

Case Study 1 – Merthyr Tydfil Public Libraries

Summary

Harri Webb (1920 – 1994) was a poet, Welsh nationalist, journalist and librarian. From 1954 to 1964, he was the librarian at Dowlais Public Library. Harri Webb is remembered as the People's Poet of Wales. To commemorate his time at Dowlais Library, a plaque has been placed in the foyer of the library by the local community.

Project Aims

- To raise awareness of Harri Webb's presence in Dowlais and Merthyr Tydfil, and recognise his contribution to the area.
- To inspire young people to be creative, and help them develop their communication skills, both written and oral, so that they have better learning skills and become more confident individuals.
- To encourage a sense of community, increasing people's feeling of safety and involvement in their local community, and promoting their social wellbeing.

The Project

Unveiling of the Harri Webb Plaque

The project began with the unveiling of a plaque to commemorate Harri Webb's tenure as Librarian at Dowlais Library. The plaque had been made by the local community.



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Quote from a participant

It was an honour to be part of the ceremony at which the plaque to the memory of Harri Webb was unveiled by the Mayor in Dowlais Library.... and a particular pleasure to read aloud Harri's poem 'Local Boy Makes Good', one of Tony's favourite poems.

Childrens Poetry Workshops

With funding from the Trecatti Trust, three poetry workshops were then lead by Mike Jenkins with classes from each of Dowlais Primary School, St Illtyds R C Primary School, and Pantyscallog Primary School. During the sessions the children used Harri Webb's poetry as a way of exploring their own environments, and the people around them. The poetry workshops ran throughout December 2019.



The poems were then entered in a competition run by Merthyr Tydfil Public Libraries Service.

The poetry workshops included looking at Harri's work and learning information about his life. The children loved hearing stories of Harri's time at Dowlais Library and the character that he was:

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Quotes from school participants:

‘I think he would have been a scary librarian, not like the ladies here now. They are really nice but Harri would have scared you a lot I think’.

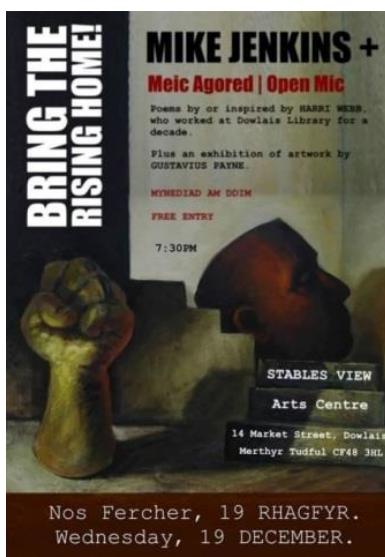
‘I like his poems because he really loved Wales and the ones we have read all tell a story about it.’

‘I liked writing my own poem and Mr Jenkins was really good when he was telling us about Mr Webb. I don’t think Mr Webb would have liked us being so noisy in the Library today!’

‘I thought writing poems would be really hard, but is not and its quite fun really’

‘I didn’t know there were so many famous people who lived in Merthyr. Lots of them were really clever like Harri Webb’

Adult Poetry Workshops and Open Mic



Mike Jenkins in collaboration with local artist Gustavius Payne, organised an Open Mic Night at the Stables in Dowlais as part of the overall project, to bring together those who had an interest in poetry to recite and to listen.

An adult poetry workshop was also held at Dowlais Library in February 2019.

Many of the participants stated that the involvement in the project had improved their understanding of local history and of the characters of the famous people who made Merthyr their home.

Others believed their understanding of poetry in its many forms had improved and they felt more confident in writing themselves after attending the workshop.

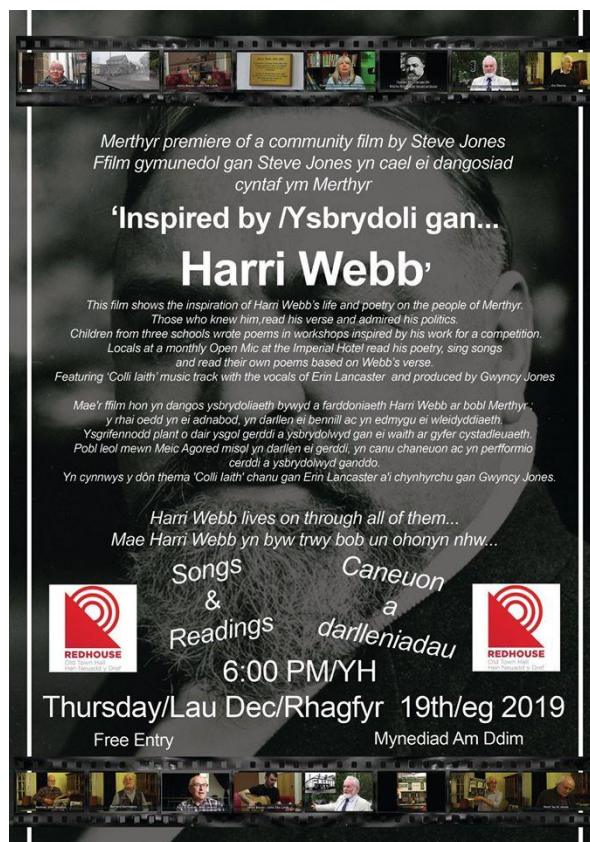
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Project Results

As the project went on, various parts of the project were filmed by a community film maker – Steve Jones. Participants came from a variety of backgrounds and had taken part in different aspects of the project. The film provided a complete overview of the project and of Harri Webb himself.

‘Inspired by Harri Webb’ was premiered at the Cardiff International Film Festival in October 2019.

‘Inspired by Harri Webb’ had its’ Merthyr Tydfil Premiere on the 19th December, 2019 at the Red House.



Merthyr premiere of a community film by Steve Jones
Ffilm gymunedol gan Steve Jones yn cael ei dangosiad
cynaf yn Merthyr

**'Inspired by /Ysbrydoli gan...
Harri Webb'**

*This film shows the inspiration of Harri Webb's life and poetry on the people of Merthyr.
Those who knew him read his verse and admired his politics.
Children from three schools wrote poems in workshops inspired by his work for a competition.
Locals at a monthly Open Mic at the Imperial Hotel read his poetry, sing songs
and read their own poems based on Webb's verse.
Featuring 'Colli Iaith' music track with the vocals of Erin Lancaster and produced by Gwyncy Jones*

*Mae'r ffilm hon yn dangos ysbrydoliaeth bywyd a farddoniaeth Harri Webb ar bobl Merthyr -
y rhai oedd yn ei adnabod, yn darllen ei bennill ac yn edmygu ei wleidyddiaeth.
Ysgrifennodd plant o dair ysgol gerddi a ysbrydolwyd gan ei waith ar gyfer cystadleuaeth.
Pobl leol mewn Meic Agored misl yn darllen ei gerddi, yn canu chaneuon ac yn perfformio
cerddi a ysbrydolwyd ganddo.
Yn cynnwys y dôn thema 'Colli Iaith' chanu gan Erin Lancaster a'i chynhyrchu gan Gwyncy Jones.*

Harri Webb lives on through all of them...
Mae Harri Webb yn byw trwy bob un ohonyn nhw...

Songs & Readings
Caneuon a darlenniadau

6:00 PM/YH

Thursday/Lau Dec/Rhagfyr 19th/eg 2019

Free Entry Mynediad Am Ddim