

# WELSH BOOKS COUNCIL

---

## ***ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING***

VENUE: County Hall, Cardiff

DATE: 29 November 2006

PRESENT: Professor M. Wynn Thomas (Chairman)

Local Authorities

Councillor John M. Griffiths (Pembrokeshire)

Councillor Neil Lewis (Torfaen)

Councillor Morfudd M. Jones (Denbighshire)

Councillor Robert H. Poole (Newport)

Councillor B. Towyn Evans (Ceredigion)

Councillor Ray Davies (Caerphilly)

Councillor Liz Hackett Pain (Monmouthshire)

National Assembly for Wales

Mr P. Mark Williams

National Library of Wales

Dr Rhidian Griffiths

Friends of the Books Council

Mr Tegwyn Jones

Dr Brynley F. Roberts

Vice Chairman

Mr Gareth Davies Jones

Honorary Treasurer

Mr W. Gwyn Jones

Honorary Counsel

Mr Milwyn Jarman QC

Co-opted Members

Mrs Catrin Puw Davies

Mr Ioan Kidd

Staff

Miss Gwerfyl Pierce Jones (Director)

Mr Elwyn Jones (Head of Administration and Public Relations)

Mr Arwyn Roderick (Head of Finance, Business and Information Technology)

Mr Sion Iilar (Senior Design Officer)

Mr D. Philip Davies (Information Services Coordinator)

Miss Menna Lloyd Williams (Head of the Children's Books Department)

Mr Dafydd Charles Jones (Distribution Centre Manager)

Ms Helgard Krause (Head of Sales and Marketing)

Officer:

Mr Richard Owen

APOLOGIES Councillors Margaret Davies; Dorothy M. J. James; Messrs Keith Morgan; R. Arwel Pierce; John Meirion Davies; Christopher Bithell; Canon Steve S. Morgan; Eirwyn Williams; Messrs D. Geraint Lewis; Iolo M. Ll. Walters; Alun P. Thomas; Robat Arwyn Jones; Lawrence Rawsthorne; T. Hywel James; Lloyd Ellis; Dewi Thomas; Rhys Bebb Jones; W. Gwyn Williams; Gareth William Jones; Dr Huw M. Edwards; Mrs Ann Keane; Mrs Eleri Huws (Senior Editorial Officer).

## 1 CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

- 1.1 The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting and explained that he had had to attend a meeting of the Assembly's Culture Board in Cardiff Bay that morning; he thanked Mr Gareth Davies Jones, the Vice Chairman, for chairing the Executive Committee.
- 1.2 A special welcome was extended to those attending their first meeting: Councillor Neil Lewis (Torfaen); Councillor Ray Davies (Caerphilly) and Mr Tegwyn Jones, who was the Friends of the Books Council's representative on the Council.
- 1.3 A welcome was also extended to Dr Brynley F. Roberts, who was returning to membership of the Council following his appointment as Vice Chairman of the Friends. He was congratulated upon his work in connection with the publication of *Cydymaith Caneuon Ffydd*.
- 1.4 The members sent their best wishes to Heather Bastow (Secretary in the Marketing Department) following a long period of ill-health.

## 2 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of the Half Yearly Meeting held on 23 June 2006 were confirmed.

## 3 MATTERS ARISING

- 3.1 Charities Commission  
The Chairman noted that the Books Council had responded to the Commission's requirements and that a letter had been received, approving the steps taken. Mr Milwyn Jarman was thanked for his advice and his readiness to prepare documentation concerning the legal situation.
- 3.2 Aberystwyth Centre for the Book  
Gwerfyl Pierce Jones reported that the three bodies involved in this virtual Centre, the University of Wales Aberystwyth, the National Library and the Books Council, had agreed to terminate their formal partnership, but that they would continue to seek opportunities for cooperation.  
  
Dr Rhidian Griffiths, on behalf of the National Library, added that the Centre had prepared several reports on the book trade in Wales, as well as publishing *Welsh Book Studies/Y Llyfr yng Nghymru*, but that other priorities meant that it was not possible to dedicate the time or resources to the Centre as originally envisaged.
- 3.3 Correspondence concerning the late Alun Creunant Davies  
The Chairman referred to correspondence from Gwenan and Deian Creunant, in which they expressed their wish to present a gift of £5,000 to the Council in memory of their father, the late Alun Creunant Davies. They were thanked for their

generosity and it was agreed that the Chief Officers would consider how this money could best be used for the benefit of the Books Council.

#### 3.4 Friends of the Books Council

Mr Tegwyn Jones, Chairman of the Friends of the Books Council, reported on the year's activities, referring to the extremely successful meeting held recently in Aberystwyth in the company of the author and National Poet of Wales, Gwyn Thomas.

He also referred to an information pack distributed regularly to members of the Friends and thanked the officers for preparing the latest edition of the newsletter, *The Friend*.

Membership of the friends stood at 388: it was intended to build on this figure during the course of the coming year.

It was also noted that the Friends had received a gift of £1,000 in memory of Alun Creunant Davies; his family was thanked for their generosity.

#### 3.5 Donation from Dr Dewi Davies

The Chairman reported that Dr Dewi Davies had contributed a further £3,000 towards the Council's Book Competitions, organised by the Children's Books Department. It was noted that his donations now totalled £21,000 and that the value of the investment, according to the latest accounts, had reached about £30,000.

## 4 GRANTS FOR 2007/08

Mr Arwyn Roderick presented a paper, indicating the likely situation regarding Welsh Assembly Government grants for 2007/08 and noted that the final budget had not yet been confirmed. He reported that there had been an increase of £53,000 in the grant towards the Council's running costs.

## 5 MEMBERSHIP OF THE COUNCIL, EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND PANELS

In accordance with the Books Council's constitution, the Chairman presented a list of members of the Council, the Executive Committee and the various panels. He explained that all representatives of local authorities were members of the Council and were represented in rotation on the Executive Committee.

Following the recent meeting of the Nominations Panel, a revised paper was presented, noting the latest situation with regard to panel membership.

## 6 REPORTS ON DEPARTMENTAL ACTIVITIES

### 6.1 Children's Books Department

The Head of the Children's Books Department presented a report on the Department's work and referred to some of the highlights:

- Welsh-language Book Competitions – these competitions have proved successful for many years and the response from schools is very positive.
- English-language Book Competitions – this activity is also going from strength to strength, with more schools taking part in the competitions each year.

- Basic Skills Awards – it was noted that the previous awards had been presented at a successful ceremony in Cardiff and that discussions were under way to hold a similar event at the end of March 2007.
- Read a Million Words – the Department was glad of the opportunity to cooperate with the Basic Skills Agency on their 'Read a Million Words' project, aimed at encouraging children to read.

## 6.2 Sales and Marketing

Elwyn Jones noted that the Books Council had succeeded in producing two attractive supplements to publicise Christmas titles, *Gwledd y Nadolig* in Welsh and *Books from Wales* in English. The publishers and booksellers were thanked for the support they had given to these supplements.

It was also noted that Cambrensis continued to help publishers and the Council through promoting Welsh-language books in the press and media and that they had already attracted considerable attention to Christmas titles.

Helgard Krause reported that she and her team of reps were very busy promoting the sales of books from Wales in both languages and was keen to thank the partnership of John Jones and Gina Rozner for their work in publicising English-language books from Wales.

## 6.3 Information Services

Mr Phil Davies referred to the work of the new information unit, established as part of the recent restructuring, noting that its main task was to ensure that all bibliographical information in the Books Council's databases was comprehensive and accurate. He noted that information was the basis of all the Council's websites and emphasised its importance to the Council's reps and schools officers.

He also noted that the publishers were now able to send information to the Council electronically and that much emphasis is placed upon the prompt receipt of this information.

In recent months, Phil Davies had visited a number of libraries throughout Wales to offer training and advice about all aspects of *gwales/libraries*. He was delighted to report that 105 librarians had already registered as users.

He referred also to the Welsh Book Trade Info website, which contained useful lists and information about the book trade in Wales. He thanked Dr Tony Bianchi for his thorough work in preparing and maintaining the content.

He concluded through referring to ISBN numbers and reported that the Council had adopted the new 13 digit numbers on all its websites.

## 7 **PRESENTING THE FINANCIAL REPORT FOR 2005/06**

The Honorary Treasurer, Mr W. Gwyn Jones, presented a comprehensive report on the 2005/06 accounts.

Thanks were extended to Mr Arwyn Roderick and his staff for their painstaking preparation of the figures and to Llŷr James, Chartered Accountants, for auditing the accounts.

## **8 PROBABLE FINANCIAL SITUATION 2006/07 AND ESTIMATES 2007/08**

The Treasurer presented the projections. He referred to the increase in funding and thanked the Assembly Government for its support of the Books Council's work.

The report was approved.

## **9 PRESENTING THE ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2005/06**

In presenting a report on the year's work, the Director noted that there had been a host of developments in the Council's work over the years and that the output of Welsh publishers in both languages reflected these developments. She noted that the Welsh-language novel had been in a critical condition ten years ago but that, by common agreement, there was now new life in Welsh fiction and that novels were attracting more discussion than had been the case for many years.

The Director also saw encouraging signs in English and cited a number of significant developments, including the Library of Wales series and the success of authors such as Rachel Trezise and Owen Sheers.

She stressed that one of the most important developments this year had been the publication of the Kewley and Richardson report and reported that the Council had already begun to respond to its recommendations through establishing a new Sales and Marketing Department under the leadership of Helgard Krause. She noted that the report also set publishers a challenge, with its emphasis on the quality of output, publishing schedules and effective promotion. She reported that changes had already begun to bear fruit and that the Council was confident that Christmas sales figures would once again beat all records.

She noted that establishing and developing partnerships was as important as ever to the Council and cited recent collaboration with the Basic Skills Agency. She also referred to the close relationship with the public libraries and the National Library.

Finally, the Director thanked all the staff for their dedication and enthusiasm during the year and thanked members of the various panels, the Executive Committee and the Council for their support.

Dr Rhidian Griffiths thanked the Director and the staff for their work and noted that the Annual Report was a fair and comprehensive reflection of the Books Council's broad remit.

At the end of the meeting, the Chairman presented the Director with a gift to mark her reaching the milestone of thirty years' employment in the service of the Books Council.