



A New Delivery from the Federation

As the Federation Newsletter returns, departing President Eva Bredsdorf welcomes a new arrival

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



Since the beginning of April I have taken "early retirement", and am now concentrating on my new son, Sam, who was born in late June. Luckily, Kevin has taken over as Acting President and will continue as such until his own term starts at the next AGM.

I am pleased to say that the Mid-and North Wales Curators' meetings, formerly under the auspices of CMW, have been resurrected under the Federation banner. The first meeting, on oral history, was arranged by Peter Crocker and Ann Williams and was held in Llandudno. It had very interesting speakers and gave colleagues a chance to meet. The second meeting, arranged by David Bownes, was held in Bodelwyddan Castle with education and lottery funding as its theme. The first meeting in South Wales was organised by Ron Inglis at Tredegar House. The topics were education and best value and the day was very well attended.

Subsequent meetings have been difficult to arrange due to work pressures, but with Chris Delaney as 'broker', two meetings have been arranged with the newly appointed Finds Co-ordinator for the Portable Antiquities Recording Scheme.

Peter Crocker has offered to arrange and host the next North and Mid-Wales Curators' Meeting and we are waiting for a similar proposal from the South! I would hope that we could keep these informal gatherings going to maintain communication between us.

The Federation Committee decided to offer a grant of £300 for a member to attend the 1997 Museum Conference. This was awarded to Pat Bennyworth from Bangor who had a useful and enjoyable time.

Inter-Museum Co-operation

The Federation has held three joint meetings with the National Museums and Galleries of Wales. At the first the National Museum presented its overall collecting policy as well as the collecting policies of each department and in the afternoon there was an open discussion.

The theme of the second meeting was 'loans' and again the focus was on the National Museum. Loans policies were explained and discussed and I am pleased to say that the overall mood of the meeting was one of co-operation between national and non-national museums. The third meeting turned the table and a number of non-national museum curators presented their museums, collections, and future collecting policies. CMW presented their past and future collection surveys and introduced the Cornucopia project.

A fourth meeting is planned for November. This time the emphasis will be on more practical matters, looking at the identification of metals and ceramics – more details later in the year. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the staff at the National Museum, especially Dr Eurwyn Wiliam.

I am pleased that after years of hibernation the Newsletter has reappeared. I know that many of us feel isolated in our museums and galleries and I would like this Newsletter to overcome that. This can only be done if we all contribute. So please let us have your news.

Best Wishes

Eva



Bryn Owen FMA, Lt RN (Retd) 1928 – 1999



With the recent death of Bryn Owen, shortly before his 71st birthday, after a relatively short illness, the profession, particularly in Wales, has lost a notable curator and a fascinatingly colourful and charismatic figure. Born in 1928 in Friog (in the old

Meirionethshire), he left Dolgellau Grammar School, his academic educational potential curtailed, and enlisted in the Royal Navy on a regular engagement. Not surprisingly he was promoted from the Lower Deck as a Gunnery Officer. He never forgot his background.

While a serving officer he developed a keen interest in Welsh military history of the 18th Century onward and his research brought him into contact with the archives and museum communities. From the start he seems to have had a particular liking for and affinity with the latter though following his retirement from the Royal Navy he prepared for a teaching career at St. Luke's College, Exeter. However, he joined H.M. Prison Service but soon sought to enter the museum profession. He became increasingly involved with the Welch Regiment Museum (WRM) based at Cardiff, firstly in a voluntary capacity and from 1978 until his death as its full time curator. He set about quickly developing museum skills determined to be a professional and such became his achievements he was made a Fellow of the Museums Association. He regarded this a distinction equal to his service career and significantly placed the FMA before his naval rank.

From 1978 onward he was first and foremost a museum curator. He held strong views on what he saw as the failings of a then common practice of indiscriminate appointment of retired (often disinterested) officers as curators. I well remember him making this point forcibly to Admiral Sir David Williams who was on a consultation visit to Cardiff in connection with the MGC's review of armed services museums. I saw him make known his views strongly on many occasions when he felt the profession under-valued, performances of commitment and passion though sometimes (as he would admit) somewhat short on diplomacy! Leaving such a meeting where Bryn had delivered a characteristic "broadside" I remonstrated gently about tactics to hear him mutter to me in our native tongue *gwell angau na chywilydd* (Better Death than Dishonour - the motto of the Welch Regiment). His analysis of MoD attitudes to armed service museums, shrewd in perception, colourfully expressed, remains unprintable! Such was the man.

Bryn was an adviser to the Council of Museums in Wales (CMW) on military museum matters and his experience as a gunnery officer proved particularly useful in dealing with firearm and ordnance legislation. He was an active member of the Welsh Federation and one of its representatives on CMW's Executive for many years. Although much older than most of his museum colleagues he was at home in their company and supportive of their career aspirations, a natural reference point for help with identification and the loan of material. He valued his association with staff at The Museum of Welsh Life (NM&GW) an institution of which he was particularly fond.

Within the very limited financial means available Bryn Owen transformed the displays of the WRM, particularly after its relocation in the Black and Barbican Towers of Cardiff Castle. Bilingual labelling was introduced and military matters interpreted in the wider context of social history. He encouraged local schools to use his museum helping to develop project work relating to the National Curriculum. He would dearly liked to have seen a full time education officer serving the museums and heritage facilities at Cardiff Castle and was disappointed that his endeavours to secure local authority funding for such an appointment had met with little success. As much as he was committed to all these activities his priority was collection management and his great love and forte, research, in all likelihood his lasting contribution to his beloved Wales.

He was a social as much as a scholarly, military historian and his magnum opus, *The History of the Welsh Militia and Volunteer Corps* (planned in volumes to cover all the old counties of Wales, but sadly only partially published at his death) reflects this attitude. He was a long standing member of the Society for Army Historical Research and a prolific contributor to learned journals.

The profession is the poorer for his passing and although its loss is little compared to that of his wife Marian and son Kevin, to whom we extend our sympathies, his colleagues in Wales will miss him sorely. Bryn was a hugely remarkable man. I certainly will remember with gratitude his ready support, stimulating company and above all his friendship. I and I suspect many other museum colleagues in Wales will long recall his sparkling eyes, wicked smile, infectious bonhomie and the occasional reminder that the sun was over the yard-arm. ■

D. Gareth Davies

The Federation would like to extend their sympathies to Bryn Owen's family. He will be sorely missed.



What about the meaning of objects?

I saw my first chapel Sunday-school banner at a CND demonstration in London back in the 'eighties. As the huge crowd moved towards Hyde Park there was the banner of Ysgolion Sul Llanuwchllyn, just ahead of the English Collective of Prostitutes, and I realised that there might be more to the Sunday-school movement than I had thought.

Ten years later I had a phone call from the deacon at Bethesda chapel Ton Pentre. The chapel was closing and he'd found a long wooden box in the boiler-house. Inside was the old Sunday-school banner, did we want it for the museum at Pontypridd? The box still had a label dated 1881.



This was a banner painted by G. Tutill of City Road, London, scrollwork and extravagant foliage betraying his origins as a fairground painter; a blue silk panel edged with yellow, on one side a conventional picture of Jesus leading his flock, on the other a picture that I'd already seen on a railwaymen's banner; a man giving a bag of money to a woman, with her bed-ridden husband in the background. On the NUR banner the central figure was the union branch official; on the chapel banner he was the minister, and a small illustration of the parable of the good Samaritan had been added for good measure; but it was still essentially the same picture on the two banners. An interesting illustration, I thought, of the priorities of this particular congregation. Bethesda, Ton Pentre, was a chapel of the Annibynwyr, or Welsh Independents, a denomination with radical inclinations. Its minister in the 1930s had gone to London with the Hunger Marchers, met Ramsay MacDonald, and promptly left the Labour Party and joined Plaid Cymru.

Obscuring the View

The point of all this is that I'm fed up of conferences, seminars, training days and mailings that treat artefacts simply as objects to be kept and conserved for some self-evident reason. I accept that all this is necessary, but it seems to be obscuring the view. Shouldn't we be moving beyond the technical and financial issues and spending more time on the meaning of things? ■

Brian Davies

NOTICEBOARD

Beth, dim Cymraeg?

Sharp-eyed readers will have noticed that this issue is all in English. First of all let me apologise for this, unfortunately we are a new editorial team and we lack a Welsh speaker amongst our numbers.

We would like the opinions of Federation members on the use of Welsh in the newsletter. Would members prefer to see a double-sided newsletter replicated in English and Welsh? Or would it be better to see articles reproduced in the language that they are submitted? Obviously there are additional costs involved in the double size newsletter, but if there is sufficient demand then the money will have to be found. Please make your views heard.

If you are able to proof read in Welsh or can translate, why not get involved in the newsletter. You can volunteer, or make your views known by writing to the editors or e-mail Jane on:

ljdhenderson@btinternet.com

The Cefni Barnett Fund

The Cefni Barnett Fund, administered by the Federation Committee, exists to promote research by professional members. Amounts up to £150 are available to offset necessary costs such as materials and transport. The research must be on a subject of museological interest but it should not relate directly to the researcher's own museum or collection.

The Federation also requires a brief report on the project following completion. Payments from the Fund are approved by the Committee and letters of application should be sent in the first instance to the Federation Treasurer stating the nature of the research project and estimated costs.

Ann Williams
Museum Development Officer
Tourism and Leisure Department
Conwy County Borough Council
Colwyn Bay, LL29 8AR

HSE launches guidance for Britain's 22 million volunteers

The 22 million people in Britain who take part in voluntary or charity work are set to benefit from guidelines and a training video produced by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

This is the first time that HSE has brought together guidance for the charity and voluntary sector in one booklet. This has been produced by HSE's Local Authority Unit (LAU), in partnership with the Charities Safety Group (CSG), which represents around 150 charities and voluntary groups. Local authority environmental health officers have enforcement responsibility for many areas covered by the booklet, such as charity shops and local fetes.

Speaking at the launch of the guidance, Jenny Bacon, HSE's Director General, said:

"Charity and voluntary organisations enjoy tremendous support throughout the country. Many people are happy to offer time and have the enthusiasm to get involved and it is important to make sure that whatever activities are arranged are done so safely and in a way that will not pose any harm to health. This guidance will help to ensure that that is achieved."

The guidelines can be applied to any situation, whether it be working in a shop or helping on a conservation project. Advice is given on how to carry out a risk assessment and how to identify training needs. Chapters cover specific issues such as manual handling and managing work-related violence and stress. The training video has a number of scenarios with obvious health and safety mistakes for people to identify.

Protecting Staff and Volunteers

The booklet also highlights areas where more specific information may be needed for example first aid requirements; employers' liability insurance and protecting staff and volunteers' hearing. Brian Etheridge, head of LAU, said: "HSE has produced these guidelines because the CSG asked for accessible and comprehensive advice. I am pleased to say that CSG members played a major part in the production of both the guidance and the training video, which has helped us to target the sector more effectively."

Paul Jarvis, Chairman of CSG, said: "This guidance is easy to read and understand. The hazards detailed in the guidance were highlighted by CSG as the main ones faced by our members. The booklet provides an outline of health and safety requirements that all organisations should take into account to protect both their paid staff and any volunteers working for them."

Copies of "Charity and voluntary workers: a guide to health and safety at work"

(HSG192 ISBN 0-7176-2424-2), price £12.00, are available from:

HSE Books, PO Box 1999, Sudbury, Suffolk, CO10 6FS. Tel: 01787-881165 or fax: 01787-313995.

Priced publications are also available from good booksellers. For copies of the video, price £25.00, please contact Mark Thomas, LAU, 7 SW Rose Court, 2 Southwark Bridge, London, SE1 9HS.

Tel: 0171 717 6686. ■

Conservation in Wales

A meeting was held earlier this year in NMGW to discuss the future of conservation meetings in Wales and the possible formation of a group. It was open to all those interested in conservation in Wales.

Twenty two people attended, mainly conservators, from a variety of disciplines, and from different institutions although a heavy bias towards the south east was observed. This meeting demonstrated the strength of the conservation profession in Wales, the shared issues and problems across disciplines and the keenness to develop and consolidate conservation links within private practice and museum staff.

It was agreed that the group should be maintained on an informal basis – a formal group would add costs and bureaucracy and most conservators belong to a number of organisations already. Staff working at NMGW offered to coordinate the group. Dr Caroline Buttler volunteered to coordinate the successful summer meeting on paper and textiles.

Annual summer and winter meetings will be continued. The winter meeting in Cardiff and the summer one ideally in mid or north Wales.

A mailing list of all those interested in Conservation in Wales is being compiled by Chris Wilson, mostly from other conservation orientated lists. Anyone who would like to be kept up to date with conservation activities in Wales should contact him at:

Cynon Valley Museum, Depot Road, Gadlys, Aberdare, Rhondda Cynon Taff, CF44 8DL.

The possibility of a publication was discussed and it is hoped that pre or postprints from the meetings will be produced with conservation related news.

Conservation in Wales – Winter 1999

Possible Topic: Accreditation

Venue: Cardiff, TBC

Jenny Williamson, Glynn Vivian Art Gallery



News from the National Museums and Galleries of Wales

One of the enduring challenges for museum professionals is to counter the notion that museums are boring places where nothing ever happens. The last six months has been anything but this at the National Museums and Galleries of Wales!

To begin with, Anna Southall took up the position of Director in November 1998. An extract from the forward of the Spring edition of *Calendr*, the NMGW events magazine, neatly sums up her vision for NMGW:

'NMGW belongs to Wales... We are here to conserve, to understand and then to share because all our stewardship is in vain if our museums are not places of learning and pleasure – for people of all backgrounds, ages and levels of interest. My aim... is to ensure that all our visitors will encounter fun, as well as facts, as they learn about their world through the collections we hold for Wales'.

In order to achieve this aim, it is essential that the staff of NMGW are doing the right jobs at the right time and in the right way. To assist in this process, a re-configuration of the management structure has taken place that has created a number of important new positions. To date, Dr. Eurwyn Wiliam has been appointed Deputy Director, and interviews have been held for the post of Keeper of the National Museum and Gallery, Cardiff. Watch this space for further developments.

Secondly, in common with all museums in Wales, NMGW has also been responding to the external environment within which it operates. In April, by making internal economies, free entry was introduced for all school children in pre-booked educational groups. NMGW would have liked to extend this to all school-age children. However, the extra resources that have been made available to those national museums funded either by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, or by the Scottish Office have so far not been made available in Wales. NMGW is working hard to ensure that members of the National Assembly of Wales share their desire to extend free entry, but that this cannot be realised entirely through internal economies.

New National Maritime Museum

Finally, in May, NMGW opened the doors – free-of-charge and by prior appointment – to its newest facility, The Collections Centre at Nantgarw. This building houses all the large and heavy collections from the Welsh Industrial and Maritime Museum, including many artefacts that were previously stored in inaccessible locations. Some will be permanently housed at Nantgarw, whilst others will ultimately go on display in the new National Maritime Museum which is currently being planned in conjunction with Swansea City Council. Some may also find their way to Big Pit once it becomes part of NMGW in May 2000. ■

Diane Dollery

The National Library of Wales: Choosing the Future

In preparation for the challenges and opportunities of the new millennium and the introduction of a new democratic framework within Wales, the National Library of Wales began in February 1999 a process of public consultation, with the publication of '**Choosing the Future**'.

The consultation took the form of a series of briefings, mainly for the media, and the publication of the consultation paper. The briefings, held in Aberystwyth, Bangor, Llanelli, Cardiff and London, led to widespread media coverage, and as a result there was a higher than anticipated demand for copies of the consultation paper. About 1,700 were distributed in February 1999 to local government, further and higher education, public bodies and agencies, religious groups, societies,

politicians, library users, the general public and library staff. Most, but not all copies went to destinations in Wales. The paper was also made available on the Library's website. The closing date for responses was given as 29 March 1999, although it was emphasised that replies would still be welcome after that date.

A summary of the responses has been prepared which will shortly be made available in bilingual form on the world wide web at the following address:

<http://www.llgc.org.uk/consmap.htm> (English)

<http://www.llgc.org.uk/papymg.htm> (Welsh)

lestyn Hughes

iestyn.hughes@llgc.org.uk



Cynon Valley open day

A taste of things to come for the general public at Aberdare's new Cynon Valley Museum

The first completed phase of the Cynon Valley Museum, Aberdare, opened on the 5th June. The whole museum is due for completion soon but the part opening has given members of the public the opportunity to get a taster of the facilities on offer.

The day was marked with by the running of a local heat for the 'Young Pavement Artist of the Year' competition and face painting, which proved popular with the young and not so young visitors alike.

Visitors are currently able to view the completed art gallery, shop, reception, cafe, mezzanine museum gallery and education room.



The main gallery exhibition will cover the history of the Cynon Valley from 1750 to the present. Most of the material used comes from acquisitions to the council over the past twenty years supplemented with loans from the National Museum.

Displays will include a mini film theatre showing a commissioned film on the iron industry; a multi media family history programme tracing a fictitious family through 200 years of the valleys history; a video presentation of the 1984/85 Miners Strike as well as a replica Co-op, the focus of the main children's hands on element to the main gallery displays. Following completion of all works and a trial run for the displays the museum will be commissioning an audio tour for visually impaired visitors.



The museum will be developing an arts programme based initially around six professional gallery exhibitions a year plus weekend art classes and summer and holidays projects and workshops. As part of this programme the museum will be actively commissioning work from artists to document the changing face of the valley, working with children and adult groups.

Two 'museum' related exhibitions will be produced a year working with existing collections and, we hope, new acquisitions as well as liaising with other organizations in the production of exhibitions.

The museum is looking to schools and life long learning as its main target audience and is currently in the process of appointing an education officer. The museum has a fully equipped education room fitted out with cd rom library and pc's linked to the Internet. It is also intended to include video conferencing as part of this package.

New technology will be used as much as possible and the museum is developing a website linked to local history projects and the digitization of the collections, initially photographic and finally artefact. The Powys Digital History Project is being taken as a model for this part of the museums development.

Cynon Valley museum is part of Rhondda Cynon Taff's Education Department and has received financial support from the Heritage Lottery Fund. ■

Chris Wilson
Cynon Valley Museum

Flemish Association for Industrial Archaeology

The Ecomuseum and Archives of the Boom Brickworks is going to host the first European meeting on the heritage of brick and tile making – on August 27th-29th, in Boom (Flanders, Belgium). This meeting will include museums, collections, preserved historic brick and tileworks, traditional works still operating, researchers, etc.



The provisional programme and some more information is announced at their new website:

<http://www.conservare.be/emabb/> (website under construction)

TEAMSHEET

The Federation Committee

Since the last AGM and with changes necessary due to circumstances:

President	Eva Bredsdorff (Welshpool)
Acting President	Kevin Mason (Bodelwyddan)
Immediate Past President	Chris Wilson (Cynon Valley)
Secretary	Michael Freeman (Aberystwyth)
Treasurer	Ann Williams (Conwy)
Editor	David Freeman (Freelance)
Committee Member	Dafydd Roberts (Llanberis)
Committee Member	Claire Dovey (Merthyr Tydfil)
Museums Association Representative	Denise Morris

Co-opted to represent the following on Council of Museums in Wales -
can attend and vote at CMW's AGM:

County Museums	Eva Bredsdorff (Welshpool)
County Museums	Ann Williams (Conwy)
County Museums	Chris Delaney (Carmarthen)
County Museums	Trevor Meakin (Tredegar House)
Independent Museums	Michael Davis (Berriew)
Independent Museums	Kevin Mason (Bodelwyddan)
Armed Services Museums	Peter Crocker (Caernarfon)

Kevin Mason and Michael Freeman represent the Federation and Peter Crocker represents
Armed Services Museums on the Executive Committee of CMW.

Other co-opted members

Representing Art Galleries	position vacant
Representing Conservators	Rebecca Campbell (Swansea)
Representative from CMW	Jane Peirson Jones or nominated officer
Representative from NMGW	Anna Southall or nominated officer

Co-opted to represent the Federation on :

NMGW	Chris Delaney
National Library of Wales	Michael Freeman

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The Welsh Federation of Museums and Art Galleries does not accept responsibility for, nor necessarily agree with, any views expressed, statements or claims made in articles, news items or letters published in Y MaG.

The Federation welcomes contributions in both Welsh and English to the newsletter which is to be published twice yearly.

Please send copy and photographs to:
Jane Henderson at Collections Care Consultancy,
74 Pen- y -Peel Road, Canton, Cardiff, CF5 1QY



Views from over the Bridge

In this regular series we'll be tracking down exiles, finding out what they're doing now and, most importantly, asking them what they miss most about Wales!

This issue: Michael Hunter, ex-Curator of Tredegar House, Newport.

Where are you now and what are you doing?

I moved to the Isle of Wight in May 1998, regrettably leaving behind the bara brith and regular visits to WNO in the New Theatre, to become Curator of Osborne House, once Queen Victoria's marine residence. Although the buildings are now owned by English Heritage the contents are still part of the Royal Collection. Over the next 5 years Osborne will undergo a major restoration programme, concentrating on restoring the external render and its original colour as well as refurbishing the interiors. So it is an exciting time here!

What was your job in Wales, and how long were you there?

I spent eight happy years (1990-98) as Curator of Tredegar House (initially a post funded by the Council for Museums in Wales). During my time there we carried out a number of major restoration projects on the house and the surrounding estate buildings. I remember the fun and games we had trying to keep the building open to the public while it was swathed in scaffolding and lime green polythene. We also made some major acquisitions to the collections, most notably the Tredegar Salt, an important piece of Elizabethan silver, the purchase of which was made possible by a Lottery grant, one of the first in Wales for an acquisition, I think.

Do you find any differences working in the Isle of Wight than working in Wales (apart from being on an island)?

The Isle of Wight is a lovely place to work – particularly during the fun and frolic of Cowes Week! – and the danger of being isolated is countered by the fact that we are part of the South East Region of English Heritage which gives us access to central expertise to satisfy conservation or documentation needs. Therefore the need to standardise procedures with regard to terminology control or standards of collections care are maintained throughout the organisation on a national basis.

You have worked all around the UK where do you think you will end up next?

Having worked in England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales I now seem to be making my way around the islands and so another island would seem the next logical place to move to! However it would be hard to find a nicer one than the Isle, particularly when I have access to a private, ex royal beach when I feel the need for a swim!

