

Cwm Rhondda chapel's history celebrated



Memorabilia showing the chapel's history is on display
The chapel where the unofficial Welsh national anthem was first performed is celebrating its 150th anniversary.

Capel Rhondda in Hopkinstown near Pontypridd is where the Cwm Rhondda hymn was first heard in 1907.

The song is now steeped in Welsh culture and is often sung by fans in the stands of the Millennium Stadium when Wales' rugby team plays.

An exhibition featuring memorabilia including photographs, wedding dresses and china from the chapel has gone on display for the next month.

The centrepiece of the display is the organ on which the composer John Hughes wrote the music of the song.

Pastor Phil Rickards said: "The vast organ has played a great part of the history of the chapel.



The organ which first played the hymn was installed in 1907

“It is something which can only be felt -

"The organ itself was installed in 1907 and they asked a composer to write a tune for a hymn.

"John Hughes wrote a tune which he called Rhondda.

"It was sung here for the first time publicly.

"It has become my signature tune and it sends a shiver down my spine every time I hear it.

"When you think where it has been sung - when it is sung at the Millennium Stadium and on other battlefields.

"It is something which can only be felt - it can't be expressed in words," he said.

The exhibition opened on Thursday night and will be held on every Saturday for the next three weeks.

"The response for things has been wonderful," said Mr Rickards.

"We have wedding dresses from every decade.

"There are photos and things about events that have been held.

"It is a fantastic display and we had over 100 people here on the opening night.

"It is so unique and special," he added.

A service of praise and thanksgiving has been arranged to be held on 11 February at 1900 GMT to mark exactly 150 years after the first services were held.

The Cwm Rhondda hymn will be sung accompanied by the organ.

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Pastor Phil Rickards

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Chapel member Moira Williams

Chapel member Moira Williams said the exhibition had brought back memories for her.

"The Welsh alphabet - that was the start of Sunday School and I couldn't wait to get old enough that my Sunday school class was in the chapel.

"It was lovely to come in here on a Sunday and there used to be a class here and a class at the back.

"The gentlemen would be on one side and the ladies on the other," she added.