

# WELSH BOOKS COUNCIL

---

## ***HALF YEARLY MEETING***

VENUE: Castell Brychan, Aberystwyth

DATE: 25 June 2004

PRESENT: Dr J. Lionel Madden (Chairman)

### Local Authorities

Councillor Meirick Ll. Davies (Denbighshire)  
Councillor Gareth Williams (Swansea)  
Councillor A. D. Hampton (Vale of Glamorgan)  
Councillor J. W. Turner (Torfaen)  
Councillor Mrs Dorothy M. J. James (Powys)  
Councillor Christopher Bithell (Flintshire)

### Chief Librarians

Ms Sue Johnson  
Mr Geraint James

### Estyn

Mr R. Alun Charles

### National Library of Wales

Dr Rhidian Griffiths

### Academi

Dr Huw Meirion Edwards

### Friends of the Welsh Books Council

Professor M. Wynn Thomas

### Council Panels

Mr Gareth Davies Jones (Publishing Grants Panel – Welsh-language)

### Honorary Secretary

Mr D. Geraint Lewis

### Co-opted Members

Dr Brynley F. Roberts  
Mr W. Gwyn Williams

### Staff

Miss Gwerfyl Pierce Jones (Director)  
Mr Elwyn Jones (Head of Administration and Public Relations)  
Mr Elgan Davies (Head of the Design Department)  
Mr D. Philip Davies (Head of the Marketing Department)  
Miss Menna Lloyd Williams (Head of the Children's Books Department)  
Mr Arwyn Roderick (Head of Finance, Business and Information Technology)  
Mr Dafydd Charles Jones (Distribution Centre Manager)  
Mr Richard Owen

Mrs Eleri Huws  
 Ms Lila Piette  
 Mrs Delyth Humphreys  
 Mr Dyfed Evans  
 Dr Kirsti Bohata  
 Ms Bridget Shine  
 Ms Shoned M. Jones

APOLOGIES: Councillors John Meirion Davies; Eirwyn Williams; Messrs Iolo M. Ll. Walters; John Valentine Williams; William Howells; John Rees Thomas; Rhys Bebb Jones; Alun P. Thomas; Milwyn Jarman; Alun Creunant Davies; Richard Houdmont; Gareth William Jones; Dewi Morris Jones; Mrs Mary Palmer; Mrs Catrin Pw Davies; Mrs Rona Aldrich.

## 1 CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

- 1.1 The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting and extended an especially cordial welcome to a new member of staff attending her first meeting, namely Dr Kirsti Bohata from the Publishing Grants Department.
- 1.2 Congratulations were extended to those Councillors who had been re-elected in the recent local elections and thanks given to those who had served on Council committees but who were no longer Councillors.

The Chairman referred specifically to the retirement of Gareth Williams as Vice Chairman, and paid him a special tribute for having represented local government on the Books Council since 1977, serving as Vice Chairman for seven years. Gareth Williams was presented with the gift of a book for his invaluable support over the years.

- 1.3 The Chairman presented an Executive Committee recommendation that a joint meeting of the Chief Officers' Panel and the Nominations Panel should be convened in order to consider names for the post of Vice Chairman. He noted that members of the Council were welcome to suggest nominations for consideration. A proposed name would be put forward at the next meeting of the Executive Committee to be confirmed by the full Council. This procedure was approved.
- 1.4 Mr Alun Creunant Davies and Emeritus Professor R. Geraint Gruffydd (former Chairman of the Welsh Books Council) were congratulated on being appointed Honorary Fellows of the University of Wales, Aberystwyth. Phil Davies, Head of the Books Council's Marketing Department, was congratulated on winning the Chair at the Bryngwenith Eisteddfod.
- 1.5 Sympathy was extended to two members of staff whose mothers had passed away, namely Ifana Savill from the Publishing Grants Department and Siriol Jones from the Distribution Centre.

Sympathy was extended to the family of Mr John Dudley Davies, a former member of staff, and also Mrs Eirlys Ffowc Elis on the death of Dr Islwyn Ffowc Elis who had maintained a close connection with the Books Council from the early days. It was noted that Professor M. Wynn Thomas would pay him a short tribute when reporting on the activities of the Friends of the Welsh Books Council.

Islwyn Ffowc Elis's family were thanked particularly for the chair and desk which had been donated in his memory. Dr Elis had won the Chair at Lewis's Eisteddfod in Liverpool in 1947, and it was subsequently the chair in which he sat whilst writing several of his novels, including *Cysgod y Cryman*.

## 2 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of the Annual Meeting, held on 5 December 2003, were confirmed.

## 3 MATTERS ARISING

### 3.1 Assembly Policy Review: Welsh Writing in English

The Director reported that the Culture Committee's report had by now been published and launched and that it was a most positive and constructive document. The Minister for Culture had already responded to it and had announced an additional sum of £250,000 for this year, in order to start on the work of implementing the recommendations. Funding would be channelled through the Books Council.

The Director thanked Professor Wynn Thomas for his support and guidance throughout the review process and also thanked Elwyn Jones and Kirsti Bohata for their contributions.

Professor Thomas noted that the report was far-reaching in its implications and observed that publishing in English could be transformed if the recommendations it contained were all implemented. He in turn wished to pay tribute to the Director and staff for their contribution to the review.

### 3.2 Joint Marketing Strategy

It was reported that the Joint Marketing Strategy had been costed and that the Books Council had submitted it to the Assembly on behalf of the Working Group.

The importance of the document was stressed and the need for extra resources in order to implement it.

### 3.3 Culturenet Cymru: Books from the Past

Richard Owen gave a report on the scheme noting that the site had now been launched and included nine books. He thanked Culturenet Cymru staff for adopting the scheme and it was hoped that it would develop through the cooperation of a number of partners, including the Books Council.

## 4 FRIENDS OF THE WELSH BOOKS COUNCIL

In the absence of Mr Alun Creunant Davies, Professor M. Wynn Thomas reported that membership of the Friends at the moment stood at 416, and he encouraged anyone wishing to join to ask for a membership form. He added that the next information pack would shortly be distributed to the Friends.

Professor Thomas referred to the great loss in the death of the author Islwyn Ffowc Elis who had been such a steadfast friend to the Books Council. He noted that the Friends had been able to recognise his contribution by bestowing on him the honour of being one of its three Honorary Presidents.

## 5 PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITIES

### 5.1 The Marketing Department

The Head of the Marketing Department presented a report on the Department's work and observed that the *Llyfrau'r Haf* supplement had already been produced and distributed in the *papurau bro*. 60,000 copies were printed this year, as a result of the success of preceding issues.

An increase was also noted in the Outreach Scheme figures for the year ending in March. Sales for the year totalled £167,067 compared to £131,813 in the previous year with 423 events being held compared to 380.

A catalogue entitled *Gwanwyn o Gyfrolau Gwych* had recently been published as part of the scheme and plans were proceeding to publish a catalogue of titles about Owain Glyndŵr for the National Eisteddfod at Newport.

The sale was reported to have been extremely successful this year with sales of £27,319 compared with £18,984 last year, and the publishers were thanked for their willingness to cooperate thereby ensuring its success.

Finally, he referred to the latest developments in connection with *gwales.com* and the subsequent improved service to booksellers as well as the public. As part of the campaign to enable the booksellers to benefit from the new technology, the Books Council had been able to offer specific grants to buy computer equipment as well as providing training for its use.

It was noted that the main changes for individuals included improved search methods and offering guidance and advice on selecting suitable books. Phil Davies urged members to visit the site.

### 5.2 Children's Books Department

Menna Lloyd Williams, reporting on the activities of the Children's Books Department, noted that Tudur Dylan Jones had been honoured with the title of Welsh-language Children's Poet Laureate for this year. The announcement had been made on stage at the Urdd Eisteddfod in Anglesey.

She also reported on the success of this year's book competitions with 33 teams competing in two competitions for Years 3/4 and Years 5/6 in the Welsh-language section. Aberystwyth Arts Centre was full to capacity and the children enjoyed listening to author T. Llew Jones.

The English-language book competitions were also an important development; six teams had participated this year.

## 6 PRESENTATIONS ON THE COUNCIL'S WORK

### .1 Welsh Writing in English – Kirsti Bohata

Dr Kirsti Bohata outlined the historical background to the development of Welsh Writing in English which had led to the establishment of a number of publishing houses and the literature grant system which supported them.

She also referred to the recent Policy Review by the Assembly's Culture Committee, and noted the importance of the recommendations to publishers, booksellers and librarians with regard to developing this important field.

Dr Bohata's main work during the coming months would be to try and implement those recommendations contained in the report which would ensure commissioning funds for authors, posts in the publishing houses and a marketing budget. She also referred to numerous challenges currently faced by the publishers as they strive to develop the field, but she was confident that, with the cooperation of all concerned, they would succeed. There had already been a degree of success with the announcement that WH Smith branches in Wales would be launching a 'Book of the Month' campaign. Dr Bohata also referred to the higher profile of Welsh authors in this year's Hay Festival and the success of the Book of the Year competition.

- .2 Promoting Books through the Schools Project – Lila Piette and Shoned M. Jones  
A presentation was given on the work of the Welsh Books Council's Schools Officers; with three officers working in the primary sector and a fourth person concentrating on the secondary sector.

Their work entailed visiting schools throughout Wales to exhibit books, advise teachers and take orders. The system enables orders to be supplied through a bookshop selected by the school.

Statistics relating to the work were then provided. It was noted that there had been a marked increase in orders from secondary schools during the last financial year, but that a number of factors accounted for the fact that a similar increase had not been possible in the primary sector.

Members of staff were thanked for their presentations and congratulated on all the work that they accomplish on behalf of the Welsh Books Council.