



Y Wladfa

At the September meeting Carwyn, Menna and Irwen shared with us their experiences of a wonderful trip to Patagonia. This is Carwyn's report of their visit.

We spent a few weeks earlier this year in Y Wladfa, Welsh Patagonia. Patagonia is a region of South America, part in Chile and part in Argentina. Politically Y Wladfa is known in Argentina as Chubut Province. Buenos Aires was our first port of call enabling us to catch a flight to Esquel SW in the foothills of the Andes. The pilot had difficulty landing the aircraft because of the wind, a constant companion in the region.



Capel Bethel and Gaucho, Trevelin

Nearby, Trevelin, a very small town, a village by our standards, was our first base. From here we visited the Alerces National Park named after trees thousands of years old. We were more interested in the way our country folk

came to inhabit this area and the continuing culture. Bethel is the Welsh Chapel with hymns being sung in Welsh and Spanish. The chapel and the primary school Ysgol Yr Andes share the same campus. The school has been built from donated funds and the Senedd sponsors a few teachers every year in Welsh schools in the province.



Patagonia Celtica & Puerto Madryn Ladies

There was a Celtic Festival in the nearby town of Esquel. There were dancers and singers from all over Argentina plus the folk group Plu from North Wales. This is an annual event to add to the Eisteddfodau which are also held in the province. For those who have read The Old Patagonian Express, there is a retired engine parked in the main street.



Pietra Parada, a volcanic plug.
A magnet for rock climbers

These two settlements are located in what was immediately named on sight - Cwm Hyfryd. The travellers who first saw the valley in 1885 thought it appropriate having travelled hundreds of kilometres through semi desert from the Atlantic side. Socially and politically the early settlers were way ahead of conditions in their home country. Women had the vote decades before Mrs Pankhurst forced such a measure. They also voted to allow this area of Patagonia to be ceded to Argentina rather than Chile.



The natural vegetation of much of semi-arid Chubut Province

From Cwm Hyfryd we followed the course of the Afon Camwy, aptly named after its many meanders, to the towns of Gaiman, Trelew and Puerto Madryn. In between is semi-desert with scrub vegetation, no trees. A geologist's paradise because rock structures may be easily seen since they are not covered by vegetation. The area of the valley around Gaiman may easily be

seen from space because it is a green diagonal rectangle representing the irrigated agricultural area. At ground level there are green fields with grazing herds of mainly Hereford and flocks of sheep and poplar trees for protection from the constant wind.

Gaiman is very Welsh, with tea shops and more Welsh flags than in Cardiff on international day. Speaking with relatives of the original descendants I was fascinated to hear their Welsh accents reflected the areas of Wales of their forebears. One lady told me she had visited Bedlinog during a visit to Wales. Her brother now lives near Aberystwyth. Some spoke English but with a Spanish accent.

Finally we reached Puerto Madryn to catch our flight to Buenos Aires. It was here in 1865 that the original settlers landed and the relics of their original habitation and stores are now protected as part of Argentina's historical development ... as are the Welsh chapels, like Moriah in Trelew which is the only one with a cemetery. Here, the grave stones of the original settlers are marked with bronze plaques.

As I have previously said, much of Chubut Province is semi desert and there must have been a tremendous PR campaign which induced the Mimosa settlers to come here and others in the following decades.

That, is another story.

Carwyn Hughes

Myfanwy

In September the society received a request for someone to read a verse of Myfanwy at a service to celebrate the life of Gwyneth Myfanwy Ingham. Gwyneth who was just 3 weeks short of her 97th birthday was very proud of her welsh heritage and the family wanted to reflect this in the service.

As I was the nearest member to The Oaks in Havant I volunteered to do the reading. As so often happens with us welsh folk, connections are made. I discovered that Gwyneth was from the Carmarthen area and had been raised in the next village to where my mother now lives.

Sue Hobday



Harvest Supper



We met in October for our traditional Harvest Supper. Needless to say, the table was laden with a splendid array of culinary delights. It was a very enjoyable evening where members were able to catch up with each other's news and enjoy a very tasty Harvest Supper.

The Aurora Borealis

The guest speaker at the November meeting was Charles Dixon. He is an expert on the Aurora Borealis and he gave us a very interesting talk on this phenomenon. He began by describing the early thoughts, myths and legends associated with the Aurora. 'Aurora borealis', the lights of the northern hemisphere, means 'dawn of the north'. 'Aurora australis' means 'dawn of the south'. In Roman myths, Aurora was the goddess of the dawn. Many cultural

groups have legends about the lights. In medieval times, the occurrences of auroral displays were seen as harbingers of war or famine. The Maori of New Zealand shared a belief with many northern people of Europe and North America that the lights were reflections from torches or campfires. The Menominee Indians of Wisconsin believed that the lights indicated the location of giants who were the spirits of great hunters and fishermen. The Inuit of Alaska believed that the lights were the spirits of the animals they hunted.

The bright dancing lights of the aurora are actually collisions between electrically charged particles from the sun that enter the earth's atmosphere. The lights are seen above the magnetic poles of the northern and southern hemispheres. They are known as 'Aurora borealis' in the north and 'Aurora australis' in the south.

Auroral displays appear in many colours although pale green and pink are the most common. Shades of red, yellow, green, blue, and violet have been reported. The lights appear in many forms from patches or scattered clouds of light to streamers, arcs, rippling curtains or shooting rays that light up the sky with an eerie glow.

Researchers have also discovered that auroral activity is cyclic, peaking roughly every 11 years. So, for those of you who have a hankering to see the Aurora you have plenty of time to plan your trip as the next peak period is expected around 2024.

Natter, Nosh and Noggin

The December meeting was of course our Christmas celebration. Morfydd was in charge of the proceedings and she led us through a programme of carols and readings in Welsh.



We followed the order of the booklet "Journey to Bethlehem" published by the Bible Society. Our carol singing was to the accompaniment of Trevor Elliot on his guitar and there was the option to sing in English or Welsh. All the old favourites were included: Oh come all ye Faithful, Away in A Manger and We Three Kings to name just a few.



Morfydd with our very own three Kings

After the last carol was sung it was time for the Natter, Nosh and Noggin. As to be expected the Nosh was a magnificent spread with a vast selection of savoury dishes and desserts to tuck into.

There was a collection with the money being shared between the Petersfield and Guildford Food Banks.

The Christmas mail was delivered and finally we wished each other a

***Nadolig Llawen a
Blwyddyn Newydd Dda.***



Stoke-on-Trent and District Welsh Society celebrated their 50th Anniversary in November. A request was made for congratulatory messages to be sent from other Welsh Societies. We managed to send two messages! The members of the Stoke Society were very grateful and they have sent a report of their celebratory dinner with a couple of photos. You will find this report on an attached page.