced at an award ceremony held for the first time at Galeri, Caernarfon, where *Pink Mist* also topped the Poetry category, therefore winning the Roland Mathias Poetry Award.

This year's Fiction category winner was *The Rice Paper Diaries* by Francesca Rhydderch, a novel which is set both in wartime Hong Kong and in west Wales. Meic Stephens topped the Creative Non-fiction category with *Rhys Davies: A Writer's Life*, the first full biography of one of Wales's most prolific writers.

Nadia Kamil said on behalf of the English-language judging panel: 'We were looking for books that excited us and ones that made us want to continue reading. Francesca Rhydderch impressed us with emotional depth which carries the reader deep into the interior of the main characters, and Meic Stephens with his intimately researched portrait of the Blaenclydach-born Rhys Davies, who was driven to write above all else. But for his powerfully direct prose play exposing the fragile humanity of boys and the women who support them, we were unanimous in our decision that the Wales Book of the Year 2014 is *Pink Mist* by Owen Sheers.'

This is the second time Owen Sheers has won the Wales Book of the Year Award, having first received the title for his book *The Dust Diaries* (Faber & Faber) in 2005.

Each category winner was awarded £2,000, and the main award winner in each language received an additional £6,000.

The Welsh-language award winners were:

Fiction: *Dewis*, Ioan Kidd (Gomer)

Poetry: *Rhwng y Llinellau*, Christine James (Barddas)

Creative Non-fiction: *Bob: Cofiant R. Williams Parry 1884–1956*, Alan Llwyd (Gomer)



Bidding Farewell

The Council's Publishing Grants Department has witnessed many changes during the last few months following Richard Owen's retirement as Head of Department. Originally from Anglesey, Richard attended Bangor University as a science student, but changed his course to study Welsh. The combination of skills honed during his studies in both subjects gave him a perfect grounding for his chosen career in the books industry.

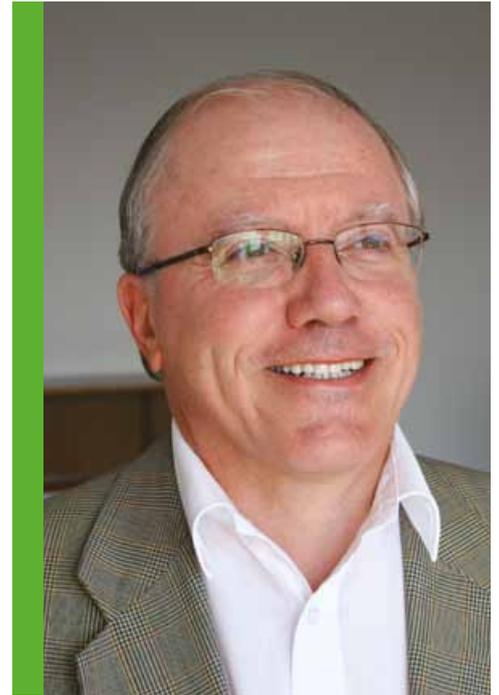
For his first post, Richard left Wales for Ireland, a country with which he is still enamoured. On his return to Wales, he moved to Aberystwyth and joined the Welsh Books Council, where he worked for thirty years until his retirement earlier this year.

Richard's constant desire to see a thriving publishing industry in Wales was a key characteristic of his nature. His enthusiasm for Welsh books and for achieving the best possible standards for readers, in both Welsh and

English, was obvious to all. In wishing him well on his retirement, Elwyn Jones, Chief Executive of the Books Council, said that Richard 'had given many years of service and support to Welsh publishers. As an administrator, ensuring fairness to all and showing a desire for success within the industry have been key factors throughout Richard's career, all founded on his keen interest in reading.'

On his retirement, several Welsh publishers expressed their respect and praise of Richard's work; many had benefitted greatly from his extensive knowledge of the industry over many years, and as well as being the prudent supervisor of the Council's grants, Richard was seen by many as a close work colleague and loyal friend.

A profile of Lucy Thomas, the new Head of Department following Richard's departure, may be seen in the previous issue of *The Friend*.



First-time Author Scoops Tir na n-Og Award



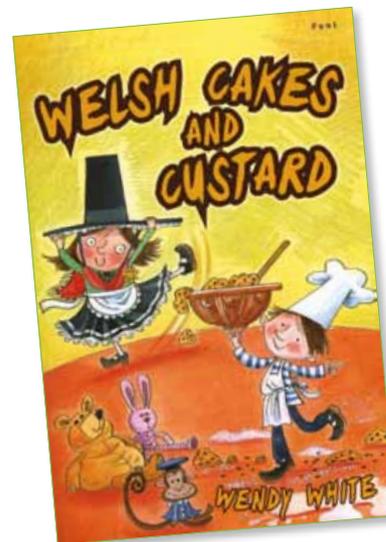
Carmarthenshire-based author Wendy White won the English-language category Tir na n-Og Award with *Welsh Cakes and Custard* (Pont), her debut novel.

The work is a charming series of stories about two young children, Betsi Wyn and Emyr Rhys, who encounter new and sometimes alarming things for the first time.

The panel of judges agreed that *Welsh Cakes and Custard* skilfully showed aspects of contemporary life in Wales, introducing unforgettable characters brimming with personality.

Lorna Egan, Chair of the Tir na n-Og English-language Panel, stated: 'Wendy is a perceptive author who understands young children, and the inclusion of both a recipe and traditional song lyrics in Welsh and English, produce a gem of a book which is warm, funny and curriculum-friendly.'

'I'm delighted to win the Tir na n-Og Award,' said Wendy White. 'It's a great honour for me to win with my first book, as it will certainly encourage me to keep on writing.'



The winners of the Welsh-language Tir na n-Og awards 2014 are:

Primary
Gareth F. Williams –
Cwmwl dros y Cwm
(Gwasg Carreg Gwalch)

Secondary
Haf Llywelyn – *Diffodd y Sêr*
(Y Lolfa)