

New Chief Executive



It was announced recently that Helgard Krause has been appointed the new Chief Executive of the Welsh Books Council. She will take up her position at the beginning of February 2017, following Elwyn Jones's retirement.

Helgard is very familiar with the Council's work, having been Overseas Marketing Officer at the Council and after two years in the post, she was appointed Head of Sales and Marketing. Following her time in these two posts, she was appointed Director at the University of Wales Press.

Born in Germany, Helgard was brought up in the Rheinland-Pfalz region, in a small town near the French border. She graduated in politics at the University of Berlin before studying English literature at Sussex University.

She has worked with several companies in the publishing industry, including Routledge and a book distribution company in Russia, where she learned to speak Russian. She then joined the RotoVision publishing company, becoming their Head of Sales and Rights and leading their marketing campaigns in China, Japan, Australia and America.

Helgard moved to Wales, and was appointed to her first post in the Welsh Books Council in 2005, becoming fluent in Welsh. She currently lives in Aber-arth, near Aberaeron.

'I'm looking forward to leading the Council's work in promoting and developing the publishing industry in Wales,' said Helgard. 'The Council has achieved a great deal since it was established over 50 years ago. It's crucial that we continue this work and ensure that the

wealth of literature created by our authors and publishers receives the attention it deserves.'

In welcoming the new appointment, the Chairman of the Welsh Books Council, Professor M. Wynn Thomas, said, 'This is an excellent appointment to a key position. Helgard possesses a depth of experience and a range of skills. This is certain to ensure the continuing success of a prominent national institution which is vital for the maintenance of Welsh culture in both languages.'

Elwyn Jones will leave the post following a period of twenty years working for the Welsh Books Council, firstly in the Marketing Department before being appointed Head of Administration and Public Relations. Elwyn became Chief Executive in 2009.

'It has been a privilege to work for the Council and I greatly admire the individuals who are involved in the publishing industry,' said Elwyn. 'Their dedication, whether they're Council employees, publishers or booksellers, is remarkable and reflects their passion for books and reading. The Council is undoubtedly one of the most important institutions in Wales, uniting two cultures and two languages, and setting the highest standards possible. I know that Helgard's skills will be a great asset to the Council, and I wish her every success in her new post.'



From the Chair Ion Thomas

The autumn with its sea of colours has arrived again this year, signalling a change in the seasons. And the Welsh Books Council is on the verge of change too; this is the last issue of the *Friend* in which I can thank Elwyn Jones for his work and dedication to the Council. He has been Chief Executive for the last seven years, and has managed to safeguard the Council and its work during a period of challenges and uncertainty. Elwyn has run a tight ship, and with wise caution, has made many difficult decisions in order to ensure that any cuts to the Council's budget would not unduly affect the work of its departments and operations. Indeed, during this period, a number of developments were

undertaken at the Distribution Centre in order to modernise its processes.

We are glad to announce that the financial support given in the Council's draft budget has increased by over 3%. This is excellent news for the publishing industry, and we hope that this increase will ensure that several plans and ideas will be continued and developed.

On behalf of the Friends, may I wish Elwyn a happy retirement, and thank him sincerely for every report and committee for which he has been responsible, and for every new scheme he has created. I look forward to greeting him as a new member of the Books Council's Friends!

Elwyn will be succeeded by Helgard Krause,

who will bring a variety of experiences to the post, and we look forward to supporting her.

This year's annual general meeting, held at the National Library's Drwm in October, was a highly memorable one, as Professor M. Wynn Thomas and Professor Alan Llwyd – chaired poet, prolific author and academic – discussed *Gwenallt*, Professor Llwyd's latest biography on the poet and scholar D. Gwenallt Jones.

I close with a simple request, namely to increase the number of Books Council Friends. We plan to offer vouchers to all existing members who succeed in attracting new blood – what a great way to buy books at a discount, so good luck!

Annual General Meeting

Friends of the Welsh Books Council will undoubtedly agree that one of the year's highlights is the discussion held as part of the annual general meeting, in the company of some of Wales's main literary figures, with Professor M. Wynn Thomas chairing proceedings.

We have, over the years, enjoyed the company of some literary giants such as Islwyn Ffowc Elis, R. S. Thomas, Jan Morris and Eigra Lewis Roberts. And last year, the meeting was held at Aberdare as we celebrated the centenary of the birth of author Alun Lewis.

This year's meeting was of a similar nature, when an audience came to the Drwm at the National Library of Wales on 15 October to

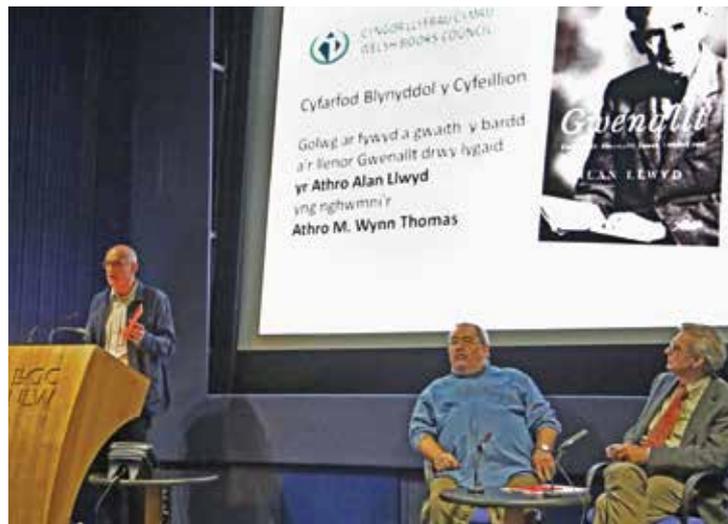


M. Wynn Thomas, Alan Llwyd, Ion Thomas and Elwyn Jones at the Drwm

enjoy a discussion between M. Wynn Thomas and chaired bard Alan Llwyd, the topic being his newly published biography of the literary scholar and poet D. Gwenallt Jones.

Alan Llwyd's meticulous research into the life and works of some of Wales's most famous poets and authors is renowned, and his latest volume, *Gwenallt*, is of the same excellent quality as his works on Kate Roberts, R. Williams Parry and Waldo Williams. During the afternoon's discussions, Alan revealed that he had discovered around sixty poems composed by Gwenallt which have never been published, poems which strengthen our understanding of Gwenallt as a poet and which link his early romantic poems and the more mature works written later in his life.

'It became obvious in the course of our discussion that Alan is an admirer of Gwenallt's work,' noted Wynn Thomas, 'and as a result of his detailed research and accomplished writing skills, he has produced a volume which



is scholarly in its analysis but is also enjoyably readable. I'm sure that readers throughout Wales will welcome its publication.'

The Friends' Steering Committee met in the morning, and membership matters were discussed, including the challenge of attracting new members to join the Friends. It was noted that the information packs distributed to members were greatly appreciated, and the fact that the Friends' financial situation is currently healthy was good news to all.

Friends Get Together at Abergavenny

Once again this August, a reception for the Friends of the Welsh Books Council was held at the National Eisteddfod, which this year had its home near Abergavenny. The annual event is an opportunity for Friends to catch up with past and present members over nibbles and a glass or two of wine!

Award-winning author Jon Gower was the guest speaker this year as a sizeable group gathered at the Books Council's stand. In his address, he referred in particular to the Welsh Government's U-turn on the proposed budget cuts, following a campaign led by a number of publishers, authors, booksellers and members of the public. The change of heart was, of course, great news for the publishing industry in Wales.

Chief Executive Elwyn Jones added, 'We are thankful for all the support shown over the last few weeks, including the support from the Friends. In the present economic climate we appreciate the confidence of the Welsh Government in our work, and wish to thank Ken Skates in particular, for his positive contribution. We will put all our efforts into supporting the industry and promoting books in both languages.

'We will also continue with our efforts to secure other funding sources to sustain and develop our work.'

Ion Thomas, Chairman of the Friends, thanked everyone for attending and encouraged new

members to join, reminding all that membership forms are available from the Books Council. If you have any news or pictures relevant to the Friends, then you are more than welcome to tag us on Twitter @CyfeillionCLIC



Jon Gower with the Friends at Abergavenny

My Favourite Books *Peter Finch*



I had *Kemlo and the Starmen* under my arm. I'd come back from Roath Park Library where I'd been sent by my mother to borrow something edifying, as she'd called it, such as *Little Women* or *Great Expectations*. Instead I'd come back with this. What was it? Science fiction, I said. This was one of E. C. Eliott's hardbacked space adventures in a series that included *Kemlo and the Space Lanes*, *Kemlo and the Crazy Planet* and *Kemlo and the End of Time*.

I've returned half a century later to retrace my steps through these childhood wonders – something you should never do. The Kemlo masterpieces turn out to be poorly written and badly plotted, clearly written at speed. Lionel Fanthorpe told me that the big cheat with writing pulp was to end the work with lines like 'and then I woke up and it had all been a dream'. Kemlo books are a bit like that.

Sometime in the early sixties I found myself in a Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge bookshop. Among the bibles and hymnals and doctrinal texts I discovered a slice of the new reality – Allen Ginsberg's *Howl* in its City Lights original edition, banned in America for obscenity but here, shining, on Wales's theological shelves. This was poetry as I'd never seen it, long breathed, mercurially hip, riveting, mystical and free. If this was poetry then it was for me.

In complete contrast and at the same time and from the same shop I bought a slim volume in the brand new Penguin Modern

Poets series. Poetry for the new age, up against the barricades, riding the coat tails of freedom, pushing the envelope. That was how they were promoted. The one I got contained three bards, all new to me: Lawrence Durrell, Elizabeth Jennings and a man who would come to influence me greatly, R. S. Thomas. With the ordinary man of the bald Welsh hills, Iago Prytherch, Cynddylan on his tractor, and Davies the dying peasant, this verse was the antithesis of Ginsberg's and just as good.

In a lifetime's reading there have been other significant moments. John Updike's *Rabbit* books, Mary Ellen Solt's ultimate poetry edge-pusher *Concrete Poetry – A World View*. R. Gerallt Jones's Welsh-medium poetry eye-opener *Poetry of Wales 1930–1970*. And proving an eclectic taste, Thomas Hardy's *Jude*, Cormac McCarthy's *Blood Meridian*, Georges Perec's *Life – A User's Manual*, and Jeff Nuttall's *Bomb Culture*. A long way from Kemlo, that's for sure.

Roald Dahl Centenary Celebrations

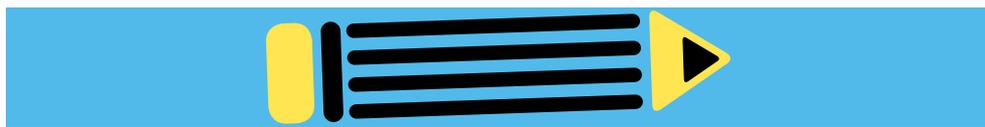
Roald Dahl – Imagine That!

As a way of engaging children across Wales with the Roald Dahl 100 centenary celebrations, the Welsh Books Council commissioned a new theatre in education show for schools and libraries, which celebrated the works of this ever-popular storyteller and author. The show was a joint venture between the Council and Mewn Cymeriad/In Character children's theatre company.



Chris Kinahan, as Alf
(Picture: Chris Morse)

Anni Llŷn, the Welsh-language Children's Poet Laureate (Bardd Plant Cymru), created the script for the show and Whitland-based actor, Chris Kinahan, took the role of an eccentric, book-loving character named Alf. Alf presented some of the author's most popular works to children of primary school age (9 to 11-year-olds) in a fun and interactive way, and the show has had excellent reviews from schools and libraries throughout Wales.



Dahlighful Stories Competition

Another way in which the Welsh Books Council encouraged engagement with the centenary celebrations was through a creative writing competition for children in Years 3 to 13 and living in Wales. The **Dahlighful Stories Competition** was an official Roald Dahl 100 Wales competition and was open for entries from June to September 2016. A total of 568 stories were received, and leading authors Phil Carradice, Horatio Clare and Elin Meek judged the entries, with winners and runners-up announced on 16 November.

'What better way to celebrate the life and work of the world's number one storyteller than by creating your own story?' said Angharad Sinclair, Reading Promotions Project Manager for the Welsh Books

Council. 'Roald Dahl is an author who inspires children and adults alike and we hope that this competition has provided an opportunity to hear the voice of the next generation of budding storytellers.' An anthology of the winning and shortlisted entries will be available for sale throughout Wales.

Roald Dahl Party Pack

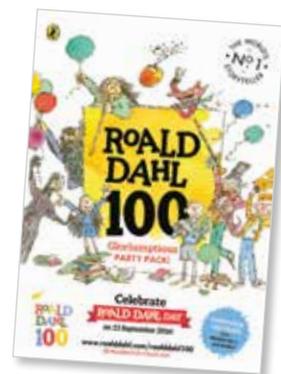
13 September saw hundreds of schools and libraries celebrate Roald Dahl's birthday with their very own parties and activities.

The Welsh Books Council worked with the Dahl Literary Estate to translate their party pack so that this was available in Welsh as a free download.

Filled with activities and resources, the pack was a wonderful way to celebrate the life and work of this influential storyteller and author.



Alf entertains pupils from Ysgol San Siôr, Llandudno (Picture: Chris Morse)



Honno – Celebrating 30 Years

Thirty years ago a group of women passionate about Welsh women's writing got together around a kitchen table in Cardiff. They wanted to work out how they could increase the opportunities for Welsh women in publishing, and bring Welsh women's literature to a wider public. They wrote to women across Wales and over 400 of them pledged support, leading to the creation of Honno, an independent co-operative press. Honno was established as a working co-operative and published its first books – one in English and one in Welsh – less than a year later, in 1987.

Honno have gone on to publish over a hundred titles and to win prizes and plaudits from reviewers and readers at home and abroad, from the Pandora Award to Crime Writers Association Dagger nominations and Wales Book of the Year. Recent successes include the Bread & Roses Award for Radical Publishing for *Here We Stand: Women Changing the World* ('A beautiful and necessary book ... This is the kind of writing that saves lives', A. L. Kennedy), and *Bookseller*

magazine e-book top ten bestseller, *A Time for Silence*, by Pembrokeshire author Thorne Moore.

Honno publishes a broad range of modern fiction covering almost every genre, from psychological thriller and historical saga to rom-com and more literary fiction. We also publish the Honno Voices, a series of titles featuring vital first-hand testimonies from women of all walks of life from important points in history, as well as the respected Welsh Women's Classics series – in both English and Welsh – publishing great writers of the past for readers of the present. To quote from *Mslexia*, this is 'possibly the Press' most important achievement, helping to combat the absence of women's literature in the Welsh canon'.

To mark the 30th anniversary, an afternoon of celebration was organised in Aberystwyth, with talks on key aspects of Honno's work, an exhibition of Honno's history and a writing workshop run by Honno editor Caroline Oakley. Many of the Honno authors were in attendance, as well as *New Welsh Review* and *Planet* contributors.

The afternoon was a great success, with over 70 in attendance, male and female, Welsh and English language speakers, old and young. It was wonderful to see so many Honno faces, past and present, coming together to enjoy the ongoing success of the organisation and eager to secure its future. The Honno staff and



Honno Staff
(Alison Greeley, Caroline Oakley, Helena Earnshaw, Lesley Rice)



Honno authors at the celebration
(Juliet Greenwood, Caroline Ross, Carol Lovekin, Judith Barrow, Thorne Moore, Alison Layland)

committee particularly enjoyed seeing readers meet the faces behind the names on books, and it was an opportunity for the writers to meet the backroom designers, illustrators, proofreaders and number crunchers who help produce, promote and polish their work.

A further event is planned for early 2017 in Cardiff.

Helena Earnshaw, Honno

New Books from Seren

Welsh Quilts

Downstairs at the Welsh Quilt Centre in Lampeter is a shop selling all manner of things to do with quilts and needlecraft. Fat quarters jostle with vintage books, crafts, antiques and curios, and staff are knowledgeable and welcoming. Upstairs is a vast space displaying the finest Welsh quilts. The exhibition changes annually, but is always exquisitely presented to professional gallery standards. The curation is rigorous, given historical context by informative display panels, while contemporary art interventions make this a very modern show of a centuries-old craft.



When Welsh Quilt Centre founder Jen Jones arrived in Wales from New England in the 1970s, Welsh traditions of quilt-making were almost moribund. Today, quilting has never been so popular. Seren's new publication, *Welsh Quilts*,

is an expanded edition of Jen's authoritative guide to the history and art of the quilt in Wales. Jen has updated the text and added new colour images to this generously illustrated book. Renowned textiles expert Kaffe Fassett provides a foreword.

Jen Jones explores the origins of quilting in Wales before focusing on the industry's hey-day between 1870 and the Second World War. In her book there are chapters entitled 'Making a Quilt', 'Methods', 'Types of Quilt', 'Joining and Finishing', 'Provenance', 'Buying a Welsh Quilt', 'Caring for Quilts', 'Blankets', and 'Types of Blanket'. There are also four Welsh quilt patterns to follow.

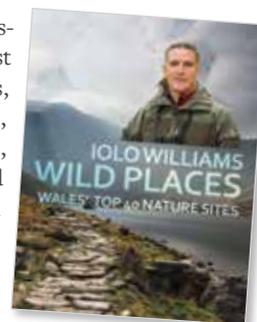
The 2016 exhibition at the Welsh Quilt Centre is now closed, though the shop is open. Details of next year's programme may be obtained from the centre: <http://www.welshquilts.com>

Wild Places

Iolo Williams needs little introduction to Welsh Books Council Friends. A *BBC Springwatch*, *Autumnwatch* and *Winterwatch* regular, with numerous television programmes of his own, he is, nevertheless, a naturalist first and celebrity second, campaigning tirelessly for the environment.

In *Wild Places*, Iolo Williams picks his favourite forty of Wales's many nature reserves. From the Great Orme to Magor Marsh, Oxwich to Gronant

Dunes, Williams crisscrosses Wales. His list includes shorelines, islands, valleys, mountains, meadows, bogs, woods and former industrial land, including sites of international significance like Cors Caron, and the managed beauty of Cosmeston Lakes. Williams draws on his many years as a naturalist in Wales to provide a survey of the natural delights of each site in his *Wild Places*.



Birds, snakes, dragonflies and damselflies, foxes, badgers, hares, eels, salmon, dolphins, hawks, owls, wildflowers, fungi, bats – the whole abundance of nature in Wales is here. Illustrated with glorious images, *Wild Places* is an invitation to enjoy the splendours of natural Wales.

On 18 November Iolo held a book signing session at the Montgomery Wildlife Trust centre in Welshpool, and on 28 November, he will be leading walks with the Gwent Wildlife Trust in Ebbw Vale and Magor, before giving an illustrated talk that evening organised by the Chepstow Bookshop. Further events will be arranged in 2017.

Simon Hicks, Seren