

WELSH BOOKS COUNCIL

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

VENUE: Castell Brychan, Aberystwyth

DATE: 28 November 2007

PRESENT: Professor M. Wynn Thomas (Chairman)

Local Authorities

Councillor John M. Griffiths (Pembrokeshire)

Councillor John Meirion Davies (Anglesey)

Councillor Dorothy M. J. James (Powys)

Councillor Eirwyn Williams (Carmarthen)

Councillor R. Arwel Pierce (Gwynedd)

Chief Librarians

Mr Robat Arwyn

Mr Lloyd Ellis

Mr Dewi Thomas

Friends of the Welsh Books Council

Mr Tegwyn Jones

Dr Brynley F. Roberts

The Welsh Academy

Mr R. Arwel Jones

Honorary Secretary

Mr D. Geraint Lewis

Honorary Treasurer

Mr W. Gwyn Jones

Honorary Solicitor

Mr Alun P. Thomas

Co-opted Member

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)

Mrs Marian Beech Hughes (Senior Editorial Officer)

Mr D. Philip Davies (Head of Information Services)

Mr Dafydd Charles Jones (Manager of the Distribution Centre)

Mr Richard Owen (Senior Grants Officer)

Officers

Dr Jasmine Donahaye

Mrs Lila Piette

Mrs Delyth Humphreys

Miss Tanwen Haf

APOLOGIES: Councillors Margaret Davies; Morfudd M. Jones; Liz Hacket Pain; Messrs Keith Morgan; Christopher Bithell; Canon Steve S. Morgan; Messrs Arwel Gwynn Jones; B. Towyn Evans; Nigel J. Gibbs; Ray Davies; Gareth Davies Jones; Milwyn Jarman, QC; David Barker; Alun Treharne; Lawrence Rawsthorne; T. Hywel James; Rhys Bebb Jones; W. Gwyn Williams; Dr Rhidian Griffiths; Mrs Ann E. John; Mrs Ann Keane; Ms Gill John; Mrs Siân E. Jones; Miss Menna Lloyd Williams (Head of the Children's Books Department); Ms Helgard Krause (Head of Sales and Marketing); Mr Sion Iilar (Senior Design Officer).

1 CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

- 1.1 The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting, and especially Mr R. Arwel Jones who was present at his first meeting, representing the Academi on the Executive Committee and the Council.
- 1.2 Mrs Marian Beech Hughes was welcomed to her first meeting of the Council, following her appointment as the Council's Senior Editorial Officer, and Dr Jasmine Donahaye, the Council's Publishing Grants Officer (English-language), was also welcomed.
- 1.3 The Chairman reported that the Council had received a letter from Mr Milwyn Jarman, QC, tendering his resignation from his responsibilities as the Council's Honorary Counsel following his appointment as Chancery Judge. Sincere thanks were conveyed for his wise counsel over the years. The Chief Officers were granted permission to seek a successor, in consultation with the Honorary Solicitor. It was noted that the Council would confirm the appointment in the Half Yearly Meeting held in the summer.
- 1.4 Mr Alun P. Thomas, the Council's Honorary Solicitor, was thanked for his attendance at the meeting and for his willing support at all times.
- 1.5 Condolences were conveyed to Miss Menna Lloyd Williams, following the recent death of her brother and to Dr Jasmine Donahaye on the death of her sister.
- 1.6 The Council sympathised deeply with the family of Heather Bastow, a secretary in the Marketing Department, who had died recently. A minute's silence was held in her memory.
- 1.7 Best wishes were extended to Anwen Jones, a Secretary in the Information Services Department, and to Mr David Barker, Chairman of the Children's Books Panel; both had received hospital treatment recently.
- 1.8 Mr Ioan Kidd was congratulated on the publication of his novel, entitled *Tyllau*, an adaptation of *Holes*, Louis Sachar, and Mr D. Geraint Lewis was thanked for his help with the Welsh adaptation of the *Monopoly* board game.
- 1.9 Congratulations were extended to Mrs Mwynwen Mai Jones, Sales Representative, and her husband Huw, a former member of staff, on the birth of their son.
- 1.10 Mr D. Philip Davies was congratulated on his appointment as Head of Information Services, and Mr Richard Owen on his promotion to Senior Grants Officer (Welsh-language).

2 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of the Half Yearly Meeting, held on 21 June 2007, were confirmed.

3 MATTERS ARISING

3.1 The National Year of Reading

Elwyn Jones reported that the Welsh Assembly Government had invited the Council to coordinate the National Year of Reading 2008 campaign in Wales, and that the sum of £350,000 had been earmarked for the work. Members were reminded that the Council had coordinated a similar campaign ten years ago, the legacy of which was an annual World Book Day. It was noted that similar arrangements were already in hand in England and that the Books Council would be eager to cooperate with a number of different partners in order to ensure the success of the year.

It was noted that meetings with partners from libraries had already been arranged.

3.2 Friends of the Welsh Books Council

Tegwyn Jones, Chairman of the Friends of the Books Council, reported that the Annual Meeting had been held recently in Aberystwyth, with Professor M. Wynn Thomas interviewing the author Lloyd Jones about his life and work. He added that the Friends' information pack had recently been distributed to members and thanked Mr Lyn Léwis Dafis for his assistance in preparing the current issue of *The Friend/ Y Cyfaill*.

4 GRANTS FOR 2008/09

Mr Gwyn Jones, Honorary Treasurer, presented a report outlining the probable situation regarding Welsh Assembly Government grants for the financial year 2008/09.

Professor M. Wynn Thomas reported that he and the Director had attended a meeting with the Minister for Heritage regarding the shortfall in the budget and its likely effect on the work of the Council.

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. The Chairman thanked the councillors for their presence and support.

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

6 REPORTS ON DEPARTMENTAL ACTIVITIES

6.1 Children's Books Department

Lila Piette reported that the Children's Books Department had recently produced two catalogues. *Wales in English*, the catalogue of English-language materials, had been widely distributed to schools, libraries and bookshops. The second catalogue was the result of co-operation between the Council and Basic Skills Wales (formerly the Basic Skills Agency), which is now part of the Welsh Assembly Government. A series of awards had been arranged earlier in the year, and this catalogue lists the materials which were successful in various categories.

She added that preparations were in hand to celebrate the 25 anniversary of Clwb Sbondonics, the book club for 7–11 year olds.

6.2 Sales and Marketing

Dafydd Charles Jones stated that sales of books through the Distribution Centre up until the end of October showed an increase of 10.66%, even though the previous year had been a particularly successful one. He added that sales in October had been especially buoyant, mainly due to the fact that many of the Christmas books had arrived early. Every attempt will be made to maintain the level of sales over the coming months, particularly in the run-up to Christmas.

Reference was also made to a number of marketing schemes to draw attention to the Christmas books; publishers and booksellers were thanked for their support for the two supplements, *Gwledd y Nadolig* and *Books from Wales*, and the television advertisements currently being broadcast on S4C. Cambrensis and John Jones were thanked for their work promoting books in the press and media.

In the absence of Helgard Krause, Head of Sales and Marketing, Elwyn Jones referred to the success of the Council's stand at Frankfurt Book Fair, where 13 publishers were represented.

He also referred to the success of the Publishing Trade Awards ceremony, an occasion arranged jointly with the National Library.

6.3 Information Services

Mr Phil Davies was congratulated on his appointment as Head of the Information Services Department.

He thanked all the Council's departments for their assistance in ensuring that the information included on the Council's websites is correct and up-to-date, as well as the publishers for sending bibliographical details in electronic form. This service is invaluable to librarians, booksellers and the Council's sales and marketing team.

Side by side with developing the Books Council's internal system to process the information received, the use made of the information has also been transformed. The 'family' of websites now includes gwales/shop, gwales/libraries and gwales.com – all of which are dependent on the core information provided.

Phil Davies also added that another significant development is the process of transferring bibliographical details of books from Wales to the international bibliographical systems, such as Nielsen BookData.

He concluded his report by urging members to visit the www.gwales.com website to see the excellent selection of titles available.

7 PRESENTING THE FINANCIAL REPORT FOR 2006/07

The Honorary Treasurer, Mr W. Gwyn Jones, presented a detailed report on the 2006/07 accounts. Thanks were extended to Mr Arwyn Roderick and his staff for their painstaking work in preparing the figures, and to Llŷr James, Chartered Accountants, for auditing the accounts.

8 PROBABLE FINANCIAL SITUATION 2007/08 AND ESTIMATES 2008/09

The Treasurer presented the projections to members. He referred to the small increase received towards the Council's operational costs, but added that both the capital grant and the publishing grant had been frozen, leaving a deficiency in the expenditure balance-sheet as regards supporting all the services.

The report was approved.

9 APPOINTMENT OF AUDITORS TO AUDIT ACCOUNTS FOR 2007/08 AND 2008/09

Following the Treasurer's recommendation, members agreed to appoint Llŷr James, Chartered Accountants, to audit the accounts for the two years 2007/08 and 2008/09.

10 PRESENTING THE ANNUAL REPORT 2006/07

In presenting her report on the year's work, the Director said that it had been a difficult time in many ways, referring especially to illness among the staff, with two secretaries suffering long periods of ill-health. Although Anwen Jones's condition was improving, Heather Bastow died following a courageous battle. The Director thanked the staff for their willingness to be flexible and for helping one another in difficult times.

The Director stated that one fact which underlined the success of the Council's work during the whole year was the increase in book sales, with 10.6% increase in sales an excellent result. She referred to some of the reasons for this increase, citing specifically the £500,000 increase in the Welsh-language Publishing Grant over a period of three years. She thanked the publishers for rising to the challenge.

She also referred to the report of the Welsh Assembly's Culture Committee on Welsh Writing in English which had resulted in an increase of £250,000 in the English-language publishing grant towards specific schemes. She noted the important contribution of book shops in the latest developments – referring to the independent shops as the backbone of the industry in Wales, and at the same time emphasising the role of the chain stores – and congratulated Borders on opening a new branch in central Cardiff.

In conclusion, the Director stressed the importance of working in partnership with others in order to fulfil the Books Council's mission. She referred particularly to libraries and the education sector as core partners.

Mr Robat Arwyn thanked the Director and the staff for their efforts, adding that the Annual Report provides a comprehensive and excellent reflection of the whole range of the work of the Books Council.