



# Post Maes Pedr



NO /RHIF 11

MAWRTH/MARCH 2013

## St David's Day

On 1<sup>st</sup> March 23 members of the society attended the annual Dinner to celebrate *Dydd Gwyl Dewi Sant*. The venue was the Hampshire Hog where the manager (Nicki) had made a great effort with the decor to aid our celebrations. She had decorated the tables with daffodils and the centrepiece was a vase of leeks and daffodils. She had also made (big) (delicious) Dragon Shortbread biscuits for us to have with our coffee.



Before Dinner was served Grace was said in Welsh by Menna and in English by Sue (W). We were all sad to hear that our Chairman Stuart was unable to attend the dinner. However he had sent a St Davids Day message to let us know his thoughts were with us. His message was read by Ian. After we had completed our main course we were entertained by a string trio. Angharad, (Cello), Lucy and Isabel (Violin) had prepared a programme of welsh music for us to sing along to.



And sing we certainly did! Calon Lan, Cwm Rhondda, Ar Hyd y Nos and The Ashgrove were sung heartily by one and all. We were very fortunate to have such musical talent at our celebratory dinner.

Following dessert and coffee (and those biscuits!) we had readings of welsh poetry. Sue (H) read some of Glyn's winning entry in the Society's Eisteddfod in 1990. Chris read Y Gwccw by John Ceiriog Hughes; Irwen read Eifionydd by Robert Williams Parry; Carwyn read Bugeilio'r Gwenith Gwyn by Wil Hopkyn and Huw read a selection of verses from hymns and folk songs. In all, a very traditional St David's Day celebration, with music and poetry. A very big Thank You to Tony, for organising a splendid evening of entertainment.



## A History Lesson

Our guest speaker at the March meeting was Barry Baker. The title of his talk was "Britain's Roads – Traffic to the end of the Edwardian Age".



Throughout his presentation Barry used projected images and video clips to illustrate the main aspects of the topic.

The earliest roads were merely trackways used to move animals to high ground for grazing. The Romans created the first engineered roads and were so well built that many still exist today. From that time into the Medieval age roads were maintained by the Monasteries, The Manor Houses and the Church. When Henry VIII abolished the Monasteries the roads inevitably suffered. Their condition became so poor that they were virtually impassable during the winter months. With the increased use of horse drawn carts and wagons the wear and tear on the roads was considerably increased. Therefore Tolls were introduced to raise necessary funds for road maintenance. There was little improvement until drainage ditches were introduced in 1765.

Major names in road building were Telford and MacAdam. Telford built the A5 London to Holyhead road. He also introduced road furniture such as milestones, which still exist today. MacAdam ensured that road building materials were carefully selected. Stones were measured and weighed to ensure they were of a consistent size. With this attention to detail roads became effective and strong. When Stage coaches and Mail coaches came into use it was vital to have good roads. Stage coaches were drawn by teams of 6 horses. They carried 17 passengers, 6 inside and 11 on top. Travelling was often a frightening experience and a degree of bravery was required in order to travel.

Robbery was rife and the mail coach guards were armed with a Blunderbuss and 2 pistols.

In 1829 the first Steam Carriages were introduced. They were more cost effective than the traditional horse drawn carriages. These new coaches cost 9 shillings a day to run, while a team of horses cost 48 shillings. Steam carriages also did not damage the road surface as much as horses did.



A speed limit was introduced at 10 miles an hour and Road tax was also introduced at £10 a year. One person was required to walk in front of the vehicle with a red flag to warn other road users. In 1896 the red flag law was abolished and the speed limit was increased. Motor Cars came into use in the 1890's although roads had not improved a great deal in the intervening years. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century experiments with tar spreading would herald a real improvement in the condition of our roads.

Our ancestors would probably wonder why we motorists of today complain bitterly about the state of our roads. They would probably think our roads are excellent compared with what they had to endure.



*Congratulations to  
Tom & Joyce  
on their  
Golden Wedding Anniversary  
30<sup>th</sup> March 2013*