



## Dysgwr y Flwyddyn Finalist Hugh Brightwell: Selecting the Patagonia Learner of the Year

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**Cyrraeddodd Hugh Brightwell yn y rownd derfynol o'r gystadleuaeth Dysgwyr y Flwyddyn eleni. Wythnos diwethaf, caeth e cyfle i ddewis yr enillwr o gystadleuaeth debyg- Dysgwyr y Flwyddyn Patagonia!**

Hugh Brightwell was a finalist in this year's Learner of the Year competition. Last week, he had the opportunity to choose the winner of a similar competition- Learner of the Year Patagonia!

Ar brynhawn ym mis Hydref pan roedd cymaint o bobl yng Nghymru'n disgwyl am gorwynt Ophelia i routhro heibio roedd yna rhywbeth hollol wahanol yn cael ei ddisgwyl mewn ystafell

One afternoon in October when many people in Wales were expecting hurricane Ophelia to rush past, there was something completely different happening in a room in Northup, Flintshire. In Eiran Conlon's office

yn Llaneurgain, Sir y Fflint. Yn swyddfa Eirian Conlon (Swyddog Gweithredol Datblygu'r Cwricwlwm), roeddwn i ac Eirian yn disgwyd cynnal cyfweliadau ffurfiol dros Skype efo'r tair ymgeisydd olaf yng nghystadleuaeth Dysgwr y Flwyddyn Eisteddfod yr Wladfa 2017. Beth gyrhaeddodd trwy wefraz'r rhyngrwyd oedd awel feddal a phleserus yn syth o baith y Wladfa, yn llawn cyffro a blas bywydau dysgwyr Cymraeg hollo di-Saesneg.

Yn wreiddiol cyrhaeddodd saith cais am y teitl ac roedd hi'n anodd iawn dewis dim ond tair i gael eu cyfweld. Roedden ni wedi ein synnu gan frwdrydedd, gweithgarwch a safon iaith ardderchog yr ymgeiswyr. Mi oedd gwahaniaethau rhwng yr ymgeiswyr ond roedden nhw'n fach iawn, iawn. I wneud y broses yn fwy cymhleth roedden nhw hefyd mewn mesydd gwahanol o ran gwaith a sefyllfa deuluo. Yn y diwedd, yn hollo annibynnol cyn dechrau trafod, roedd y ddau ohonon ni wedi dewis Jessica Jones o Drefelin, Ariela Gibson o'r Gaiman a Carina Medina o Drelew. Drwy gyd-ddigwyddiad roedd hyn yn cynrychioli tair o'r prif ardaloedd lle mae Cymraeg yn cael ei siarad ym Mhatagonia.

Cytunon ni ar nifer o gwestiynau i'w gofyn ac hefyd, i fod yn hollo deg, i ofyn union yr un cwestiynau craidd i bawb. Roedden ni'n awyddus i ddarganfod pam dysgodd y tair ohonynt nhw Gymraeg, beth oedd eu hanes a'u cefndir, faint o amser roedden nhw'n treulio'n siarad Cymraeg ac yn annog pobl i ddysgu Cymraeg. Mi fase hi wedi bod yn braf cael taith allan i gyfweld y tair(!) ond yn ffodus, dan ni'n byw mewn Oes Ddigidol ac yn medru gweld a siarad, yn fyw, â phobl miloedd o filltiroedd i ffwrdd ar draws y môr, gan ddefnyddio meddalwedd fel Skype a'r Gweplyfr. Roedd ganddon ni fanylion cyswllt y tair ar y ddwy wefan, ac mi lwyddodd Skype efo dwy a negesydd (drwy ei ffôn) efo un!

Roedd ymatebion pob un yn wych, roedd yn bosibl clywed y balchder o fedru Cymraeg yn lleisiau'r tair ac i weld y cyffro â'r brwdrydedd ar eu hwynebau. Ar ddiwrnod mor stormus roedd hyn yn hynod o bleserus â chalonogol. Gan defnyddio cynefindra Eirian â'r Wladfa roedd yn bosibl i dynnu mwy o wybodaeth am eu gweithgareddau Cymraeg. Roedd bob cyfweliad am chwarter awr ac ar sail safon iaith y ceisiadau gwreiddiol, eu hyder wrth siarad yn fyw drwy gyfrifiadur efo dau berson hollo ddiarth, ac yn fwy pwysig defnydd yr ymgeiswyr o'r iaith a'u brwdrydedd i berswadio pobol Patagonia i siarad Cymraeg a dysgu am ein diwylliant, roedd rhaid penderfynu pwy fyddai "Dysgwr y Flwyddyn" 2017.

Roedden ni wedi ein synnu efo brwdrydedd a chyfraniad gwerthfawr y dair yn y gymdeithas Gymraeg, efo plant, pobol ifanc ac oedolion eu cymunedau. Mae'r dair yn defnyddio'r iaith yn eu gwaith (y dair, fel mae'n digwydd, yn gweithio yn system addysg ddwyieithog Patagonia) ac yn eu bywydau cymdeithasol.

Roedd hi'n ddiddorol clywed bod y tair wedi cael cyfle i ddwad i Gymru i ddatblygu eu Cymraeg, ac yn achos Jessica ac Ariela, i ddarganfod mwy am eu gwreiddiau.

Roedd Jessica wedi dechrau dysgu Cymraeg yn 17 yn Ysgol yr Andes. Roedden ni wedi dotio efo ei Chymraeg naturiol hynod o

(Curriculum Development Executive Officer), Eirian and I were holding interviews across Skype with the last three candidates in Patagonia's Dysgwr y Flwyddyn 2017 competition. What was transmitted over the internet was a soft and pleasant breeze of Patagonia's prairie, full of the excitement and taste of the lives of learners who are completely without English.

Originally there were seven applicants for the title, and it was very difficult to choose only three to be interviewed. We were surprised by the enthusiasm, diligence and the excellent language standard of the candidates. There were differences between the candidates but they were very small. To make the process more complex they have different types of work family situations. In the end, and completely independently before we started discussing, both of us chose Jessica Jones of Trevelin, Ariela Gibson of Gaiman and Carina Medina of Trelew. By coincidence, these represented the three main areas where Welsh is spoken in Patagonia.

We agreed the number of questions to ask, and then, to be completely fair, to ask the same core questions to everyone. We were keen to discover why the three of them learnt Welsh, what was their history and background, plus how much time they spend on speaking Welsh and supporting people to learn Welsh. It would have been sweet to have a trip out to interview the three of them, but fortunately we live in a digital age and can see and speak with people thousands and thousands of miles away across the sea, by using software such as Skype and Facebook. We had the contact details for three of them on both websites, and I used Skype with two and messaged one (through her phone!).

The answers of all of them were great, and it was possible to hear the pride of being able to speak Welsh in voices of the three and to see the excitement and enthusiasm on their faces. On such a stormy day this was extremely enjoyable and encouraging. Using Eirian's familiarity with Patagonia it was possible to draw more information about their Welsh language activities. Each interview was for a quarter of an hour and was based on the standard of the language used in the original applications. Their confidence in speaking live through the computer with two strangers was clear, and more importantly the use of the language of the candidates and their enthusiasm to persuade the people of Patagonia to speak Welsh and learn about our culture was evident. But we had to decide who would be Learner of the Year 2017.

We were surprised by the enthusiasm and valuable contribution of the three in the Welsh language society, with children, young people and adults of their communities. The three use the language in their work (all three, as it happens, work in the Patagonia bilingual education system) and in their social lives.

It was interesting to hear that the three had the opportunity to come to Wales to develop their Welsh, and in the case of Jessica and Ariela, to find out more about their roots.

Jessica began learning Welsh at the age of 17 in the Andes School. We noted her extremely natural Welsh, and the excellent contribution in the

gywir, a'i chyfraniad arbennig yn yr ardal efo plant ac fel aelod o'r Gymdeithas Gymraeg yn ardal Trefelin.

Roedd Ariela o'r Gaiman yn cyfrannu mewn llawer ffordd at ochr gerddorol diwylliant y dre ac yn rhannu Cymraeg ymysg rhai nad oedd yn ei glywed fel arall. Unwaith eto roedd ei Chymraeg yn rhugl ac roedd ei brwdfrydedd yn heintus.

Roedd Carina hefyd yn llawn brwdfrydedd, yn defnyddio'r Gymraeg mewn llawer o ffyrdd efo Celf a'r Urdd yn Nhrelew, wedi cydweithio efo yr gwehydd Cefyn Burgess yn ddiweddar ar brosiect yno, ac roedd ei goobaith i ddechrau cyfarfodydd Ti a Fi yn Nhrelew er mwyn cefnogi rhieni i blant bach yn syniad ardderchog.

Mi wnaethon ni fwynhau siarad efo'r dair yn fawr ac roedd hi'n eithriadol o anodd dewis enillydd. Mi hoffen ni longyfarch pob un o'r saith wnaeth gystadlu, ond roedd y dair yma yn wych. Mae'n sicr y bydd y dair yn parhau i gyfrannu at lawer agwedd o ddiwylliant Cymraeg Patagonia i'r dyfodol. Hoffen ni annog y ddwy arall i gystadlu eto flwyddyn nesa, gan mai mater o farn ydy cystadleuaeth ar y safon yma ac fe allai beirniaid eraill ddewis yn wahanol. Ond eleni yr enillydd, o drwch blewyn, ydy Jessica Jones- felly llonyfarchiadau, Jessica.

Yn ôl trefnydd y gystadleuaeth, Clare Vaughan sy'n wreiddiol o ardal Caergwrle ger Wrecsam, ac yn dwad adre'n aml i Sir Fflint "Roedd y tair gafodd gyfweliad yn canmol y beirniaid am wneud iddynt deimlo yn gartrefol ac yn eu galluogi nhw i fyngi eu hunain heb deimlo'n rhy nerfus!" Diolch byth am hynny!

Bydd Clare wedi cyhoeddi'r canlyniad yn ystod yr Eisteddfod nos Sadwrn Hydref 28, a bydd yr enillydd yn derbyn tlws Dysgwr y Flwyddyn a 500 peso gan Menter Patagonia.

Mae Eirian a fi'n diolch yn fawr am y cyfle i gael helpu 'chydig ar yr ymdrech i gadw'r Gymraeg yn ffynnu ym Mhatagonia, mor bell o Gymru. Profiad newydd i'r ddu ohonon ni a diddorol i mi fod 'yr ochr arall i'r ddesg' (y cyfrifiadur tro 'mal) ar ôl cyrraedd rownd derfynol Dysgwr y Flwyddyn yr Eisteddfod Genedlaethol eleni!

area with children and as a member of the Welsh Society in the Trevelin area.

Ariela from Gaiman contributes in many ways to the musical culture in the town and shared Welsh amongst those who did not otherwise hear it. Once again her Welsh was fluent and her enthusiasm was infectious.

In addition, Carina was full of confidence and uses Welsh in lots of ways with the arts and the Urdd in Trelew, had co-worked with the weaver Cefyn Burgess recently on a project there, and her wish to start a You and Me meeting in Trelew to support young children was an excellent idea.

I enjoyed speaking with the three of them a great deal and it was extremely difficult to choose a winner. I want to thank all seven of them for competing, but the three finalists were excellent. It is certain that the three of them will continue contributing in key ways to the Welsh culture in Patagonia in the future. We want to support the two others to compete again next year, as the standard of the competition was excellent this year and perhaps other judges would choose differently. It was a difficult decision, but this year Jessica Jones won- so congratulations Jessica.

According to the organiser of the competition, Clare Vaughan, who is originally from the Caergwrle area near Wrexham, and comes home regularly to Flintshire: "The three interviewed praised the judges for making them feel at home and enabling them to express themselves without feeling too nervous". Thank heavens for that!

Clare will have announced the result during the Eisteddfod on Saturday October 28, and the winner will receive the title Learner of the Year and 500 pesos from Menter Patagonia.

Eirian and I are very grateful for the opportunity to help 'with the effort to keep the Welsh language thriving in Patagonia, which is so far from Wales. It was a new experience for the two of us and it was interesting to be the other side of the desk' (and of the computer as well!) after reaching the final round of the National Eisteddfod's Learner of the Year!

Yn y llun uchod, mae Hugh yn siarad â'r enillwr, Jessica Jones, dros Skype.

In the image above, Hugh is talking over Skype with the winner, Jessica Jones.