



## Young Guitarist climbs stairway to stardom



James Gair-Owens - Caerphilly County Borough Schools Young Contemporary Musician 2009/10.

Fifteen year old James Gair-Owens, a pupil at Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhywni, was crowned Caerphilly County Borough Schools Young Contemporary Musician of the Year 2009 at the end of last year.

Over 140 young people entered this year's event to battle it out through the preliminary stages before a shortlist was decided in the categories of Guitar, Bass, Drums, Singing and Composition. After a long day of impressive performances, the panel of judges declared young guitarist James Gair-Owens the overall winner.

Racheal Rajah, a St Martins Comprehensive student was awarded the title of Caerphilly County Borough Schools' Young Contemporary Singer of the Year 2009.

Nathan Battersby, a student at Lewis School Pengam, was awarded the title of Caerphilly County Borough Schools' Young Contemporary Composer of the Year 2009 after submitting a composition called "Finding Out".

The Mayor of Caerphilly CBC, Cllr John Evans, presented trophies to the delighted winners and commented, "Every year this event showcases the outstanding talent that we have in our local schools. It was a pleasure to see how these young people are excelling in their chosen fields. The high standard is also a credit to the music provision in our schools and the support provided by the Caerphilly Music Service. I'd like to congratulate everyone involved".

The event was organised by Caerphilly Music Service, in association with AXMusic, under the direction of Dr Keith Ellerington, Principal Officer for Music.

## Careers Convention – A big success

The first Caerphilly 14-19 Careers Convention was hosted at Caerphilly County Borough Council Headquarters during November 2009. The event was organised collaboratively between the Caerphilly 14-19 Unit, Careers Wales Gwent and Careers Wales Mid Glamorgan and Powys.

Year 9 and 11 students from secondary schools all over the county borough were invited to attend and many came along with parents and carers.

Students commented that the convention was fantastic, and after attending they had a better understanding of their future intentions. Parents were equally as positive and impressed. One parent commented, "I think the event was very well organised with an interesting variety of employers and service providers involved. I was given some useful information that I'm sure will help my son".

There were approximately 50 exhibitors taking part including the police, fire service, universities, media companies and local training providers. A number of seminars and talks were also arranged to supplement the information provided by exhibitors.



First Caerphilly Careers Convention at Penallta House.

## Minister officially opens Ysgol Gymraeg Penalltau

New Welsh-medium primary school, Ysgol Gymraeg Penalltau officially opened last term, when Jane Hutt AM Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills visited the school to perform a ribbon cutting ceremony. The Minister and official guests toured the facilities before enjoying a programme of entertainment, including Welsh songs and poetry.

The modern, purpose-built school provides Welsh medium education for children from Penallta, Penybryn, Penpedairheol, Tir-y-Berth, Gelligaer, Glyn-Gaer and Glan y Nant. The school is currently open for the infants phase only, but will extend to become a 3-11 primary school from September 2010.

Ysgol Gymraeg Penalltau, consists of a main hall, library, IT suite and eight classrooms, which can accommodate up to 240 pupils. The £2.8M project was jointly funded by Redrow, Caerphilly County Borough Council and the Welsh Assembly, and also incorporates cost effective energy systems such as under-floor heating and automatic lighting.

Education Minister Jane Hutt said: "It is crucial that pupils have a stimulating environment in which to learn. I am delighted that we've been able to provide £660,000 in capital funding to support the school. The new developments are absolutely ideal and will provide young learners with modern facilities to get the most out of their education."



Minister Jane Hutt AM, performing the official ribbon cutting at the opening of Ysgol Gymraeg Penalltau.

Outdoor learning, through the medium of play, is at the top of the agenda at Ysgol Gymraeg Penalltau, which has its very own secure woodland area with a little stream running through it. This area is ideal for learning experiences in the Foundation Phase. To further encourage outdoor learning in the future, canopies will be fitted onto the secure outdoor playing areas outside the reception and nursery classes.

Headteacher Andrea Woods said, " I am delighted to welcome all of our important visitors to the school. It is a testament to the exceptional growth in demand for Welsh Medium Education in the county borough that Ysgol Gymraeg Penalltau is the 11th Welsh primary school to open."

## Pupils from Lewis School Pengam bounce forward

**Year 7 pupils at Lewis School Pengam completed a Level 1 Trampoline Award after receiving coaching sessions through the school's 5x60 programme.**

With the assistance from teaching staff Miss Tamplin and Mrs Archer, and trampolining coach Julie Proctor, the pupils received five coaching sessions in which they learned how to perform pike jumps, straddle jumps and seat drops amongst other things.

Julie, who runs her own trampolining club at Caerphilly Leisure Centre, said, "It has been an absolute pleasure to work with this group and they have progressed so quickly!"

Mike Jones, 5x60 Officer at Lewis School Pengam said, "It is good to see those who don't usually enjoy physical activity, getting involved and having a go, and most importantly enjoying it."

The 5x60 programme at Lewis School Pengam offers a range of activities for pupils to try during lunch times and after school. For more info contact Mike Jones on [jonesm19@caerphilly.gov.uk](mailto:jonesm19@caerphilly.gov.uk)

## Christmas Extravaganza is a massive hit

As in previous years, local people flocked to enjoy an evening of singing, classical music, extracts from musicals, jazz and pop performed by a dazzling array of local musical talent at the fabulous Christmas Extravaganza which raised the roof of St David's Hall, Cardiff.

The event, described as 'A Seasonal Celebration', and organised by the award winning Caerphilly Music Service, featured over 600 talented young musicians drawn from schools and Youth and Community Groups across Caerphilly county borough.

As people arrived, and also during the interval, music spilled out into the public areas, including performances by students from Lewis School Pengam.



Lewis School, Pengam pupils performing on level 3



St James pupils performing scenes from 'Mari Lwyd'

The concert opened with the Youth Wind Orchestra playing extracts from "Pirates of the Caribbean" and "Copacabana". This was followed by pupils from St James Primary School creatively enacting the ancient local custom of the "Mari Lwyd", which explored traditional and contemporary rhythms and rhymes in a battle of wits between the householders and revellers involving a horse's skull being carried from house to house to mark the passing of the darkest days of mid-winter. The Youth Big Band and the Youth Percussion Ensemble then presented their programmes. Students from Rhymney Comprehensive and the Heolddu cluster combined their talents to give a cameo performance of Sian Jewell's new musical "The Land of Nedrag" just prior to the interval.

Two combined choirs – one from the Cwm Rhymni cluster, and the other from St Martins, Lewis Girls plus the Youth Singers and Chamber Choir – performed an entertaining selection of music in the second half.

Two highlights of the evening included Chloe Angharad Bradshaw (a sixth form flautist at Cwm Rhymni) playing 'The Suite Antique' with the Youth Sinfonia and Leanne Talbot (a sixth form students at St Martins) singing "I'll be There" and "Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas" with the Youth String Fusion.

Official guests included the Leader of Caerphilly CBC, Cllr Lindsey Whittle, and the Director of Education & Leisure, Ms Sandra Aspinall, who both took to the stage to officially thank everyone concerned for providing an excellent evening of music making.

The finale "Rudolph, the Red Nosed Reindeer" performed by the Combined Choirs and Big Band, brought a fabulous evening to a close.



Caerphilly combined choirs

## Heolddu commemorates War Heroes

Heolddu comprehensive school was delighted and proud to welcome members of the Royal British Legion, serving members of the Armed Forces, Cadets and members of the Police and Emergency Services when they hosted a special Remembrance Service at the end of last year. This was the second year Heolddu has hosted the Remembrance service, which was once again led by Reverend A. Bookless of Saint Gwladys Church.

During the service there were musical performances from the School Orchestra, the Choir and the Brass Ensemble. Bargoed Male Voice Choir helped create a fantastic atmosphere with a rendition of songs and student Chelsea O'Keefe sang the solo – Hero by Mariah Carey. The congregation joined in the singing with songs from the war time periods including the songs 'It's a long way to Tipperary', 'Pack up your troubles', 'Keep the home fires burning', and 'We'll meet again'.

Headteacher, Phil Jones and pupils Sarah Parry and Elizabeth Dunsford gave the readings for the service. Standards were raised to 'The Grenadiers March' performed by Heolddu's Brass Ensemble. The event brought together many generations of the community to remember those who have given their



Military visitors attending Heolddu's Remembrance Service.

lives in the service of their country and to pray for those who are involved in conflicts today. The service closed with the reading of the Kohima Prayer.

"When you go home, tell them of us and say; for your tomorrow, we gave our today".

## Pupils improve their netball skills



Primary School pupils who took part in the netball sessions pictured with the Celtic Dragons.

More than 70 pupils from six local primary schools learned how to perfect their netball skills during a three-hour session with the Celtic Dragons Netball Team, who kindly donated their time and knowledge to help out fellow team member and Netball Development Officer for Caerphilly County Borough, Suzy Drane.

Suzy, who has played for the Dragons for four years, is hoping that the Dragons visit will encourage pupils to actively participate in the sport that she has been so passionate about since the age of 10.

Goal shooter for the Dragons, Becky Neate said, "Participating in sessions like this gives the players an opportunity to interact with the community and to hopefully inspire the pupils to become the budding Celtic Dragons players of the future."

Pupils from Ysgol Gymraeg Gynradd Caerphilly, Rhydri Primary, Ysgol Y Castell, Ysgol Ifor Bach, Plasyfelin and Cwrt Rawlin Primary schools took part in the sessions. As a special treat, each pupil received forms to claim up to ten tickets each for the second match of the season in Cardiff. Each school also received a ball signed by the team.

Cllr Phil Bevan, Cabinet Member for Education and Leisure, commented, "I think it is important to demonstrate that playing sport contributes to the development as well as being equally beneficial to the health and well-being of pupils. The Dragon's camaraderie is a shining example to the youth of Caerphilly. It was fantastic to see so many people taking part. Hopefully, in the future with the help of Suzy and her colleagues, Caerphilly will once again participate through a competitive league".

## Sport encourages pupils literacy

At the end of last term more than 200 male, Year 7-9 pupils visited three major South Wales sporting venues - Cardiff City and the Swalec stadiums, Cardiff and Rodney Parade, Newport, to take part in a series of 'Read a Million Words' workshops organised by the Caerphilly Schools Library Service and Sport Caerphilly.

The initiative organised in partnership with the sports clubs is intended to encourage creative writing and improve literacy in comprehensive school pupils. The workshops covered various aspects of sports journalism, including match report writing techniques and styles, researching and writing sporting personality profiles and drafting questions for an interview with a chosen sports personality.

Pupils from Bedwas, St Martin's, Risca and St Cenydd comprehensive schools spent the day at Cardiff City Stadium where they started the morning with a tour of the arena, followed by a writing workshop with author Michael Harvey. During the afternoon they enjoyed a second workshop with the author.



*Risca pupils thoroughly enjoyed their visit to the stadium.*

Sport Caerphilly's Active Young Peoples Manager, Andrew Honey-Jones, who led the project, said, "This is a fantastic opportunity for the young people to experience a professional sporting environment. The visit to Rodney Parade and Cardiff City and the Swalec stadiums positively inspired the pupils to work hard to improve their literacy whilst exploring their interest in sport."

Author Michael Harvey commented, "By visiting these sporting venues the boys are inspired by the focus and determination needed in elite sport, which feeds into their writing."

## Media studies get better and better



*Lewis school pupils outside the famous fish and chip shop of Cwm Deri.*

During last term thirteen Media Studies pupils from Lewis School Pengam visited the BBC headquarters in Cardiff. The Year 11 and 12 pupils toured the studios to see the interior and exterior sets of 'Pobol y Cwm', where staff were busy decorating sets ready for the Christmas viewings. The pupils also toured the 'Wales Today' News studio and received a talk about career possibilities with the BBC.

For the students, the highlight of the visit was having lunch in the BBC canteen where the pupils indulged in spotting the celebrity diner.

Lewis School plan a return visit for Year 10 Media Studies pupils in the New Year.