

From: AFReese [REDACTED]
Date: Mon, 3 Feb 2003 18:34:52 EST
Subject: (no subject)
To: lowens-whalen@ [REDACTED] et, [REDACTED]
upshall@ [REDACTED] (Alan Upshall), elli [REDACTED] (Ellis Jones),
N [REDACTED]
X-Mailer: AOL 4.0 for Windows sub 112

Greetings to all,

This is a multiple addressee message to serve multiple purposes/

For Ellis-This is a progress report on the WNGGA history I hope you can get in the next issue of HWYL. The second article is a search for pictures that readers in the Youngstown, Niagara Falls, NY and Pittsburgh areas may have.

HISTORY OF THE WNGGA

Col. Alf Reese is deeply involved in writing the History of The Welsh National Gymanfa Ganu Association (WNGGA) (1929-2003) He intends to have the history published before and available at the Nelson Llewellyn 75th Anniversary National Gymnafa Ganu in Niagara Falls, NY in 2004.

He has spent the past six months working on, and has just about completed the first essential document. This 375-page document, called a Compendium, is a condensation of all the meeting minutes and National Gymanfaoedd Program books. Just the meeting minutes and associated reports amounted to 850 pages. The Program books, when stacked, provided another 11 inches of material that had to be condensed.

The Compendium will contain a chronological listing and summary of each meeting and National Gymanfa Ganu. The full range of the activities of the Association and the Nationals will appear in separate sections or ease of reference. For example, if one wants to research into the WNGGA Constitution, this information will be available in one section without having to read through minutes to find it. The Compendium will be an invaluable document for the archives of the WNGGA International Headquarters, the Executive Director, and the Officers and Trustees of the Association. It will be made available to libraries, such as The Welsh National Library at Aberystwyth, and any other organization or institution having an interest in this foremost North American Welsh organization and its activities.

The Compendium will be the working reference he needs to write the History of the WNGGA. The History will be a further condensation distilling the essence of the WNGGA into a readable and interesting story.

Alf has spent the last 4-6 years gathering most of the material he needed to start the history. There is something still missing to make the history a living document. This is the experience of WNGGA members and participants in the National Gymanfaoedd. Personal memories, anecdotes, humorous or not so humorous recollections, friendly associations, interesting coincidences, feelings of hiraeth, disagreements, or just about anything will help fill this void.

He has asked for this frequently with little response. Your input, including why the Nationals are important to you, will make the History of the WNGGA a document you will want for your own interest and that of anyone who should be made aware of the great Welsh National Gymanfa Ganu Association.

Anything you may have is important. No items are insignificant. Please send them to him at PO Box 485, Lehighton, PA 18235.

SEARCH FOR PICTURES

Alf Reese has a need for pictures of the Founding Officers of the National Gymanfa Ganu Association, predecessor of the Welsh National Gymanfa Ganu Association, for the WNGGA history he is writing. These officers for

1929-1931 were:

President-William E. Lewis, Youngstown, OH
Vice President-Ellis Hughes who also served
as Secretary (1932-37), Niagara Falls, NY
Secretary-David J. Lewis, Youngstown, OH
Treasurer-W. B. Jones (1929-49),
Pittsburgh, PA

Clear copies, suitable for reproduction in history, would be greatly appreciated. Please send to address above.

For Ellis and Lynn-I have had a breakdown in my filing system and I have no proof that I sent the following correspondence:

Lynn-7 Nov 02-Banner, history and planned giving.
24 Dec 02-Joan Mandry Authors and Composers

Ellis-5 Nov 02-Banner and Ron Green
6 Nov 02-Your departure
6 Nov 02-contribution schedule- I have indication you received this.

For both-No need to reply if you received.

For Lynn-Hope you receive this. I have three-mail addresses. Using one on your correspondence on suits.

For Nelson-Hope you can help on pictures and anything else for history

Thanks to all

Alf

Col. Alfred J. Reese, Jr., USA (Ret.)

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Lehighton, PA 18235

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1 August 2003

Lynn M. Owens-Whalen
President, WNGGA
[REDACTED] Dunbar Street
Vancouver, BC V6N 1W8
Canada

Dear Lynn,

I am making steady progress with the WNGGA History following a recharging off period. I have reached the point where the bulk of the research is complete, the format has stabilized, and the better than rough writing is nearing completion. Just in case, I make a practice of periodically saving The Compendium and The History to floppy disks.

I've reached the point where I need some guidance. I do not think that we should plan on printing or publishing The Compendium. While it is the bibliography for The History and deserves distribution to selected institutions, this can be done with reproduced copies. Obviously, I hope The History will be printed and published. With this assumption, I need to know such things as size of the publication (that of regular or large hymnal), binding, the form in which I must make the submission for printing (manuscript, floppy or both), and other things I don't know enough to ask about. The number of pages will be dependent on the guidance received. Inclosed is a fair approximation of the title page, dedication, introduction, preface, prologue, and table of contents. While there is no immediate urgency, I will need to know this at least by the time following your meetings in Richmond.

I estimate that the manuscript of The History will consist of approximately 250 single sided 8 1/2 X 11 pages. Depending on the size of the publication, this could reduce to 125 double sided pages with a text font of 12 if the large hymnal size is used. If printed in the size of the reformatted hymnal, its length would lie somewhere in between. I assume we would use printing techniques available today that permit flexibility in initial and reordering quantities. I expect to have it finished for review prior to the end of this year.

I will need a summary of the legal problems from the time they began with the South California Welsh Choir (correct name?) up to the present. This summary should be cleared by the legal people so that it doesn't open the door to further difficulties. As a starting point, I have inclosed a rough idea of what I think I need. By rough, I mean I recognize that I may not have all the correct names, facts and the proper sequence of events. I repeat it is rough. Tear it apart. However, since this is history, or should be by the time of publication, I don't think it can be ignored and not included in The History of the Welsh National Gymanfa Ganu Association.

Please remember that I will continue to need copies of all minutes, important correspondence, any updates, directories, any thing else considered pertinent and two copies of the Program for the National in Richmond. I'm not sure that I have received the mid-year meeting minutes and financial statements. Won't take the time to look now, can always use a second copy.

Hope everything is shaping up for Richmond. Sorry we cannot be there.

Sincerely,

Alfred J. Reese, Jr.

cc: Dr. Alan Upshall
✓ Dr. Ellis J. Jones

M E M O

TO: John Ellis
FROM: Ellis Jones
DATE: August 11, 2003
SUBJECT: WNGGA History Project

John, enclosed is a copy of the letter which Alf Reese sent to Lynn and me concerning his progress on the WNGGA history. The goal is to have the history completed for distribution by next year at Buffalo at the 75th Anniversary event.

This morning I talked with Alf and indicated I was going to send it to you and that was great with him. I pointed out that you would be the person to be involved with the publication and distribution. In addition, you have the historian's viewpoint and may be able to make some suggestions to him. I assume it would be best to have it published near you in Hartland so that the cost of delivery of the final copies might be kept low.

On the last page, he and I talked about what he had roughed out about the law suit. I mentioned that the date in the fourth paragraph (1999 National Gymanfa Ganu in Minneapolis" was not correct because the WNGGA Headquarters was not served with the papers until January 2002--the incident about which the plaintiffs brought suit against us took place at the San Jose National on Labor Day weekend 2001.

Alf pointed out that there needs to be something included in the history so he had just written what he understood what was the situation. He agreed that whatever is put together does need to be reviewed by legal counsel to ensure that there is no further basis of legal problems based upon what is said there. He is very flexible on that point--just wants to be sure something is included.

Alf will not be at the NAFOW in Richmond but when you receive this and have had a chance to look through it, you might want to contact him--Phone: 570-386-2419, email: afreesejr@aol.com; FAX--570-386-2883 about any suggestions you might have. I'll send a note to Lynn indicating that I think you are the person to work closely with Alf.

It does seem that the time frame for publication by August 15 of next year may be getting a little tight but if you could let him know that you are involved, you could work directly with him. This particular project is very dear to him. He has been working on collecting data for the past several years.

Ellis J.

HISTORY
OF THE
WELSH NATIONAL GYMANFA
GANU ASSOCIATION
(WNGGA)
1929-2004

by

Colonel Alfred J. Reese, Jr.
Past President, WNGGA

WELSH NATIONAL GYMANFA
GANU ASSOCIATION
International Headquarters
Hartland, MI
2004

To

All those past and present members who provided the inspiration, to those past and present Officers and Trustees who committed their dedication, to local venue committees who took the initiative, and especially to the following Secretaries and successor Executive Directors who provided the continuity.

George Bundy 1934-1966

Jack Meadows 1966-1983

Nelson L. Llewellyn 1983-1998

Dr. Ellis J. Jones 1998-2003

INTRODUCTION

Faye and I attended our first Welsh National Gymanfa Ganu, the 55th, held in Columbus, OH in 1986. I really did not know what to expect since I had never been involved in Welsh-American activities nor had any idea of what went on at a national gymanfa ganu. I did not know how to pronounce gymanfa ganu.

I enjoyed the Friday evening dinner, the Saturday concert of the Rhos Male Choir and learned how to pronounce its home Rhosllanerchrugog, and the Sunday bi-lingual church service. But it was the Gymanfa Ganu sessions in the magnificent Palace Theater in downtown Columbus that were a revelation to me. The Palace seemed filled to capacity and for the first time I was overwhelmed with the singing of those beautiful, moving, and, sometimes, haunting Welsh hymns. I was lost when the singing was in Welsh, but I could still feel the emotion that flowed throughout the Palace. The day ended, believe it or not, with more informal singing, throughout the Columbus Hyatt Regency and the attached Ohio Center. that lasted until the early morning hours.

I was entranced, charmed, captivated, fascinated, all the words being synonymous with being hooked. I left Columbus with new feeling of refreshment and determination to become a part of the great organization responsible for this wonderful feeling.

During 1989-91, as President of the National Welsh-American Foundation, I attended the meetings of the WNGGA Board of Trustees as one of its ex officio Vice Presidents, becoming a full-fledged member in September 1990. At the completion of six years as a WNGGA trustee, I became Vice-President in 1996 and its President for 1998-2000. In 1994, I became the Editor of *HWYL*, the membership newsletter of the Association.

During the Harrisburg National Gymanfa Ganu of 1995, I announced my intention to write a history of the WNGGA, identified it as a long-term project requiring the gathering of all available data, and asked for the help of everyone. This gathering, along with other projects, took the better part of six years. Work began on the first draft in 2001 with the objective of having a printed history available for the 75th Anniversary Welsh National Gymanfa Ganu to be held in Niagara Falls, NY over the 2004 Labor Day weekend.

Alfred J. Reese, Jr.
Lehighton, PA
December 2003

PREFACE

The History of the Welsh National Gymanfa Ganu Association, covering the period 1929-2004, is actually two documents: The Compendium and The History

The first, The Compendium, is a condensation of 74 Programs of the Annual National Gymanfaoedd (a stack 12 inches high); and 850 pages of the minutes of meetings of the National Executive Committee, the Board of Trustees and the Annual General Meetings of the members. To a limited extent, these are supplemented with associated correspondence and newspaper articles. These sources constitute the bibliography.

The purpose of The Compendium is to record in one place the important events and decisions that have formed and guided the Welsh National Gymanfa Ganu Association for the past 74 years. The Compendium is the medium for stating the facts as extracted from minutes and Programs. The printed Programs have been extremely important in providing a picture of the growth and development of the Annual Gymanfaoedd from a one-day event to a four-day celebration and the dawning of The North American Festival of Wales. In condensing these documents, especially the minutes, exact wording is identified with quotation marks. Wording has often been rearranged for purpose of shortening the length. For this reason, unless there is something unusual, opening prayers and songs, letters of recognition, identification of those making motions and seconds, acceptance of reports, thank you remarks, congratulations or appreciations or other routine actions are not included although the minutes are replete with such positive actions or statements. Because of its length and the time required to compile it, the Compendium is not precise as to grammar and punctuation.

The second document, The History, is a further condensation, based on The Compendium, that distills the essence of the WNGGA into a readable and interesting story. With the above in mind, the text of The History is not cluttered with footnotes. The Compendium, on file at the WNGGA International Headquarters and selected libraries, is available for those wanting more details.

A report on each of the Nationals, based on the printed Programs, follows the extracts of Executive, Board of Trustees, and Annual General Meetings for each year. Financial statements, reporting the results of a National, appear in the report of the specific National even though, in most cases, they were submitted after the National and included in the minutes of the following year's meetings. When breaking down receipts and disbursements, only significant or unusual items are indicated. For this reason, the included amounts will not always add up to the totals reported.

While casual reference is made to elections, financial reports, and scholarships/grants in minutes and to events that took place during each National (Noson Lawen, banquet, seminars and tours, concerts, and sessions of the gymanfa), details are found in chronological order in their special Appendices. For example, any one wanting to follow the evolution of the WNGGA Constitution, from its origin in 1935 to the present, will find this information in Appendix A to The History. When items are reported on during Executive Committee, Board of Trustees, and the Annual General meetings, they are not repeated for each meeting but are reported where most appropriate.

Years are grouped, somewhat appropriately, in chapters. Each chapter is introduced with, in some cases, an extended summary containing the author's selection of significant entries, his analysis or conclusions based on close reading of the source documents and his familiarity with some of the later principals of the Welsh National Gymanfa Ganu Association.

Where reference is made to Program with a Capital P, it is the official Program listing events during the Annual National Gymanfa Ganu. The term "festival" is often used interchangeably with the Annual National Gymanfa Ganu. It may be possible that an event scheduled in the Program, such as a seminar or tour, did not occur because of insufficient subscription. Where location of cities is obvious, no mention of States is made. Abbreviations of States is as done currently i.e. PA rather than Pa. Capitalized numbers (i.e. Sixth) are used where obvious to reduce repetitious repeating of Annual National Gymanfa Ganu in discussion of a specific annual. The term Association is interchangeable with National Gymanfa Ganu Association and Welsh National Gymanfa Ganu Association. In its broadest sense, The Association means the totality of its membership, its governing body the Board of Trustees made up of its Officers and Trustees, the Executive Director and the International Headquarters. WNGGA, depending on its usage, is often meant to mean the International Headquarters. For simplicity, the National Gymanfa Ganu Association is abbreviated NGGA rather than N.G.G.A. and the National Executive Committee N.E.C. is abbreviated NEC.

The intent is to have both The Compendium and The History available for the 75th Anniversary Celebration, The Nelson L. Llewellyn National Gymanfa Ganu, to be held in Buffalo, NY in 2004. Originally planned for Niagara Falls, NY, the site of the 2004 anniversary gymanfa ganu had to be changed to Buffalo because of the conversion of facilities in Niagara Falls to a gambling casino. Bus transportation will be provided for the trip to Niagara Falls for celebration of the anniversary at Goat Island scene of the first National Gymanfa Ganu.

ERRORS ARE INEVITABLE. I HOPE THEY ARE MINOR. HOWEVER, MAJOR OR MINOR, THEY ARE MY RESPONSIBILITY.

PROLOGUE

Dr. Edward G. Hartmann in his *Americans From Wales* (Boston: The Christopher Publishing House, 1967), the definitive work on Welsh emigration to America, identified the Eisteddfod, the Gorsedd and the Gymanfa Ganu as three unique institutions created by the Welsh people.

The relative importance of two of these three institutions in Wales, the Eisteddfod and the Gymanfa, may be reflected in recently published or reprinted histories of Wales. An admittedly cursory review of the indices of *History of Wales* by John Davies (1993), *Wales-A History* of Gwynfor Evans (reprinted 1996), *History of Wales* edited by Prys Morgan (2001), *The Heart of Wales-An Anthology* edited by James A. Davies (1994) and the popular *The Matter of Wales* by Jan Morris all provide significant coverage of the Eisteddfod in Wales. However, there is an almost total disregard of the Gymanfa Ganu. This may be a reflection of the relative importance of the institutions in Wales and confirms the predominance of the Eisteddfod, The Royal National Eisteddfod of Wales, in Wales.

The following summary of the origin of the Eisteddfod and the Gymanfa Ganu in Wales and their movement, following immigration of the Welsh in America, is taken exclusively from Dr. Hartmann's *Americans From Wales*, reprinted in 2001 by the National Welsh-American Foundation. Dr. Hartmann cited Tom Parry's *The Eisteddfod of Wales*, Denbigh, Wales (National Eisteddfod Council), n.d., pp. 25-38 as a principal source for his information.

The first eisteddfod to be so called was held in 1450 at Carmarthen. From time to time, eisteddfodau were held at various places during the sixteenth century and the seventeenth for which data is scanty. A revival, initiated by the Gweneddigion Society of London, occurred in 1789 when three eisteddfodau were held (Jan-Llangollen, May-Corwen and September-Bala). The first great National Eisteddfod was held in 1858 at Llangollen followed by another in 1860 at Denbigh. It was here that it was decided to hold the festivals annually rotating between North and South Wales. In 1880, the National Eisteddfod Association was formed and supervised the annuals until 1927 until it was replaced that year by the National Eisteddfod Council.

Holding Eisteddfodau in the United States started in the mid-1880's with the largest held at Hyde Park in Scranton, PA in 1867. Another large Eisteddfod, the Chicago International, was held in 1893 in conjunction with the Columbian Exposition. The National Eisteddfod Association of American was formed in 1923 and held annuals until 1940. The oldest Eisteddfodau, still in existence in the United States, are Utica, NY (1858) and the Edwardsville, PA "Cynonfardd Eisteddfod" (1887). The 114th Annual Eisteddfod was held in Edwardsville on 26 April 2003. "Cynonfardd" was the Bardic name assumed by Dr. Thomas C. Edwards when he was named Archdruid of America. Cynonfardd translated Cynon (Bard of the Cynon, a stream in the Cynon Valley where Edwards lived his early years) and Fardd the Welsh for bard or poet.

Hartmann contended that "as the Americanization of the Welsh-American communities progressed, the Eisteddfod was replaced by the Gymanfa Ganu, the Welsh singing festival, as the

popular institution of Welsh-Americans. Although by this time many of the latter could no longer handle Welsh as a living language, they could still sing in Welsh for they had been taught to do so from their early Sunday School days. Love of the old Welsh hymns and singing of the same in Welsh lingers on in most of the Welsh-American communities. This nostalgia for the days of their youth and the remembrances associated with the same is the reason why the Gymanfa Ganu is still a strong institution in America today.”

While much of Hartmann’s view may have changed since his 1967 first edition of *Americans From Wales*, his conclusion that “the Eisteddfod has practically died out in America...too intimately associated with the Welsh language to survive the Americanization of Welsh-American Communities” has proven true. Those few that survive today are conducted, predominantly, in English alone. His view that “The Gymanfa Ganu remains strongly entrenched and is likely to remain so largely because it requires only a love of community singing” has also proven true. However, his prediction that “The time will come unquestionably when substitution of English for Welsh words will occur” has not occurred. His opinion “that the Gymanfa Ganu, and it only, will be the institution that the Welsh contribute to the American musical way of life” seems to be a fact.

Perhaps this is so because there are many like my wife Faye and myself. When we both attended our first National Gymanfa Ganu neither of us could speak or sing any Welsh. Over the years, with the courage gained while singing with a thousand or so others, we became reasonably proficient and comfortable singing the most popular hymns in Welsh. My self-esteem in this matter blossomed when, during a Gymanfa Ganu of the Ontario Gymanfa Ganu Association, the wife of one of the members of the performing Male Voice Choir from Wales asked if I was from Wales. When she learned that I was not she was highly complimentary of the quality of my Welsh during the Welsh hymn singing.

There is little doubt that the Eisteddfod holds the prominent place in Wales while the Gymanfa Ganu does the same on the North American Continent. It remains to be seen if the Welsh National Gymanfa Ganu Association will be successful in adding an annual eisteddfod to its North American Festival of Wales.

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Appendix I – Important Miscellanies

The Legal Problems

It all started back in 1997 when a dispute broke out between Geraint Wilkes of Milwaukee and Michael J. Lewis, the director of Welsh Choir of Southern California. Allegedly, there was a contractual arrangement for their cooperative effort in preparing music to be presented during the 1997 National Gymanfa Ganu in Milwaukee. For reasons unimportant to the Welsh National Gymanfa Ganu Association, this arrangement was unsuccessful and should have been resolved among the principals.

This was not to be. Others entered in to the dispute and it spread to Welsh Choir of Southern California under the musical direction of Michael J. Lewis. Three individuals challenged the right of the choir to perform under its name The Welsh Choir of Southern California. The challenge was based on the fact that all the members of the choir were not of Welsh extraction. At this point, it should be acknowledged that few, if any, Welsh Male Voice Choirs from Wales, popular attractions at the National Gymnafoedd here, are made up of all Welsh. Things started to get messy when other individuals were brought into the ensuing court suits because of their comments regarding the pros and cons of these proceedings. Court summons were issued leading to further disputes and additional summons.

To this point, the Board of Trustees and many members of the WNGGA were only interested spectators. Many wondered about the nature of the dispute and were concerned over the impressions, favorable or unfavorable, the publicity left with the Welsh of North America and their friends here and in Wales.

It changed during the 1999 National Gymanfa in Minneapolis and the WNGGA became an unhappy participant. An injunction had been issued in California preventing the sale of musical items (CD's or cassettes) produced by the Welsh Choir of Southern California. The WNGGA contention that it was not part of the action in California and not subject to the injunction was accepted by the court but is still in the appeal process. Further challenges were issued regarding the WNGGA Constitution and its scholarship/grants program and further accusations led to additional summons to individuals.

This has been a long drawn out process. Suits have been dismissed, some apologies have been issued to close out suits, the option of appeals, repeatedly granted by the court, has been used by the plaintiffs, additional suits have been filed, and peripheral conflicts have appeared.

All that can be said about the entire affair is that it damaged reputations, destroyed friendships, and left wrong impressions. It disrupted operations of organizations involved in the preservation and advancement of an understanding of Welsh culture, heritage and the Welsh language. It distracted many from this very important effort and used resources that could have been better used in carrying out the Purpose of WNGGA.