

Dydd Miwsig Cymru close to Minister's heart

The Minister set up a Welsh record club in her old school, Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Glantaf to encourage fellow pupils, many of whom came from non-Welsh speaking homes, to engage with the Welsh language outside of lessons. She also sold bimonthly Welsh language music magazine Sgrech (Scream) in the school and arranged bus trips from Cardiff to the annual Sgrech awards night in North Wales.

In a commemorative issue of the magazine, published in 2005, 20 years after the magazine stopped publishing, the Minister wrote about her involvement with the Welsh language music scene.

She wrote:

“The 80s were an exciting time in the Welsh pop world. There would be a gig somewhere nearly every weekend and they were opportunities for those of us who followed Welsh pop to meet up. 80% of the children at my school, Ysgol Gyfun Gymraeg Glantaf, came from homes where no Welsh was spoken. If the children didn't take an interest in school, they were unlikely to take an interest in Welsh.

“I started a Welsh record club in school and, as it was an excuse not to go out in the cold, many fellow pupils came along. They started to realise Welsh was something that extended beyond the classroom...

One of the highlights was a trip to the Sgrech awards night. For a small, isolated group from the city to go to the other end of Wales and see thousands of Welsh speakers in one place was quite something!”

With responsibility for promoting the Welsh language now a major part of her portfolio, history is repeating itself, albeit on a larger scale for the Minister.

The scene itself is also on a larger scale. To mark Dydd Miwsig Cymru, Spotify will reveal the number of hours of Welsh language music streamed by the service in 2017. Shazaam will also be releasing a list of the top 20 most Shazammed artists of 2017 and NME will be letting its 900,000 followers how they can celebrate the day.

Rather than having to arrange bus trips across Wales to go to gigs, Welsh music is now accessible world wide at the touch of a button. Six bespoke playlists including Acoustic, Electronica, Campfire Sing Song, Chill Out, Workout and Legends will be available on Spotify, Apple Music and Deezer through a Shazam code. The day will also feature on BBC Breakfast and BBC

Radio stations across the nation.

There are gigs too for those who prefer their music live. Free gigs for children and adults are happening all across Wales. There are even events as far afield as Budapest and Brooklyn.

The Minister said:

“Digging out the article brought back some lovely memories, although maybe not of my hairstyle! I have always been passionate about encouraging others to use Welsh and to use it in social settings rather than just in school or at work.

“Reaching the target of a million Welsh speakers is a task that requires changing a culture and government cannot do that alone. This is why I am calling on every Welsh speaker to play their part in encouraging or helping someone to learn Welsh.

“Dydd Miwsig Cymru provides the opportunity to do just that so I am thrilled to be a part of it this year. As I found with my classmates, music is an ideal way to introduce people to the language in a social setting and to show that Welsh is a language that is alive and thriving.

“The events taking place show the diversity of Welsh language music. There really is something for everyone wherever you are and whatever the sort of music you like so I’d urge everyone to go to a gig or download a playlist. You don’t even have to get off your sofa to take part!”