

Cyfranogwyr o brosiect Taith yr Iaith

When Mary Edith Roberts took up a teaching post in 1950s Flintshire, little did she realise she was at the forefront of a movement that would change how children were taught in Wales for generations to come.

Now, over 60 years later, and thanks to funding raised by National Lottery players, Mary's granddaughter Megan is part of a project that recalls those early days, showing how Welsh education has developed and flourished over the years, and celebrating the importance of the language within the county.

85-year-old Mary has very vivid memories of her time at Ysgol Glanrafon, the very first Welsh medium school in north Wales and only the third throughout the country. She said: "While we were all young and enthusiastic for the language I don't think any of us had any idea of the significance of our work, that we were pioneers in the field.

"We met in the chapel hall originally, with only eight pupils, and it was all just great fun. I suppose many thought it wouldn't last, but we were all determined to make it a success - and by now it certainly makes me feel proud to have played my part.

"It's funny how my career has come full circle, with my son, Dafydd, receiving Welsh language education, and now Megan wanting to look back and reflect on those early days at Glanrafon."

Exhibition at Urdd Eisteddfod

The Taith yr Iaith (Journey of the Language) project will form part of an exhibition by Ysgol Maes Garmon that will be showcased at this year's Urdd National Eisteddfod in Flint, having secured funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF)'s Young Roots programme.

As Mary's 17-year-old granddaughter Megan has been finding out, it is important not to forget the efforts of people like her nain: "It can be easy for us to take the Welsh language for granted, but we need to remember it wasn't so long ago that children were being punished for speaking it in school, let alone being taught through the medium of Welsh.

"Taking part in this project has made me realise that a small group of passionate people had to really fight to ensure this was the case.

"Our exhibition at the Urdd will not only celebrate people like my nain and other teachers like her, and their dedication to reviving the language, but will also show how that language they fought so hard for is being used in Flintshire today."

To complement the exhibition, a new book will be launched to chronicle the language's development within the community, and a new song released, written and composed in partnership with the renowned Welsh singer, Arfon Wyn.

Richard Bellamy, Head of HLF Wales, emphasised the importance of the Young Roots programme: "Getting young people involved and interested in heritage projects is one of our key priorities - we want to show that everyone, no matter their age, has something to gain from engaging with history.

"The Taith yr Iaith project has been driven by the young people themselves and is a perfect example of how we can explore our past, to see how that has impacted on our lives today. While young people can develop new skills and ideas through our projects, they are also able to bring fresh ideas and enthusiasm to the table which benefits everyone involved."

Further information

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