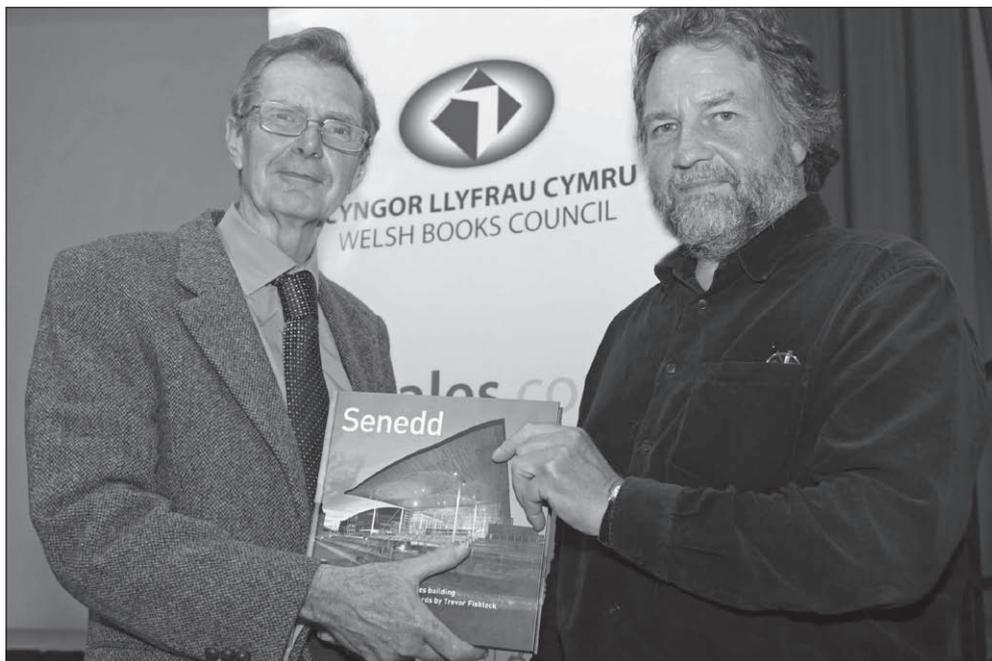


The Annual Meeting



Wynn Thomas
presenting a gift
to Nigel Jenkins

On Saturday, 2nd October, members assembled at the Morlan centre, Aberystwyth, for the Friends' Annual Meeting.

After welcoming everyone, Tegwyn Jones, the Chair of the Friends, presented a report on the decisions of the Steering Committee that had met that morning. He confirmed the intention to continue with practical support for the Welsh Books Council by sponsoring the joint initiative with the Welsh Assembly Government that promotes reading amongst boys. The Friends' contribution would be to pay for packs of books for two flagship events on World Book Day 2011.

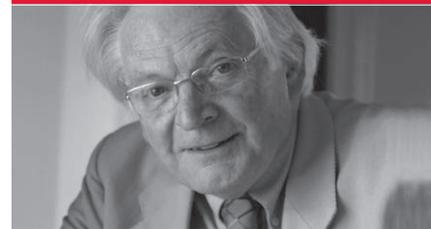
Tegwyn also announced the intention of the Steering Committee to hold next year's annual meeting at another location in Wales.

But the main business of the meeting, as usual, was to acquaint ourselves better with one of our authors. This year the guest author was Nigel Jenkins. Nigel is well known as a poet, journalist and author of creative non-fiction books. He was also one of the editors of the *Welsh Academy Encyclopaedia of Wales* published in 2008. He's a lecturer in creative writing in the Department of English at Swansea University.

The session was led by Professor M. Wynn Thomas, one of Nigel's colleagues in the Department of English at Swansea University and who is also the Chair of the Welsh Books Council. He questioned Nigel about his family background and his literary interests and we also had the opportunity to hear him read some of his poetry.

From the Chair

Tegwyn Jones



Summer is now a distant memory, as is the leisurely relaxing on a golden Spanish beach, perhaps, or on a Greek island, with a riveting book for company. A biography, an autobiography, a novel or a collection of verse – the feast of summer reading provided by our publishing houses was as colourful and varied as usual. But how many of us, I wonder, as we perused and enjoyed these works, spared a thought for their authors, their labour and sometimes no doubt, their anguish as they struggled with the process of bringing out a book? And further asked the question, what would be the fate of these books were it not for the support, the vision and the perseverance of the Welsh Books Council and its enthusiastic and professional staff? We need hardly pause to search for the answer. It is our privilege as Friends of the Council to promote this work in all possible ways, and I do not apologize for repeating an appeal that I have voiced many times, that is, to spread the message among your family, friends and acquaintances, and gently allure them into our midst. The greater the number of Friends, the greater will be our ability to support the Books Council's vital work.

Your Pack

As well as the latest copy of *The Friend*, it's a pleasure to send you information on the latest reviews and the best sellers. Also, please use your advantage tokens to buy books from the enclosed catalogues.



Condolences

As this edition was about to go to press, we heard the sad news of the death of Mrs Elinor Humphreys, the wife of the man of letters, Emyr Humphreys, one of the Honourable Presidents of the Friends. We send our sincere condolences to Emyr and to his daughter, his sons and all their families in their loss and grief.

My Favourite Books

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



David Greenslade

I don't read for pleasure. Few things give me more pleasure than reading but I read more out of vital necessity than out of distraction, routine or gluttony. I rarely watch my diet but constantly graze and even steal from other people's plates.

I'm one of those who always have more than one book on the go – a book near the table, other books near the bed, others at work, more in my study, one in the car and others placed on shelves around the house. If I invest in a book then I make sure that I spend time with it before it, too, finds a place where I can return and read those sections that prompted me to buy it in the first place. I do read from cover to cover but not always in that order. I suppose I become what I read. Currently, the book I can't put down is

A History of Engineering and Structural Design by Matthew Wells, which is a rhapsodic account of paradigm shifts in our relationship with material things.

The last book I was given as a gift was *Create Your Own Japanese Garden* and the last book I bought online was *How and Why Do We Learn*, edited by W. R. Nisbett.

The most recent books I traded with friends who are poets were Scott Thurston's *Internal Rhyme* (Shearsman), *Sad Giraffe Café* (Arc) by Richard Gwyn and David Woolley's *Pursued by a Bear* (Headland) – three very different collections which I'm still re-reading. The last new poetry book I bought was *Shield* (Parthian) by Lyndon Davies. Lyndon manages language in ways that I really enjoy and Parthian, thank goodness, is willing to publish work of this experimental nature.

The books that currently distract me from what I should be doing are almost all of them second hand. And even though I can read them, I often find them baffling. They are books of diagrams. I am currently fascinated by the relationship between textual and graphic line. Some of these treasures are very obscure – *Meddyg y Fferm* (1880) and Hopkinson's *Boiler Mountings and Valves* (1910) with its luminous airbrush illustrations. Some are written in a foreign language which isn't a problem, as it's the illustrations (plan, circuit, section,

exploded view) that absorb me. Reading in bed before turning off the light includes *Kombinat* (Igloo), a survey of titanic industrial ruin in central Europe, and *On the Origin of Objects* by Brian Cantwell Smith, which comes to the wonderful conclusion that objects don't exist.

Currently, the book I read if I find myself waiting at Pyle or Bridgend railway station is *Illennium* by Swansea-based John Goodby. *Illennium* is a sequence of sonnets the like of which I've never seen before. It's never the same book twice.

The most recent novels I finished were *Lleidr Da* by Gareth Miles and *Wela'n Gwawrio* by Angharad Tomos, both bought second hand and both by writers I respect on and off the page. I'm just getting started on *Pryfeta* by Tony Bianchi – a writer whose sense of pace and detail always challenges my bad habit of reading too quickly.

There have been periods when I lived almost completely without books. Reading was not encouraged when I was a deshi or student in Tokyo many years ago. More recently, when I spent two years in the desert city of Nizwa, Oman, the only books I took were *Y Beibl Cymraeg Newydd* and Bobi Jones's *Hunllef Arthur*. While there, I collected discarded multilingual instruction manuals and entertained myself by reading them.

So it's a varied diet – a snack here, a feast there, occasionally a health restoring fast.

New challenges for reading promotion

At the National Eisteddfod in Ebbw Vale, Leighton Andrews AM, Minister for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning, launched *Take Five, Read for Ten* – an exciting initiative that will encourage parents to read with their children. This campaign forms part of the Welsh Assembly Government's National Literacy Plan and reflects the emphasis that the plan places on getting families to read together.

The Books Council has a unique contribution to make to the Literacy Plan since a number of its reading promotion initiatives, such as World Book Day, Reading Communities and Quick Reads, reinforce the Assembly Government's work. Building on the success of the four Reading Communities which have been organised since 2008, the Council

is currently working to establish ten new Reading Communities across Wales.

'This is a very exciting development,' said D. Geraint Lewis, Chair of the Reading Promotion Steering Committee. 'It offers an opportunity to raise the profile of books and reading in some of the most disadvantaged communities in Wales. With the help of local partners, the aim will be to organise a range of activities that will become an accepted part of community life.'

Activities planned for World Book Day 2011 will also promote the aims of the Literacy Plan in a number of ways. These will include two high-profile events aimed at bringing sports personalities and boys together to explore the pleasures of books and reading. In addition, schools and libraries will

organise a variety of events throughout Wales, as they have done over the years.



Leighton Andrews AM

The Tir na n-Og Awards

The Tir na n-Og Awards, established in 1976 to give recognition to the best books for children and young people, are sponsored by the Welsh Books Council and the Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals. Three awards are presented annually: for the best



English-language book and the best Welsh-language books for the primary and secondary sectors.

The English award was won this year by Paul Manship for his novel for young people, *Dear Mr Author*, a gripping and amusing story set in Newport. The main character, eleven-year-old Sam Willoughby, always seems to be trying too hard for success, but fails miserably as a result of his over-eagerness. Paul was born in Newport, and now teaches in a primary school in the city. He has written two other novels for children – *The Cube* and *Rewind*.

The Welsh awards were presented to Manon Steffan Ros for her novel *Trwy'r Tonnau* (Primary Sector) and Rhiannon Wyn for *Codi Bwganod* (Secondary Sector).

Manon originally comes from Dyffryn Ogwen but now lives

in Pennal, near Machynlleth. Her novel tells the story of Cledwyn, Siân and Gili Dŵ and their adventure in the magical land of Crug which is full of fantastic creatures. Manon has also written several plays and won the Drama Medal at the National Eisteddfod in 2005 and 2006.

Rhiannon Wyn is a scriptwriter for the television series *Rownd a Rownd* and *Pobol y Cwm*. She spent her early years in Groeslon, near Caernarfon, and *Codi Bwganod* is her first novel for young people. Erin, the main character of her novel, has recently moved into a smart old mansion which is featured on a TV programme. A relationship develops between presenter Robyn Rici and Sara, Erin's mother, but little do they know that Erin also has a companion – a friendly ghost!



Rhiannon Wyn



Manon Steffan Ros



Paul Manship

Christmas Feast

My favourite week of the year is the one between Christmas day and New Year's day. Suddenly the mad rush that precedes the modern Christmas is over, and silence reigns. Time to relax and read, and a quick glance at what will be available to readers this Christmas gives me cause to look forward more than ever to that slow and peaceful week.

Our various publishers have made a stout effort to cater for all tastes. Those whose interests lie in books dealing with different aspects of our history will read, to their great edification, publications such as Chris Evans's *Slave Wales: The Welsh and Atlantic Slavery 1660–1850* (not too many uncomfortable facts, one hopes), or J. R. Kenyon's *The Medieval Castles of Wales* (over 90 of them it appears). Dai Smith's *In the Frame: Memory in Society – Wales 1910–2010*, also promises to be a stimulating read. Lovers of biography and autobiography have a rich choice of books. This year they can learn all they need to know of household names such as Wyn Lodwick of Llanelli, that lovely man of jazz, (*Count Yourself In*), the comedian Owen Money (*My Autobiography: Money Talks*) and that other colourful character, Mal Pope (*Old Enough to Know Better*).

There are some interesting coffee-table books on offer. One of these that caught

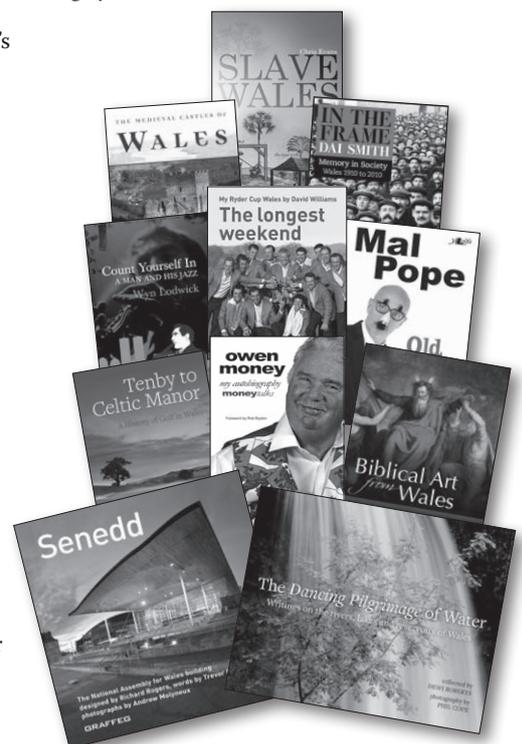
my eye was *Senedd*, a celebration in words and pictures of the building that houses the iconic National Assembly of Wales in Cardiff. Photographs by Andrew Molyneux and the text by that excellent journalist and lover of all things Welsh, Trevor Fishlock. For sport lovers there are two volumes that will remind them of the Ryder Cup Tournament's visit to Wales earlier this year – *Tenby to Celtic Manor* by Byron Kalies, and *The Longest Weekend: My Ryder Cup Wales* by David Williams, which is a commemorative photographic record of the historical event.

If I were to be exiled to that well-known desert island, and allowed two books from this year's list, it would be a difficult decision to make. However, if my arm was to be twisted, I would go for *The Dancing Pilgrimage of Water*, a collection of writings on the rivers, lakes and reservoirs of Wales, selected by Dewi Roberts, and *Biblical Art from Wales* edited by Martin O'Kane and John Morgan-Guy. 'Throughout Wales,' we are told in the blurb, 'the Bible has been interpreted and illustrated in a surprisingly wide range of media: in paint and sculpture, needlework and ceramic, woodcarving and engraving. The illustrations in the book (over 400 are in colour) reveal the creative and unique visual aspects of traditional religious and cultural life in Wales.' The book comes

with a DVD containing over 600 images. Mouthwatering!

Further details of the books and authors mentioned above, and many more, may be found on gwales.com.

Tegwyn Jones



How will Estyn inspect literacy?

Ann Keane, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales, provides a report for the Welsh Books Council

In September 2010, Estyn introduced a new common inspection framework for all providers of education and training. Our new inspection model puts a strong focus on learners' literacy skills. Putting more emphasis on literacy in inspections signals how important reading and writing are to the learning achievement of individuals. While progress has been made in raising standards of literacy already, too many children and adults still have a poor grasp of the basics, and this affects their quality of life as well as the progress they can make in education.

On each inspection, inspectors will evaluate whether learners have the literacy skills needed to access all areas of the

curriculum. Inspectors will observe a small sample of teaching sessions and look at the work undertaken. In each of these observations, they will focus on literacy as a line of enquiry to judge how well learners apply and develop their reading and writing skills. Inspectors will also consider the attainment of learners, in assessments of language standards and their performance in GCSE, essential skills qualifications and the key skills qualifications of the Welsh Baccalaureate Qualification, as appropriate.

Inspectors will evaluate how well the wider curriculum itself develops learners' literacy skills. For example, they will judge how well literacy skills are embedded into

the experience of learners across all subject areas or learning pathways. Inspectors will look at how the use of initial and diagnostic assessments of learners' literacy skills and support programmes helps learners to improve. Inspectors will expect leaders and managers to give priority to developing learners' literacy skills so that learners can realise their potential.

The Welsh Assembly Government's national literacy plan outlines the action to be taken to secure better standards of reading and writing for all learners. Putting more emphasis on inspecting learners' literacy skills will support the drive for improvement and provide evidence of how effectively this plan is implemented.

Retirements

Following the retirement of the former Director, Gwerfyl Pierce Jones, last year, 2010 sees two other familiar faces bidding their farewell to the Welsh Books Council – Menna Lloyd Williams and Dafydd Charles Jones.

Menna already had a vast experience of children's literature when she joined the staff of the Welsh Books Council in 1991 as Head of the Children's Books Department. She began her career as a Welsh teacher, before becoming a member of the staff of Dyfed Cultural Services under the leadership of Alun R. Edwards, and subsequently Director of the Welsh Centre for Children's Literature.

'Perhaps the greatest changes that I have seen are the growth in Welsh-medium education and the implementation of the Cwricwlwm Cymreig throughout Wales, which has meant that books from Wales have become a natural part of every school pupil's learning. The growth in Welsh education has meant that incentives such as the



Menna Lloyd Williams

Clwb Llyfrau (Schools' Book Club) ensure that non-Welsh-speaking parents receive the information they need to help their children choose which books to buy. Parents are very eager to purchase Welsh-language books for their children but they need help to do so.

'It has also been great to see English-medium schools becoming part of the Books Council's book competitions. I get excited when I see children from schools all over the country coming together, along with their parents and relatives, to compete and discuss, and to share the pleasure they get from reading books.

'As I look to the future, I hope that enabling children to experience the pleasure of reading will remain an important element of the Books Council's work. Personally, I hope that I will have more time to spend in the company of Hugh Hughes, the Red Poet of Anglesey, and a chance to record some of the exploits of Parddu Ddu o Fôn!

Dafydd, as Manager of the Distribution Centre, was the public face and voice of the Books Council for many people, especially the owners and staff of bookshops. And his relationship with the booksellers was a testament to his easy-going nature, his enthusiasm and energy in promoting books.

Before joining the staff of the Books Council, Dafydd worked for Lloyds TSB in Ruthin, Caernarfon and Colwyn Bay. In 1989, he was appointed as Manager of the Distribution Centre at



Dafydd Charles Jones

Glanyrafon, Aberystwyth, and has seen many significant changes during a period of twenty years and more.

'Looking back, it's incredible how the range of books has developed,' said Dafydd, 'and credit must be given to the hard work of all the publishers. I enjoyed working on the Books Council stand at the National Eisteddfod and seeing the interest people generally had in the books. That always gave me great pleasure.

'As sales increased, we had to develop computerised systems to manage the Centre's work and we were always proud of the fact that we offered our customers the best possible service. I'm very grateful to the staff who worked with me throughout the years. The Books Council does a very important job and I wish its staff all the best for the future.'