

INTERNATIONAL POLE VAULTER AIMS HIGH



Seven times international Pole Vaulter, Ffion Llewellyn (18), from Bridgend has won a place to study Aeronautical Engineering at Imperial College London.

Ffion, who gained an A* in Maths, A* in Chemistry, A* in Further Maths and an A in Physics at A Level, has competed for Wales since she was 13 years old in the SIAB Championships, the Welsh Internationals and came second in the Welsh Senior Championships this summer.

Ffion's future career ambition is to work as a pilot. She gained a place on the coveted British Airways' work placement scheme in the company's maintenance department at Cardiff Airport where she shadowed engineers, emptied a plane entirely of its seating, changed filters and checked oil and has honed her engineering skills on work experience at civil engineering firm CMB in Cardiff.

"I started as a gymnast when I was three and made my way into the national Welsh Squad, moving from artistic to acrobatic gymnastics" said Ffion. "I have always been very sporty and my parents have been very supportive. My Dad wanted to box when he was young but didn't have the money or opportunity so was very encouraging to both my sister and I, taking us to gymnastics, ballet and swimming lessons.

"I have also been taking flying lessons, given to me as birthday presents, near Cardiff Airport in a light aircraft and was fortunate to fly over the Grand Canyon in a helicopter sitting in the front which was a tremendous experience. I want to understand how an aircraft works from the inside out and am delighted that I can do this at Imperial College which has a great aeronautical engineering course. I know that there is a shortage of female engineers in the UK, but I have always been interested in why things work from playing with Meccano as a child, taking things apart and building them back up. My Mum and Dad own a building company and I go out on site with my Dad which I really enjoy and work part time in the office which has been great in terms of understanding how a small business works."

Ffion, who gained a full scholarship to study at top league table school Cardiff Sixth Form College, from her state school in Bridgend, applied after seeing a BBC TV programme - 'Britain's Brainiest School'.

"I applied to Cardiff Sixth Form College with my friend and we couldn't believe that we were both accepted" she said. The quality of teaching is incredible here, they organise amazing trips and the teachers really go the extra mile and give us lots of support both in and outside of lessons. I have been a member of the Engineering Society and won a Gold Crest Award in a national engineering

competition where we monitored the flow of water in the Docks. My confidence has grown tremendously and my horizons have certainly been lifted!”

Said Cardiff Sixth Form Principal, Gareth Collier: “I am delighted that so many of our female students go onto study engineering at top universities as bright students, such as Ffion, will have a significant impact in terms of future innovation in this country. Students here are not bound by stereotypes and we actively encourage all our pupils, regardless of gender, to pursue their dreams and aim high. Ffion has been a tremendous role model here at the College joining the International Citizenship programme in Malaysia where she undertook an engineering placement in a small firm, winning the Gold Crest Award in a national engineering competition and helping lead the Engineering Society. Being used to compete at international level I am sure she will realise her ambitions and make an excellent pilot.”