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We'd love to hear from you!

Chwarae Teg
Agile Nation

The Ascent programme is being run as part of Chwarae Teg's Agile Nation Project. Find out more at: www.thewayforwardforwomen.co.uk



Author set to visit American university

THE profile of Wales and Welsh writers could soon flourish overseas thanks to the work of a former Rhondda headteacher.

Phil Rowlands, who left Pentre primary six years ago, has been spending his retirement writing and helping other Welsh authors get recognised here and across the globe.

In October, the 65-year-old, from Tonypany, will travel to Portland State University in Oregon, US, to take part in an event which will discuss the possibility and desirability of offering courses or modules at American universities on Welsh writing in English.

The discussion will take its cue from Dr Tracy Prince's book *Culture Wars in British Literature* Multiculturalism and National Identity.

The evening will com-

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mence with a performance of the Welsh national anthem by the Oregon Welsh Festival Choir and there will be readings from Welsh and American writers including Mr Rowlands, Mike Jenkins, Chris Keil, Ceri Shaw and Sarah Woodbury.

Mr Rowlands said: "I will also be attending the Wordstock Literary Festival but there is no doubt that it is the panel discussion and the possibility of American universities running modules on Welsh writing that should make every established and aspiring Welsh writer sit up and take notice with their fingers firmly crossed."

"When I first took up my passion for writing I could not have imagined it

would lead to this point.

"My first novella, *A Christmas Carol Revisited*, was featured on BBC Radio Wales and given its first public reading in the City Bar Building, Manhattan, on December 19 last year.

"The event proved a great success and I received a note of congratulations from jazz singer Freddy Cole, son of the great Nat King Cole."

Reasoning that if he could do it so could others the author set up a blog, kindleauthors.blogspot.com, to encourage and help others through the process of writing, self publishing and self promotion.

He said: "My blog posts brought me to the attention of Ceri Shaw, a Welshman residing in Portland, Oregon. Together with my partner Gaabriel Beckett, Ceri cre-

ated the social website *AmeriCymru.net* with the aim of raising the profile of Wales, and all things Welsh particularly in America.

"Ceri proposed a joint venture with me which resulted in the creation of *Eto* (www.etomagazine.com) – for established, emerging and aspiring Welsh authors writing in English.

"Through all this we managed to get connected with the American university and now Welsh writers could start getting even more recognition across the world."

The second issue of *Eto* will be available in September and will feature Lesley Coburn, daughter of Rhondda author Ron Berry, as well as other Rhondda writers Bel Roberts, Stuart Keir, Sheila Lewis and Julie Samways.

Couple's fairytale comes true

A YOUNG couple have turned their fairytale wedding into a reality – by hiring a Cinderella-style horse and carriage and baking a castle cake.

Jamie Reakes wed his childhood sweetheart Gemma on July 27 on what was described as a "magical" day for the pair.

After walking down the aisle at Soar Chapel in Pontygarth, the couple were paraded through the Rhondda Fach on horse and carriage before arriving at Rhondda Golf Club for the wedding party.

Jamie, 24, said: "We waited for our fairytale wedding for so long, and when the day finally came we couldn't have been happier."

"I was really nervous, but when I saw my beautiful wife walk down the aisle I was overjoyed."

The couple first met nine years ago when Jamie moved from Blaenllechau



■ Jamie and Gemma with their horse and carriage

to Pontygarth.

"I was a really naughty boy growing up and I was chucked out of school when I was 11," he said.

"But as soon as I met Gemma, when I was 15, my life changed. Without her I might have gone down the wrong path."

A white and pink castle cake was made for the occasion by Made By Mam in Aberdare.

They are now hoping to

continue the fairytale theme next summer when they head to Disneyland for a belated honeymoon with their son Tyler and twins Harmony and Holly.

Jamie added: "The best man was my brother, Leon Reakes, who did a fantastic job. The bridesmaids also did a wonderful job. It was a beautiful day and night and I'd like to thank everyone who came and helped."

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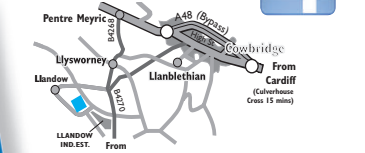
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