

Cambrian News, Eisteddfod yr Urdd Ceredigion 2010 column

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First Urdd National Eisteddfod for Anwen Eleri

Although Ceredigion's Urdd Development Officer has seen numerous eisteddfodau during her last 10 years in the job, this will be her very first Urdd National Eisteddfod on her home patch, and she is really looking forward to the event:

"I can't wait for the week itself to arrive, there's only nine months to go, but before then we have a lot of work to do!" explains 30 year old Anwen Eleri Bowen who lives in Pembrokeshire with husband, Darren.

"I can't believe that it was back in 2004 when three Urdd regional representatives and myself formally approached the county council to see whether or not they would support Aberystwyth local committee's formal invitation to host the Eisteddfod within Ceredigion. Time has flown, and in May 2010, six years since that original meeting, the site at Llanerchaeron will be a hive of activity! We are extremely grateful to Ceredigion County Council for their support and to the National Trust for allowing us to use the site."

There is no doubt that an Urdd Development Officer has a huge task on their hands when the major Eisteddfod arrives on his or her patch, but it is one they relish as there is so much activity. Eleri is a member of the youth committee, the activities committee and the main steering committee for Ceredigion 2010, so she is thrown into the Eisteddfod planning process from the outset.

"I am extremely lucky that every primary and secondary school in Ceredigion has Urdd members, so the support from the youngsters and teachers is second to none. The county is a hive of activity, with people thinking up novel ideas of fundraising for the Eisteddfod. One of the most bizarre activities arranged was the 'Biblathon' at Cardigan. Starting on a Sunday, there was a rota set up to read the Bible from start to finish non stop until it was completed! I even participated and read verses from the Old Testament! It took four days, and the group raised £6500 – fantastic! There are so many similar stories throughout the county, of people really buckling down and working hard so we can reach the county's overall target of £300,000 needed to host the event."

Eleri is no stranger to the Urdd, as a pupil at Ysgol Pontyberem and Ysgol Gyfun Maes yr Yrfa she participated in recitation parties, disco dancing and choir competitions. During her student years at Trinity College, Carmarthen, she even risked her first degree examination because of the Urdd!

“During my college years, I worked as the Assistant Development Officer for the Urdd within Carmarthenshire, so when the Ceredigion job was advertised I applied for the position straight away. At 5pm the day before my first degree examination, I sat at an interview for the job at Aberystwyth. Thankfully, I was awarded my degree and the job, and have not looked back since!” Eleri explains.

The Development Officer recalls the last time she was so heavily involved with the Urdd National Eisteddfod on her home patch. It was exactly twenty years ago, when she was 10 years old and participating in the children’s pageant at Cwm Gwendraeth’s Urdd National Eisteddfod. At the time her mother worked as an administrator for the Eisteddfod.

“Suffice to say, twenty years on, and the Urdd continues to be a huge part of my life. It’s a great organisation, offers youngsters some fantastic opportunities and most of all opens doors,” Eleri explains.

And what is she looking forward to most for the Eisteddfod in May 2010? “A week of glorious sunshine, welcoming the whole of Wales to the county and seeing Ceredigion’s youngsters competing and performing on the main pavilion stage! In addition, I can’t wait to see so many youngsters participating in this huge cultural festival and being offered new and exciting opportunities!”