

*Gŵyl Gerdd Dant
Genedlaethol Cymru,
Tal-y-bont,
12 Tachwedd 1977*

*The Cerdd Dant
National Festival,
Tal-y-bont,
12th November 1977*

Pan gytunodd cyfarfod cyhoeddus a gynhaliwyd yn Nhal-y-bont ym mis Mai 1976 i wahodd yr ŵyl i'r pentref, gwelwyd fod manteision amlwg dros ei chynnal yma. Onid Tal-y-bont oedd pwerdy Cymdeithas Cerdd Dant Cymru ar y pryd, gyda Dafydd ac Edith Jones – Trefnydd yr Ŵyl ac Ysgrifennydd y Gymdeithas – yn byw yn Nhŷ Capel Nasareth? A thrwy ei lleoli yma, roedd modd manteisio ar ddoniau amrywiol cylch Aberystwyth ar y naill ochr, a bro Ddyfi ar yr ochr arall. Yn y canol, roedd Tal-y-bont yn gyforiog o adnoddau angenrheidiol ar gyfer gŵyl lwyddiannus – lleoliad cyfleus yng nghanol Cymru, trigolion diwylliedig yn barod bob amser i gefnogi'r 'Pethe', ac adeiladau addas a chyfleus i gynnal y cystadlaethau, y rhagbrofion a'r bwyd.

Am fisoedd lawer, aeth y trefniadau rhagddynt yn rhwydd a didramgwydd – yr arian yn llifo i mewn yn hael, pobl yr ardal yn frwdfrydig, a'r problemau parcio'n cael eu datrys. Tan y pythefnos olaf, yn wir, prin y gallai neb gredu fod gŵyl genedlaethol i'w chynnal yn y pentref, a phawb ohonom yn byw mewn rhyw baradwys ffôl! Ond tua'r adeg honno deffrodd pawb gyda'i gilydd, a dyna hi'n fedlam yn ein tŷ ni! Roedd y ffôn yn eiriasboeth, a'r stepiau tuag at ein drws ffrynt yn cael eu treulio'n bantiau gan draed y dwsinau oedd yn galw heibio ar ryw neges neu'i gilydd! Diolchais ganwaith fod Tŷ Capel – neu HQ – mor agos, a help a chyfarwyddyd i'w cael yno bob amser. Daeth y sioc fawr gyntaf ryw ddeg diwrnod cyn yr Ŵyl gyda chyhoeddiad y bwrdd trydan y byddent yn torri'r cyflenwd trydan am gyfnodau yn ystod ymgyrch gweithio-i-reol un o undebau'r trydanwyr. Yn ôl cwmni Manweb, byddai Tal-y-bont yn ardal 'high risk' am gyfnod o naw awr yn ystod dydd Sadwrn yr Ŵyl! Cysylltodd y Swyddogion ar unwaith â dau aelod seneddol – Geraint Howells, Ceredigion, a Dafydd Elis Thomas,

When the public meeting held in May 1976 proposed to invite the Cerdd Dant Festival to Tal-y-bont, it was seen that there were several advantages in holding it here. At the time, Tal-y-bont was the 'powerhouse' of the Wales Cerdd Dant Society, with Dafydd and Edith Jones – the Festival Organiser and the Society's Secretary – living at Tŷ Capel, Nasareth. By holding the Festival here, it would be possible to take advantage of the wide range of talent available in the Aberystwyth area on the one hand and in Bro Ddyfi on the other. Tal-y-bont itself was brimming with the necessary resources for a successful Festival – a convenient location in the centre of Wales, inhabitants who were always willing to support cultural activities, and suitable, convenient buildings in which to hold the competitions and prelims and to prepare and serve food.

For many months, the arrangements went ahead smoothly and unhindered – the funds flowed into the coffers, people were enthusiastic and the parking problems were eventually solved. Indeed, until some two weeks before the Festival, one could hardly believe that a national festival was to be staged here – we were all living in a fool's paradise! Then, suddenly, everyone seemed to awake from their slumber at the same time – and it was bedlam at our house! The phone was red-hot from morning to night and the stone steps to our front door were in danger of being worn down by the tread of dozens of feet as people called with various messages and problems. I was very grateful that Tŷ Capel – or HQ – was so close and that help and advice were freely available there at all times. The first big shock came about ten days before the Festival with the announcement that Manweb would be cutting the electricity supply in the area for long periods, due to the work-to-rule of one of the industry's unions. According to the leaflet we received, Tal-y-bont would be a 'high risk' area for a period of nine hours on

Meirionnydd – a oeddynt ill dau yn gefnogwyr selog i'r Gymdeithas. Ymhen ychydig oriau, cafwyd sicrhad ganddynt y byddai Tal-y-bont yn cael llonydd gan y trydanwyr dros gyfnod yr Ŵyl. Fel y digwyddodd pethau, fe setlwyd yr helyntion diwydiannol ddeuddydd cyn yr ŵyl, ond roedd y Pwyllgor Gwaith yn hynod o ddiolchgar i'r ddau am eu gwaith diwyd tu ôl i'r llenni.

Rhyw ddeuddydd cyn yr Ŵyl, roeddem yn mwynhau paned ganol pnawn pan waeddodd un o'n meibion, 'Ma'r tai bach yn pasio!' Rhuthrodd y teulu i gyd at y drws ffrynt mewn pryd i weld y tai bach symudol – a huriwyd ar gyfer yr Ŵyl – yn ymlwybro'n araf i fyny'r pentref ar gefn lorri. Brysiais innau at y neuadd i gynnig help llaw, dim ond i ddarganfod nad oedd y fynedfa i iard ochr y neuadd brin bedair modfedd yn lletach na'r tai bach! Bu'n rhaid eu gwthio i mewn yn araf a gofalus, gyda dwy res o geir yn ymestyn am filltir o bobtu'r pentref. Ar yr un pryd, cynyddodd nifer y gwylwyr, a phob un yn cynnig ei gyngor ar y gwaith – y rhan fwyaf o'r cynghorion yn rhy amharchus i'w cofnodi yma! O'r diwedd, wedi oriau o chwys a llafur, roedd y tai bach yn gadarn yn eu lle. Gorffwysodd y gweithwyr blinedig gan edrych ar eu campwaith – a darganfod, er

the day of the Festival! The officials immediately contacted two MPs – Geraint Howells, Ceredigion, and Dafydd Elis Thomas, Meirionnydd – who were both staunch supporters of the Society. Within a few hours, we were assured that Tal-y-bont would not be affected on the crucial day. As it happened, the industrial dispute was settled two days before the Festival, but we were extremely grateful to the two MPs for their hard work behind the scenes.

One afternoon, about two days before the Festival, we were enjoying a cup of tea when one of our young sons shouted, 'The toilets are going past!' The family rushed to the front door in time to see the Portaloos – hired for the Festival – meandering slowly up the village on the back of a lorry. I rushed up to the Hall to offer my help, only to discover that the entrance to the side court of the Hall was barely four inches wider than the Portaloos! They had to be guided slowly and carefully into place – whilst queues of traffic over a mile long built up on either side of the village. At the same time, a large crowd congregated to watch the proceedings, and various pieces of advice were offered – most of them unsuitable to be repeated here! At last, after hours of hard toil, the Portaloos were firmly in place. The exhausted workers stood back to admire



mawr embaras iddynt, y gallai unrhyw un oedd yn pasio heibio weld yn syth i mewn i dŷ bach y dynion! Rhag peryglu digniti mawrion y genedl, codwyd sgrin ar frys dros y ffenest honno! Ddiwrnod neu ddau cyn yr Ŵyl gwaethygodd y tywydd dros Gymru, ac ar y nos Wener torrodd y storm waethaf i'r wlad ei gweld ers blynnydoedd. O bob cwr o Gymru deuai hanesion am rai oedd ar eu ffordd i Dal-y-bont yn gorfod troi'n ol oherwydd llifogydd a gwyntoedd cryfion. Daliwyd Derwyn Roberts, Wrecsam – un o hoelion wyth y Gymdeithas – mewn llifogydd ger Glandyfi. Yn hytrach na thorri'i gyhoeddiad i feirniadu yn yr Ŵyl, gadawodd ei gar yn y fan a'r lle, rholio'i drowsus i fyny a rhodio ar wyneb y dyfroedd hyd nes y daeth rhywun i'w achub!

Oherwydd y storm, doedd dim trydan yn Nhal-y-bont am gyfnod o bum awr yn ystod yr Ŵyl – a doedd dim y gallai hyd yn oed yr Aelodau Seneddol ei wneud i atal hynny! Erbyn hyn, rhyw luniau ac argraffiadau digyswllt o'r hunllef honno sy'n mynd trwy fy meddwl – merched y gegin yn dal i gynhyrchu prydau bwyd blasus ar stofs Primus; dwsinau o bentrefwyr yn rhuthro adref i chwilio am lampau paraffin; R. Alun Evans, un o'r arweinyddion yn dal torts i oleuo copi'r delynores, a'r swyddogion yn cael cathod bach wrth feddwl am ddefnyddio lampau paraffin i oleuo neuadd lle roedd cannoedd o bobl, a thelynau gwerth miloedd ar filoedd o bunnau! Yn bennaf oll, cofiaf ysbryd ardderchog y gynulleidfa a eisteddodd mewn oerni a lled-dywyllwch yn mwynhau'r cystadlu brwd, a'r fonllef o gymeradwyaeth a groesawodd y trydan pan ddaeth yn ei ôl. Yr ysbryd hwn a ysgogodd y penawdau ym mhapurau newydd y dydd Llun canlynol – rhai megis, 'Festival glows despite power failure'. Gwir y gair!

Ar waetha'r mân drafferthion a ddaeth yn sgîl trefnu'r Ŵyl, y pleser a'r boddhad o'i chynnal sy'n aros yn y cof. Atgofion am oddeutu saith gant a hanner o gystadleuwyr yn wynebu tywydd garw i heidio i Dal-y-bont o bob cwr o Gymru; y perfformiadau graenus; y gynulleidfa frwdfrydig – hyd yn oed am 1.45 ar y bore Sul! – ac atgofion am werthfawrogiad cystadleuwyr a chynulleidfa o'r holl drefniadau a wnaed ar eu cyfer, dan amgylchiadau anodd. Hyn oll oedd gwobr y Pwyllgor Gwaith a thrigolion

their handiwork – only to discover, much to their embarrassment, that the gents' toilet was plainly visible to all and sundry. So as not to compromise the visiting dignitaries, a screen was hastily erected to cover the offending window! A day or two before the Festival, the weather deteriorated throughout Wales, and on the Friday night the worst storm to be seen for years broke out. From all parts of Wales came news of people who were on their way to Tal-y-bont having to turn back because of the floods and high winds. Derwyn Roberts of Wrexham – one of the Society's 'big guns' – was caught in floods near Glandyfi. Rather than break his engagement to adjudicate at Tal-y-bont, he left his car, rolled up his trousers and waded through the deep water until he was rescued!

Because of the storm, there was no electricity in Tal-y-bont for a period of five hours during the Festival – and there was nothing even our MPs could do to help this time. By now, only fragmented pictures and impressions of that nightmare are left in my memory – the 'kitchen ladies' still producing tasty meals on Primus stoves; dozens of villagers rushing home to root out old paraffin lamps; R. Alun Evans, one of the compères, holding a torch so that a harpist could read the music score and the officials in a blind panic at the thought of using paraffin lamps to light a hall holding hundreds of people and harps worth many thousands of pounds! My favourite memory, however, is that of the inimitable spirit of the large audience who sat in the cold and half-darkness, enjoying every minute of the competitions and the huge cheer which welcomed the electricity when it was finally switched on again. This spirit was reflected in the newspaper headlines the following Monday, for example, 'Festival glows despite power failure'. How true that was!

Despite the few problems which had to be faced whilst arranging the Festival, all that remains in the memory now is the pleasure and the satisfaction felt by all who were involved. Memories of some 750 people facing atrocious weather to travel to Tal-y-bont from all parts of Wales; the high standard of the competitions; the enthusiastic audience – even at 1.45 a.m. on the Sunday morning! – and the appreciation of competitors and audience alike of the arrangements made for them, often in

y cylch am eu diwydrwydd a'u brwdfrydedd dros y misoedd lawer o baratoi. Yn goron i'r cyfan daeth y newyddion fod yr Wyl wedi gwneud elw o dros £2,400 – yr elw mwyaf erioed hyd hynny. Wrth edrych yn ôl dros dair blynedd ar hugain, a'r llwyddiant a'r bri sydd wedi dod i'r Wyl Gerdd Dant yn y cyfnod hwnnw, rhaid cyfaddef fy mod yn teimlo ei bod wedi colli rhywfaint o'i hanfod trwy dyfu mor fawr fel nad yw bellach yn bosibl ei chynnal ond mewn dinas neu dref sydd a theatr bwrpasol ac adnoddau proffesiynol. Collwyd y teimlad o berthyn i gymdeithas wledig, glôs, lle roedd pawb yn cyfrannu tuag at lwyddiant ein gŵyl 'ni'. Gŵyl Gerdd Dant Tal-y-bont a'r Cylch, 1977, oedd yr olaf yn y traddodiad hwn, ac y mae gennym le i fod yn falch ohoni.

Gwilym Huws

difficult circumstances. This was the reward of the Steering Committee and the local people for their hard work and commitment over many months. To cap it all, the Festival made a profit of £2,400 – the largest ever at the time. Looking back over 23 years, and at the success which has come to the Cerdd Dant Festival during that period, I must admit to feeling that it has lost some of its essence by growing so large that it can now only be accommodated in large towns and cities where there are purpose-built theatres and professional resources. It has lost the sense of belonging to a small, close-knit community, where everyone was happy to contribute to 'our' festival. The Tal-y-bont Cerdd Dant Festival, 1977, was the last in this tradition and we have every reason to be proud of our achievement.

Gwilym Huws