

## More Awards for Mair



Mair Wynn Hughes (right) receiving the Mary Vaughan Jones Award from Gwerfyl Pierce Jones

Even though she has retired from her work as a farmer's wife, Mair Wynn Hughes has not given up what she enjoys most – writing. She is one of the Welsh language's most prolific authors, having published dozens of volumes for children and teenagers. This year she won the Tir na n-Og Award for her novel *Ein Rhyfel Ni* (Gwasg y Bwthyn), a story for 9–11 year-old readers about evacuees from Liverpool who went to live in rural Anglesey during the Second World War. This is the fourth time for her to win the Tir na n-Og Award.

As well as the Tir na n-Og Award, Mair has also won the Mary Vaughan Jones Award which was presented to her in a special meeting held at Oriel Môn, Llangefni, Anglesey. This award is presented every three years by the Welsh Books Council in memory of pioneering Welsh-language writer Mary Vaughan

Jones who died in 1983. It acknowledges a special contribution made to the field of children's literature in Wales and in the past it has been won by T. Llew Jones, Roger Boore and Emily Huws.

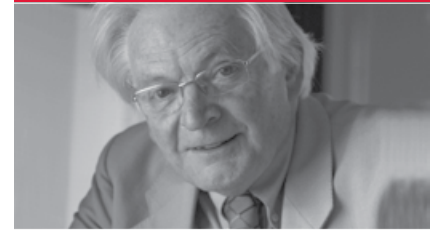
Mair Wynn Hughes began to write when she was a school teacher. Her first book was published in 1967 and since then she has published regularly. She admits that she thoroughly enjoys writing: 'My main interest is writing. Sitting in front of the computer and seeing the story grow and develop on the screen gives me a special thrill. The characters and situations are alive in my head and I long to see all the pieces fall into place. I take great pleasure in working with an idea, thinking about the characters and finding the right names for them, and then as I write, I take particular pleasure in the actual story itself. But the greatest pleasure of all is opening the parcel from the publishers and seeing the finished volume.'

When she isn't writing, Mair Wynn Hughes is an avid reader, as she herself admits. 'I also enjoy reading. The shelves and cupboards of our house are overflowing with books. It's no surprise that my husband says that we would have been very rich if I had spent less money on books!' She also admits to a love of television, being especially fond of soap operas such as *Pobol y Cwm* and *Coronation Street* and wildlife programmes in general.

'She is an author who thoroughly deserves the award,' said Menna Lloyd Williams, Head of the Children's Books Department at the Welsh Books Council. 'Her contribution over the years has been remarkable and her work has been enjoyed by thousands of children across Wales.'

## From the Chair

Tegwyn Jones



It is with a note of sadness, unfortunately, that I must greet you this time, for April this year witnessed the passing of Catrin Puw Davies whose interest in the Welsh book industry, and her contribution to it as a writer, literary critic and member of many committees, was a long and honourable one. As a member until recently of the Council's Publishing Grants Panel, her guidance in numerous matters was greatly sought after and much appreciated. She remained a member of the Books Council's Council, and of its Executive Committee, at the time of her death. To all these she brought a wise and balanced judgement, often tinged by a sense of mischievous humour. She will be sadly missed by all who knew her.

It is a matter of considerable pride to us all that the book publishing scene in Wales is currently a flourishing one. A stream of attractive books continues to flow from the various publishing houses, and it is a privilege to thank the authors, publishers and booksellers for their great efforts, and to congratulate them on the happy cooperation that exists among them. Our task as Friends must be to ensure the continuation and development of this state of affairs. How better to show our appreciation of the Council's work, and what better means of commemorating the labours of the likes of Catrin Puw Davies?

## Summer Reading

Your personal copy of the Welsh-language supplement *Llyfrau'r Haf* (Summer Books) is included with your information pack and the supplement includes a great selection of summer titles.

65,000 copies of the supplement have been produced and distributed with the *papurau bro* and the Books

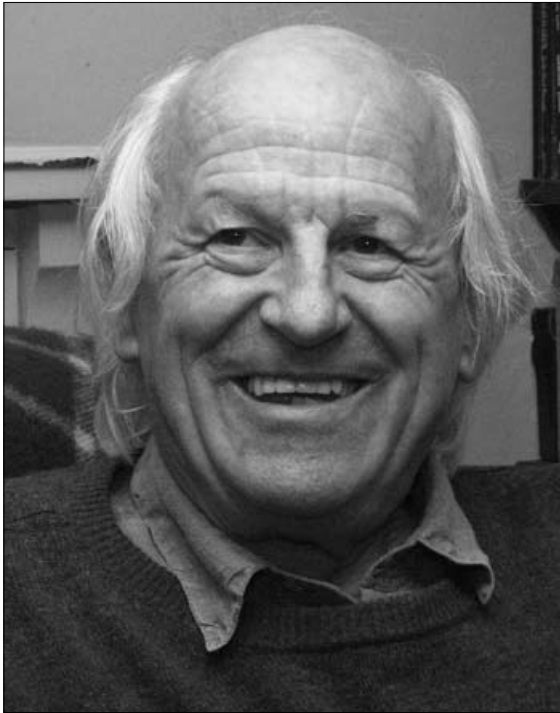
Council appreciate the support of the publishers and booksellers.

'You'll find a good selection of titles in the supplement,' said Helgard Krause, the Books Council's Head of Sales and Marketing, 'from biographies to novels, and from factual books to children's books. Please visit your local bookshop to see the full selection.'



# My Favourite Books

Members of the Friends are invited to present their favourite books. Here is Ned Thomas's choice.



Ned Thomas. Photo by Marian Delyth

To have an unchanging list of favourite books would be to admit to arrested development. Books become favourites at different times and to meet different needs. Reading can be a form of discovery, with the excitement discovery brings, and then one moves on and perhaps beyond, though keeping an affection for an author or volume one has spent time with: let

me call these the old favourites.

Orwell is an old favourite, and despite the fact that the book is full of complex political detail and has never achieved the fame of *Animal Farm* or *1984*, *Homage to Catalonia* is for me the volume that presents Orwell at his most appealing – close to physical experience, swimming against the orthodox tide, resilient, without the social pessimism that later set in.

Of course his appeal for me may be something to do with the years I spent on the Iberian peninsula, and that may also be true of a current favourite, an author whom I have only in recent years discovered and darkly through the glass of translation. Bernardo Atxaga writes his novels in Basque; they are translated fairly swiftly into Spanish and more gradually into English. Quite apart from the fact that the social context of some of the novels makes us in Wales privileged readers in that we can understand certain things by analogy, his is a truly original mind which can play with narrative dazzlingly in the post-modern way but can also write with deep moral insight in straight realist mode. My choice here is a novel I have read in Spanish, *El Hijo del Accordeonista*, which I suspect is his best to date, but for those seeking a volume in English translation, *The Lone Man* is a good starting point – a novel in thriller

mode but with serious undertones.

Poets I have spent a lot of time with, eagerly awaiting each new volume as it appeared, are Derek Walcott and R.S. Thomas – but which volumes to choose? Certainly not the hefty *Collected Poems*, which in each case is similar to an almighty tombstone, useful for reference but without the feel of the times in which the single volumes appeared and excited one. Waldo Williams is a different case – his one slim volume, *Dail Pren*, is also his collected poems, and here familiarity has still not overtaken a sense of mystery and discovery.

And so we come to the poems of Boris Pasternak. The British army taught me Russian to interpreter level during National Service but I have never had to study the literature in an academic context, so my response to Russian literature is unmediated by criticism. Later in Moscow I had friends for whom the speaking of Pasternak's poetry came naturally at the dinner table or on walks. On one walk we visited the poet's grave at Peredelkino where we found a pair of young lovers reading to each other from the same small square brown edition that I use today (that is true immortality). When I take it from the shelf it encapsulates a whole world, the atmosphere of a whole time.

## Accent Press

A feature in our series on publishers from Wales

Four years ago, having completed an MA degree in Creative Writing at Trinity College, Carmarthen, Hazel Cushion, founder and Managing Director of Accent Press, had little idea that her entrepreneurial efforts would garner her numerous awards and an invitation to Buckingham Palace to meet the Queen. She'd started the course to develop her writing career but, having published the students' anthology, a book entitled *Sins*, she realised that she'd found her true vocation in publishing.

Combining her previous charity work with a love of short stories led to the creation of a range of charity fund-raising anthologies with the catchy title of *Sexy Shorts*. There are now six books in the series which have raised over £50,000 for various charities and won awards including The Most Borrowed Library Book and Best Selling Fiction title in Wales. Getting big name authors such as Katie Fforde, Catrin Collier and Carole Matthews to donate stories was the key to the success of the series, but they have also provided a launch-pad for talented new writers who have since signed publishing contracts.

From this base the company has developed a

strong commercial list which sells throughout the UK and overseas. While most of the titles are commercial fiction, such as Katherine John's crime titles, they also have a strong non-fiction list which includes some Welsh-interest books, including *Longer Walks in Pembrokeshire*, *William Haggart – Fairground Film-maker* and *A Town Built to Build Ships – The History of Pembroke Dock*. Accent Press have also been keen partners in the Quick Reads adult literacy campaign and have published six English-language titles for the range. One of these was Dame Tanni Grey Thompson's inspirational book, *Aim High*, which was launched at Cardiff prison on World Book Day 2007 in the presence of Jane Davidson, Assembly Minister for Education at the time.

In October 2006 the company moved from its original Pembroke Dock base to an old primary school at the top of

a beautiful valley forty minutes north of Cardiff. As well as being Accent's head office, the school is also home for Hazel, husband and Financial Director Bob and their eleven-year-old triplets.

Accent Press plans to continue developing its main list and Welsh-interest titles, but is also starting a new educational division in September 2007, Curriculum Concepts, which will predominantly supply teacher support material for primary schools. This will initially be in the English language, although bilingual and Welsh medium material is also being developed.

This feisty company has demonstrated that Wales can be the land of opportunity for creative companies and it is good to see its dedication and professionalism rewarded. With 14% of its turnover coming from export sales, it is also firmly placing Wales on the publishing world map.

# Wendy Morris

## Senior Sales and Marketing Executive



Wendy Morris

One of the Book Council's services which is generally hidden from the public gaze is the work of the Sales and Marketing Team located at the Distribution Centre on the Glanyrafon Business Park, Llanbadarn Fawr. But though they are hidden, the fruits of their labours are plain to be seen, because the sales team's representatives are responsible for visiting shops all over Wales, making sure that booksellers are aware of the latest books and that they are available in the shops for readers to buy.

In order to learn more about their work, I had a word with Wendy Morris, the Senior Sales and Marketing Executive, who leads a team of four

sales representatives. Like all the Books Council staff I have interviewed, Wendy was enthusiastic and keen to tell me how important the work of the sales representatives was to the success of the publishing industry in Wales. 'My work is very varied. There's no telling what I will be doing from one day to another. Perhaps I will be contacting a small independent bookshop in the morning and discussing with Tesco buyers in the afternoon! We have to make sure that the booksellers know which books are available, and then we must ensure that they are delivered to the shops.'

Recently there have been significant changes in the sales and distribution system and Wendy has been part of those changes.

'One of the important things that have happened recently is that we've started to organise sales conferences, bringing together publishers and our sales representatives. It's an opportunity for publishers to promote those books they intend to publish and share information with the sales representatives; the representatives will then use this information in their discussions with the bookseller.'

'If a book is going to sell, then that means hard work in bringing it to the attention of the bookseller in the first place, and then to the attention of book buyers. So I'm responsible for organising promotional tours

for authors to promote their books. Recently I have worked with the novelist Malcolm Price and the weatherman Derek Brockway as they went from bookshop to bookshop to meet their readers and promote their volumes.'

But it's not only direct selling that takes up the whole of Wendy's time, she is also responsible for ensuring that the information about Wales's bestsellers reach the media and she also coordinates the promotional Wales Book of the Month and the Welsh-language Novel of the Month.

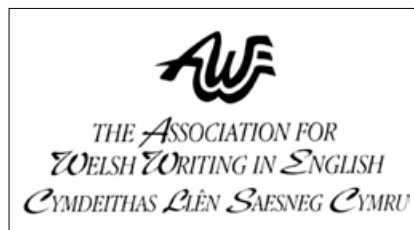
The work of the sales team is changing as the business of book-selling changes. 'Over the past few years I've seen a lot of changes. The backbone of book-selling in Wales is the traditional independent bookshops that are seen in our towns and villages. But more and more people today are buying their books in chain-stores and supermarkets, and ensuring that books from Wales are available in these outlets is a very important part of the job.'

When she isn't working, Wendy is an enthusiastic runner and artist, and as a mother of two daughters, she's kept very busy. But she's not too busy to read. 'I read more now than ever, and I'm glad to say that the girls are also great readers. I read anything – fiction or non-fiction – anything, provided it tells a good story. If it does that, I will read almost anything!'

## Association for Welsh Writing in English

Gregynog Hall has been the venue for the annual conference of the Association for Welsh Writing in English since it was established in 1984, and the nineteenth conference on 'Life Writing in Wales' was held in March this year. The Association exists to promote research and the study of Welsh writing in English, and the conferences are notable for the eclectic and lively mix of academics and lay people who attend and contribute to the weekend events.

The tradition of having a book launch and often a reading by a Welsh writer brings publishers and authors to the conference: this year the poet Christine Evans gave a reading; in a joint launch Honno presented their latest Welsh Women's Classic *Dew on the Grass*, by Eiluned Lewis – edited by conference organiser and AWWE chair, Katie Gramich – and Parthian launched *Bit on the Side*, a book of life writing by women from Wales and another example (joining the writing of Maggie O'Farrell for instance) of Welsh 'chick-lit' for the thinking woman. As well as these new releases, a wide range of contemporary books from Wales were stocked – alongside more academic and specialist tomes – in a temporary bookshop which is set up every year with



the help of the Welsh Books Council.

As well as a range of excellent papers from practising academics and experts, one of the great features of the annual conference is the inclusion of a series of short papers by postgraduate students. A few conference goers have been known to slope off to an art gallery in Newtown or take the opportunity to make the pilgrimage to (R.S. Thomas's) Manafon, during these 'postgrad papers', but such extra-curricular activities, tempting though they may be, are poor substitutes for these sessions which are invariably rich and surprising.

Their papers cover a wide range of subjects and are delivered by researchers who are thoroughly immersed in and impassioned by their subjects. For those not familiar with the work of Rachel Trezise, Arthur Machen or Glyn Jones, John Cale or Lorna Sage, or subjects such as representations of the 'Welsh Mam' in memoirs, historical biodrama in Wales, Glyn Jones and 'Anglo-Welsh' mythmaking, the papers this year offered a welcome introduction. For the more initiated these papers show that some of the most exciting new work in Wales is being done by the increasing number of postgraduate students engaged in doctoral research.

For more information about the Association or to learn how to join see: <http://www.swansea.ac.uk/english/crew/awwe/index.html>

# World Book Day 2007 celebrates its 10th birthday!



Rhiannon Lloyd (centre) at the World Book Day Lecture with Gwerfyl Pierce Jones and Professor M. Wynn Thomas

## World Book Day Poster

With the enthusiastic support of our partners – including schools, libraries, organisations such as the Basic Skills Agency and Academi, and the book trade – the 10th World Book Day was certainly one to remember! The celebrations were launched with an inspiring lecture by Rhiannon Lloyd, Headteacher of Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Glantaf and Coordinator of the National Year of Reading (1998/99), at the Wales Millennium Centre. Amongst the other highlights was the simultaneous announcement of the Academi's Book of the Year long list, at Cardiff and Ruthin.

Booksellers and publishers organised a wide variety of activities, and the children's author tour was particularly successful. For the first time, by working

in partnership with the Welsh Video Network, three authors took part in videoconferencing sessions with secondary school pupils. Messages of support were received from a number of Welsh celebrities – Glyn Wise, Eve Myles, Connie Fisher and Dwayne Peele – and photos of Glyn Wise and Eve Myles appeared on promotional posters.

The Spread the Word campaign gave adults and children the opportunity to use specially produced postcards in order to recommend book titles to friends and colleagues. Over 100,000 bilingual cards were produced and distributed through libraries, schools and other locations. CADW organised poet, author and storyteller sessions at a number of their sites, and locations

such as Pentre Bach Sali Mali in Ceredigion were a hive of activity throughout World Book Day week.

Eight new titles were published in the Quick Reads/Stori Sydyn series and they were launched by Tanni Grey Thompson, one of the project's authors, at Cardiff Prison on World Book Day. In Wales, the scheme is the fruit of a partnership between the Welsh Books Council and the Basic Skills Agency, with the support of the Welsh Assembly Government, and aims to provide fiction and other good reads for emergent adult readers.

As World Book Day continues to go from strength to strength, it offers an ever increasing opportunity to highlight books and the pleasures of reading.

## Hay Festival

The last week of May was extremely busy for the Welsh Books Council, with stands at both the Urdd Youth Eisteddfod in Carmarthen and also at the annual Hay Festival.

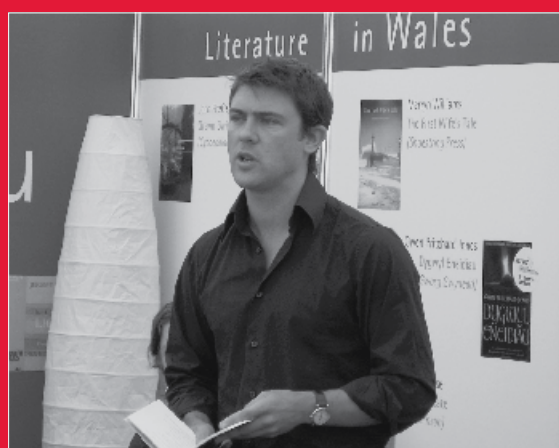
This year, the Council shared a stand at the Urdd Eisteddfod with local bookshop T-hwnt, who provided an excellent selection of books for both children and adults.

During the same week, the small town of Hay saw an influx of readers for the Guardian Hay Festival, which had a record attendance of 170,000 this year. The Books Council was one of the

main partners on the Literature in Wales stand alongside the Welsh Assembly Government, the Arts Council of Wales, Academi and the National Library.

A full programme of daily readings and workshops, as well as an extensive range of books from Wales drew a positive response from the public. The Books Council also supported the festival bookshop, Pemberton's.

'With a new location and a bigger stand we were able to offer the public a varied programme of events to promote books from Wales,' said Helgard Krause on behalf of the Books Council.



Owen Sheers reads his work on the Literature in Wales stand, Hay.