

# Llangollen 2016

## ***Hands on @ Llangollen Eisteddfod*** ***e-newsletter***

Edition 3

March/April 2016

### ***A note from our Chairman***

At the time of writing this it's nearly Easter and we've now got an exciting concert stream in place along with an increased number of competitors applying to come to Llangollen for our 70th Eisteddfod. We're keen to re-engage locals and have been promoting what's available for the price of a grounds admission ticket. The ticket allows admission to the pavilion during the day to use the red chairs and there will be a full programme on the outside stages accessible to all.

I am very grateful for all the work you all do as volunteers; the Eisteddfod simply couldn't function without all your support. However, if you or any of your friends and acquaintances feel you can offer any other skills, please contact the volunteer team at [volunteers@international-eisteddfod.co.uk](mailto:volunteers@international-eisteddfod.co.uk).

Marketing and promotion of the Eisteddfod is always important and much can be done by word of mouth and social media. Please take every opportunity to spread the word so that we can have a successful Eisteddfod and if any of you know of, or have access to land on which we could put advertising in the run up to the Eisteddfod please contact our marketing officer, Meg McNutt at [marketing@international-eisteddfod.co.uk](mailto:marketing@international-eisteddfod.co.uk). Unfortunately we're not allowed to put posters on Denbighshire "street" furniture so all suggestions are appreciated.

**Dr Rhys Davies**  
Chairman

#### **Dates for Your Diary**

- **Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> April**  
Pub meet up at The Sun Trevor, Llangollen at 7.30pm
- **Saturday 21st May**  
Cheese, Wine & Musical Crackers - A fundraising evening of music from stage and screen with *Stage 2 Stage* at Llangollen Town Hall at 7.30pm
- **Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> June**  
70<sup>th</sup> Celebration, Town Hall. More details to follow.

# Fundraising event - Cheese, Wine & Musical Crackers

On Saturday 21st May, the Eisteddfod will host a fundraising evening of *Cheese, Wine and Musical Crackers* in collaboration with local show choir, *Stage 2 Stage*.

The event, which will be held in Llangollen Town Hall starting at 7.30pm, will feature a two-set programme of popular songs from musical theatre and screen accompanied by a live, five piece band. Highlights from the programme include rousing numbers from *Les Misérables* and *Evita*, a hauntingly beautiful rendition from *West Side Story* and toe-tapping medleys from *Chicago* and *Guys and Dolls*.

In addition to the musical entertainment, there will also be an auction of Eisteddfod memorabilia. Items up for grabs include a signed, one off painting of the main stage in all its colourful glory by resident artist Ian Wildgoose, clothing autographed by celebrity artists such as Status Quo, Alfie Boe, Rufus Wainwright and Jonathan Antoine and various crafts and ornaments, generously donated by Eisteddfod week traders.

*Stage 2 Stage's* members, along with their Musical Director, Elen Mair Roberts, Chairman of the Music & Staging Committee, have close links with the festival, with several volunteering both year round and during Eisteddfod week in various roles on the Music & Staging, Grounds and Finance Committees. Others have volunteered or worked for the organisation in the past, or have simply enjoyed visiting as audience members.

Colin Roberts, secretary of the Grounds Committee and member of the singing group said, "One of *Stage 2 Stage's* main objectives is to support local organisations in their fundraising activities by providing high quality, affordable entertainment. Several of us have close connections with the Eisteddfod, therefore it seems only natural that we would wish to give our support by facilitating an event, which we hope will generate a good sum for Eisteddfod funds".



Photograph of Stage 2 Stage performing at Welsh Rugby Captain Ryan Jones' Testimonial Dinner 2014 courtesy of Paul Brown

Tickets for *Cheese, Wine and Musical Crackers* are priced at £12.00 and include a glass of wine on arrival and cheese and biscuits during the interval. They can be purchased directly from the Eisteddfod Office (01978 862001) or from Llangollen Tourist Information Centre. Details of the items for auction will also be published on the website prior to the event so keep watching this space <http://international-eisteddfod.co.uk/events/cheese-wine-and-musical-crackers/> !

# Volunteering Opportunities

## Outside Stages

The Music & Staging Committee is looking for volunteers to help on three outside stages; the Royal Mail stage (the Globe stage), the Amphitheatre stage and the small Intra-arts stage, which will be located in the story telling tent. The latter is mainly for music or dance workshops and exhibitions. The two bigger stages host competitors and professional acts all week.

Each stage is staffed in shifts by at least 1 sound engineer, a stage manager, a presenter and one or two volunteers. The Stage Manager has overall control of the stage and the presenters introduce the artists. Volunteer duties will involve assisting with administration, PRS paperwork (copyright), looking after performers, a go at presenting if they would like to or anything else required (...praying to the Sun God!).

Shift times are 9:30am to 2.30pm and 2.30pm to 7.30pm. Meal tickets will be provided for each person on duty for each shift, plus free tea, coffee and water throughout. We plan to rotate duties across all 3 stages over the week so that everyone gets the chance to experience each stage.

If you fancy a new volunteering challenge or know of someone who would like to get involved, please get in touch for more information [volunteers@international-eisteddfod.co.uk](mailto:volunteers@international-eisteddfod.co.uk)

## Front of House

The Front of House team is seeking one or two new volunteers to help us set up the pavilion in the two weeks before the Eisteddfod and tidy away during the week after the Eisteddfod.

The start date is June 18th until July 13th, 9.00am to 4.00pm, however we would be grateful for any hours of help you can give. We would stress that the persons need to be physically fit and able to lift.

During Eisteddfod week the volunteers would be available to help other committees with physical jobs and would be welcome to train for the control desk, stewarding in the pavilion or assisting the Tickets Committee.

If you are interested or know of someone who would be, please contact Ros Davies at [rosdavies@nasuawt.net](mailto:rosdavies@nasuawt.net)



Hands On @ Llangollen Eisteddfod now has a Facebook page!



Join our group page to keep up to date with the latest news and information



## Eisteddfod Ambassador Campaign

As part of our promotional work for the 2016 Eisteddfod, we would like to invite volunteers to join in our new ambassador scheme.

Volunteers are a vital part of the success of the Eisteddfod and we would like to hear your stories and at the same time spread the word about the Eisteddfod. We would like to hear from those of you who have a particularly longstanding commitment as a volunteer, an unusual connection with Llangollen, those of you who are out of the area or just feel happy to share your experiences. Your stories would feature in our social media or PR campaigns and as a Volunteer ambassador we would ask that you make your email address available so that people in your local area can contact you with questions about visiting or competing in the Eisteddfod.

If you are interested in being a Volunteer ambassador then please contact Siân Eagar on [siane@international-eisteddfod.co.uk](mailto:siane@international-eisteddfod.co.uk)

## Volunteer News

Many congratulations to volunteer Scott Cooper and his fiancée, Anna Davies, on the recent birth of their first child. Their daughter, Grace Elizabeth Cooper, arrived 5 weeks early in mid-March but both she and her proud mum and dad are all doing really well.

A sound and lighting engineer by profession, Scott is part of the hardworking team that runs the outside stages and is a familiar face at the Amphitheatre stage during Eisteddfod week, where he lends his skills as sound technician.

We wish Scott, Anna and Grace all the very best as they enjoy their first days together and look forward to welcoming Grace as the latest recruit to the Eisteddfod family!



*Photograph of Scott and Grace courtesy of Scott Cooper*

# *Focus on....Competitor Liaison*

**Each edition, we ask a different committee or function to give us an insight into the role they play in making the Eisteddfod happen. In this issue, we focus on the role of Competitors' Liaison Officer, which is currently fulfilled by Merle Hunt.**

I loved competing at Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod as a member of the combined Oswestry Girls' and Boys' High School choirs, but I did not realise at the time that this love affair was going to be a lifelong commitment.

I visited the Eisteddfod as part of my higher education to observe excellent examples of cultural dance at first hand and this stood me in good stead when I subsequently embarked on my teaching career. Later, as a college lecturer, it was only natural that I should bring my students to Llangollen to have this same unique experience.

After spending some 12 years with an LEA inspectorate and later with ofsted, I returned to my roots in Wales. It was not long before my love of the Eisteddfod was rekindled by hosting members of overseas groups in my home and later helping to organise the allocation of our given group to different homes in the Ceiriog valley. It is always an exhilarating and often humbling experience to have such a range of different nationalities and cultures sharing your home, such as groups from the Canadian First Nation, Punjab, Ukraine, Serbia and Ghana.

I later worked for 5 years overseeing UK competitors and in 2013 was appointed as Competitors' Liaison Officer, a post relinquished by Brian Evans.

So, what does my role involve?

Following receipt of overseas competitors' travel and accommodation requirements, I work with a dedicated team of fellow volunteers to organise airport transfers to and from Llangollen, to allocate accommodation into hotel, residential school/college or home stay provision and to arrange groups' daily transport needs whilst at the Eisteddfod. This procedure is a year long process in terms of encouraging initial overseas participation, updating information packs, agreeing budgets, liaising with the various Eisteddfod committees and of course, communicating with competitors. Are there any volunteers out there who would like to assist with any of these duties?

Where competitors have little command of the English language, I allocate interpreters for them. I already have Russian, French and Italian stalwarts, but would welcome any further language volunteers!

With regard to Visa Nationals, I have to formally confirm individuals' passport details, their role within the group and their participation in the different competitions and performances during the Eisteddfod. This confirmation plays a vital part in supporting their visa application in their Border Agencies. I am also in regular contact with the Home Office sending them details of all Visa National applying to come to the Eisteddfod and to ensure that the Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod remains on the Permit Free List of Festivals in this country.

My role also entails allocating bursary awards, via a committee, to overseas groups who face financial hardship. This annual bursary fund is provided by a fantastic range of donors, committees and Eisteddfod friends, who devote the whole year to raising money for this purpose. Sadly, there are never sufficient funds to meet everyone's needs.

As with other roles, the lead up to the Eisteddfod week is challenging! Constant liaison with Hospitality ensures that the regular amendments to group numbers, room shares and arrival and departure times are up to date. As always, for a variety of reasons, there are last minute group withdrawals. This is always uncomfortable as Hospitality has to cancel the planned accommodation, which always threatens the availability of that accommodation for subsequent years.

There are regular telephone calls from Border Agencies to verify our non-Visa Nationals competitors. This involves having all competitor details to hand and an ability to understand the pronunciation of each name!!!!

An exercise that involves many, many cups of coffee is confirming the individual groups' 'whereabouts' during Eisteddfod week i.e. ensuring with the music office that each group's rehearsal times & venues, workshops, backstage times, outside stage and outreach performances and adjudications are all feasible!

Next on the list is a whole plethora of photocopying of information for the groups and their hosts. All these require collating and filing into individual named packs. Volunteers for this task are very, very welcome!!!!

During the week it is a joy to meet, at last, the group leaders. I feel as if I already know them from the amount of communication that we have had between us. Their smiles, appreciation of, and gratitude to, the Eisteddfod organisers are profuse and this makes the year's work even more satisfying and enjoyable.

If anyone is interested in the role of Competitor Liaison Officer, I would be very happy to arrange a job shadow.



*Photograph of Merle courtesy of Gareth Edwards*

# From the archive

For the next few editions, we will be sharing some little gems from the Music & Staging Committee's archive, which have been kindly provided by Ann Ankers. The articles, each written by a visiting celebrity artist, public figure or presenter, were featured in the Committee's own newsletter *Miscellany*, which was edited by Ann, and provide a fascinating insight into their experience of the festival.

This time, we revisit a contribution made by presenter Siân Thomas, who is still a very familiar face on the main stage during Eisteddfod week.

To say that I was delighted to be asked, back in early 2002, to join the team of stage presenters for "LIME", would be the understatement of the year. I had loved Llangollen as a town since I was a child, holidaying with my parents in Llandudno. It was always a great day out, and a chance to enjoy the trains, canal, and a very large ice cream eaten on the banks of the river. I visited during Eisteddfod week for the first time, while at secondary school – an end of term outing, and was fascinated by the way the little town seemed to have acquired elastic sides! Suddenly, this sleepy corner of Wales was crammed full of people wearing wonderful costumes, speaking the language of countries I had only heard about in geography lessons. It was all so exciting, so glamorous, and bearing in mind that few of us in those days had travelled outside the British Isles, so very "different!" For one week in July, it seemed as though the whole world had come to "Cymru fach".



How wonderful that a group of Welshmen, had this vision of a world in harmony, and that this, the "land of song", in 1947, would invite other lands to harmonise with her-celebrating that which unites us, rather than focusing on the divisions. This little country of ours opens her heart to the world, and its beat is heard loudly at the Llangollen Eisteddfod.

This glorious unique festival, happens not in a bustling metropolis, but right here in Wales, and I'm thrilled to play my small part in its continued success. I love so many aspects of it – the kaleidoscope of colour and mishmash of languages on the eisteddfod field, the organised chaos backstage as presenters and performers try to get to grips with each other's languages, and pronounce the names of songs and dances, the hustle and bustle of moving the stage risings for each choir, and the occasional panic when a competitors bus is stuck in traffic, and they're due on stage in five minutes!. I have even grown to love that steep ramp backstage, which has caused so many problems for me and my high heels over the years! I love it all – it's Llangollen! But I think my favourite event is the welcoming on stage of all the countries represented at the Eisteddfod- each proudly waving its flag. It always brings a lump to my throat, and a tear to my eye, and I'm sure that you too, have often wished, when you're part of occasions like these, that the whole world could be more like Llangollen. To be part of it is thrilling, humbling and a great privilege, and makes me very, very proud that it happens here in my country – in Wales.

# Volunteer Q&A

Our 750+ volunteers make a significant and invaluable contribution to the running of the Eisteddfod. This regular Q&A feature will aim to give a light hearted insight into the individuals who make our festival possible. For this edition, Jillie Sanders, Chair of the Finance Committee, has kindly provided us with a glimpse into her Eisteddfod “journey”.

- **What is your full name, where you were born and raised and where do you live now?**  
Jillian Ruth Sanders, I was born in Brighton and I currently live in Betws-y-coed.
- **When was your first Eisteddfod and why did you visit?**  
First visited in 2000. I'd not been living long in North Wales and was searching around for something worthwhile to become involved with. A friend, who had stewarded for a number of years, suggested that I try my hand at stewarding and I became 'hooked'.

- **What is your current role as a volunteer and what does it involve?**

I am a Trustee of LIME and currently chair the Finance Committee. Finance meetings are held approximately once a month when all strands of LIME's financial activities are discussed and examined under the tutelage of the Treasurer. Like myself, a number of Finance members are budget heads for each of the different areas of LIME and most members are very often key personnel in their own right.



*Photograph of Jillie courtesy of Gareth Edwards*

Despite the title of Chair, which hopefully is self-explanatory, I seem to have become involved in many other areas which have little to do with Finance (too numerous to mention here), a state of affairs that probably applies to just about every other volunteer. I also attempt to help/aggravate Hayley, our Finance manager, and attend the office one day a week throughout the year. Many of you will know I am responsible for meal vouchers for volunteers which is a time-consuming exercise but one in which I firmly believe. Most volunteers, if they can, provide their own food during the week but I feel there is a principle at stake here in that our volunteers give so much of themselves, their time and their money and that providing a little thank you in the form of a meal voucher cannot be seen as a waste of precious financial resources.

- **What other roles have you had as a volunteer?**  
Working from the Finance office is an all-consuming exercise as a volunteer and especially during the festival week I don't get out much! Because working in the Finance Office means I see absolutely nothing on stage during the day, some years ago I elected to be the back-stage person who presents the winners with their cheques after the formal event has taken place on the main stage. It was a way of experiencing the excitement of the winners and

getting to meet actual competitors! On stage, winners are given empty envelopes, the certificates and cheques and sometimes real money are not handed over until they appear back stage. Finance Secretary, Trudi Edwards, has kindly been deputising for me as other financial commitments took over. Other roles include retail therapy at Bookers purchasing a fridge, boxes and boxes of crisps, drinks, obtaining fruit from a stall on the field and organising the making of hundreds of sandwiches for the Welcome Hosts who operate out of the Information and Publicity tent. I never worked out quite what that had to do with Finance other than someone had to do it!

- **What is your most memorable Eisteddfod moment?**

This was a hard question to answer as there are so many memorable moments. However, I do remember presenting a winner's cheque to a beautiful, weeping Russian lady who was leading a group of young singers. She spoke no English but the translator was able to tell me that the reason she was weeping was because she was experiencing the joy of winning at the Eisteddfod and also crying for one of the members of the choir who was seriously ill and couldn't journey with the group. She said they had sung their hearts out for this particular member and was overcome with emotion at winning in such a beautiful place where everyone had shown them such kindness. I guess that is what the Eisteddfod is all about, we try to spread harmony and joy for competitors to take home with them.

- **What is your funniest memory of the Eisteddfod?**

At times, usually inappropriately, we do have a lot of laughs but I can't think of anything specific.

- **Please tell us something you have done that you might never have done if you hadn't been involved with the Eisteddfod?**

There are a lot of things I have done which I would most definitely not have done if I hadn't been involved with the Eisteddfod. But I suppose the most recent experience for me was acting as liaison for the visit of the Prince of Wales and the Duchess of Cornwall in 2015. The experience has opened my eyes as to the preparation required for a visit from Royalty and to understand just how easily things could go wrong. Liaising with the Police, Special Branch, Lord Lieutenant, Clarence House, not to mention Eisteddfod personnel was a bit like herding cats. I can't believe the number of telephone calls and meetings that took place. The change of plans, the confusion, the organisation – it was all amazing. Fortunately, a few special group of LIME volunteers were marvellous, were always available and helpful (they know who they are) which ensured that all went well on the day. Personally, I don't remember much about it as I was feeling somewhat tense, so concerned that we didn't get things wrong.

- **What would be your perfect Sunday night concert?**

A concert that makes the Eisteddfod lots of money!

- **Please tell us something that no one at the Eisteddfod knows about you?**

Now, that would be telling!

- **Finally, please tell us what the Eisteddfod means to you?**

Anyone who volunteers to work wholeheartedly for the Eisteddfod knows and understands that it is, at times, very hard work. But the comradeship is amazing, folks try so hard to help others even if it isn't in their sphere of operation. We, the volunteers, are sometimes self-critical but the competitors and performers will often tell us how wonderful we are, how well organised we are and what a wonderful time they have had and that they can't wait to come back again. So, for me the satisfaction is the knowledge that however dire the news is from around the world, in our small way we continue to strive to bring a little peace and harmony in a very dangerous world!

We hope you have enjoyed this edition of the Hands On@ Llangollen Eisteddfod e-newsletter! The next issue will be the end of May 2016. Please send any contributions to [volunteers@international-eisteddfod.co.uk](mailto:volunteers@international-eisteddfod.co.uk) by Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> May.