
THE HONOURABLE SOCIETY OF
CYMMRODORION

A CONCISE HISTORY
1751 – 2001

by

Emrys Jones and Dewi Watkin Powell



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The two-hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion inevitably aroused considerable interest in its long history. As part of the bicentenary celebrations of 1951, the Society had produced an account of the first two hundred years, written by R.T. Jenkins and Helen M. Ramage and published as volume fifty of *Y Cymmrodor*, a series of occasional studies in Welsh history. It was based largely on Mrs. Ramage's University of Wales MA thesis but reworked by R.T. Jenkins and heavily influenced by the research he was undertaking as editor of *Y Bywgraffiadur Cymreig*, published two years later. Though based on meticulous scholarship the history was written to meet the needs of the general reader, eschewing footnotes and references other than giving a succinct indication of sources. It is a fascinating volume, not likely to be superseded for a very long time.

The story has, however, been brought up to date by His Honour Judge Dewi Watkin Powell, who gave the Sir T.H. Parry-Williams memorial lecture at the National Eisteddfod of 2001 at Denbigh: 'Cared Doeth yr Encilion; Yr Hanner Canrif Ddiwethaf yn Hanes y Cymmrodorion'. This was published in the *Transactions* for that year (new series, volume 8, 2002). To combine the two histories in a new publication would have been ideal but costly; but to publish an English version of Dewi Watkin Powell's paper seemed necessary, to meet the needs of non-Welsh-speaking readership. It was thought that if a synopsis were prepared of the Jenkins and Ramage volume as a long introduction to an English version of Dewi Powell's paper, then a whole generation of readers would have the benefit of a concise history of the entire period from 1751 to the present time.

In preparing the 'concise' version of the Jenkins and Ramage history one important factor was kept in mind. R.T. Jenkins makes it clear in his Preface that the Society instructed the authors to set their history in the context of the story of the Welsh in London during the preceding two centuries. The Society has now published a book (Emrys Jones (ed.), *The Welsh in London, 1500-2000*, University of Wales Press, Cardiff, 2001) which deals with this background, and consequently the synopsis gives greater emphasis to those aspects which are directly related to the Society itself.

*I: A Concise History of the Society 1751-1951**

by Professor Emrys Jones, FBA

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The history of the Cymmrodorion Society is not a continuous one. Since 1751 three successive societies have borne that name, but their essential features have been the same because they were a response to the same circumstances; the influx of Welsh people into London and the nostalgia which brought some of them together to assert their Welshness. Whereas the majority of Welsh migrants merged effortlessly with their host society and were indifferent to their origins, some maintained their links with Wales and cultivated their own culture even in this foreign Babylon. They regrouped in societies to serve both their London community and their native land. The Cymmrodorion societies wore their leeks with a difference, transcending a natural sentimentalism in a deliberate effort to benefit Wales, and eventually playing a major role in forming Wales's first modern national institutions.

The links between Wales and London were established long before the organisation of societies. They were consolidated in Tudor times when London offered all those advantages which Wales lacked. Unlike Scotland, Wales did not have a capital city, and London was the goal for anyone involved in affairs of state, government, education, the professions, guilds and entrepreneurship; even Welsh books — including Bishop Morgan's Bible — had to be printed in London. Some of the strongest links were provided by transients, by drovers — as familiar with Smithfield as with Llanerchymedd or Llanymddyfri — by hosiers, and later by 'merched y gerddi', weeders who tended the market gardening of a burgeoning city.

The first formal organisation of Welsh people in the capital, like so many in an age of societies, was concerned with charity and the education of the poor. The Honourable and Loyal Society of Antient Britons was established in 1715, and has claims to be the parent of the Cymmrodorion. It emerged after this announcement in the London Gazette of February 12, 1714 (*1715, new style*), that 'on Tuesday the 1st. of March next, being St David's Day there will be prayers and a sermon preached in the Antient British language, by the Rev. Mr Geo. Lewis, a Native of the Principality of Wales.' That the Princess of Wales, Caroline of Anspach, had been born on March the first was an excellent reason for seeking royal patronage. The Prince of Wales became President, establishing a long and rewarding link. The sermon was followed by an extravagant dinner — which has remained an annual feature of London Welsh life.

* Based on *The History of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion 1751-1951*, by R. T. Jenkins and Helen M. Ramage. *Y Cymmrodor* Vol. L.

Profits from the dinner, together with collections, were the sources of charity. It was announced in 1716 that this would enable 'two Welsh boys to be put out to Apprentices to Trades'. The scheme was extended in 1717 and the upshot was the founding of the Welsh Charity School 'for the benefit of children of Welsh parentage within the City of London and the Liberties of Westminster'. From its first location in Sheer Lane it moved to a new building in Clerkenwell Green in 1738, to much larger premises in Gray's Inn Road in 1772 and finally to Ashford in Middlesex in 1857. Girls had been admitted from 1768. The Clerkenwell building still exists (it is now the Karl Marx Library); the Ashford School became a Girls' School in 1882 and is now known as the St David's School. When the Cymmrodorion Society was founded in 1751, it was quite clear that it was in part a revival of the Antient Britons, and the same men were involved in both societies. Richard Morris, for example, was Steward of the Antient Britons as early as 1728.

This was the social scene in London when the Society was created, but its genesis is in part the story of the brothers Morris of Anglesey. Morris Prichard Morris (b. 1674) of Llanfihangel Tre'r-Beirdd, a carpenter and cooper but with some education and good connections, had four sons. The youngest, John (b. 1706) joined the navy and was killed in action in 1740. William Morris (1705-63) became Controller of Customs at Holyhead, but he was an ardent naturalist whose researches were the basis of Hugh Davies' *Welsh Botany* (1813). He rarely left Anglesey but was deeply involved in the correspondence, which tied him to his brothers Richard and Lewis.

Richard Morris (1702-78) came to London in 1721, and was truly a London Welshman for fifty-seven years, returning to Anglesey once only. He was the 'Father of the Cymmrodorion' who had been deeply immersed in the Society of Antient Britons. Richard was an accountant who eventually became a Chief Clerk in the Navy Office on a salary of £100 and the privilege of calling himself 'Esquire'. But he had always dabbled in Welsh literature and was involved in the publishing of Welsh books, correcting the new SPCK edition of the Welsh bible and prayer book; he later collected many Welsh books and manuscripts which he deposited in the Welsh Charity School and which became the basis of the Cymmrodorion Society library. Many of these found their way to the British Museum, though some followed the school itself and are now in Ashford.

But the outstanding genius in the Morris family was Lewis (1701-1765). He began life as a surveyor in Anglesey, and was commissioned to survey the coasts of Wales, a work which was published in 1748. Later he became involved in mining in Cardiganshire. He spent several long periods in London, in 1753, 1754, 1755 and 1756-8, and certainly enlivened the new society with his mercurial personality. William, Richard and Lewis had an intense interest in poetry, in particular the 'strict' measures, so in addition to a 'classical' output they were collectors of traditional verse, transcript volumes of which are now in the British Library, and were determined to rehabilitate the Welsh lan-

guage. Their interests were paramount to the programme of the Cymmrodorion Society, and it was Lewis Morris' authority that gave the Society its status in Wales, while Richard's enthusiasm generated its success in London.

That Lewis Morris thought of the Cymmrodorion as a learned society suggests to some that he saw it as an alternative to the Royal Society, of which he may have solicited a Fellowship from Dr. William Jones, the renowned mathematician — also from Llanfihangel Tre'r-Beirdd. Richard saw the society as an association of the Welsh in London and that it had other aims. Unity and brotherhood ('undeb a brawdgarwch') were high on the list and consequently the charitable aims, shared with the Antient Britons, were important. So was conviviality. No society entered with more enthusiasm into the tavern and coffee-shop society of late eighteenth-century London. The Society was born in the London Stone Tavern and nurtured in the Salutation Inn in Paternoster Row, then the Half-Moon in Cheapside, the Queen's Arms in St. Paul's Churchyard and so on... It was Lewis who invented the name, a form of 'cynfrodorion' (aborigines), a throw-back to the original people of Britain, and having the double 'm' which has persisted to this day. He also produced the Rules of 1753 and the Constitution of 1755 ('Gosodegeithau' must have been a very difficult word to pronounce at the end of a typical convivial evening!) The President to his death in 1779, was Richard Morris, succeeded by Sir Watcyn Lewes, Lord Mayor in 1780, and former treasurer of the Charity School. But there was also a Chief President (Penllywydd), William Vaughan of Corsygedol, a distinguished member of the Welsh squirearchy and an MP, who was succeeded in 1768 by Sir Watcyn Williams Wynn, the fourth baronet, a vice-president of the Antient Britons, a generous donor to the Welsh School and a well known patron of the arts and member of the dilettante society of the capital. A touch of the aristocratic elite was to be a continuing element in the society's history.

Admission to the society was by proposal and ballot and a subscription of 10/6. By 1759 there were 168 members and by 1778, 228, plus 136 corresponding members. Membership lists include the names of many prominent people. Richard notes that 'many great men are joining, such as Watcyn Williams Wynn, Lord Bulkeley, Lord Grosvenor, Lord Paget, Sir Hugh Williams, John Pugh Pryse of Gogerddan etc. etc. and if God give me life, I doubt not that I shall see all the aristocrats of Wales among us'. In spite of this snobbishness the rank and file reveal forty trades, although Lewis made every effort to hide this — 'in the decent obscurity of an unlearned language' — by translating them into Welsh; 'For God's sake, don't put down weaver, tinker, cooper, but let their titles be disguised as much as possible, that every English fool may not have room to laugh in his sleeve and say, "Such a society indeed!"' The corresponding members were of three classes: eminent English antiquarians and poets, such as Gray, Shenstone, Willis and Panton; Welsh landowners of substance; and men of letters in Wales, such as Thomas Pennant, Goronwy Owen and Evan Evans.

The society met on the first Wednesday of every month, from 8 to 11 in spring and summer, and 7 to 10 in autumn and winter. But many meetings went on into the small hours, discussions — mainly in English — poetry and turbulent talk giving way to hard drinking. In spite of their enthusiasm for collecting MSS and an avowal to publish as much as possible, little saw the light of day. The Prayer Book of 1770 was Richard's own contribution and Pennant's *British Zoology* (1776), although under the Society's imprint, had little to do with the Cymmrodorion. The efforts to safeguard the Welsh literary heritage were taken on subsequently by the Gwyneddigion Society, though the impetus owed much to the members of the Cymmrodorion. *Blodeu-gerdd Cymry*, printed in Shrewsbury, did appear in 1759, and *Diddanwch Teuluaid*, an anthology of contemporary poetry, was published in 1763, and was indeed a landmark in the literature. In the 1770s medals were offered for poetry competitions, one for the 'awdl' and one for the 'prydddest', the basis of a tradition in the eisteddfod of the award of a chair and a crown.

There were times when the Society took up the cudgel for causes in Wales, for example their support of the cause in Trefdraeth and Llangwyfan in 1773, when the appointed priest could not speak Welsh. Their efforts ensured that incumbents in such parishes should be Welsh-speaking.

There is no single reason why such an active society should have been suspended, yet it was dissolved in 1787, by which time its membership was only 70. The contributory factors may have been partly financial, with insolvency looming, partly the lack of inspired leadership which Richard had given until his death, and mainly the growth of the Gwyneddigion Society, established in 1770, which although it included so many members of the Cymmrodorion, infused a new set of ideals and new enthusiasm among the London Welsh. The Cymmrodorion Society's achievement had been that it had created a centre of corporate life for the London Welsh; indeed it was the only manifestation of Welsh identity in the capital. Its aims and standards were such that the gentry, in Wales and in London, thought it necessary to be associated with it and many of lesser status were proud to be a part of it. The Society's social and philanthropic achievements were considerable, and it was platform for future activities. It was a society that counted.

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The rebirth of the Cymmrodorion Society in 1820 was in response to the growth of Cambrian Societies in Wales. These were founded by a circle of clergymen, minor literati concerned with promoting the Welsh language through eisteddfodau: W.J. Rees (1772-1855), John Jenkins (1770-1829), Walter Davies (Gwallter Mechain, 1761-1849) and others, supported by the Bishop of St. David's, Dr Thomas Burgess (1756-1837). The attitude of the episcopal church contrasted sharply with current nonconformist views that poetry and music were frivolous vanities to be avoided at all costs. Even the

harp was seen as part of a tavern culture and the editor of *Seren Gomer*, reporting on the Carmarthen eisteddfod of 1819, was pleasantly surprised that it was 'held in a seemly and highly commendable way. The presence of the harp was not a sign of licentiousness'.

The establishment of the Dyfed Cambrian Society (1818) was followed by Gwynedd (1819), Powys (1819) and Gwent (1821). Dyfed's eisteddfod was held in 1819 in the presence of Iolo Morganwg and boasted the first Gorsedd meeting in Wales. The four provincial societies, however, felt the need for a co-ordinating committee and, as many of their officers were MPs, London was the obvious venue. At a meeting in Lord Dynevor's town house it was decided that the Cymmrodorion Society should be re-established for this purpose; and on June 24, 1820, at a meeting in the Freemason's Tavern the new society was born — the Cymmrodorion Society or the Cambrian Institution. It met four needs: the desirability of a Welsh literary society in London; to revive the society of 1751; to connect with the Cambrian societies in Wales and be 'a point of union between such societies'; to 'preserve and illustrate the ancient remains of Welsh literature'. The last was the paramount aim. By 1824 the society had 108 members and 32 honorary members, including eminent writers in English such as Walter Scott and Robert Southey. The President was Sir Watcyn Williams Wynn (1772-1840), and its officials were drawn mainly from the existing Gwyneddigion Society. The first secretary was J. Humphreys Parry (1787-1825), who edited the first volume of the *Transactions* in 1822.

The life of the revived society was brief and often contentious. The eisteddfod initiative in Wales soon faltered, partly over funding. A truly national eisteddfod was still decades away. More divisive was the society's adoption of William Owen Pughe's idiosyncratic orthography, resolutely opposed in Wales. The London committee was also attacked for the increasing place given to music — and the harp! — in eisteddfodau; although this attracted the nobility, it distracted the clerical literati who saw the event degenerating into concerts for the upper class to the accompaniment of increasing anglicisation.

By 1827 the weekly meetings of the Cymmrodorion were declining, although in the anniversary meeting of 1830 they could still muster over 600 to a business meeting in the morning, an 'eisteddfod' in the afternoon and a dinner in the evening. But however popular the music — now often with an international flavour, such 'Mr. Piozzi on the French horn' — the original aims of the society were being lost.

On the other hand poetry and essay writing were encouraged by the award of Flaxman-designed medals, of which thirty were awarded, and an annual prize was given in grammar schools in Wales for the best essay in Welsh. Books and manuscripts were collected — 'which may be a valuable foundation for a national library'. Most important by far was the acquisition of a hundred volumes of the manuscripts of 'Owain Myfyr', the *Myvyrian Archaeology*. Two volumes of *Transactions* were published, and in 1833 Robert Williams produced his biographical sketches of eminent Welshmen, of which an

English version was published in 1836, and enlarged in 1852. The works of Lewis Glyn Cothi were also published by the society in 1836. Links were established with the Society of Antiquaries in France leading eventually to Thomas Price's translation of the Bible into Breton. Members of the society had also been keen to establish a Welsh church in London, and this they realised in 1843 when they acquired a church in Ely Place, Holborn.

The last reference to the second Cymmrodorion Society is in 1837, in *Seren Gomer*. Possibly because of dearth of leadership the age of societies was over. The Gwyneddigion disappeared in 1837, though the Cymreigyddion hung on until 1855. London life had changed. Conviviality was a thing of the past. Taverns gave way to chapels. The society's motto 'Cared doeth yr encilion' had long replaced 'undeb a brawdgarwch'. A paper given in 1843, the year of the dissolution of the second society, by Hugh Owen on Welsh education indicates a swing to the social problems of Wales. These, fifty years later, were to be central to the concerns of the next Cymmrodorion Society.

(iii)

The existence and success of the first Cymmrodorion Society stimulated the creation of other societies in the second half of the eighteenth century, the membership so overlapping that some mention of their history helps in understanding the parent society. The Gwyneddigion, founded in 1770, was not, as the name suggests, aimed exclusively at Northwalians. Rather it reflected the feeling among many that there should be less involvement with the gentry, more on the common man and certainly more emphasis on literature and music; singing to the harp was a necessary ingredient. That there was no hostility between the societies is clear from the fact that the founders, Owen Jones and Robert Hughes, were respectively assistant secretary and librarian of the Cymmrodorion.

Owen Jones, or Owain Myfyr (1741-1814) was a Denbighshire man who came to London in 1765, became a furrier and was subsequently a business man of considerable means. He reigned supreme over the Welsh company which met regularly at The Bull in Walbrook Street, an inn which became the spiritual home of the Gwyneddigion and a major centre of literary activity. He was a most generous patron who organised the collecting of old Welsh manuscripts which he published as the *Myvyrian Archaeology*, and which cost him £1000. He was the new society's first president. The most colourful member of the Bull's company was David Samwel (Dafydd Ddu Feddyg, 1751-1798), a former surgeon on Cook's last voyage, and described as 'a clever, whimsical genius'. John Jones (Jac Glan y Gors, 1767-1821) was another habitué, the bohemian proprietor of the King's Head and admired radical. Later William Owen Pughe (1759-1835) and W.D. Leathart were very active, the latter publishing a history of the Gwyneddigion in 1831. Pughe edited much of Owain Myfyr's collection, and he also published a Welsh dictionary (1793-1803) as

well as *The Cambrian Bibliography* (1803) and a translation of *Paradise Lost* (1819), but is best remembered for his eccentric orthography of the Welsh language. Iolo Morganwg (Edward Williams, 1746-1826) who invented the Gorsedd was another of the inner circle, which also included Edward Jones (1752-1825), harpist to the Prince of Wales.

When the Cymmrodorion ceased, Welsh literary activity focused on the Gwyneddigion. It was Welsh speaking, encouraged singing and was more 'gwerinol' than its predecessor. 'Members assemble in amity for mutual delight and further to uphold the honour of their country and cherish its history, poetry and language'. Less highbrow than the Cymmrodorion, indeed 'unashamedly merry' at times, it scorned aristocrats and was anticlerical. Its members revelled in the freedom of the capital, particularly from the 'oppression' of Methodism, and courted the radicalism of the time. Nevertheless they upheld social reform in Wales, and were good stewards of its literary heritage. It was Iolo Morganwg who, in 1792, organised the first gorsedd - 'The Throne of the Bards of the Isles of Britain', on Primrose Hill.

The Gwyneddigion waxed and waned through the first three decades of the nineteenth century before formally disbanding in 1843. The Cymreigyddion held their ground a little longer. They were formed in 1795, and focused their activities more specifically on the Welsh language. In its heyday the society met every Thursday in one of the many city taverns. Their modest entrance fee, and absence of subscription, suggests an appeal to the masses. When literary societies began to proliferate in early nineteenth-century Wales, the title Cymreigyddion was more attractive than Cymmrodorion. Their activities emphasised conviviality and song, which only gradually gave way to a more serious and sober approach as the century progressed. The Welsh language was given priority and the chapel replaced the tavern as a meeting place. Respectability had arrived. There was even an attempt at forbidding smoking in their meetings. The Welsh now settled down to a compromise between light hearted tavern society and the seriousness of the chapel, but by mid-century there were no general societies - until the advent of the third Cymmrodorion.

(iv)

The London Welsh in the mid-nineteenth century were becoming increasingly aware of the need to safeguard their culture and to promote the well-being of the people of Wales. Hugh Owen was doing much on the educational front, being largely responsible for a new training college in Bangor (1862) and forming the committee which sponsored a university college at Aberystwyth in 1872. Several new initiatives were searching for some kind of co-ordination; an antiquarian society founded at the Mold eisteddfod of 1873, Urdd y Ford Gron, supported by Ceiriog to foster music and literature, a South Wales Choral Union. By 1873 Gohebydd (John Griffith, 1821-77) was calling for an organisation to unite such movements, suggesting that London was the

best centre. He, Hugh Owen, Brinley Richards (1817-85), Director of the Royal Academy of Music, and Stephen Evans (1818-1905), a warehouseman, met in London to draw up the rules and formally arrange a 'new' society. On November 10, 1873 fifteen of thirty people invited, met in the Freemason's Tavern and founded the third Cymmrodorion Society. This group became the first council, and as personalities and leadership were paramount, it is worth recalling who they were. Hugh Owen, Chief Clerk of the Poor Law Commission was steeped in educational reform. Gohebydd, who had come to London to assist Owen in setting up the British Schools, was a brilliant journalist who brought Parliamentary proceedings to the pages of *Y Faner*, and was dedicated to social reform. Stephen Evans was a warehouseman, steeped in eisteddfodic tradition and chairman of the council until his death. Robert Jones (1810-79), incumbent of Rotherhithe for thirty-seven years, was an outstanding Welsh scholar, later editor of *Y Cymmrodor* and of Salesbury's English-Welsh *Dictionary*. John Puleston (later Sir John, 1830-1908), later MP for Devonport, who became treasurer of the society; J.R. Phillips (1844-87), historian and stipendiary magistrate for West Ham; William Jones (Gwrgant, 1803-86), the sole survivor of the second Cymmrodorion; the Rev. Evan Jones (d. 1903) the incumbent of the Welsh church in Ely Place; Brinley Richards (1817-85), Director of the Royal Academy of Music and collector of Welsh folk song; R.G. Williams QC, B.T. Williams, QC, MP for Carmarthen 1878-81 and then a judge of Glamorgan County Courts; Morgan Lloyd QC (1822-1893), M.P. for Beaumaris and later Anglesey and the author of books on the law; Ellis Jones and Erasmus Jones, two prominent business men; and finally William Davies (Mynorydd, 1828-1901) a sculptor. Though not recorded (Sir) Thomas Marchant Williams (1845-1914), later a stipendiary magistrate for Merthyr, was present to take notes. It is a formidable list, covering business, parliament, law, scholarship, music and art.

In subsequent years many men of eminence and leaders of the Welsh community would look upon the Cymmrodorion as an outlet for their desire to serve the people of Wales. Officers in the pre-1914 period included Sir John Rhys, principal of Jesus College Oxford, Sir D. Brynmor Jones, the eminent lawyer-historian, Dr Henry Owen, Lord Aberdare, the 'Grand Old Man of Welsh Education' and first Chancellor of the University, Sir Isambard Owen, Dean of St. George's medical school and Deputy Chancellor of the University, Sir John Williams, court physician and founder of the National Library of Wales and, above all, Sir Vincent Evans, accountant and journalist, who moulded the society into the supreme Welsh literary society and was responsible for the scholarly output of the *Transactions*, *Y Cymmrodor* and the *Cymmrodorion Record Series*.

The achievements of the third Cymmrodorion up to the second centenary in 1951 were outstanding and varied, reflecting the talent that existed in the Welsh community in London. They focused particularly on the eisteddfod, education, the Welsh language, national institutions and on producing a body

of scholarly work in history and literature. The new society soon took up and expanded the aims of the second society in promoting the eisteddfod. It strove for a national institution. In Wales itself there were two factions with very differing views, much to the dismay of those who wished to see the eisteddfod prosper. There was a conservative element, mainly the poets, concerned with maintaining their prestige; and the social reformers, who saw the eisteddfod as an institution for furthering educational reform. They had previously come together in an Eisteddfod Council, on which Hugh Owen, Gohebydd and Robert Jones served, but this was dissolved in 1868. In a paper in 1880 Hugh Owen argued for a new, permanent body which emerged as the National Eisteddfod Association. This introduced the north-south alternation of the eisteddfod, promoted the publication of results and supported the part played by the Gorsedd. It became the Council of the National Eisteddfod in 1937. Much of the initiative had been Cymmrodorion-led, and this resulted in its being much better-known in Wales.

Educational reform through the eisteddfod was still the society's central aim, and to this end they acquired a Cymmrodorion Section in 1880. But it was Vincent Evans, in London, who led the reform movement, and the society became a forum for current thought on the matter. Marchant Williams, an inspector of schools in London at that time, had already read a paper to the society in 1877 on Welsh educational needs, which led to extensive discussion. At the 1883 Section meeting considerable time was given to discussing intermediate education, and in the following year the society presented a memorandum to the Committee of Council on Education at Whitehall; there was no response. The 1887 Section meeting was devoted to the future of educational systems in Wales as a result of which a conference was convened in 1888 on elementary, secondary and higher education. Sir John Rhys was in the chair. Their resolve that Wales' first need was for an efficient intermediate school system led to a Bill for Intermediate Education in 1889. The Cymmrodorion also championed education for girls. In 1880 only three of the thirty endowed grammar schools were for girls, and several Section meetings had argued for change. It was the 1889 Act that eventually gave girls equal footing in secondary education.

Meanwhile the efforts at establishing the Intermediate Education Bill had impeded the efforts to found the University of Wales. Although discussions, under the guidance of Viriamu Jones, had been carried on since 1877, it was 1888 before real changes were established as the need for a University organisation became clear. Eventually the efforts were rewarded, and a University charter was granted to Wales in 1893.

The Education Act of 1889 had no provision for the Welsh language. Paradoxically it could be said that the problem on the educational side was a deficiency in English, particularly if the benefits of education were seen as material advancement. There was still the need to find time for Welsh teaching in the national curriculum. A paper of 1882 advocated more English, but

this would be at the expense of Welsh unless, it was argued, Welsh were used to teach English! The discussion now focused on bilingualism, a cause championed by Dan Isaac Davies. A questionnaire of 1886 on the desirability of teaching Welsh as a subject showed a small majority in favour, though in the anglicised areas of Wales it gained little support because it had no commercial value. At a public meeting in Cardiff in 1886 thanks were 'tendered to the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion for their thorough enquiry into the advisability of introducing Welsh into the course of elementary education in Wales, and for their excellent report'. A new society was set up 'in association with the Honourable Society' which was formally established in 1899 as 'Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg'. There was now a call for bilingual school books and this brought to light the need for other reforms, including the need to revise the orthography of the language; this duly followed in 1928.

The creation of a national library was an idea that persisted in the Cymmrodorion, and one which had been discussed in the Mold eisteddfod of 1873 when it was linked with the new university college in Aberystwyth which was then beginning to collect books and manuscripts. In 1895 the Cymmrodorion also discussed the issue of a national natural history museum. A parliamentary committee of 1903 endorsed the idea of a centralised library, which also had a circulating loan collection. This was opposed by the Cymmrodorion who called for the committee's reconvening and championed instead the setting up of two institutions in a scheme drawn up by Isambard Owen. The nucleus of a library was held by the Cymmrodorion in the Welsh charity school, although the valuable manuscripts were already deposited in the British Museum, and this was moved to Aberystwyth in 1925.

The Society's part was critical in establishing both the National Library and National Museum, by the activities of their officers and leaders but particularly by their ability to organise public discussion, forums, learned papers and deputations. They used the same techniques for other new institutions. A Section discussion would kindle interest, a committee or conference was convened, and a new association was created. So began the Folk Song Society (1906), the Welsh Bibliographical Society (1907) and the Council for the Preservation of Rural Wales (1927).

The second Cymmrodorion had awarded medals for literary works of merit, and Gohebydd was keen to renew the practice; but after prolonged discussion it was decided to confer a medal as a 'recognition of distinguished service rendered to Wales in connection with literature, science and art'. It has been described as 'a literary canonisation', and the first recipient, in 1882, was the Rev. William Rees – Gwilym Hiraethog. (R.T. Jenkins himself was the thirty-second recipient, in 1953.)

From its inception the third society laid great emphasis upon its publications and has produced some of the most valuable contributions to Welsh scholarship in all its aspects. It was Robert Jones, in 1875, who proposed that the Society's journal should be known as *Y Cymmrodor*, a half yearly publi-

cation with one section reporting papers and another devoted to printing valuable MSS and a third to reprinting rare works. Due to the imbalance of material the scheme failed in 1884, and nine years later Vincent Evans organised the separate issues of the three sections. Henceforth papers would appear in the *Transactions*, occasional substantial contributions would be in the *Cymmrodor* series, and manuscript publications in the *Cymmrodorion Record Series*. For fifty years the main responsibility for all series fell on Vincent Evans.

Papers in the *Transactions* cover a wide range of topics but are predominantly historical, and have brought to light the vast sources of the Record Office, including much on the laws of Wales. Religious topics do not feature. More recently literature has gained a much more prominent place and many of the papers have been in Welsh. The *Cymmrodorion Record Series* has been an outlet for original research in Welsh history, antiquities and literature and the valuable republishing of rare documents which would normally appeal to few; they include the works of Gildas, *The Ruthin Court Rolls*, *The First Extent of Bromfield and Yale* (1315), *The Register of the Council of Marches in Wales* (1569-1591), George Owen's *Penbrokeshire* (1603) and *A Catalogue of MSS relating to Wales in the British Museum*.

The third *Cymmrodorion's* history can be thought of as having two phases, the first associated largely with Hugh Owen and his ideas, the second with Vincent Evans. Hugh Owen's inspiration was originating and stimulating movements for the good of Wales, mainly in education but in most aspects of Welsh culture. His ideas had a tremendous effect on the *eisteddfod*, on schools, colleges and the university, and on the founding of the National Library and National Museum. Vincent Evans's monument are the serried ranks of Society publications, like himself, massive and imperious. There can hardly be a scholar or man of letters in Wales today who is not indebted to the Society for publishing some of their work — not a few can testify that the Society was his first patron.

But Vincent Evans to a greater degree than most also cherished the tradition of conviviality. The society was still to be the predominant meeting-place of the Welshman in Town. Like Lewis Morris and Owain Myfyr before him he was a gregarious man who relished the social aspects of the *Cymmrodorion*. With his death and the advent of the second world war there were changes. The direction of the *eisteddfod*, for example, passed to a newly constituted Council. Nevertheless all aspects of the society's activities flourished, and its membership was in excess of 2000 in the 1950's.

The healthy state of the Society as it entered its third century was largely due to the fact that its affairs were now in the hands of another outstanding secretary, John Cecil-Williams (1892-1964). Succeeding Vincent Evans in 1934 he immersed himself in forwarding the Society's influence in Welsh affairs and in ensuring its contribution to Welsh scholarship. He boosted membership seven-fold and made it better-known in the United States. He was

also the major driving force behind the Society's major project of this period, *Y Bywgraffiadur Cymreig hyd 1940*. Initiated, as in so many cases at the Eisteddfod (Cardiff, 1938), by Sir J. E. Lloyd, who became the first editor, its compilation was taken over by R. T. Jenkins in 1947: and it made a triumphal appearance in 1953. It was followed in 1959 by the English version, *The Dictionary of Welsh Biography down to 1940*. The production of subsequent volumes belongs to the last half century of the Society's history, but we continue to be in the debt of Sir John Cecil-Williams, one of the most eminent London Welshmen of the twentieth century. He bridged the pre-war and the post-war periods and in a way the bicentenary celebrations of 1951 were an acknowledgement of his own success and a tribute to his contribution to the Society.

Although steadfastly a London Society, by mid-century an increasing number of members came from Wales, including one in four of the Council. Meetings in Wales were becoming more frequent, and the Society's motto, 'Cared doeth yr encilion', was applicable to the most remote villages of Wales. The third Cymmrodorion, phoenix-like, had arisen from its own ashes. Far surpassing the span of its predecessors it entered its new half-century full of vigour. The writers of the authorised history ended their task with the salutation 'esto perpetua', and the Society's progress in the next fifty years justified their faith.

II: *The Honourable Society 1951-2001**

by His Honour Dewi Watkin Powell, MA, LL.D

The relationship between the Society and the National Eisteddfod is, perhaps, closer than is generally realised. It is well worth noting. Those who took part in resurrecting the Society in 1873 were also among those who in the same year planted the seed of what has grown to be the Court of the modern National Eisteddfod. The two institutions have a common parentage. It is not surprising therefore that the traditional annual lecture under the auspices of Honourable Society at the Eisteddfod started in 1873 and has lasted until this very day – but with one difference. In 1989 the Eisteddfod lecture was re-baptised as the Sir Thomas Parry-Williams Memorial Lecture to whose memory the National Eisteddfod, the Honourable Society and the whole nation are deeply indebted. It is most appropriate in these circumstances that in celebrating its quarter millennium, the Society should have the honour of presenting the Chair in this year's Eisteddfod.

A word about the title of the lecture. Should it be asked whether the Society has cherished antiquities in accordance with its motto, the answer, so far as the last fifty years are concerned, is 'Yes and No'. The Honourable Society's motto *Cared doeth yr encilion* which was adopted in 1820, stresses its character as a learned society because to its devotees at that time the term '*encilion*' meant antiquities and ancient manuscripts. It is the oldest surviving Welsh learned Society but what makes it unique is its wider vision, in the context of Wales, in including activities with which learned societies are not usually concerned. What this means is that, when the need arises, it has proved to be an effective means of bringing pressure to bear on public authorities. It is a reminder of the Society's roots in the eighteenth century when it sought to encourage the interest of its members in the literary traditions and history of Wales and to protect their material interests, an objective which, possibly, has not had the notice it deserves. Its contribution to the advancement of learning is well known, not so its role as a pressure group. Both aspects of its activity are prominent in the contribution the Cymmrodorion has made to Welsh life in the last fifty years: each is as important as the other. What I shall attempt to do, in broad terms, is to outline the story of the Society during this period. It is a period when there has been a phenomenal growth in the national consciousness of the Welsh people, a period of interest in and, at times, of heroic struggle for things Welsh and particularly the language. It is a continuing struggle which is relevant to the objects of the Society.

*A translation of the text of the Sir Thomas Parry-Williams Memorial Lecture delivered by His Honour Dewi Watkin Powell in Welsh at the National Eisteddfod at Denbigh in 2001 and printed in the *Transactions for 2001*.

The first questions which arise are who were the members of the Cymmrodorion in mid-century, what were their objectives and what was the significance of the interest, some people might say the 'obsession' of the Society in the matter of its status. The year 1951 was a notable milestone in its history. With a membership which had grown from 300 before the Second World War to 2,200, a healthy balance sheet, work on the *Bywgraffiadur Cymreig hyd 1940* nearing completion, an interesting and ambitious programme ready for celebrating its two hundredth birthday and a very distinguished team in charge, the prospects were good. The team consisted of the Officers and Council of the Society. Going through a list of their names is like opening the doors of an assembly of talent and influence and the impression given is that the high places in the academic and administrative establishments in Britain were much more open to Welsh people than they are today. It is hard to say whether that is due to Welsh persons being less inclined to choose a career of this kind or to the doors being less open. Whatever may be the reason, the Society, in the fifties, was the means of harnessing their ability and their influence for the benefit of Wales.

The President was Sir Idris Bell, the former head of the British Museum and a Welsh scholar in his own right. In the key office of Secretary was John Cecil-Williams (who was knighted in 1951). The Chairman of the Council was Sir Wynn Wheldon, the former Permanent Secretary of the Welsh Department of the Ministry of Education, Chairman of the Committee for Wales of the Festival of Britain, Chairman of the Broadcasting Council for the Schools of Wales and a leading administrator. The editorship of the Society's publications was in the hands of Dr Llewelyn Wyn Griffith, a very senior officer in the Inland Revenue, an author and broadcaster and, at one time, Chairman of the Welsh Committee of the Arts Council. Among the other members of Council were Sir William Llewelyn Davies, the National Librarian, Sir Ifan ab Owen Edwards, Professor (later Sir) Goronwy Edwards, Director of the Institute of Historical Research in the University of London, Dr (later, Sir) David Evans, head of the Public Record Office, Professor Ifor Leslie Evans, Principal of the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, Professor R. T. Jenkins of the University College of North Wales, Bangor, Sir Rhys Hopkin Morris, Deputy Speaker of the House of Commons, Alun Oldfield Davies, Director of BBC Wales, Sir David Hughes-Parry, Mr (later Sir) Ben Bowen Thomas, Permanent Secretary of the Welsh Department of the Ministry of Education and Professor (later Sir) Thomas H. Parry-Williams. The Society certainly did not suffer from a lack of knights among its members.

Of all these, the one who had the greatest influence on the Council was John Cecil-Williams, born in London but whose roots were in Uwch Aled and of whom at his funeral Sir Thomas Parry-Williams said: 'Throughout his life he had the sweet air of Cwm Eithin in his nostrils and Cerrigydrudion for a pavement under his feet'. He was Honorary Secretary of the Society from 1934 to 1964 during which he successfully developed the scholarly and more 'politi-

cal' functions of the Society. He had vast experience and a wide circle of friends in influential positions. The energy he devoted to carrying out his functions as Secretary in getting lecturers to address the Society was proverbial and in his deliberations with government officials he acquired a reputation for getting his own way.

This then was the team which prepared the programme for the 1951 celebrations and which took advantage of the opportunity to mark its mission. That mission was and is three fold: first, to sustain a Welsh learned society of the highest grade and of recognised status; secondly to promote the culture of Wales in its widest sense and thirdly to protect the interests of Wales generally by bridging the gap between those interests and the concepts of the establishment in London about Wales. This latter function is one which has not so far received the recognition it deserves. To achieve these objectives, however, the Society, in the middle of the twentieth century, as in the eighteenth, placed emphasis on one factor above all and that was STATUS. The Morris brothers were great believers in 'rubbing shoulders with important people', which led to their being accused at the time of being snobbish; not everyone was allowed to join the Society. The same concern was voiced in the fifties of the twentieth century.

What gave the Society its status as a learned society was the scholarly quality of the lectures and of its publications and the merit of those who received the Society's medal: but however much of the snobbish element there was in all this, the Society was very conscious that the professional and social status of its members, its Council and its supporters was crucial in securing a level field when it became a matter of bringing pressure to bear on the authorities in seeking to protect the heritage of Wales. This, I am inclined to believe, is the justification for the presence of the throng of knights among its members and on its Council and, of course, for accepting the personal patronage of the Crown or the heir to the throne ever since its beginning in 1751. This too is the reason for electing so many Vice-presidents who have made their mark in a variety of fields or who have given service to the Society. In 1951 there were 55 vice-presidents, nearly half of whom had a title of one kind or another, but all of whom had a connection with Wales, many of them having been elected on account of their substantial contribution to Welsh life. Even today half of the 70 Vice-presidents are titled, academically or otherwise.

Events in the 1951 celebrations reflected very much the importance of its status as an *Honourable Society* and provided a glorious opportunity to promote its public image. The year opened with a reception given by the Lord Mayor of Cardiff in the City Hall, an event of some significance. In May, the Society's Secretary, having very much in mind developing connections in the United States, organised a Grand Banquet at the Savoy in London to honour Joseph Davies, formerly the United States Ambassador to the Soviet Union and a Vice-President of the Society. A wide range of representatives from public bodies in Wales attended the event. In November the London Welsh Association whose

president Sir John Morris (Lord Morris of Borth-y-Gest, later) was one of the Society's Vice-Presidents, organised a concert to celebrate the Society's bicentenary. In the same month the Society received its long expected Royal Charter. The climax of the celebrations was a *Conversazione* held at St. James's Palace in December 'by the gracious permission' of the King himself, the Patron of the Society, as the report in the *Transactions* drew the attention of its readers to the event. Present were hosts of members of the Society and guests from various official institutions 'which shows', says the annual report, 'how broad is the span of the Society's connections with the cultural life of this country'. The highlight of the evening was the presentation by the President, Sir Idris Bell, to Princess Elizabeth of the Cymmrodorion Medal – 'the highest honour a Welshman (*sic*) can receive from his native country' according to Cecil-Williams. Her Majesty is the thirty-first on the list of persons to whom the Medal has been awarded since 1883. As it happens, her name follows directly after that of Saunders Lewis, the thirtieth recipient of the Medal. That too occurred in 1951 but that was in the Wesleyan Chapel at Llanrwst.

However important the grandeur of the public events was to the Society's profile and influence, its other activities underlined its role as a learned society and guardian of the cultural heritage. Only one lecture was delivered in London that year. It was on the remarkable Library of the Welsh Girls' School at Ashford. Four meetings were held in Wales including an address by Professor T. H. Parry-Williams at Ystrad Fflur (Strata Florida) on the occasion of unveiling a memorial in stone to Dafydd ap Gwilym carved by R. L. Gapper who had been commissioned by the Society to carry out the work. There were meetings in Llangefni and Llanfihangel Glyn Myfyr as well as at the National Eisteddfod at Llanrwst when the Society's Medals were presented to T. H. Parry-Williams by Thomas Parry and to Saunders Lewis by Ben Bowen Thomas.

I have dealt at some length with 1951 because the events of that year were a foretaste of the Society's principal activities in the succeeding twenty years or so. I have already referred to the tireless energy of Sir John Cecil-Williams. In 1957 he went to the United States on two occasions to represent the Society, on the first occasion as a member of the British delegation at the tri-centenary of the College of William and Mary at which Goronwy Owen had taught Latin. On the second occasion he went, at his own expense, to deliver lectures at a large number of American Colleges and successfully recruited new members of the Society, literally by the dozen, from among American institutions and members of academic staff.

In 1960 Sir Wynn Wheldon retired from the presidency and Sir Thomas Parry-Williams was elected as his successor, which underlined the fact that the Society was no longer London-dominated. When he retired from the presidency in 1969 he was followed by Sir Ben Bowen Thomas. 1969 was Investiture Year. Bearing in mind the relationship between the Society and the monarchy, the officers of the Society, not unexpectedly, were given a promi-

ment place in the procession at Caernarfon Castle and it was Sir Ben, its President, who read the 'Loyal Address'. I wonder whether the spirit of John Cecil-Williams, who had died five years previously, was hovering there that day. If it were, whatever others may have thought, he at least would have been pleased!

I do not propose to go into detail concerning the officers save to note the apostolic succession in the Society. There was a considerable change in the officers during the seventies. When Llewelyn Wyn Griffith retired from the chairmanship in 1973 he was followed by Ben Jones and J. Haulfryn Williams was elected to follow Ben Jones as Secretary. A new treasurer was also elected when Elwyn Griffiths followed R. Prys Roberts. After the death of Sir Ben Bowen Thomas in 1977, Sir Thomas Parry was elected President in 1978, this again confirming the non-London element in the Society. In the same year Ben Jones retired from the Chair of Council and I was elected in his place. To add to the changes, after twenty years as editor of the *Transactions* Sir Idris Foster expressed a wish to be freed from the editorship to which he had made a tremendous contribution and Dr Prys T. J. Morgan was elected in his place.

The seventies proved to be a difficult period for the Society what with the difficulty in getting secretarial help, galloping inflation and financial worries. The world with which the Society was familiar was changing. Despite all the difficulties Haulfryn Williams succeeded in keeping the Society going with the assistance of members of Council, especially Dr Gwenda Thompson and Geraint Francis Roberts, but the heavy burdens which the Secretary had to bear increasingly taxed his health. In December 1979 the Council appointed a committee to consider in detail the role of the Society in the future and its financial state. It presented its report and its proposals to the Council in 1980. It was a negative report which foresaw little prospect for the Society. Under the leadership of Sir Thomas Parry, the President, the Council rejected the report and the decision was made to carry on.

Following Haulfryn Williams' death in the autumn of 1980 the Society had to look for a new Secretary. The Society was fortunate in being able to persuade June Gruffydd (Mrs Ceiri Griffith), a member of Council, to accept the Secretaryship, the first woman in the history of the Society to have held office in it. Her contribution was to be immense. One of her feats was to return the Cymmrodorion to its roots as a society which fosters social enjoyment as well as intellectual enjoyment which would have delighted the founders of the Honourable Society in the eighteenth century. She had an outstanding talent as an organiser; where possible locating the meetings at places which bore a relationship with the subject matter of the lecture, making evening lectures, to quote our present President, 'events to be remembered'. For example, a lecture on Dean Goodman became so much more meaningful by being delivered in the atmosphere of Westminster School where he had been assisting Bishop Morgan to produce the Welsh Bible. The premature death of June Gruffydd in 1989 was a serious blow to the Society as well as to its members personally.

The Society had already suffered a heavy loss in the death of the President of the Society, Ben Jones, the gentle and distinguished 'Cardi', only a few weeks before the death of June Gruffydd. In his place, the Society elected Professor Emrys Jones who had been Chairman of Council since 1984 – and he is still with us! Professor Ceiri Griffith became chairman of Council for three years and he was followed by Professor John Elliott but there were several changes in the office of Secretary after 1989. The Society was fortunate in getting Professor Tegid Wyn Jones to undertake the work from 1990 to 1994, and then David Lewis Jones, Librarian of the House of Lords from 1994 to 1996. Mrs Eirlys Bebb was Membership Secretary from 1990 to 1996. In 1993 the Society appointed an honorary Publications Officer, Gwyn Davies. The Society is now in the safe hands of John Samuel who followed David Lewis Jones in 1996 and continues to prosper although the knights are not so prominent, or so it seems, as they used to be!

From officers to activities. Its existence as a learned society is central to the life of Cymmrodorion and this is made clear in the contents of the *Transactions* and the publication of the *Bywgraffiadur Cymreig* (1953) and its English version, the *Dictionary of Welsh Biography* (1959), probably the greatest of the Society's achievements and, possibly, its greatest service to the Welsh nation. The Society has been fortunate in the editors of the *Transactions* on the one hand and of the biographic dictionaries on the other. The two editorships were, of course, quite separate with the nature and the requirements of each being different. Since 1951 the *Transactions* have been edited by six different editors whose scholarship is widely recognised, Dr Llywelyn Wyn Griffith, Sir Idris Foster, Dr Prys Morgan, Professor R. Geraint Gruffydd, Dr Llinos Beverley Smith, and Dr Peter Roberts, the present Editor. The work of editing *Y Bywgraffiadur Cymreig* began in earnest in 1943 and it has subsequently been under the editorship of distinguished librarians and historians from Sir John Edward Lloyd, Professor R. T. Jenkins and Sir William Llewelyn Davies to Mr E. D. Jones and Professor Brynley Roberts. The Welsh edition, *Y Bywgraffiadur Cymreig hyd 1940*, was published in 1953, the English version in 1959; the second volume in 1970 and the third in 1997.

The importance of the *Transactions* and the biographic dictionaries for scholars and laymen alike and the use made of them are not in doubt. When *Y Bywgraffiadur Cymreig* was published in 1953 it filled an obvious gap in our appreciation of our history as a nation. Who is here today who has not browsed in it at some time or another? John Cecil-Williams was well aware of the financial implications of the venture and if ever there were a venture in faith, this was it. It is he chiefly who should be credited for the fact that the *Bywgraffiadur* ever saw the light of day. It was he who persuaded the local authorities in Wales to contribute to the venture from the moneys they received from the Tithe Fund. A grant of £5000, a very substantial sum in those days corresponding to £150,000 and more in our day, was made by the Pilgrim Trust. There is no doubt that it was through Thomas Jones, CH, one

of the Society's Vice-Presidents and Chairman of the Pilgrim Trust that this came about. The title of the volume, *Y Bywgraffiadur Cymreig*, was a last minute inspiration by Sir Thomas Parry-Williams before it went to press.

As to the *Transactions*, a claim was made in 1985 that 'the majority of university libraries in Britain and many from America are subscribers'. There is no reason why this claim should not be believed but alas! it is unlikely that this is true of university libraries in Britain today. Be that as it may, in size and contents the *Transactions* remain substantial. Since 1951 contributions by 314 authors have been published most of them being lectures delivered in the Society's meetings and aimed at retaining the interest of the audience! It is of interest to note that 22 per cent of all the contributions to the *Transactions* are in Welsh, a percentage which broadly corresponds to the percentage of the population in Wales able to speak Welsh. If the figure of 22 per cent is some 2 per cent above the percentage of Welsh speakers in Wales, it is intriguing to speculate how many London Welsh people are in that 2 per cent? Since 1978 the Society's Annual Report is published bilingually in the *Transactions* and since 1993 the Financial Report is also bilingual.

There is a wide span in the topics dealt with in the *Transactions*. The first number published after the great celebrations in 1951 is a good example of this variety – addresses by Thomas Parry and Ben Bowen Thomas in presenting the Society's Medals at the Eisteddfod in Llanrwst, addresses in Llangefni by E. Morgan Humphreys and W. J. Gruffydd on T. Gwynn Jones and a paper by a young lecturer in geography at Queen's University Belfast on 'Some aspects of cultural change in an American Welsh Community'. That lecturer's name, by the way, was Emrys Jones! I do not propose to go through a lengthy list of scholars who have contributed to the *Transactions* save to say that there is scarcely any scholar whose interests lie in the language, literature, history, music, art or the economy of Wales who has not published part of the fruit of his or her research in the *Transactions*. The latest number to be published follows the tradition of the *Transactions* in all its glory with ten scholarly contributions in a variety of disciplines very different from each other, including studies of John Parry, the Blind Harpist, patterns in coloured glass, transport in Wales, Sion Dafydd Rhys, John Griffith Llanddyfnan and Kitchener Davies. There are also appreciations of R. S. Thomas, who died within weeks of receiving the Cymmrodorion Medal and of Ronald Hammond, the Society's Treasurer, who died suddenly, Rheinallt ap Emrys, to those who knew him in his Oxford days.

No account of the publications of the Society would be complete without mentioning an important volume, indispensable for researchers, the work of Gareth Haulfryn Williams, *An Index to Y Cymmrodor and the Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion 1878 – 1982*, which was published in 1990, a heroic feat on any showing. Another work, edited by Professor Emrys Jones and published jointly by the University of Wales Press and the Cymmrodorion, was launched at this Eisteddfod, *The Welsh in London 1500 – 2000*.

I now turn to another of the functions of the Honourable Society, the stewardship of Welsh interests in terms of commemorating a person or an event in history and of supporting bodies upholding the nation's heritage. That may be another reason for its being concerned with having the appropriate status to enable the Society to bring things to a successful conclusion whenever the need might arise. Much of what happened in 1951 was just that; and then, in 1954, a service was held in the centre of London in the church of St. Martin-in-the-Fields, to commemorate the life of Bishop William Morgan at which no less than a bishop preached the sermon and a summons went out to all who could attend to bring with them their academic robes! More seriously, in 1977 the plaque commemorating Goronwy Owen in Northolt Parish Church was restored at the expense of the Society. The most notable activity of this kind was the unveiling of a plaque on the wall of the town hall in Whitland in 1979 to commemorate Hywel Dda, the king whose name is connected with the indigenous Law of Wales. It was Gwynfor Evans who suggested to the Society that it might consider sponsoring a commemorative memorial in the town and it was he who unveiled the plaque carved by Jonah Jones and commissioned by the Society. The unveiling was accompanied by a fanfare composed for the occasion by William Mathias. Matters did not end there. The local community, led by Ithel Parri Roberts, was stimulated to approach the Arts Council of Wales with a more ambitious plan to commemorate the Law of Hywel. With the support of the Arts Council, the result was the laying out of the remarkable set of gardens designed by Peter Lord on the walled site of the old market place in Whitland, each representing a branch of the Law, and containing facsimiles of appropriate sections of the Law on enamelled plaques.

There is another extremely important aspect of the Society's work which, to a certain extent, has been ignored. It is, nevertheless a field in which, over the last fifty years, the Cymmrodorion has been actively engaged. This is to uphold the interests of Wales by using the Society's status to influence decisions relating to Wales by public authorities and by governmental bodies in Whitehall and Westminster. I shall give a number of examples. In 1952 there were discussions between a deputation from the Society and ministers and civil servants with a view to Wales being given visible recognition on currency, on postage stamps, on the arms of the Sovereign and on an official flag of its own. The deputation succeeded on the first two matters but not on the latter two. Much to the disappointment of the Society, and of the public in Wales generally, and sharp criticism from some quarters, all that was granted was a round badge, surmounted by the royal crown encasing a red dragon on a shield; a badge that continued to appear on the early papers of the Welsh Assembly Government.

In October of the same year, the Home Office published the Report of the Committee on the publication of Welsh books. The Society's offer to organize a National Conference to discuss the report was accepted. The conference was attended by 140 representatives from the world of education, religion and cul-

ture. Sir Wynn Wheldon took the Chair. Sir Ben Bowen Thomas, the Permanent Secretary of the Welsh Department of the Ministry of Education, the Chief Inspector, Wyn Lloyd and a host of officers from the Ministry of Education were present. A resolution was passed urging the government to consult with the local authorities and, in particular, to give effect to the financial recommendations of the report, appealing to the local authorities to establish and maintain a Welsh Books Institution and calling upon publishers of Welsh books to 'support an Institution such as this in order to make sure of a market'. The attempt to get the local authorities interested failed but the matter was raised again during the National Eisteddfod in Aberdare in 1956 following a lecture by Dr Elwyn Davies. It was decided to adjourn the matter until a report on the opinion of the publishers had been obtained. There is no record of the Society itself having organised any further meetings but the road had been opened for discussions which resulted in the establishment in 1961 of the Welsh Books Council which is still with us.

Another matter of importance in the fifties and sixties was the massive development in the world of broadcasting and especially in television. According to Dr John Davies in his book *Broadcasting and the BBC in Wales*, there had been a campaign as early as the spring of 1957 in which the Cymmrodorion had taken the leading role, to enable Welsh-speaking people living in England to receive Welsh language television programmes in their homes. As part of the campaign in 1965, the Society joined with the National Eisteddfod Council and others in a deputation to the Post Master General. Again according to Dr John Davies, 'Sir John Cecil-Williams sent numerous letters to the Post Master General pleading for more Welsh on television'. Dr Davies notes one very revealing fact namely that although the letters bear the signature of Cecil-Williams, Secretary of the Cymmrodorion, in all probability they were drafted by Alun Oldfield Davies, the Director of BBC Wales, who was, at the time, a member of the Council of the Society. The Pilkington Committee had already been established in 1960 to consider the future of broadcasting and television in Britain. Dr Elwyn Davies to whom reference has already been made in connection with the publication of Welsh books, was the only Welsh member of the Pilkington Committee. Its Report was published in June 1962 and, with unusual rapidity the Government's White Paper followed a week later. The Honourable Society had submitted a very strong memorandum to the Committee specifying four principles which became the basis of further developments in broadcasting in Wales. They were:

- (a) That Wales has an innate right to be treated as a nation and not as a geographic region in the United Kingdom:
- (b) That a broadcasting and television system should not be considered as adequate unless it provided these services for the whole of Wales:
- (c) That Wales has an innate right to broadcasting and television services which meet the requirements of her people in Welsh and in English:

- (d) That the fact that existing services in English are ahead of programmes in Welsh calls for an increase in programmes of substance in Welsh to be transmitted during hours when people have the leisure to use them.

It must be remembered that the sixties was a period when public protests against the authorities were gaining ground. In Wales the critical event which had an irreversible effect on the nation was Saunders Lewis' radio lecture in 1962 'Tynged yr Iaith' (The Fate of the Language). This lecture was undoubtedly one of the factors which led the government, at the request of the Welsh Parliamentary Party to appoint a Committee in July 1963 with a remit 'to explain the legal status of the Welsh language and to consider whether there should be changes in the law'. It was significant that the three members appointed on the Committee were members of the Cymmrodorion, two of whom, Sir David Hughes-Parry and Professor (now Sir) Glanmor Williams were members of the Society's Council. The Society submitted a memorandum to the Committee and evidence was given on its behalf by the leading authority on constitutional history, Sir Goronwy Edwards, and Ben Jones, the Society's Assistant Secretary at the time but who was to have a further role in the matter of the status of the language. The Report of the Hughes-Parry Committee was published in 1965 and the Cymmrodorion urged the government to adopt the Committee's very comprehensive recommendations. The outcome was the Welsh Language Act 1967 which unhappily did not make provision for several key recommendations.

To an appreciable degree, the policy of the Society in maintaining its status and developing a close relationship with members of the Society who were already in decision-making positions in various walks of life was bearing fruit. Until the seventies it had been possible to work within the establishment. In 1973 Peter Thomas, the Secretary of State for Wales in the Conservative government, appointed Ben Jones to the chair of the Welsh Language Council. In 1978 that Council published its Report recommending bilingualism in all aspects of public life in Wales, a principle which had the full support of the Honourable Society. With the establishment of the Welsh Office in 1964 and the growth of the Welsh Civil service in Cardiff rather than in London the political scenario was transformed. It could also be argued that the Society was adopting a harder political stance and seeking more popular support in pressing its case rather than relying on intervention by prominent individuals. It was under the cloud of the failure of the Referendum on Devolution in 1979 that a meeting was arranged under the Society's auspices in the Societies' Pavilion at the National Eisteddfod in Caernarfon calling upon the newly elected Conservative government to give effect to the recommendations of the Welsh Language Council. In a packed Pavilion, a resolution was passed with only one or two against. As a result of this Sir Thomas Parry, the President, Ben Jones and I, as Chairman of Council, were invited to meet Wyn Roberts,

the Minister, in the Welsh Office in London in March 1980. The deputation received a warm welcome and as a result of a comprehensive discussion there was a further meeting at Maenan to which Sir Thomas Parry was invited. It was at that meeting that the new Secretary of State, Nicholas Edwards, made a declaration on behalf of the government that went further than any previous statement by a Minister of the Crown in favour of the Welsh language in public affairs, but still short of giving effect to the recommendations of the Welsh Language Council. It was a long and stormy haul to the Welsh Language Act of 1993. The Society nevertheless played a more active role in these developments up to 1980 than is generally recognised.

There are several instances of the Society's intervening before decisions had been made, to prevent the authorities from following courses which would have been harmful to Wales. One such case arose in 1955 when the Society prevented the Treasury from de-grading the National Library to regional status by persuading the then Minister for Welsh Affairs, Sir David Maxwell Fife, to bring pressure to bear on the Treasury to abandon its plans. Similar action was taken in January 1984 when it came to the attention of one of the members of Council that the Ministry of Agriculture intended to move the Welsh Plant Breeding Station (IGER now) from Gogerddan to the Thames Valley. Letters were sent on behalf of the Society, urging the retention of the institution at Gogerddan, to the Secretary of State for Agriculture and the Chairman of the Research Council for Agriculture and Food. A letter to the same effect was sent to *The Times* newspaper and published bearing the signature of the President of the Honourable Society and sixteen other prominent persons including the leaders in the agricultural world in Wales, the Vice Chancellor of the University of Wales and the Presidents of the Colleges, the Presidents of the National Library and the National Museum, and the Chairmen of TUC Wales and the CBI in Wales. It was a mighty effort but the Society knew that the staff at Gogerddan and a relevant civil servant in the Welsh Office were in favour of retaining the Station. The effort succeeded.

In conclusion, I want to refer to another wholly contemporary matter of the utmost importance to us as a nation. In October last year John Samuel, the Secretary, presented a memorandum prepared by a sub-committee of the Society consisting of experts to the House of Commons Select Committee on Welsh Affairs on the role of the Government in promoting the interests of Wales overseas. The Report of the Select Committee was published in March this year, the Society's Memorandum being one of the three most important memoranda out of the 36 presented; its recommendations for ensuring that Welsh interests are given full consideration by the European Union are most comprehensive. Its three principal recommendations were:

- (a) Ensuring that the Assembly is represented on every level, not just casually, on the different official committees in Whitehall including the principal committee dealing with European Union matters;

- (b) Ensuring that the Secretary of State for Wales is a full (not casual) member of the relevant Cabinet Committee dealing with European Union matters;
- (c) Ensuring that officers of the Assembly accompany the United Kingdom team to meetings of the official committees called together by the Commission to discuss beforehand all the matters which will be on the agenda of the Council of Ministers.

What I have just referred to is a clear example of the kind of activity in which the Society has participated time after time over the last century in seeking to use its influence to safeguard the interests of Wales in which it has had a measure of success. It is still doing so, proof positive that the Society is far from being out of breath despite its being two hundred and fifty years old. The secret of its success, it seems to me, is that it has managed to bring together, in London, in Wales and beyond, those Welsh people who are proud to be Welsh and share similar attitudes, whatever the nature of their occupation, whether in the academic world, the civil service, law, medicine, business or the countless other occupations people may follow in urban or rural environments. The Society moves with the times. What makes it unique is that it has done all this without compromising the highest possible standards as a learned society.

The constitutional and administrative changes during the latter part of the twentieth century have meant that many of the decisions which used to be made in London are now made in Cardiff or in Brussels. The challenge facing the Society is considerable. Over and above this the respect that used to be paid to learning in the humanities has lessened. Nevertheless, in the complex fields of public administration as in the field of scholarship, the Honourable Society has a strategic role to play as long as the remarkable sense of devotion which has characterised its members lasts. Modern Wales needs the Society, come what may.

As the Honourable Society reaches its quarter millennium, the only greeting, which is merited, is 'Long live the Cymmrodorion'.

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