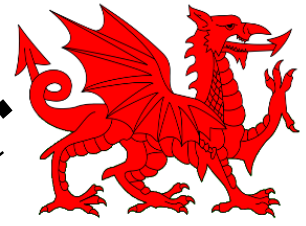


Post Maespedr



Rhif/No. 46

Ebrill/April 2024

Cymru o'r Gorfod – Wales from Space

Beverley started the meeting with some news items from Wales.

- Ben Lake the Plaid Cymru MP for Ceredigion has been raising awareness about the loss of jobs with the closure of Port Talbot steel works. He is supporting the workers who are facing redundancy and is urging Tata to reconsider closing the plants altogether, and keeping one furnace open, while they look for greener ways to make steel in Port Talbot. The closure of Port Talbot will have an impact on the whole of Wales
- Welsh farmers have been protesting about the Welsh Government's sustainable farming scheme. One of the suggestions is that farmers should commit to ensuring 10% of their land is used for trees and 10% for wildlife habitat. The proposals have sparked big protests and go-slow tractor demonstrations.
- With the resignation of Mark Drakeford as leader of the Senedd a leadership election took place for his replacement. The two candidates were Vaughan Gething and Jeremy Miles. Vaughan Gething won with 51.7% of the votes with the backing of the majority of the Unions.



Beverley then introduced Jeremy Thomas, our guest speaker for the evening, Jeremy began by explaining his Welsh credentials: he was born in Gorseinon which is near the Loughor estuary and 6 miles west of Swansea. Jeremy studied at Cardiff and Bangor University Colleges. He taught physics at Portsmouth Grammar School for many years before joining the Institute of Cosmology and Gravitation at Portsmouth University where he is an Outreach and Public Engagement Fellow. The title of his talk was "Wales from Space".

There is considerable evidence that prehistoric man had rituals and beliefs involving positioning monuments to align with the sun or moon at significant times. Stonehenge is a prime example of this.

Perhaps a lesser known structure is the Crick Round Barrow which is located near Caldicot in Monmouthshire. It is thought to be the only round-barrow in Wales. The site was excavated in the 1940s where two cup-marked boulders in the stone ring revealed that they had been astronomically aligned. The Crick Barrow has cup markings which align with Beltane/May Day, the start of summer and Lughnasadh(Gwyl/Awst) the start of Harvest.

Our ideas about the Solar System and beyond have developed over time. Humans have looked to the skies and observed the apparent movement and changes in the Sun, Moon and stars for thousands of years. People with knowledge of star positions, solar eclipses, and lunar cycles could create star maps, calendars and measure time. This was useful for farming and navigation. A number of Welsh people made significant contributions to the development of space exploration.

Sir William Lower: He was born in Cornwall but settled in South-West Wales. In 1607 he observed Halley's comet and made significant observations. With a telescope provided by Thomas Harriot he later made a number of observations of the moon. Similar observations were published by Galileo a few weeks later.

John Dilwyn Llewelyn: He was a gifted amateur scientist and a member of the Royal Institution of South Wales. He built an observatory in the grounds at Penllergare where he was able to pursue his interests in science, photography and astronomy. In 1887 he took some of the earliest known photographic images of the moon from his observatory.

Isaac Roberts: was a Welsh engineer and businessman from Denbeigh. He was best known for his work as an amateur astronomer. He was a pioneer in the field of Astrophotography as he photographed the Great Nebulae in 1887.

Arthur Mee: He was born in Aberdeen but the family moved to Llanelli. Mee was a journalist on The Western Mail. He was noted for his efforts in support of amateur astronomy and in 1895 he founded the Astronomical Society of Wales. The Mee crater on the moon is named in his honour.

Hugh Percy Wilkins: He was born in Carmarthen. He was a keen amateur astronomer and selenographer. He produced a detailed map of the moon in 1946 which was used by NASA to plan the moon landings in the 1960s. The Wilkins crater on the moon is named in his honour.

The work of these early astronomers was the foundation for further space exploration. The first photo of Earth from space was taken from V-2 launched in 1946. Sputnik, the first satellite was launched in 1957 by the Soviet Union. This was swiftly followed by Explorer 1 by the USA. The TIROS-1 spacecraft, launched on April 1, 1960 sent back the first television footage of weather patterns to be taken from space.

Today there are nearly 10,000 satellites in space being used for a variety of purposes. The main uses are:

- Communication: television, telephone, radio and internet.
- Navigation and mapping (Global Positioning System.)

- Weather forecasting: monitoring clouds, effects of pollution, ocean currents, changes in vegetation etc
- Scientific research.
- Earth observation.

Jeremy ended his talk with a quiz. We were shown 20 images of places in Wales (that had been photographed from space) and we had to identify them. Some were more recognisable than others but sadly nobody managed to get full marks.

Jeremy's final slide of the evening featured the well-known Welsh spaceman Morgan the Moon! According to Max Boyce he landed on the dark side.

In memory of John Fisher

John Fisher was a member of Petersfield Welsh Society from 1996 until 2000 when he and his wife Merle moved to Machynlleth and later to Caersws. John was born on 18 December 1936 in Gillingham, Kent. A career in the Navy brought him to Hampshire where he served as an engineering officer on HMS Britannia for two years. He then became a chief engineer on HMS Glamorgan.

John and Merle were members of Portsmouth Welsh Society before they moved to Petersfield in 1996. They had been married for 45 years when John passed away very suddenly and peacefully on 16th April 2024.

Petersfield Welsh Society send deepest sympathy to Merle and Izzy, Ian, Mark and Paul at this sad time.

Great Coastal Railway Journeys by Michael Portillo

Episodes 6-10 of the 3rd series (which is currently coming to the end of its run) covers the western coast of Wales from Cardigan Bay to Colwyn Bay. The series is available on iPlayer for 11 months.

Dates for the diary:

Thursday 20th June : Afternoon Tea at 2.45pm
at Old Thorns, Liphook. GU30 7PE
Cost: £18.95pp

Saturday 13th July : Barbecue at 12.30pm
at 51 Chalton Lane, Clanfield.