

Ifor Part 1



What was it like to grow up speaking Welsh, in London?' That's a question I've heard... more than once during my life... because most often what people really want to know is 'how different was it, to growing up in Wales?'

Well, that would depend on where in Wales of course. If I had grown up in Llandudno... or in Flint, or I dunno...in Cardiff, it's possible that it would have been quite similar, that is to say, I wouldn't have heard a lot of Welsh around me... I would have maybe only spoken Welsh with members of the family... but the main difference is probably that if I had been brought up in... a more anglicized area in Wales, I would at least have had more opportunity to receive my education through the medium of Welsh

...we'll come back to that later, there was a Welsh primary school in London but as I say we'll discuss that later

So, what was London like, when I was growing up there in the 1960s and 1970s, in terms of the Welsh language, and in terms of the Welsh-speaking society there?

Well, what dominated London Welsh society at the time was a trinity of organisations... The London Welsh Club in Grays Inn Road, which was a social club... The London Welsh Rugby Club in Old Deer Park... and also about forty Welsh chapels around the city – our family first worshipped at Charing Cross Chapel. And then we moved to Willesden Green chapel which was a little closer to where we lived, and then we moved to Harrow Chapel which was even closer to where we lived!

...so those were the social milieux if you like, those were the places where you could use your Welsh. There wasn't a lot of Welsh to be heard in the rugby club, and not all that much to be heard at the London Welsh Club, though there was more there, ... and even in the chapel... there were seven of us in my Sunday school class, five of us knew Welsh and two didn't, so even the Sunday school class was in English, so by then, chapel was no longer a linguistically sustainable institution... sure, we were being immersed in Christian principles but maybe not being helped on as we might have been with the language.