

Abergavenny's 10th Anniversary Eisteddfod 2011

The children's Eisteddfod at King Henry VIII School on Saturday morning was packed to overflowing, with keen competitors aged from 4 to 11 in their places from 9.00 am to 2.30 pm, watched by crowds of adoring parents, grandparents and friends. Ann Bellis, Head Teacher of Ysgol Gymraeg Y Fenni, did a sterling job as compere, supported by the morning's President, Siân Precious of King Henry's music department.

The finals on Saturday only represented the tip of a huge iceberg, with hundreds of children having taken part in six preliminary competitions spread over two weeks at primary schools in and around Abergavenny. The solo instrumentalists at Cantref School and singers at Llantilio Pertholey posed the greatest challenge to adjudicators, with competitions finishing at about 8 o'clock and 9 o'clock in the evening respectively, after 4.30 starts.

Highlights of Saturday morning were Gilwern Recorder Group giving a choreographed performance of Teddy Bears' Picnic, complete with teddy bears and picnic blanket, and the colourful and energetic "Ladies' Choice" dance group from Our Lady & St Michael's. Cantref's "Skirrid" folk dancers, from the youngest age group, charmed the audience with their smiles and lovely costumes, and reciters Ffion Hodder from Ysgol Gymraeg Y Fenni and Emily James from Gilwern are surely great stage performers in the making.

Half way through the morning the stage was filled with young writers, photographers and artists, receiving their prizes from Councillor Jane Foulser, Mayor of Abergavenny, on behalf of Abergavenny Town Council, sponsor of the competitions.

At 2.30 pm adjudicators Anne Smith, Emma Carlton and Jane Blank completed their work and the audience re-grouped for the afternoon's 11-18 age group competitions.

The afternoon was compered by Val Burch and adjudicated by Hetty Watkins and Angela Morris Parry. Tim Hill, Head of King Henry VIII music department, played an active role as President, masterfully reconciling occasional split loyalties, congratulating competitors both from his previous school at Cwmcarn and from KHS.

Talented instrumentalists included Anna and Evan Roberts from Abergavenny, who not only scooped prizes as piano and instrumental soloists but also won one of the afternoon's top prizes – together with the chance to perform on stage at the Borough Theatre in the evening – as part of the very polished Only Brass R Loud. Hannah Roper from Fairwater School was also selected to perform in the evening, filling the hall with a powerful rendition of Defying Gravity from the musical Wicked.

After a very witty 5 minute sketch from Tredegar youngsters, Val Burch concluded the afternoon's competitions, paying tribute to Sam Ellis and Bethan Reed, the day's highly efficient stage hands and music technicians, who made sure that the sound system worked and the stage was cleared for a very long day's action. Heroes both!