

Black Chair Festival, Birkenhead Park

9-10 September 2017

In commemoration of the Royal National Eisteddfod of Wales in Birkenhead Park 5-7 September 1917

Hedd Wyn and the 'Black Chair'

Rhaglen yr Ŵyl/Festival

Saturday 9th September 10 30am – 10pm

at the

Wirral Hospitals School – Joseph Paxton Campus
Park Road North, Birkenhead

Sunday 10th September 10 45am – 3 30pm

at the

Seion, Laird Street Chapel, Birkenhead

For further information or to book places please contact:

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BIRKENHEAD 'BLACK CHAIR' EISTEDDFOD CENTENARY

GŴYL Y GADAIR DDU

9th – 10th September 2017

In September 1917, the Welsh National Eisteddfod was held in Birkenhead Park, in the presence of the Prime Minister, David Lloyd George. The climax was the traditional chairing of the Bard, with the presentation of a wonderful chair, skilfully carved by Eugeen Vanfleteren, a Belgian refugee living in Birkenhead.

The winning poet was Private Ellis Humphrey Evans (Hedd Wyn) of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers, for his poem 'YR ARWR' (The Hero). But when his name was announced no-one stepped forward. Hedd Wyn had been killed in the third Battle of Ypres a few weeks earlier. The empty chair was draped in a black sheet and taken back to his family home in Trawsfynydd – a potent symbol for all the empty chairs in millions of homes after the First World War.

To mark the centenary of the 1917 'Black Chair' Eisteddfod, Merseyside Welsh Heritage Society and Friends of Birkenhead Park (with support from Wirral Council, Snowdonia National Park Authority and Birkenhead Lions) are organising a Festival embracing all aspects of that historic event.

We are offering a handsome bardic chair and £100 (the gift of Brian and Hilda Thomas) to a Welsh poet for a poem or poems (not to exceed 100 lines) on Hedd Wyn. The chair will be presented by the Flanders Hedd Wyn Society, which will be represented at the Festival. We will also be presenting two Crowns donated by the Merseyside Welsh Heritage Society and the Rev D. Ben Rees and £50 each (the gift of Dr John and Beryl Williams) for a poem or poems in English or Welsh, (not exceeding 50 lines), open to young people aged 11 – 19.

Professor Peredur Lynch of Bangor University, will give a lecture in Welsh (translation facilities available) on Hedd Wyn, under the auspices of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion with Emeritus Professor Prys Morgan in the chair. The broadcaster, Dr Huw Edwards will give a lecture in English on David Lloyd George. Professor D. Ben Rees will lecture in Welsh on the Birkenhead Welsh, while Emeritus Professor Robert Lee will give a lecture in English on Belgian refugees and the creator of the Black Chair, Eugeen Vanfleteren.

The young men from Wales and Merseyside who died in the Great War, will be remembered at a ceremony to unveil the cleaned commemorative stone and a new memorial to Hedd Wyn in Birkenhead Park. A male voice choir from Anglesey, Parti Meibion Bara Brith, will sing R. Williams Parry's moving poem 'In Memoriam'.

On Saturday evening two concerts will be held; the Anglesey Youth Choir with conductor Mari Lloyd Pritchard and the North Wales Rugby Choir under their director Geraint Roberts. The soloists will be Dylan Cernyw (Harp) and Huw Ynyr (Tenor).

On Sunday September 10th, a service will be held at 10 45am in Capel Seion, Laird Street Chapel, Birkenhead at which the North Wales Rugby Choir will sing. At 2pm the weekend will conclude with a Singing Festival (Gymanfa Ganu) with the Rhoslanerchrugog Orpheus Choir, all under the baton of Alwyn Humphreys.