

## ODA PRESIDENTS REPORT 2023/24

It was a great honour to be the President of the Association this year. When Keith Evans phoned me to ask me to consider the role, I had no hesitation in accepting. The friendships I made at Dynevor are of long standing, the memories are vivid and colourful, the rugby was energetic, who can forget Andrew Edwards up a tree in the wonderful school play, *A Penny for a Song*, the nourishment and banter at school dinners, oh and yes, the education was quite good too.

It has been an eventful year with so many highlights and people to thank.

The Dinner was a marvellous occasion, thanks to Geoff and Jeff for the organisation and to Alun Griffiths for arranging the presence and contribution of Wales and British Lion Graham Price. I shall always treasure the rugby shirt I won at the auction, the proceeds of which went to a charity of Graham's choosing.



TOD under the careful editorship of Pam Bashford goes from strength to strength. It is always a pleasure to read bringing back memories, connecting the past to the present and showcasing the wonderful work we are still doing under the banner of the Dynevor Days Project to widen educational opportunity for Swansea youngsters. This is very much in the Dynevor tradition. The school in my days (1967-1974) brought together boys from all parts of Swansea and laid the focus as much on good citizenship as academic achievement. We are very grateful to our anonymous benefactor. See TOD #44 for more detail of the impact we are making on local schools.

One of the highlights of my year was presenting a cheque to the Swansea Young Carers. I presented a £100 donation to the YMCA Young Carers Youth Club, Swansea, in early March on behalf of the Association. The youth club, held weekly during school term-time, is for youngsters aged 8-18 who provide care for a family member with a significant long-term need. It provides an opportunity for young carers to enjoy a few carefree hours with others in a similar situation. Staff organise activities which support the young peoples' needs at the club, as well as trips and visits during school holidays. Very importantly staff provide invaluable support for individuals.

Egija Cinovska, Young Carers Project Coordinator, thanked the Dy'vorians for thinking of young carers. The initial idea is to use the donation for a young carers' pizza night which Egija said would be 'a nice treat for them'. I am sure you will agree that the donation has been made to a very good cause.

The strength of the Association is its members, and it is vital that we keep them all informed. We have been so fortunate in securing the services of Robert Treharne Jones whose emails are always so well presented, informative and timely. Many thanks indeed.

Stuart Batcup presented the 2023 ODA Annual Lecture in November based on his book *A Trek Through Old Mumbles and Thistleboon: A History*. A Trek is defined in the dictionary as a long arduous journey, this was nothing of the sort rather a delightful, picturesque stroll through aspects of the history of Mumbles and Thistleboon House in particular. Stuart is a well renowned lawyer but, in this lecture, and in the book, Stuart reveals his considerable skills as a historian. The lecture showcased Stuart's research and erudition but also his love of place, for the village, its people and the House which loomed large in his memory.

Much of the history was new, he delved into the unrecorded provenance of Thistleboon House, concluding that Colonel Philip Jones, a noted Parliamentarian, and associate of Oliver Cromwell was its most likely founder in 1648. Cromwell's Survey of Gower in 1650 mentions a "house and garden at Ffistleboon" owned by Col Jones for which he was paying a pepper corn rent. As a counterpoint, Stuart produced a photograph taken of him in their front garden in the Winter of 1952/3 with

Thistleboon House in the background. Stuart explained the etymology of Thistleboon- English, Welsh, and local dialect all contributed: a derivative of Pissle Bourn (the Welsh-Pistyll) meaning waterspout, bowdlerised to Ffistle then Thistle. Thistleboon House has had many owners and functions in its history: a fortified House, an Estate, an Academy, Farmhouse, Orphanage and latterly Flats. It stood large over the Old Mumbles Village skyline before it was demolished in 1976. His well illustrated talk compared the Past with the Present reminding the attentive audience of the poverty that once characterised this small fishing village. Stuart's book is dedicated to his family, the profits go to the All-Saints' Church Organ Restoration Appeal, a much-loved place which Stuart describes as his anchor.

I was privileged to host two Annual Lectures this year. In March 2024 we had a fascinating talk from Peter Phillips. After serving as **Deputy Head at Dynevor** from 1982 to 1996, **Peter Phillips** left to join **HM Prison Service** as a full time Anglican chaplain, thereafter completing an MA at Bristol and a PhD at Cardiff. As **an Anglican cleric** who has **never held a parish post** he considers himself to be on the **outer reaches of the Anglican universe**. He is currently **Director of Swansea Samaritans**. Peter reflected on his journey from Dynevor to prison (!) and on the sequence of institutions with which he had been involved in one way or another.

Peter's lecture was well presented, using academic research on organisational character, with valid conclusions about the ways in which people and "institutions" interact exemplifying Churchill's observation that "We shape our buildings and then they shape us." I liked his reference to Dynevor architecture as "Welsh Gothic".

During his talk he mentioned some of the great Dynevor greats such as George Hounsell who were powers of organisation and presence during his time at Dynevor. A few of his stories from his time as prison chaplain and more recently as Director of the Samaritans were very sad, others humorous, showing the resilience of character which personifies the people of Swansea.

Because I live in Aberystwyth and have done so since 1980, I was unable to attend all the events. I am sorry to have missed Mal Pope's event. I am told that everyone who was able to join **Mal Pope's** presentation on 30 October agreed that it was a very special night out, as Mal took everyone on **a whistlestop journey** through his musical career, which started as a Manselton schoolboy exactly 50 years ago! Mal was just 13 years old when he first sent a demo tape to John Peel at Radio 1, but within a few weeks he had signed a recording contract with **Elton's John's company** that proved the start of a **long and illustrious career in music and broadcasting**. The vote of thanks was given by

Mal's English teacher at Dynevor, David Taylor, whose opening remarks were: 'I came here knowing I would be entertained, but I have also been informed and moved.'

**Phil Stone** has written up the whole evening for **The Dyvorian #44**, and there is a **video recording of the night** (by [clicking on this link](#)).

I am also told that the coffee mornings held in Dynevor have been well attended and appreciated drawing Dy'vorians from several different years. The Rock Night in the Wig and Pen in September reminded us that the connections between Dynevor and Rock have always been strong. My old mate from my years in school, the late Mike Cement worked with Black Sabbath and other groups throughout his career. See TOD #44 for Jeff Vaughan's write up of a very enjoyable night. By the way as I write this, another Dy'vorian, Rob Deery (year of 67) is performing with CODA - A Tribute to Led Zeppelin, at Sin City in Swansea, and the plan is to have Glenn Watkins (year of 67) performing a supporting slot with one of his acts!

One of the roles of the President is to chair meetings. I have been involved in meetings most of my professional life, ODA meetings though are special. Dynevor people love to talk and contest, so timekeeping of meetings can be challenging. The meetings and other Association business rest on the able and conscientious shoulders of Pam Bashford. Our thanks to her as an Association are immeasurable. She is not only an efficient secretary but also edits the TOD. Her advice and support have made my brief contribution a pleasure. It is also reassuring that our finances are in the safe hands of our treasurer Stephen Way, who has had a challenging year dealing with the bank's bureaucratic money laundering rules. Thank you, Stephen.

All the members of your committee make active contributions, but a special mention to Phil Stone for his networking abilities and Jeff Vaughan for taking on the organisation of the Dinner as well as a very successful Rock Night.

As I write I look forward to giving the President's Awards at the UWTSD prize giving in April, the same day as the AGM. Then the highlight of the year the 85<sup>th</sup> Annual Dinner in May, preceded by the Golf Day at Clyne (thanks to Pete Samuel) when I hand over my chain of honour to Andrew Clemes.

What of the future? One of the saddest tasks that fall to the Association is marking the death of our members, a common occurrence of course as we all age. We are unable to send out details of funerals and memorial services to our members since it would be invidious to do this for a few and not for all. I recall a point made by Phil Stone in one of our meetings, we should measure our success not by the number of members we have (which continue to be buoyant) but by the quality of the

interaction between us, our connections to our year groups and our support for the work of the Association, which with the Dynevor Days Project has as much to do with the future as the past.

Rwyf wedi mwynhau y profiad o fod eich Llywydd yn fawr. Diolch yn fawr i bawb sydd wedi fy nghefnogi. Ymlaen i'r dyfodol!

HYWEL M DAVIES

MAUNDY THURSDAY 2024