

This month we bring you updates on some of our performers and events at the North American Festival of Wales. We also want to share our excitement at the response that we have received from the Welsh community to our program and Festival concept. At the time of writing, over 225 registrations have been received and nearly 1400 room nights have been reserved at our headquarters and second hotel. The tours are well-subscribed, especially our pre-event day tour to Victoria -- we are just about to reserve our second bus. Most seminars are also well into double-figure reservations, but especially popular are the genealogy seminar by Eirionedd Baskerville of the National Library of Wales and the four seminars by Welsh author Terry Breverton. It looks as if the banquet will sell out, and our first day Salmon Barbecue has proven very popular. Needless to say, 99% of the registrants are going to the Grand Concert by the Dunvant Male Choir and Ticketmaster Canada has also begun to sell tickets to the local population.

We are delighted to report that we've been able to negotiate discount car rental rates with National Car Rental for all attendees who are staying at the hotels. The National Car Rental office is conveniently located at the Hilton Hotel, right on site, so there is not only the discount but also no on-site airport fees. You can reserve a car through the Central National Car Rental reservation system at 1-800-CAR RENT or on line at www.nationalcar.com. Be sure to quote the contract ID of 5007125. The discount for delegates is at least 15% discount on all types of vehicles.

— Cynthia St. Clair and Alan Upshall

NAFOW Seminar Speaker Wins Book of the Month Award from The Welsh Books Council

Welsh author Terry Breverton is coming to Richmond to deliver two seminars (each given twice), one on Welsh saints and one on Welsh pirates. Both of the topics are subjects upon which Terry has recently written and published, and his book entitled ***Welsh Pirates and Buccaneers*** was awarded the Welsh Books Council “Books of the Month” award for March 2003. Incredibly, this is Terry’s third book to have received the award within the last two years — his books ***100 Great Welshmen and The Welsh Almanac*** were honored also. But that’s not all — his ***book Glamorgan Seascape Pathways*** won the Millennium Award from the Wales Council for Voluntary Action and ***The Secret Vale of Glamorgan*** was the recipient of a Millennium Commission Award.

Terry is a prolific author. In the last three years he has written and published nine books covering many aspects of Welsh history and Welsh life, which have been received with considerable acclaim by the critics and Terry has built a successful publishing company, Wales Books-Glyndwr Publishing (www.walesbooks.com), around his writings.

The planning team for the North American Festival of Wales is very pleased to have been able to entice Terry to come to Richmond. He comes with the support of the University of Wales Institute Cardiff (www.uwic.ac.uk). It is also hoped that Terry will be able to bring some of his books for sale at the Marketplace, but this is not yet confirmed.

Also it is anticipated that other books supported by The Welsh Books Council [will be available for sale \(www.clc.org.uk\)](http://www.clc.org.uk). The Welsh Books Council is a national body funded by the Welsh Assembly Government that provides a focus for the publishing industry in Wales, with a view to improving standards of book production and publication in both Welsh and English. One of its functions is to recognize works of importance to Welsh culture and heritage with the Welsh Books Council “Book of the Month” award. The Welsh Books Council is the only body in Wales that is concerned with and supports the whole spectrum of publishing, from the author’s manuscript to distribution and sales promotion of the resulting publication. The Welsh Books Council is also committed to promoting reading and literacy in Wales.

There also will have tables selling CDs and tapes, especially those of our performing artists, and other souvenirs. As this article is being written early in June, the full spectrum of the Marketplace and Wales Resource Center is not yet complete. We anticipate several more contributors, and anyone interested should quickly contact Gerri Baker Parry gerri@walesresourcecenter.com as space is limited.

The Marketplace incorporates a Wales Resource Center

It is traditional at our annual gathering to have a Marketplace where Welsh goods and souvenirs may be purchased. The Festival's location on the west coast of Canada this year, as well as the complex tariffs and customs issues, means that many of the U.S. vendors of Welsh items will not be present, but we are endeavoring to find Canadian vendors who will come.

However, we have expanded the Marketplace into a Wales Resource Center by inviting several groups that will display and describe not only Welsh history, but also Wales today. Coming to Richmond with still and video displays will be delegations from the Welsh Assembly (www.cymru.gov.uk), Wales Tourist Board (www.visitwales.com), and possibly the Welsh Development Agency (www.locate-in-wales.com). To provide a focus of interest, these delegations and displays will be clustered adjacent to each other, rather than being scattered around our display area, so creating a Welsh information enclave for Festival attendees.

Update on the North American Festival of Wales Eisteddfod

One of the features of the eisteddfod competitions over the years has been the unpredictability of number of entries, and this year has been no exception.

For the Richmond Eisteddfod, the organizers took a bold step and offered a competition for semi-professional voice with a significant prize < a trip to Wales to sing in the Eisteddfod in Newport, Gwent, in 2004. The step was risky, as was the very generous support of our prize sponsor, David G. Morris, but we are thrilled to report that we have sufficient entries to hold a very strong competition, and from listening to the CDs accompanying each entry, what a competition it will be. We have not yet received the biographies of all entrants, but here are several to give you an idea of the caliber of the contestants.

Catrin Rowenna Davies (mezzo-soprano)

Catrin Rowenna Davies is a second-year student in the Graduate Performance Diploma program at the Peabody Conservatory, Baltimore, in the studio of Marianna Busching. She previously studied with Beatrice Unsworth at the Welsh College of Music and Drama in Cardiff, Wales, where she received an Advanced Diploma in Voice Performance with honors and won the Monmouth Choral Society Prize and the Valetta Iacopi Memorial Prize.

Catrin has sung chorus for Baltimore Opera and for Wolf Trap Opera, and is currently performing in the Baltimore Opera's education program. She has performed recitals in Montreal, Washington, D.C., Oxford, Cardiff, and Baltimore. This summer she will perform the role of Phoebe in *Yeomen of the Guard* with the Young Victorian Theater Company. She has sung many roles and has performed as the 2nd Lady and Papagena in the Peabody Opera Roundabout cast for their production of *Papageno!*, as The Squirrel in *L'Enfant et les sortilèges*, and as Mrs. Herring in *Albert Herring*.

Colleen Kennedy (soprano)

Colleen has attended several of our National Cymanfa Ganu celebrations. She has been a guest soloist for Welsh events in Scranton, Utica, Philadelphia, Wilmington, Columbus, and New York City, where she is a member of Eglwys y Cymru and the Welsh Women's Club. In Wales, she was a guest artist with Côr Orpheus Tregeddar and sang in a concert at Bryntirion School, Bridgend. She has given concerts in New York City for old-age pensioners and for children, and has been a soloist at churches and synagogues in the NY/NJ area. In addition, Colleen has toured as the Wicked Witch of the West and the Fairy Godmother in Cinderella.

This past winter Colleen recorded her first CD, "In Wondrous Ways," accompanied by the renowned Marshall Williamson. It will be released in late summer. She is looking forward to seeing Vancouver and to introducing her cousin, Dr. Ian Kennedy of Campbell River, to his first Cymanfa.

The other three entrants to date are Heulwen Jones of Winnipeg, J. Robert O'Brien of New York and Paul Kawabori, currently of Los Angeles.

There are several entrants for the amateur solo competition, including previous winners John Owen of Idaho, who won at the very first North American National eisteddfod in 1994, and David Gwynn of Virginia.

We anticipate that our choral competition, which has already attracted two outstanding choirs, will make our Saturday morning session of semi-professional and choral competitions an event not to be missed.

To our surprise, the story-telling competition - quite popular in Harrisburg last year - has not attracted many entries, and unless a few more are received very soon, it is likely that the competition will be withdrawn.

We have also been very disappointed in the lack of entries for the competitions designed to involve youth -- the solo voice and choral competitions -- and with our lack of success in trying to offer youth-related activities throughout the Festival. Despite a generous sponsorship offer, we were unable to attract a youth choir from Wales, and that was followed by our lack of success in entice a youth rugby team to come play some games against local Richmond and Vancouver school teams. The dilemma of how to attract the youth to our annual gathering remains unsolved.