

2024 Wisconsin Welsh Weekend for All

Submitted by Jan Jones Batty

Wisconsin spring weather was just right for our annual Welsh Weekend in Baraboo, former winter home of the Ringling Brothers Circus.

On Saturday, May 4 we began our afternoon activities with a tour of the magnificent Al. Ringling Theatre, complete with a short organ recital by our tour guide. This theatre was completed in 1915 and features a 9 rank, 3 manual Barton organ with a circus wagon style console. The organ rises out of the orchestra pit.

Our next stop was nearby First Presbyterian Church where over 40 of us had refreshments and a little social time before beginning the eisteddfod. We sang Penblwydd Hapus to Robert Humphries on the occasion of his 50th anniversary on the planet. Bron Wentzel made “50” cookies!

This year’s eisteddfod theme was Circle of Life and Circus/Cylch Bywyd a Syrcas. We had one competitor in our most revered category, Literary Arts. Kim Corbin won the coveted “Chair” for her essay entry. Her brother Bron Wentzel restored and decorated the chair along a circus theme, and she was the center of an award ceremony led by Robert and Rhys Humphries. The Visual Arts category was adjudicated by popular opinion and there were three competitors: Jan Jones Batty, Kim Corbin and Bron Wentzel. Jan and Kim tied and were each awarded “The Crown” - Welsh hats knitted by Bron’s daughter Mary Wentzel. The recitation pieces for this year were “The Circus” by Anna Osipova and “Y Dychweliad” gan T. H. Parry-Williams. Kit Proud’s English recitation was awarded “The Microphone” as winner, with Joe Corbin’s Welsh recitation as runner-up. The Music winner of “The Baton” was twelve year old Andrew Messner, grandson of board member Tom Williams. Andrew performed a clarinet solo accompanied by Ann Lemmenes. Joe Corbin was our other musical competitor, performing “Lily y Dyffrynoedd” on guitar. Many thanks to adjudicators Dale Hughes, Robert Humphries, Danny Proud and Marilyn Schrader.

Next on the agenda was a presentation by Robert Humphries on “Welsh Settlers on the Baraboo River.” Very interesting, and several in attendance were related to some of these early settlers. Afterward, we held the chairing ceremony for the eisteddfod, and had a little time to check into hotels before pub night.

At the Al. Ringling Brewing Company, a large group gathered for pub grub, libations, and plenty of fun. Danny Proud and Joe Corbin led us in folk songs, with the grand finale “Take Your Pills” performed by Kit Proud.

On Sunday our numbers doubled for the 90th State Gymanfa Ganu. Joe Corbin led us through three sets of hymns, accompanied by Ann Lemmenes who added circus interludes to “Morte Christe,” among other hymns. Pipe Major Christopher Brand provided special music – two sets of hymn medleys which included “Joanna” and “Llwyn Onn.” During the gymanfa ganu, a slide show played scenes from Wales taken by one of the church members.

Afterward, everyone convened in the fellowship hall for a te bach of treats and tea and lemonade. Many thanks to church members for their help. A special thanks to Kathleen Thurow for taking care of all the details at the church and at the Ringling properties. And thanks to Joe and Kim Corbin for

arranging for us to convene in Baraboo this year. Check our website, wggaw.org, for more information about Welsh events in Wisconsin.

Photo Captions

Bron Wentzel and Kim Corbin. Kim won "The Chair" which was restored and decorated by her brother Bron.

Penblwydd Hapus i Robert Humphries.

The magnificent Al. Ringling Theatre.

Andrew Messner performs his clarinet solo.