

WELSH BOOKS COUNCIL

HALF YEARLY MEETING

VENUE: Castell Brychan, Aberystwyth
DATE: 21 June 2007
PRESENT: Professor M. Wynn Thomas (Chairman)

Local Authorities

Councillor John Meirion Davies (Isle of Anglesey)
Councillor Christopher Bithell (Flintshire)
Councillor Dorothy M. J. James (Powys)
Councillor B. Towyn Evans (Ceredigion)
Councillor John M. Griffiths (Pembrokeshire)
Councillor Eirwyn Williams (Carmarthenshire)
Councillor Lynda G. Williams (Neath Port Talbot)

Vice-Chair

Mr Gareth Davies Jones

Chief Librarians

Mr Lawrence Rawsthorne
Mrs Siân E. Jones
Ms Gill John
Mr Dewi Thomas

Estyn

Mrs Ann Keane

Friends of the Welsh Books Council

Mr Tegwyn Jones
Dr Brynley F. Roberts

Council Panels

Mr David Barker

Honorary Secretary

Mr D. Geraint Lewis

Co-opted Members

Mr W. Gwyn Williams

Staff

Miss Gwerfyl Pierce Jones (Director)
Mr Elwyn Jones (Head of Administration and Public Relations)
Mr Sion Ilar (Senior Editorial Officer)
Mr D. Philip Davies (Information Services Coordinator)
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 Dyfed Evans
Dr Kirsti Bohata
Mrs Delyth Humphreys

Ms Lila Piette
Miss Emma Lloyd Davies
Mr Richard Owen
Mrs Karina Wyn Dafis

APOLOGIES: Councillors R. Arwel Pierce; Dilwyn O. Roberts; Morfudd Jones; Keith Morgan; Canon Steve Morgan; Nigel J. Gibbs; Mrs Margaret E. Davies; Ray Davies; Neil Lewis; Liz Hackett Pain; Robert H. Poole; Messrs. Milwyn Jarman; W. Gwyn Jones; P. Mark Williams; Iolo M. Ll. Walters; Alun P. Thomas; Rhys Bebb Jones; Robat Arwyn Jones; T. Hywel James; Lloyd Ellis; R. Arwel Jones; Ioan Kidd; Dr Rhidian Griffiths; Ms Tudfil Adams; Mrs Ann Keane; Mrs Eleri Huws; Ms Helgard Krause; Ms Wendy Morris.

1 CHAIRMAN'S BUSINESS

- 1.1 The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting and extended a special welcome to David Barker, who was attending his first meeting, in his role as Chairman of the Children's Books Panel.
- 1.2 The Chairman paid tribute to Catrin Puw Davies who had died suddenly on 14 April. Catrin had been a member of the Executive Committee and the Council, and a dedicated member of the Publishing Grants Panel. She had made a substantial contribution to the Books Council over many years. The Chairman referred to a letter from Catrin's husband which spoke of her commitment to the Council and the profound respect she had for its work.
- 1.3 The Committee wished Mr D. Geraint Lewis well as he approached retirement from his post as Assistant Director of Cultural Services for Ceredigion County Council. He was congratulated on the publication of his two recent titles: *Y Llyfr Enwau – Enwau'r Wlad* and *Geiriau Gorfoledd a Galar*.
- 1.4 The Committee also conveyed its best wishes to Mr Iolo Walters, the WJEC representative on the Executive Committee and the Council, on the occasion of his retirement.
- 1.5 Dr Kirsti Bohata was congratulated on her appointment as a lecturer in the English Department at the University of Wales Swansea; the Committee wished Eleri Huws a happy retirement; best wishes were conveyed to Sion Iar and his wife, who had recently adopted two young boys; Jane Hopkins was welcomed back to work following surgery; and Heather Bastow, too, was welcomed back after a long period of illness.

2 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

The minutes of the Annual Meeting, held on 29 November 2006 were confirmed.

3 MATTERS ARISING

- 3.1 Grants 2007/08
A paper had been tabled summarising the position regarding grants for 2007/08.
- 3.2 Correspondence re the late Alun Creunant Davies
The Chairman reported that the Chief Officers' Panel recommended using the bequest of £5,000 to commission a book on the history of the Books Council, for

publication in 2011, its half-centenary year. The family had given its assent to the proposal. Dr Brynley Roberts suggested that the proposed volume should also present something of the history of the Castell Brychan building. The Committee agreed that this would be appropriate.

3.3 Welsh Language Board: Welsh Language Scheme

Elwyn Jones reported that the Welsh Language Board had approved the Council's Language Scheme on 20 February 2007, after a period of public consultation.

3.4 Friends of the Books Council

Mr Tegwyn Jones, Chairman of the Friends of the Books Council, reported that the Friends' latest information pack was in preparation and would be distributed in July. He noted that the pack would contain a copy of the newsletter, *The Friend*, and he thanked Lyn Lewis Dafis for his help with this work.

He reported that membership of the Friends had reached 380 and that officers were always keen to attract new members.

4 REPORT ON DEPARTMENTAL ACTIVITIES

4.1 Children's Books

Menna Lloyd Williams, Head of the Children's Books Department, reported on the Department's work and drew attention to the following schemes:

- Tir na n-Og Awards
S4C's *Wedi 7* had dedicated an entire programme to the announcement of the Tir na n-Og award winners. The winners were honoured further at the CILIP annual conference dinner. A series of advertisements and a colourful poster had been produced to publicise the winning titles.
- The Mary Vaughan Jones Award
A special event had been held at Oriol Môn for the presentation of the Mary Vaughan Jones Award to Mair Wynn Hughes in recognition of her outstanding contribution, over many years, in the field of children's books. Anglesey Council was thanked for its cooperation.
- Basic Skills Awards
The awards were presented at a ceremony in Cardiff on 30 March 2007. This scheme is organised jointly with the Basic Skills Agency. A catalogue of the award-winning materials will be published shortly.
- Catalogues
It was noted that the 2007 *Catalogue of Children's Books and Educational Resources* had been published and distributed and that plans were in place to publish a new version of *Wales in English* for the autumn term.
- Spondonics Book Club
Preparations were in hand to celebrate the club's 25th birthday in 2008.

4.2 Sales and Marketing

Mr Dafydd Charles Jones, Manager of the Distribution Centre, noted that the increase in sales referred to in the Annual Meeting in November had continued, reaching 10.56% for the whole financial year. He added that a new financial year had begun and that sales had risen 2.38% by the end of May 2007, even though the previous year had been exceptionally successful.

He referred to a number of schemes which had been mounted to promote book sales, including the annual sale and collaboration with the T-hwnt bookshop, Carmarthen (to provide a stall at the Urdd Eisteddfod) and Pembertons bookshop (to sell books at the Hay Festival). He added that preparations were in hand for a stand at the Royal Welsh Show and the National Eisteddfod. He referred also to the *Llyfrau'r Haf* (Summer Books) supplement which had been published recently and would be distributed through the community newspapers (*papurau bro*).

In the absence of Helgard Krause, Elwyn Jones noted that the London Book Fair had been a great success and had been attended by a good number of Welsh publishers.

He noted also that a Literature in Wales stand had been organised at the Hay Festival in partnership with the Assembly Government, the Arts Council of Wales, the Academi and the National Library, and that the unit's location at the main entrance had added to its success. It had provided the opportunity to display and sell a wide selection of books from Wales as well as a venue for a variety of events.

He thanked the publishers and the booksellers once again for their support for the *Llyfrau'r Haf* supplement.

5 PRESENTATIONS

5.1 Welsh Book Trade Info

Mr Phil Davies gave a presentation on the content of the Welsh Book Trade Info website and noted that the creation of such a resource had been prioritised in the recommendations of the Joint Marketing Strategy. Although the Council had received no additional money to carry out this recommendation, it had been possible to fund the website from the Council's core budget.

Phil Davies explained that the website contained three elements: news from the book trade (which may also appear on the Council's other websites), useful lists of authors, translators, publishers and others, and a section offering advice about different aspects of the publishing world, such as legal deposit and publishing schedules.

Phil Davies thanked Tony Bianchi for his work on the content and noted that there would be an opportunity in due course to extend the scope of the information available on the site.

5.2 Library of Wales (Welsh Classics Series)

Kirsti Bohata gave a presentation on the Library of Wales series, which was supported by the Assembly Government. Nine titles had appeared, together with an educational pack designed for use in the classroom and intended to encourage teachers to introduce the books to their pupils. Copies of the series and the education pack had been presented to every school in Wales on behalf of the Minister of Culture. It was noted that more than 16,000 copies of titles in the series had been sold to date.

New titles in the series would appear in the autumn, including an anthology of sports writing and an anthology of poetry from 1900 to 2000. Plans were in place to bring out further titles in 2008.

5.3 Stori Sydyn/Quick Reads

Delyth Humphreys explained the background to the *Stori Sydyn/Quick Reads* campaign, which was the product of a partnership between the Books Council and the Basic Skills Agency. This series of short, lively publications was targeted at the 75,000 aspiring readers in Wales. Six new titles had appeared last year and eight others would be published in 2007. The latest titles had been launched in Cardiff Gaol on World Book Day in the presence of Jane Davidson, the Minister for Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, and Tanni Grey Thompson. The books had received further publicity through the Communities Reading campaign, which aimed to make them more accessible to their target readership, and focussed on this occasion on the towns of Caernarfon, Aberystwyth and Swansea. The response in these areas had been encouraging, with shops, offices and the local press all supporting the initiative.

The Chairman thanked the officers for their presentations and remarked that they provided a useful indicator of the breadth of the Council's activities and services.