

Cymdeithas Thomas Pennant (Thomas Pennant Society)

Autumn/Winter Report 2014

Since the Summer of 2014, Cymdeithas Thomas Pennant has continued with a range of activities. However, the highlight of our early autumn programme, was the 18th Annual Pennant Lecture, held in Holywell Library on Thursday, 16th October.

This year, the lecture was given by Jim Perrin. Mr. Perrin is a distinguished mountaineer, writer and environmental journalist. Amongst publications that he has contributed to, he writes as the Welsh Country Diarist for the Guardian and writes a monthly column for 'The Great Outdoors' magazine. He has written numerous books, one of his latest being 'Snowdon: The Story of a Welsh Mountain'. Currently, he is researching a book on the 19th Century travel writer, George Borrow.

Jim Perrin was born in Manchester, but his heart is in Wales where he has lived for 40 years. He has respect for the Welsh language and a broad literary background. He further runs courses in travel and nature writing and he is an honorary Fellow of Bangor University. Jim Perrin has a home in Harlech and a property in the French Pyrenees, where he retires for solitude and writing.

In his lecture, Mr. Perrin discussed the contribution of Thomas Pennant as a travel writer and commentator, with especial reference to his seminal work, 'Tours in Wales' and with particular reference to Snowdonia. Jim Perrin sees Pennant as a crucial and central link in the 18th Century, between the 'Age of Enlightenment' and Reason and the Romantic era of the earlier 19th Century. He quoted extensively from Pennant's writings and others, including Dr. Johnson, who regarded Pennant as: 'the best traveller I ever read'. Thus, Jim Perrin put forward the proposition that Pennant was NOT only a travel writer, natural scientist and so forth, but also a considerable literary figure who deserves to be recognised as such. The lecture was effectively constructed, full of challenging ideas, academic and erudite and enthusiastically received by the audience.

We were delighted that the Chair for the lecture was Lawrence Rawsthorne, Flintshire County Council's recently retired Head of Libraries and Culture and a good friend of Cymdeithas Thomas Pennant. Finally, we must thank the Library staff at Holywell Library, for giving of their time out of hours and for their welcome and refreshments after the lecture.

We should add that already we have a lecturer lined up for the 2015 'Silver Jubilee' lecture, Dr. Mary-Ann Constantine, Senior Researcher at the University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, Aberystwyth. Dr. Constantine has also launched a

project, based on a study of Pennant's Scottish and Welsh tours and we hope that our Pennant scholars will be able to make an input to this project.

More generally, the Cymdeithas has continued to be involved in other projects, such as the proposal for North Flintshire to be designated as 'Pennant Country' and we continue to be associated with Whitford Church and the 'Sacred Doors' project which includes items in the church about Thomas Pennant. We also, as individuals, give support to Holywell's 'Town Partnership' Scheme as, as is well known, Thomas Pennant was active in the town and in writing about The Greenfield Valley. Our website remains very active with a considerable number of monthly 'hits' and our thanks go to our IT Co-ordinator, Ryan Jenner and our website provider, Delwedd, of Caernarfon, for all their efforts. Our website remains: cymdeithasthomaspennant.com

Finally, when you read this piece, the society will have held its A.G.M. and sadly, at this gathering, we will have to say farewell to our excellent treasurer Jim Maxwell, who is retiring. Jim is a stalwart of the Cymdeithas and we are so grateful and appreciative for all his hard work and efforts on our behalf over the years. But we are delighted to report that Sally Chinery is being nominated as a replacement as treasurer. Next year, of course, is the Cymdeithas' Silver Jubilee year and under the guidance of our Chair, Norman Closs Parry, we are planning a series of events to celebrate 25 years of the society. But before then we will have had our Christmas lunch on 12th December. All are welcome to join us, just give me a ring as soon as possible on: 01352 712588.

Naturally, we are grateful for all the interest that is and may be shown in our society and we are always happy to welcome anybody who may care to join us and contribute their knowledge and ideas.

Thank you: Diolch yn Fawr: Paul Brighton: Secretary/Ysgrifennydd.