

1/16/99

Dear Lynn

Happy new year, hope you had a good Xmas. Funny that Alf thinks I am too busy for this, I have been talking with him about this for quite a while. I am not sure if I copied you in on this conversation. But I am really too busy, but lets do it anyway. I am beginning to look beyond Alf, with a view to radically changing the face of the North American Welsh system. Probably won't be successful but

Anyway to recap my correspondence with Alf. His vision I believe is to expand membership as fast as possible because there are so many people out there who are Welsh and who therefore will give WNGGA money because of this (perhaps I am being hard here). I have no doubt that there are a lot of people out there who have never heard of WNGGA but there are many who have and who are still not members. Why? I think it is because there is the impression that it does not give anything. Membership in a national organization is different from that in a local. I think most people want to see that something good is going on and be told so. My approach to Alf is that we need members but let's decide on what we are trying to sell first so that we can make that clear presentation.

We have had discussions about trustee distribution and I have proposed some changes in the constitutional review (which no one yet has responded to).

So to your letter. No Alf did not send me the info, but I suspect that you are right and concentrating here is right since these people know about the organization and the Gymanfa weekend activities. I think this is much better than just calling people with Welsh connections. If you have a list which includes the 1994 in Bellevue, it would certainly need updating, gravestones do not have mailboxes. In the NWAFF we just went through the exercise of calling defunct members from an old list and I spent ages ringing numbers where the area code had changed, the people had moved or died. Looking up numbers on the web didn't help much because there is usually more than one family in town with the same name. I see trustees spending a lot of time here unless they have access to good local mailing lists. It may be cheaper just to send out a postcard to all past members and take the loss. The problem with this approach is that it does not have the personal touch and a lot of junk mail is actually unopened on passage to the recycle box. A well presented eye catching card, with a tear off reply part may do well.

In my discussions with Alf about registration I indicated that a problem with Columbus (and all other Nationals) is that the board and the organization are essentially transparent at the weekend. We need a registration table adjacent to the main registration table clearly showing our contribution to the event and having an activity related to the weekend, not just flyers and unmanned. Helping with registration may be a good way into this.

I suggested that we could attract new members by giving a free ticket to a seminar of their choice. If we were to give anything away I agree with you that we could not go as far as accommodation and travel. Not sure how much further we could go, but we could

give new members the free seminar and then put all members attending in a drawing for a free weekend (ex expenses). We could have a book for all members to sign in for entry. Since there would be no fee there would be no lottery. The table might then become a gathering place. Don't know how the law applies to nonmember attendees. What about a WNGGA reception, perhaps linked with the WTB one?

Agree about manning times at the desk, but that desk has to be also stocked with good literature. Who is going to organize this desk and it's manning? We need to be working with the Minn group on this now. Alf giving a seminar? Maybe too late for Minneapolis, but is he the right person? Certainly a seminar on WNGGA activities from a WNGGA person rather than someone like Gary Davies in Milwaukee.

I know that Ellis has already scheduled nothing to compete with the AGM, but it will take something special to pull in more people. AGMs are essentially boring. Could include some form of recognition/presentation within or straight after the AGM.

Flashy Brochure, we have to develop one, but as earlier, we have to define what would go in it i.e. what are the benefits of membership?. Corporate sponsorship has to be a long term goal.

Committee membership: I backed off from a dispute with Alf about this. The constit. Comm. is poor in that half don't even respond. So I suggested to Alf that I bring in non trustees. He didn't like the idea. It's not a battle worth fighting now but I'll win it later. I asked for functional people not sitters.

Get as much input from anywhere? Jack Pritchard is tied up with NWAFF. Look for the fringe people. Roy Morris, Beth Landmesser, Raymond Mathias, Myfanwy Davies, Rhiannon Acree. etc. these are going to be there rather than have been and we need to look forward rather than back. Ask anybody for input.

OK got to go down town, so I'll stop. Don't work too hard
alan

10 August, 1999.

Dear Alf

I have received an email from Ellis that disturbs me greatly. This e mail was addressed to myself, Lynn and David, and in talking with Ellis last night I understand that he has informed you of this email distribution. The gist of the message is that his relationship with you has deteriorated to a very low level and that he is therefore prepared to submit his resignation in Minneapolis.

I have two prime concerns:

First, stress upon Ellis in this time of his medical problems. Ellis as we know is not a well man, and stress is well known to make medical conditions worse.

Second, Ellis and his office is a critical part of the organization, and to lose those now would create a hiatus in the organization.

As Vice President, I feel that it is my duty to talk with both sides to try to seek the root cause(s) of the issues and to attempt to devise a solution which enables some resolution and continuance of the day to day operations and functions of the WNGGA, and its officers, as a team exercise for the good of the organization and its members. I also should say that last night I talked with both David and Cerwyn and they support my approach. Lynn unfortunately is on vacation in Newfoundland and is unavailable for comment. I stressed to both that this matter should be held as very confidential. Additionally, from my previous job, I am experienced enough in matters of people management to realize that sometimes relationships deteriorate beyond the critical point before they surface and that often they cannot be resurrected. I sincerely hope that this is not the case here.

There is, however, no question that Ellis is greatly upset. He discussed with me his view of the problems between you both. My difficulty lies at the moment in only having the one side of the picture, therefore I cannot make a considered approach to resolving the difficulties. I would greatly appreciate hearing your view of the relationship and where it has gone wrong, and also your ideas for somehow repairing the relationship or trying to accommodate possible conflicts so that the daily functions can continue.

My goal is not to cover up problems but to resolve them and in this case to do so before the meetings in Minneapolis. I believe that it would be to the detriment of the organization to have this issue as a major item of discussion amongst the members.

I am not able to call you today or tonight but will try to do so tomorrow night. I apologize for this, I would like to call sooner, but my activities do not allow it. In the meantime, your considered written opinions and comments would be very helpful to me.

I am sending this by both email and fax, I know you are not a computer slave like me. I also am copying both David and Lynn to keep them informed of my actions.

Best regards



Alan

Fax: to Alf Reese at [REDACTED]
From: Alan Upshall

Dear Alf

Attached is my summary of the situation and suggested resolution in order to keep us all working together down the WNGGA avenue. I will be emailing his to Ellis but he will not receive it until he returns home on Wednesday. I have not yet copied to Lynn or David, but will do so once I have received responses from both you and Ellis.

See you in Minneapolis

Regards

Alan

Confidential

To: Alf Reese, President, WNGGA
Ellis Jones, Executive Director, WNGGA

Date: 16 August 1999

cc: David Williams, Treasurer
Lynn Owens Whalen, Secretary.

Dear Alf and Ellis,

One overriding agreement that has emerged from our conversations and communications over the last 10 days is that we all believe that the well being of the WNGGA is of paramount importance and that no action must be taken which would impact the strength, or future development of the organization.

The resolution of differences therefore must be seen from a 'what is best for the organization' viewpoint, and in my opinion and I believe in both of yours, resignation of either President or Executive Director, or both, do not fall into that category.

A solution to the issue at hand therefore relies upon the willingness of all of us to achieve a balance of responsibilities and interaction that enables the circumvention of the 'presentation and interpretation of communications' relationship that I believe has caused the current breakdown.

This is not an inquiry therefore I have no report to prepare, but I present a solution that I hope will fit the bill.

In these times of change, I believe that we have to begin to work more as a team and my suggested solution is to do just that. Team work has not been a strength of the organization in the past, but that must change. This team is not just President and Executive director, but also the Vice President (myself) who, after all, has a pretty good chance of becoming the next President and who therefore needs to know exactly what has been going on. (I am not excluding the Secretary or Treasurer here as other members of the executive committee, and I think that they should be copied on correspondence, and they can comment if they wish to do so, but I think it critical that we three make the clear effort to constructively interact)

Over the coming year, we three should communicate at least once a month and plan those arrangements necessary for the Ottawa gathering, arrangements which I believe Ellis will have the responsibility to put into place. With input from each of us we should be able to make sure that WNGGA interests are accommodated by the Ottawa committee. Similar communication has to be organized with the San Jose group if the board decides to issue an invitation. This is a direct activity that is vital for the future of the WNGGA.

This has the knock on effect that Alf and I have to communicate directly and more frequently to discuss all of the issues that need to be presented to the board and to Executive Director for action, before the instructions are distributed.

It is obvious that I will be acting in two capacities, first as an integral member of the team and second as a buffer between you both. I view the latter role as a critically functional one to maintain the dignity and well being of the Offices; the former as my clear involvement in expressing my opinion on the future development of the WNGGA.

In essence therefore I am proposing:

No one resigns, that would be detrimental to the WNGGA and to the people involved and create so much of a distraction that very little constructive work would be done in Minneapolis, and possibly spin over into the success of this year's National.

That we three communicate at least monthly to plan and organize those arrangements necessary for Ottawa and the day to day running of the WNGGA.

Alf and I communicate again at least monthly to discuss and agree on courses of action and directions prior to circulation.

If we can agree to this way of working together I believe that we can put the difficulties to one side and focus on the issue of progress within and management of the WNGGA. I am not naive enough to believe that relationships can be repaired overnight, but I would like to believe that working as a team would allow us to bypass the current difficulties.

I will be arriving in Minneapolis on Wednesday, coming up from Mankato, and as I have suggested on the telephone, I believe that it would be a good idea if we three met on at the hotel Wednesday night to clear the ground and prepare for our set of activities during the rest of the weekend

Best regards

Alan.

8/17/2009

Dear Alf: Just got home from work and your three faxes awaiting.

Your Fax #1.

I quite agree with your comment about unacceptability of censorship.

I never thought of using the word buffer to correlate with censorship. That was the furthest from my mind while I tried to find a way of pulling together. My mental definition of buffer is one who acts as a sort of mediator, relaxing the strain, not a censor.

My thoughts, and perhaps I used the wrong word, were for us to communicate together as a group so that there would be a full discussion of issues. Clearly, it would be unacceptable to both you and Ellis, and even myself, to have third party censorship of our communications. Not what I was suggesting.

In my experience, an initial conversation, sometimes with a third party, backed up by a letter very often achieves much more than just the letter and it puts the recipient in a preparedness frame of mind which can result in the right interpretation. This sounding board strategy can sometimes help with written communications also and I have used it quite effectively in difficult situations. I appreciate also that there are times when this is neither sensible nor practical.

What I suggested was more interaction and discussion between parties, including myself, in the belief that I could contribute and help to smooth what is obviously a stony path.

I go back to the first paragraph in my letter and restate that I believe that all of us have the well being of the WNGGA as the most important factor. Should either or both of you resign in Minneapolis, there will be a very significant impact on that and therefore I tried to create a means of interaction which will I believe allow us to move forward. There is no doubt that as President you will still be in charge.

Fax #2. I agree with you that the issue should have been openly broached and discussed. This is always the best way to resolve issues if at all possible. (I have had some situations where it was not appropriate though). I cannot express any views as to why Ellis did not do this. What I would like to do is not dwell on what has been but to address the future and how we can move ahead. Our Wednesday meeting might shed some light on this question.

Fax #3. I agree here too, the dreams must stop. As above, I in no way wish to be a censor, that would put me in an intolerable position. The open channel of communication is for opinion and issue resolution and strategizing. I am also very prepared to be a sounding board for anything.

I do not at this point intend to change the original letter that I sent to both you and Ellis. I hope that I have clarified your worries and interpretations and understand my thought processes. Ellis I know will not read his copy until tomorrow, perhaps he will have some of the same concerns. I will not copy Ellis on this correspondence.

Best regards

alan

21 September 1999

Alf Reese
President, WNGGA

Dear Alf

Received your letter today and thanks for the thoughts. I believe that the issues are behind us and Ellis' letter to you I think sets us up very nicely for a very productive year.

I too have been thinking about our chats and immediate issues, and two come to mind that we should move on. The first is the issue of contract signing and the ramifications out of that. Although I am neither a legal or strongly financially minded person, I believe that this issue is probably the most significant change that we will have to undertake because of the potential implications to the structure and balance sheet of the WNGGA. This will have to be looked at carefully but also speedily. How about a small group with Mary Ellen (chair) and Huw Williams, David Williams and myself to put together a discussion document by Xmas? The first phase should be a thorough outline of the implications and essential considerations in the change and how it might affect the constitution.

The second is the one you refer to in your letter, namely the continuity factors from year to year and the debriefing of the annual Gymanfa. Your idea is spot on and I don't think Ellis would take umbrage. I would see the outcome of this critique as generating a list of essential items for each organizing committee supplemented with a collection of "this worked and this didn't" topics. Without criticism to any organizing committee, it is about time that each event knew the best way to distribute banquet tickets and that there are certain items which have to be included in the weekend program.

Should we get involved in the dispute between Mary and Arturo? Arturo is very protective of his trademark, we had some communication with him relating to the first designs for the logo for the Welsh choir. My position at this point is to see what Mary comes up with as a response, but this again is something that perhaps we have a responsibility to let organizers know.

I think that the three of us between us can come up with a first pass questionnaire which we can circulate to the board. After that response we could make this the centerpiece of the next Hwyl?

I'll do most of the communicating by fax, unless I need to quickly send an email. I regret in a way that I have become addicted to the latter. I have been involved with so many different groups that it is the way I communicate quickly, even with the family.

As you see this has not gone to Ellis, but I see no harm in us discussing ideas first and we can put our ideas to him next.

We had a good trip back and I now know why Montana has a reputation for grain growing. It went on for more than a day's driving.

Best wishes
Alan

Dear Alf and Ellis
1 October 99

I promised myself to spend some of today catching up with WNGGA activity, which has been accumulating in this pile right in front of me, beginning to obliterate the light from the window. Thank you both for all of the correspondence and good wishes etc. I do believe that we have made significant progress in all areas.

To respond to issues and suggestions, I shall take them as they come from the pile (this may not be in date order). I will then add some more comments at the bottom.

1. an email that I sent this morning to Mary Ellen and copied to you both. The rationale here relates to the discussion of membership table at the National and what can we offer to existing and new members which make them stand out from the crowd. Mary and I chatted and thought that the Columbus Badge might be good. It is striking, and if appropriately modified (e.g. by adding WNGGA member, perhaps with LIFE or year), clearly gives the wearer something different. Members can therefore be moved from the regular table to the WNGGA table to pick up their badge and non members can be pointed in that direction by a suitable package insert. What we need to determine are costs and what is inscribed and whether there is a way of placing a new member name on the badge quickly and easily at the location. This I will follow up on and when I have the information let you know. There has to be other ways of attracting registrants to our table and I think that we could ask Geri Baker-Parry to look into this. She has not yet been allocated a job and I know that she could do this. What do you think?

2. Bequests (Alf, 30 Sept.). I think it would be very appropriate especially since the second one has not arrived. It might also be to our advantage in that we can report on another bequest in the next issue. Repetition creates familiarity.

3. Hwyl. Is there someone who could write a small article on Minneapolis from the WNGGA perspective? i.e. how we were involved in the weekend, and what we achieved overall for the benefit of the society, rather than the usual "it was a great weekend" (which it was) with all of these activities which are usual for the articles placed in Y Drych or Ninnau. I think that it important that the membership receive something unique. Bios of the new trustees and their contact addresses would also be useful especially when we are trying to increase membership. Describe the strategy of increased trustee number to tie in with a membership drive, and also report on the new constitution. Ellis, can we drop the new constitution to the Web site so people can access it? Is this a suitable thing to do?

4. Constructive critique of the National. I think this is a great idea and the word constructive is very important. By the complex nature of the event there are problems every year, some of which are new and some of which have happened before. We should be able to better help each local venue committee in a practical sense. For example, I believe in the Columbus report Mary says that there has to be a better way to allocate banquet tickets. There is, and it has been successfully used and Mary knew about it, but perhaps we did not help her enough.

The questionnaire is a good way to go. The problem with a questionnaire is its structure and perhaps it should be both directed and open ended. I also have a half mind to suggest that we send it to all registrants, but I suspect that we would have a very poor response so it probably would not be worth it.

Some topics I would ask:

Was the registration process easy to follow.
Did you have any registration problem
Were you able to find the scheduled events easily
Was the information in the registration package enough

Were events scheduled appropriately
Did you enjoy the concerts
What type of activity would you like to take part in at the National
Were there some activities that you did not enjoy
Was the late evening singing adequate and well supported

Were the Sunday arrangements appropriate
Was the shuttle bus service adequate
Please comment on the afternoon and evening Gymanfa Sessions

I am sure that given more thought I could come up with more but I put those up for discussion now.

To take this one stage further though, I also believe that we should think about a set of "must do's" for each committee, because sometimes little things fall through the cracks and little things can be blown up into big things. Two significant items here are: Marketplace and sponsorship, two topics that we have current discussions about.

I tried to talk with Anne Habermehl about the long term market place issue, but after the first sentence could not get a word in. She went off into her usual seminar on the state of play. I admit to not following through because there was a brick wall which I could not climb. On that basis, I did not talk with Earl, but we are going to have to get this straightened out. I think that we should come up with a set of criteria for local venues so that they can approach the hotel and obtain costs. Local venues can then present to vendors who can then decide whether to accept those costs or not. A second issue is that since we need the vendors there, they are actually an integral part of the economic and social activity of the weekend, should we subsidize their presence?

Something like:

- Cost per 8 foot table
- Number of tables available
- General plan of the marketplace area (important)
- Costs for entry on Wednesday am
- Costs for entry on Wednesday pm
- Costs for entry on Thursday am

We also need to inform every venue of the need for absolute security of the marketplace (The first suggestions from San Jose did not accommodate this and I had to put them straight).

Sponsorship. We have had a sponsor for a long time (Wales Tourist Board), and they both enjoy coming and displaying their wares. However, they also need to obtain value for money and have to be treated well. They always receive a full page, usually back page ad in the brochure, but I also think that we should recognize better. One thing happened this year which is minor but affects appearances. I happened to be in the marketplace on the stall when WTB came in to set up their stall, so I saw the faces. The "official" sign for their booth read 'Whales Tourist Board'. There were smiles and 'not smiles'. Also I would like to see special acknowledgement in the brochure to those groups who sponsor (we after all list donors etc). In these days of cost effective business, sponsors need to be seen and acknowledged, especially important if we are looking for more.

So following this I would like to see us go to local venues with a list of must do's and small but very important considerations like:

Publicly recognize sponsors in some way

How to allocate banquet tickets

Signage and visible directions are very important

Seminar rooms must be checked for set up and equipment before each seminar

Probably more and perhaps these could be asked of previous venue chairmen, or even of the sponsors. Should we write to WTB and ask them for their thoughts?

Milwaukee 97. Tragedy from gross mismanagement. It is not clear to me whether we received anything at all. However, I have a copy of a law suit that is being pursued in California with Geraint Wilkes (enjoined with the Milwaukee Committee) suing Michael J Lewis for damages due to his alleged actions in respect of the planning for the Milwaukee concert. I do not know whether we can expect to receive anything if Geraint wins.

Travel Plans: I think in all of these visits we have to stress the greater involvement of WNGGA (too late for Ottawa), not only for the general registration support, but also for the financial commitments and overall budget. We can use Milwaukee as an anonymous reason to protect both WNGGA and the local committee. I already did that with San Jose when I went there. If you want me to come along to the San Jose meeting and also Denver if they happen let me know.

Others: To tie into visits and event budget, is the issue of contracts and signing and I think, Alf, as we discussed, that the group to look at this is very important and timely. Have we heard anything from San Jose about their signing of contracts? They were close to this earlier this year and I had to tell them not to sign until they received approval, but Alf's invitation letter indicates that they must keep us fully in the loop. We may have to

have an ad hoc policy for this year, which will respond to events, but the sooner we can come up with an approved situation the better.

OK. That, I think, completes the list. I did not expect 4 pages and I hope that I have not been too verbose or wooly. If I have missed something let me know.

Have a good weekend

Regards

alan