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Most famous paperboy in Britain

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It's 50 years since an 18-year-old paper boy from Menai Bridge won the radio quiz Brain of Britain. Anthony Carr shared his memories of the 1956 final with BBC Radio Wales.

In 1956 18-year old Anthony Carr from Menai Bridge became the youngest ever Brain of Britain, a record he still holds today. He was instantly catapulted into fame, with national papers heralding the amazing achievement of the shy schoolboy. His story is told in a BBC Radio Wales documentary

"When I was 18 I was painfully shy, I think that's the best way to sum myself up," says Anthony Carr on the programme. "I wasn't very strong on social skills, I wasn't a leader, I wasn't any good at games... I tended to go my own way in my own mind."

'The Most Famous Paperboy in Britain!' shouted one headline when he won the BBC radio quiz, referring to his first job, which incidentally Anthony Carr thinks helped him.

"I used to take papers around Menai Bridge every morning before going to school. I used to read the headlines going up people's drives. I think it gave me extra knowledge of current affairs."

Having heard the Brain of Britain quiz on the radio a few years previously, when Anthony saw an advert in the local paper he decided to audition at BBC Bangor. He was then invited to compete in London. He had to get through three rounds to reach the final, one of which he completed before catching the overnight train from London to sit his Latin A-level exam in the morning.

In the final, the schoolboy represented Wales against a secondary school headmaster from Leicester, representing England, and a schoolmaster from Hawick, representing Scotland. Walking out of the studio following his victory, a woman from the audience shouted "Da iawn Sir Fon!" (well done Anglesey!), which made him very proud.

Unknown to him at the time, people were also celebrating his success in the Falkland Islands, where he spent much of his childhood, and returning there for a holiday in 2003 "to my surprise, people remembered me!"

Being a local girl, his wife Glenda, had heard of him and had followed his success, as most local people had.

"I think locally he was regarded as a bit of a celebrity, but because he was so shy, he didn't respond to it like some people might have done," she says.



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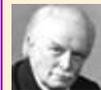
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On her first day at Bangor University, somebody pointed Anthony out to her.

"I was a little disappointed," she laughs, "because he looked so shy somehow and so unassuming. I thought he'd be confident and very out-going because of all he'd achieved.

"He was shy, but he was interesting. He had this wide range of knowledge which other boys didn't seem to have. He knew all sorts of things which made him an interesting person to be with."

Glenda talks about the admiration there was for him at the time.

"He was just a boy really," she says, "and he was competing against middle aged professional people and yet he won all the competitions, and that did make him something special, I think. You wouldn't have expected a boy of 18 to have amassed this amount of general knowledge."

Still only 18, Anthony went on to win the Brain of Brains, a competition between Brain of Britain title holders, and then in 1962 won the Top Brain of Britain title, out of the 3 Brain of Brains champions. This led to one paper simply declaring 'He's the Cleverest Man in Britain'.

Looking back, Anthony thinks of the Brain of Britain competition, for which he won a £5 record token, as a bit of fun and thinks that people take today's shows, where big money's now on offer, too seriously.

One of the things Magnus Magnusson said to him when he competed in Mastermind was "It's only a bloody game!"

"I think that's the attitude one should have to these things," he says. "It's the attitude we should have to a lot of things."

your comments

Antony Carr from Bangor

If I may answer Ms Kelsall, I went to university, graduated in history, did research, worked for nearly four years as an archivist in Essex, then returned to Bangor as a lecturer in Welsh History at the university there and spent the rest of my career there, ending up as professor of medieval Welsh History. I retired in 2002.

Thu Apr 16 16:18:53 2009

Sue Kelsall West Yorks

I wonder what Mr Carr did in the years after winning the competitions. What kind of work did he do? Does he still live in Menai Bridge?

Mon Jan 26 09:41:18 2009

LLEOL I MI Gogledd Orllewin



Tai Hanesyddol

O blastai crand i ffermydd
gwledig, camwch dros
drothwy rhai o dai mwyaf

hanesyddol yr ardal

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