



ROBERT LLOYD column

Robert Lloyd is the print content editor for the South Wales Evening Post

In YourArea.co.uk

We can't wait to cwtsh...cautiously!

IT'S one of the gambles you take writing a newspaper column - you never know if your words are going to be trumped by overnight events.

By the time you pick up this newspaper, I am confidently expecting the First Minister of Wales, my old 'Carmarthen Gram' schoolmate, 'Mister' Mark Drakeford, to have started the legal processes for the new 'Cwtsh Law'.

On the other hand, my throw of the dice may have fallen off the table and his latest ministerial coronavirus announcements may include zero references to 'cwtshing'.

Either way, I will not be too disappointed as I know the topic of 'the cwtsh' has been occupying the minds of our ministers in the Senedd. It is only a matter of time before a 'cwtsh' gets enshrined in law.

For one thing, I am expecting some 'Judgement of Solomon' verdict on the true spelling of the word - is it 'Cwtsh' or is it 'Cwtch'? (More on this a little later).

In England, where they use the less glamorous word 'hug' instead of 'cwtsh', Prime Minister Boris Johnson has announced that people from different households will be able to meet up and hug from Monday as part of the lifting of coronavirus restrictions.

Wales' chief medical officer Frank Atherton is taking a cautious approach - even adopting the English term 'hug', which can only serve to confuse some of us in Wales!

Dr Atherton said: "Prevalence rates (of coronavirus) are really quite low at the moment, and being close to a

member of your family is less risk now - but with strangers, I would be very cautious still.

"I think there are other ways to greet people than to give everybody a hug, so there are ways to do that and to do it safely - don't spend too long making face-to-face contact, make it a brief hug.

"But to be honest, I think it is quite right - I understand that grandparents want to hug their grandkids, of course they do, and that's only natural.

"But we have learned over the last year that there are other ways to interact socially, and perhaps . . . hug cautiously."

With some help from well-placed marketeers and a little tweak of the words, I am sure Dr Atherton's words will soon be appearing on mugs and T-shirts in Welsh souvenir shops - 'Cwtsh cautiously!'

It's sensible advice from the good doctor, who has done an amazing job helping to guide Wales through the pandemic.

It's our own responsibility to do our own 'risk assessments' on who we 'cwtsh'. Members of 'The Bubble'? Probably, yes. Other fringe family and friends? Probably not, just yet.

And, so much may depend on the timing and direction of the 'cwtsh' in helping to keep the virus at bay -

■ No face-to-face cwtshing. Go for the slightly side-on approach.



Sand drawing for Cwtch The Bid in Swansea Bay on Swansea beach.

■ Don't linger. Dive in and dive out, couple of seconds, tops.

■ Adopt the diving pool approach - take a breath before moving in and breath out afterwards.

■ Use the light touch approach. This is not a squeezing contest. Imagine your Nana is an eggshell.

■ Practice beforehand using a cushion. You'll be surprised how you've lost your touch through not using your 'cwtsh' muscles. Check your cushion prop

after your trial run. If you leave a dent in the cushion, you need to relax a bit more.

My fellow columnist, the comedian Phil Evans, has been exercising his 'cwtsh' muscles in readiness for the lifting of restrictions on physical contact.

He's also been continuing his battle to promote the correct spelling of 'cwtsh'.

Back in 2017, he got very irate when the Swansea Bay City of Culture bid was launched.

The fanfare events launching the bid included a giant sand sculpture with 'Cwtch The Bid' written into the sands of Swansea's Beach.

Phil quickly pointed out the slogan's glaring spelling mistake - 'Cwtch' rather than 'Cwtsh'.

Evans said at the time: "It's a question as big as 'To be, or not to be?' in Wales: should the favourite Welsh word for a hug be a 'Cwtsh' or a 'Cwtch'? - that is the question."

Evans, who is often billed as the resident comic 'Hugmeister' of Wales, is convinced the correct spelling of the word is 'Cwtsh'.

He explained: "I

am sure there will be plenty of Welsh scholars out there willing to say different, but in my book it should always end in 'sh' rather than 'ch'.

"The explanation is simple. The Welsh CH is like the Scottish CH in loch, the sort of sound you make when you're clearing your throat and used in words like 'bach' (small).

"I've always been adamant that the correct version is 'Cwtsh', so it has been interesting to follow the debate on social media sites when the argument kicks off every now and again."

Look around various shops and cafes and you'll see some disagreement, with some using the word 'Cwtch'.

The Gwendraeth Valley - 'home' to the Welsh language soap opera Pobol y Cwm - has its Caffi Cwtsh, Cwtsh Gloyn and Y Cwtsh and nearby Ammanford has Cwtsh Chwarae.

The Ffrwms theatre in Llanelli boasts a Bar Caffi Cwtsh.

But, across Wales, for every two 'Cwtshes' there is probably one 'Cwtch'.

Which is probably why some legal judgement is needed on the matter from the newly-installed members of the Senedd in Cardiff Bay.

I am currently preparing my

'We want a big cwtsh' banner (white letters on red background in the style of 'Cofiwch Dryweryn') for the first official 'demo' at Cardiff Bay (rules on social distancing and public gatherings allowing, of course).

In the meantime, I leave you with a poetic observation on that old 'Cwtch The Bid' row. This is from one of Phil Evans's biggest fans, Nicci Brayley -

And God looked down on Swansea Bay

And cried out from the heavens

"Some silly person's spelt that wrong!"

It's "S" - go ask Phil Evans!"

A mighty clap of thunder God reached down with his hand

To scribble out the error That was etched there in the sand

"If you think Cwtsh is spelt like that"

"You need to step aside" So he clicked his mighty fingers

And quickly turned the tide

The waves came crashing up the beach

To smooth the sandy mess

The tide went out and all was calm

The C was now an S

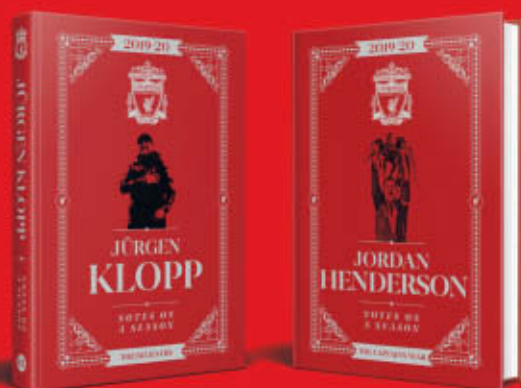
So Evening Post and all my friends

(and man on beach with rake)

I hope you read this poem And have spotted your mistake!

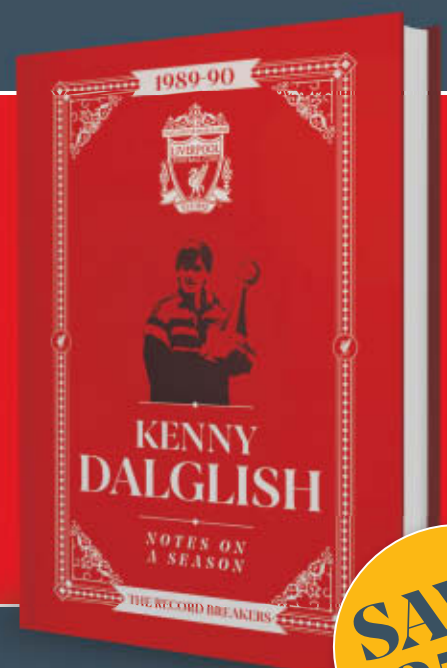
You can follow Robert Lloyd on Twitter @rlloydpr or email - robert.lloyd01@walesonline.co.uk

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