

## Local Business People Carrying the Torch for Charity



The Gwynedd leg of the Olympic Torch Relay took place on 28th May and celebrated some unsung heroes from the area. To mark the occasion, **Gwynedd Council** hosted the only official London Organising Committee (LOCOG) North Wales event.

After a reception catered by partner organisation Coleg Menai, the Celebration event took place followed by the arrival of the Torch fresh from its journey around Gwynedd. Along the route its bearers comprised an inspirational cross-section of the community, including several well known faces from the business sector.

Take, for example, Albi Jones who helped to carry the torch through Pwllheli. Albi, the proprietor of the **Penwaig** café in Nefyn, was diagnosed a few years ago with a heart condition and advised to give up sports. However, following successful surgery, he celebrated in 2011 by organising a 256 mile bike ride from Anglesey to Cardiff in aid of the British Heart Foundation. Albi was advised by his doctor that such a challenge might be beyond the recommended levels of exercise for a man in his condition; such, however, was the support from locals that the doctor set aside his objections and decided to join him on the ride.

Over in Caernarfon, the torch was passed to Anna Williams who works for the **Snowdonia Wildlife Gardening Partnership**. Anna was born in Sweden, moving to Wales in 1987, where she trained in Forestry and met her husband David. Since 2004 Anna has been the volunteer leader of an award winning wildlife club for local children. She organizes the annual Wildlife Gardening competition encouraging schools, businesses, communities and private individuals to make room for wildlife in their gardens. Anna has secured funding to employ three staff promoting wildlife friendly gardening in North Wales. This helps over 150 schools create gardens with the help of parents, staff and pupils.



## From Coleg Menai to Kyoto

A group of students from **Coleg Menai** took first prize in a national competition for young entrepreneurs – and now they're bound for Kyoto in Japan to take on the rest of the world. The Art and Design students came out top in the national final of the Global Entrepreneurship Challenge 2012, held in Cardiff, which this year had an Olympics theme. Groups were asked to develop a product or service which would ensure that the spirit of 2012 left a lasting legacy in Wales.



The competitors were given just 24 hours to develop a business idea, business plan and a cashflow proposal, and had to be ready to pitch their proposition to a panel of experts the following day. The group from Coleg Menai decided to call their business "Localympics", and drew up a business plan to promote mini-Olympic events in Welsh schools and colleges, introducing youngsters to a wide range of sports, all the way from table tennis to climbing.

First prize took the form of a trophy, plus funding towards travel to the global finals, to be held in Kyoto. Business Minister Edwina Hart thanked all those Welsh entrepreneurs who had backed the competing teams with mentoring and encouragement, and commented: "I am delighted that Coleg Menai will now represent Wales at the Global Finals and wish the team every success."

[www.menai.ac.uk](http://www.menai.ac.uk)

## Gwynedd Business Man Cleans Up at Award Ceremony



At a glittering occasion on Thursday 17th May, a top local entrepreneur was honoured by his peers as Gwynedd Business Person of the Year. Mark Woolfenden is Managing Director of the enormously successful **Afonwen Laundry**, recognised as the fastest growing firm in Wales in the Fast Growth 50 awards for 2011. This latest accolade is further testament to Mark's dedication and hard work at the helm of this family owned company with its origins in Pwllheli.

The award ceremony was part of the annual Gala Dinner, a premier event in the Gwynedd calendar and the highlight of Gwynedd Business Week 2012. The Dinner is sponsored by Bangor University and the event was held at the Management Centre of the University's Business School. The award, sponsored by **Gwynedd Business Network**, recognises the significant contribution made by an individual to the region's business sector. It was presented by Gill Richards, highly successful local business woman and Board Member of the Network. Gill related the development of Afonwen and its impressive record of achievement under Mark's inspirational leadership. In accepting, Mark said: "I am particularly thrilled to receive this award, not least because we are a Gwynedd business and our roots are firmly within the local business community. It is a great tribute to the founders of the business that we now supply over 45,000 hotel bedrooms throughout all of Wales and from Newcastle upon Tyne down to Exeter and across the whole of London."

Afonwen is one of the largest privately owned laundry and linen hire companies in the UK, with state-of-the-art production facilities and an emphasis on customer service. The company has doubled its business throughout the hospitality sector over the last couple of years, providing hotels from the corporate four-star to budget sectors with over 1.6 million items of linen a week. 2012 sees close to 440 staff employed across four sites in North Wales, Cardiff, Leeds and London.

Earlier this year Afonwen Laundry were ranked 65 in the Investec Hot 100 list of fastest growing businesses in the UK, with 34% compound turnover at £16.4 million. Mark was named Daily Post Achievement Wales Awards Business Person of the Year in 2011, and on the very same day as the Gala Dinner he was among the business people being honoured at the 2012 Institute of Directors Wales "Director of the Year" Awards in Cardiff.



Guest speaker at the Dinner was Peter Griffiths, outgoing Chief Executive of Principality Wales, who was introduced by Phil Ryan, the Managing Director of the Management Centre. Freshly re-elected Gwynedd Council Leader, Councillor Dyfed Edwards, who addressed the prestigious gathering and concluded the formal part of the evening, commented: "Now in its seventh year, the Business Week is a great opportunity to promote and celebrate the wide variety of successful enterprises operating in the county."

Unlike many other such consortia, membership of the Gwynedd Business Network is completely free of charge and anyone interested in joining can do so in a couple of minutes by visiting: [www.gwyneddbusnes.net](http://www.gwyneddbusnes.net)

[www.afonwenlaundry.com](http://www.afonwenlaundry.com)

## Construction Company Posts Healthy Trading Results

The **Watkin Jones Group** have announced group sales of £69.9 million for the six months to 31st March 2012, generating a before-tax profit of £8.15 million. Says Mark Watkin Jones, Managing Director: "All divisions have once again performed well and have strong order books for the foreseeable future. With new projects about to commence we are actively recruiting new staff across all disciplines of the business."

Established in 1791 by Penmachno carpenter Huw Jones, Bangor's Watkin Jones & Son has remained a family business while growing steadily over two centuries to become one of the most successful and respected names in the building, property development and construction industries. [www.watkinjones.com](http://www.watkinjones.com)

## Titanic Plaque Honours Gwynedd Hero

**Inigo Jones** are proud to supply a new Welsh slate plaque for local hero Harold Lowe, who saved many lives on the night of the Titanic disaster. Harold spent his early childhood in Barmouth, where the plaque was unveiled exactly 100 years after the tragedy to commemorate his gallant endeavours.

Roger Davis, a director of Inigo Jones, said: "We were delighted and honoured to be commissioned to provide this important plaque which records the bravery of Harold Lowe." The bilingually engraved Welsh slate plaque features a hand painted colour picture of the Titanic.

The story of Harold's courageous actions on the "Night to Remember" is certainly worth the telling. As Fifth Officer of the Titanic, Harold was put in charge of Lifeboat 14. When the ship foundered at around 2.20 am, Harold had rowed clear with his rescued survivors. He wanted to go back for more, but had fears of being swamped by hordes of desperate people in the water.



He redistributed his passengers in the group of lifeboats he had assembled, readying one boat to search for additional survivors – the only boat to return to the scene of the tragedy that night. He was able to pick up only four men, one of whom died later that night. The plucky Fifth Officer then had his crew raise the mast and sail and proceeded to rescue the passengers from another sinking lifeboat, the 'Collapsible A', before ferrying them all safely to the Carpathia rescue vessel.

Harold served in the Royal Naval Reserve during the First World War, attaining the rank of Commander before retiring to Deganwy with his family. He died on 12 May 1944 at the age of 61, and is buried at Llandrillo-yn-Rhos church in Rhos-on-Sea, North Wales.

[www.inigojones.co.uk](http://www.inigojones.co.uk)

## Food Technology Centre Excels

During 2011, the team at the **Food Technology Centre (FTC)** trained 390 employees from the region's food businesses. The learners achieved excellent results with 100% completing their programmes and 96% achieving their chosen qualification.

The Centre Manager, Martin Jardine commented: "We are delighted with these results. They demonstrate year-on-year improvements, with the FTC exceeding the national comparators for successful completion. This reflects the high quality teaching and learning taking place." Martin added: "If your business would benefit from an increased level of technical knowledge and expertise, the FTC has a broad range of food business specific training programmes available. These courses focus on key areas such as Food Safety and HACCP systems."

To find out more about these initiatives and the full programme of short training courses available, call: 08445 460 460 or visit [www.linc.menai.ac.uk](http://www.linc.menai.ac.uk)



## A Celebration of Young Talent

The 2012 **Urdd Eisteddfod** took place on Coleg Meirion Dwyfor Glynllifon's estate, near Caernarfon, between the 4th and 9th of June. Once again the event, Europe's largest youth festival, proved hugely popular with both locals and visitors from across the country and beyond. Nearly 100,000 visited the site during the week, with Gruffudd Antur from Llanuwchllyn winning the Chair for his awdl (strict meter poem) discussing Welsh political and social life.

The Chair, made by Llew Jones, was donated by the Fron Olau family of Rhoslan, near Criccieth, to celebrate the lives of father and son Meirion and Ceredig Parry. Llew, of Rhosfawr, near Pwllheli, used oak to create the Chair. He set Nantlle valley slate into a panel at the top of the Chair's back. Under the slate a carving of a path and trees reflects the splendour of Lôn Goed, the avenue that passes close to the family home at Fron Olau.



Gruffudd Antur wins the Chair in the Urdd Eisteddfod Eryri 2012

The Chronicle of the Princes, one of the most important primary sources for Welsh history, records that Chairs were first awarded to the winners of bardic and musical competitions at Cardigan Castle by Rhys ap Gruffydd of Dinefwr in 1176. Today, the Urdd Eisteddfod is Wales' premier arts festival for young people. Talented Welsh youth between the ages of seven and twenty-four take part in a week of

competition in singing, recitation, dancing, acting and musicianship, with regional heats held in advance. As with the National Eisteddfod, the Urdd Eisteddfod is held in a different location each year.

[www.urdd.org/eisteddfod](http://www.urdd.org/eisteddfod)

## New Centre for Business on the Llŷn

The "Tai, Gwaith, Iaith" (Housing, Employment, Language) regeneration project has entered a new phase with the completion of an £1.8m enterprise centre on the Llŷn peninsula. **Canolfan Fenter Congl Meinciau Enterprise Centre** joins Phase 1 of the project, twelve affordable housing units in the village of Botwnnog, and comprises twelve business units, a café and other facilities for small businesses.



The Centre was built by a local building company, Derwen Llŷn, whose brief was to maximize local economic benefits throughout the construction process. The Centre makes extensive use of renewable energy technologies.

The overall plan for the project sees the Centre forming a hub of enterprise in the community based around the medium of Welsh. Besides the twelve units to let, there is a computer suite and training room, as well as a hot-desking facility. A business counselling service is provided for the benefit of Centre users, and broadband and WiFi are available throughout the building. Also on site is a quality café, Caffi Grug.

During May a pilot local product and produce shop was opened with support from the Sustainable Communities project funded through the Rural Development Fund. The project has been developed by Cymdeithas Tai Eryri in collaboration with Pen Llŷn Communities First, Gwynedd Council and the Welsh Government.

[www.conglmeinciau.org.uk](http://www.conglmeinciau.org.uk)

## North Wales Jobs Boosted by Agency Licence

The longest established recruitment agency in North West Wales has just been granted a special licence to provide local labour for the supply of fresh produce. **Supertemps**, which has an office at Parc Menai in Bangor, will now be able to supply workers for agriculture, horticulture, forestry, fish processing, shellfish gathering and dairy farming, as well as general packing or processing duties. Previously, explains Managing Director Sarah Ellwood, businesses had been obliged to bus in labour from outside the region. "This is great news for both North Wales businesses and job seekers alike," she says. "These sectors make up a large part of the North Wales economy but until now they have been forced to use agencies outside the area for their labour supply." [www.supertemps.co.uk](http://www.supertemps.co.uk)

## Festival No. 6 Aims to be Number One at Portmeirion

The latest addition to the UK's Festival Circuit is **Portmeirion's Festival No. 6**, set to take place in September and boasting a fantastic range of top international talent. Headliners include New Order, Primal Scream and Spiritualized, together with Wales' own Gruff Rhys. As well as the music there will be a host of fun activities taking place at various locations around the Village and its surroundings: cinema screenings, street theatre, prose and poetry readings, midnight masquerades, cliff-top comedy stages, secret parties, impromptu interactive moments and even cultural lectures and debates.

The No 6 Festival runs over the weekend 14th to 16th September. Its name is, of course, an allusion to the legendary 1960s TV series "The Prisoner", filmed on location at Portmeirion, where the unique accommodation options for festival-goers will range from the rooms within historic Castell Deudraeth, to individual residences in the village to luxury yurts, tipis and bell tents.

Portmeirion Managing Director Robin Llewelyn commented: "We are pleased to act as host to this innovative addition to the UK festival scene. Let's hope that this is the start of a new tradition for the Village and the first of many such gatherings."

Portmeirion was the most visited paid tourist attraction in North Wales last year. The Italianate village near Porthmadog attracted 234,000 visitors in 2011, the fourth most popular site in Wales.

[www.festivalnumber6.com](http://www.festivalnumber6.com) / [www.portmeirion-village.com](http://www.portmeirion-village.com)



## Good News for Gwynedd Foodies as Local Firm Expands

Exciting times are ahead for local food wholesalers **Harlech Foodservice**, as they expand their range of products and announce the acquisition of award-winning wholesale and catering butchery Bwydlyn, a North Wales neighbour.

During its fifteen-year trading history, Bwydlyn has achieved a loyal customer base built on its reputation for quality Welsh meats. Comments Andrew Foskett, Managing Director of Harlech Foodservice: "We also intend to invest heavily in a new state-of-the-art processing plant that will give us more flexibility to produce bespoke products."

Harlech Foodservice will also be offering its own brand of beverages. The new range of "Celtic Blend" tea bags will be joined by "Celtic Roast" coffee, which is made with 100% Rainforest Alliance Certified Arabica beans for a smooth yet rich drink with an enticing aroma. [www.bwydlyn.co.uk](http://www.bwydlyn.co.uk)



## Ieuan Wyn Jones Commends 'Prentis Menai'



Ieuan Wyn Jones AM met with the team at apprenticeship employment agency **Prentis Menai** to learn about its success in working with local businesses. Linc Menai, the employer engagement arm of Coleg Menai, founded the agency to up-skill local workers, with its base at the college's brand new

state-of-the-art £6 million Canolfan Ynni. During his visit Ieuan Wyn Jones praised local employers for creating apprenticeships: "I applaud their desire and commitment, not only in taking the brave step of setting up their own business, but also in investing in young local people."

Engineering and Energy Development Officer Glenn Williams commented: "Roberts of Portdinarwic, Snowdonia Mountain Railway and Ysbyty Gwynedd are all part of the initial group of companies in Gwynedd to benefit from our agency, which provides additional funding to enable companies to take on apprentices."

[www.linc.menai.ac.uk](http://www.linc.menai.ac.uk)

## New Food Market for Gwynedd Producers

With the help of a grant from Annog, local Gwynedd food producers have just introduced a new market on the Maes in Caernarfon. The June launch was timed to coincide with the Urdd Eisteddfod and Jubilee celebrations and proved a huge success with both residents and visitors.



Ela Roberts of Oinc Oink

Inspired by the success of the Porthmadog local produce market, **Marchnad Eryri Snowdonia Market** comprises twelve food and drink producers who pride themselves in using high quality locally sourced ingredients. Let's put together a sample menu from what's on offer!

The main course is a North Wales success story, which saw Huw and Ela Roberts of **Oinc Oink** lift the supreme pig championship at the Royal Welsh Spring Festival in May. Oinc Oink are producers of pedigree Welsh pork, with all free-range pork reared and fattened on the premises.

We'll toast their success with a glass of **Aerona**, the first aronia berry liqueur to be made and sold in the UK. This unique liqueur is made with hand picked aronia berries from plants grown on the family farm of Hazel and Gwilym Jones, near Pwllheli. On its own, Aerona is the perfect warming tot, an ideal after-dinner liqueur, or it can be combined with a mixer if you prefer a longer drink. It also makes a fabulous cocktail ingredient.

For those with a sweet tooth, there's homemade fudge and toffee from **Eboni ac Eifori**, winners of two gold stars at the Great Taste Awards 2011. If you prefer the cheese board, **Richlin Dairy Goat Products** produce several different pasteurised soft and semi-soft cheeses made using milk from the herd of twenty-four goats at their farm near Pwllheli.

The grant to set up the food market was part of the Llwyddo yng Ngwynedd (Succeeding in Gwynedd) project which comprises a range of funding projects aimed at encouraging rural business development in the county. Annog are an Anglesey based organisation who implement the Local Products initiative, designed to help Gwynedd Producers improve their profile and increase awareness and sales of their products.

[www.cynnyrchgwynedd.co.uk](http://www.cynnyrchgwynedd.co.uk)



Hazel Jones of Aerona

## LEAD Wales - Skills and Tools to Grow your Business



**LEAD Wales** is a free training and development programme that equips owner-managers of SMEs to enhance their leadership skills and take their business to the next level. It enables entrepreneurs to increase turnover and profitability, expand their horizons and release the full potential of their staff.

There is no charge for the programme valued at over £11,500 but you will need to commit to spend a total of two days per month over ten months to ensure graduation.

To be eligible, you need to be the Owner Manager of a business with a minimum of four members of staff, in the convergence area of Wales.

Call Jackie Whittaker on: 01248 382569 or email [j.whittaker@bangor.ac.uk](mailto:j.whittaker@bangor.ac.uk)

The £8 million programme is being delivered through Swansea University and **Bangor University Business School**, and is backed by the Welsh Government. To date 103 local business owners have either graduated or are currently on the programme at Bangor University.



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