

# Casnewydd Catchup



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## Goodbye Mrs Roberts



Gwenda, dest a gwên y dydd  
I'n hannog  
Am hynny 'da'n gilydd  
Ceisiwn ni, blant Casnewydd  
Garu'r ffin â geiriau ffydd  
Mererid Hopwood

As you are all aware, Mrs Roberts will be retiring at the end of this term. So this edition of Casnewydd Catchup is taking a look back at her career and her time at Ysgol Gymraeg Casnewydd. There are messages from Pupils, Governors and parents who want to wish Mrs Roberts a wonderful and well deserved retirement.

Mrs Roberts was raised in Sling, Tregarth and went to Ysgol Bodfeurig Primary School and then on to Ysgol Dyffryn Ogwen. She then attended Coleg Normal in Bangor, North Wales where she studied to be a teacher. Her first teaching role was in Ysgol Nant y Coed, Llandudno.

She married Keith in 1978 and decided to give

up her job to travel with him across the world as his job took him to various countries for long periods of time. They lived in Germany, Sweden, Australia and Kentucky, USA where their first daughter, Lowri, was born. They moved back to the UK and her second daughter, Ffion, was born in 1983.

They decided to settle in Newport in 1987 so their daughters could have Welsh Medium education and their two daughters went to the Welsh unit in High Cross where Mrs Roberts followed and became a Supply teacher there. During this time she decided to complete a BA Hons degree at Aberystwyth University and spent many weekends travelling there to complete the course (before the days of the internet!)

## **A look back to where Welsh Medium education began (by Mr Ian Carter, School Governor)**

Back in the last century- yes it really was that long ago- I joined the battle for Welsh medium education provision within the Newport area which at that time was under the control of the County of Gwent. Both my children went to the Welsh unit at High Cross School which had been established following a long battle by parents going back to the 70s.

On the teaching staff at the time was a certain Mrs Gweda Roberts who certainly taught my daughter, as I have a class photo as evidence. School life was hard in the late 80's and early 90's. We were definitely the second class citizens isolated in the Welsh block with a great deal of animosity locally with the majority of the children getting to the unit on buses or private transport. There were several unsavoury incidents which increased in frequency as the number of pupils increased. The school was managed by the governing body of Mount Pleasant and Rogerstone. Trying to get our voice heard formally on the Governing body was a constant struggle and they eventually capitulated and allowed one parent representative, Brian Hancock, a place on the governing body, but he was a lonely voice. Outside the unit the battle continued with constant lobbying of Gwent Council Education officials, formally and informally, in and out of meetings. We even protested in the council chamber at County Hall in Croesyceiliog at meetings of the Education Committee and the full council, being ejected under escort on various occasions.

At the end of the 80's, the Welsh unit pupils significantly outnumbered the main school pupils and some classes had to be held in the main block. Then the unthinkable happened and we were promised a new school, not a rundown Victorian cast off building from an English medium school but a brand new build. The temporary governing body was set up and I will never forget the tingle down my spine when, with a bright yellow hard hat on my head, we had a look inside the new building during construction phase in the early summer of '93 along with the newly appointed head teacher Mr Arwyn Thomas. Arwyn, with immense energy and drive set about appointing a cohort of school staff with equal vision and drive for the development of Welsh Medium education in the new school.

Pupil numbers increased rapidly along with new members of staff and the hard work continued to establish a centre of educational excellence through the medium of Welsh. Over time staff changed as individual ambition dictated a career change but the foundation had been firmly laid down. Arwyn Thomas moved on via various high profile roles and is now Director of Education for Gwynedd. Rhys Harries, following a secondment to the Welsh Assembly, is now Head of Ysgol Gymraeg Treganna now on their new site since 2013 following a long campaign by parents in Cardiff.

Gwenda Roberts became Head Teacher at Ysgol Gymraeg Casnewydd in 1998 and continued to develop the ethos and standards of the school that had been set, culminating with an Estyn inspection in March 2004 and February 2010 achieving Grade 1 in all 7 key questions. The school continues to set high standards in all areas to the extent that we have frequent visits from other education professionals to see our systems and procedures in place as an example of how to maintain and drive up standards. On behalf of Governors and parents past and present, I would like to sincerely thank Gwenda for her leadership over the last 18 years and wish her well as she enjoys the sun in Australia during the long and frequent visits that she will now be able to undertake to see her daughters and grandchildren. If Keith, her husband, is stuck at home with work for some of these visits then if he gives me a ring, I have the phone number of a couple of good takeaways!!



Do you recognise any familiar faces in this photo taken in 1994 at Ysgol Gymraeg Casnewydd when shoulder pads were in fashion? Can you spot Mrs Roberts in the back row 3<sup>rd</sup> in from right with Mr Arwyn Thomas the first Head Teacher of Ysgol Gymraeg Casnewydd, in the back row, far right. And who is sitting in the front row far right? Mrs Brazell of course!



**The Days of the Unit at High Cross**





High Cross Welsh Unit 1992



Staff photo circa 1998



Staff photo 2001



Staff photo 2005  
A few familiar faces in  
this photo!

# Messages from pupils and parents

Mrs Roberts

Thank you for making our childrens school life so wonderful. We hope you enjoy every minute of your retirement.  
Cariad Jo, Megan, Bethan and Cerys Shergold

Thank you Mrs Roberts our Welsh school and our kind school.  
From Sebastian.

You are the star of the school and in my heart.  
Hollie Johnsey

I'm sure that I speak for everyone- pupils, parents, staff, governors and friends, past and present- in thanking Mrs Roberts for her commitment to the school over the years and to wish her all the best in her retirement.

Mr John V. Williams  
Chair of the Governing Body

On behalf of the PTA, we would like to say a huge thank you and good luck to Mrs Roberts. The PTA has been supported by Mrs Roberts throughout the years, which has made raising the massive amounts of money for the children a complete joy. You will be greatly missed! Enjoy!

Mrs Rachel Harmes  
Chair PTA

Thank you for everything Mrs Roberts! You have been an amazing Head Teacher. Good luck for the future.

Mollie a Eva Quarterly.



By Ava Ravenhill  
Derbyn



By Megan Taylor  
Year 1





By Megan Donovan  
Dosbarth Pili Pala

If you leave the school we will miss you.  
Dafydd Cheshire

Tomos and I would like to thank you for everything. Good luck Mrs Roberts. Elin and Tomos Davey.

On behalf of myself, Jordan and Kayleigh Brown, Mia and Maddox Sawyers, we would like to thank you and wish you the very best for your future! Diolch!

Sue Sawyers and family.

Good luck Mrs Roberts. We will remember you.  
Josh Harries



By Charlie Beirne  
Dosbarth  
Dwmpnen Malwoden

Mrs Roberts ... what can I say! I first came to the school as a nervous (noisy!) student. This school impressed me from the very beginning, and I felt that I had found the best teachers and children in the world! I applied for a job, and I came here as a newly qualified teacher, to year 2, in the year 2001. It is difficult to believe that I will follow in your footsteps and I would like to thank you for seeing something in me, and encouraging me over the years to be the best that I could be. I have SO enjoyed working alongside you, you have taught me a great deal. I think of you as more than my Headteacher, you have become a friend and I will miss our times together. Best wishes for the future, and remember that you are welcome here at any time ... in particular to wash tea towels!!  
Ceri Parry



By Teigan Sander  
Dosbarth Pili Pala

Dear Mrs Roberts - thank you for giving me, a nervous and newly-qualified teacher, a job all those years ago. Thanks to you and this school I have thrived and blossomed. I'm very excited to begin my Deputy Headship in January, but will be sorry to say farewell to you. I can still remember my first interview with you back in the Summer of 2001!!!!  
Rhian Evans

Thank you for you time, your love, your happiness and our journey.  
Lola Harmes

My favourite thing about Mrs Roberts is that she's kind and makes children smile.  
Ifan Jones

Once again thank you to the PTA for organising the Christmas Fair and the many activities throughout the term, as well as financing the printing of this paper. If anybody would like to become a member of the PTA, registration forms are available in the office.. Please remember that all money raised goes back to support your children and their education!