



Do we Speak for the Profession in Wales?

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Eva Bredsdorff's incumbency as President came to a close at the AGM in Llanberis in September. I always knew that taking over after Eva would be a difficult task, not least because she always produced a rather special Newsletter introduction! I can't hope to compete but I will take this opportunity to express the Federation's thanks to Eva for her hard work over the past three years.

September's AGM was notable for the fact that one of our guest speakers was Anna Southall, Director of the National Museums & Galleries of Wales. Anna's description of her work and the role of the NMGW proved to be of particular interest not least for the encouragement she gave towards joint working arrangements in the future. Membership of the Federation extends across all sectors of the Welsh museum scene and itself can be a vehicle to ensure that this very valuable joint working can be achieved. A presentation on Sharing Museum Skills by Annie Hollobone and a tour of the newly refurbished Welsh Slate Museum rounded off a very worthwhile meeting.



Derek Phillips

The Christmas and New Year festivities were tainted by the sudden and tragic death of Derek Phillips on the 23rd December. Derek was well known to many in the Federation as a hard working individual and a true professional. His adherence to the museum cause, despite some significant disabilities, is surely a

lesson to us all. You will find a much more worthy dedication presented on Page 2 of this Newsletter.

As this is the first copy of the Federation Newsletter to be produced in the new Millennium, may I wish everyone well for the future. Until now I have refused to be drawn into the hype, except for a quick check for computer bugs. Unbelievably, I have not even booked my ticket for the Dome! However, I do feel that the start of a new Millennium offers at least a suitable excuse for a review of the Federation's role and activities.

Brave New World?

In recent years there have been so many changes in our working environment that the Federation must consider how best to work in this 'brave' new world. There have been significant political changes as well as an ever increasing demand being placed on us to produce high standards with fewer resources. It seems to me that this trend towards greater bureaucracy at the expense of real service is a worrying development.

The Welsh Federation was established to represent the views of the museum professional and to influence the national decision making process. I believe every organisation should review its aims, role and impact on a regular basis. We must carry out some detailed soul searching to ensure that the Federation lives up to the bold claim that it speaks for the profession in Wales.

We will have an opportunity to debate this and other important issues at the Spring Federation Conference planned for May, at a venue to be confirmed in mid Wales. The Committee hope that a number of guest speakers will be present to place the Welsh museums scene in a national context. This will be a event not to be missed! There may also be the chance of a small amount of merry-making, but of course this is not the real reason for the get together, honest.

Kevin Mason



Derek Phillips 1961 – 1999

Curatorial Officer, Merthyr Tydfil

Derek passed away on December 23rd, having spent most of his life coping bravely with a terminal heart and lung condition. He had been in hospital since the end of October having developed a clot in his leg, which in turn led to other complications.



Derek was born in Coventry and spent much of his early life in and out of hospital, as his heart and lung problems were kept under observation. I recall he once mentioned how lucky he was to have had this period of his life, as his stays in hospital led him to meet such worthy celebrities as Ed ‘Stewpot’ Stewart, who was visiting children in hospital around this time! A typical example of his humour and his wish to see something positive in any situation.

Derek often joked about his medical record. His parents were told when he was born that he was not expected to live beyond the age of two. When he reached two this was extended to eight, then twelve, and so on. At the age of twenty one, these predictions of longevity ceased, and when asked why, Derek’s reply was “That’s when I stopped going to see doctors”.

An intelligent and quick brain led Derek to do well at school, and he went on to study for a degree in History and American Studies before volunteering at the Herbert Museum & Gallery in Coventry. He was then taken on under a work experience scheme, leading him on to a job at Peterborough Museum. He worked there until coming to Merthyr in 1990, settling in Dowlais.

Derek joined the team here at Cyfarthfa back in 1990, and worked closely with Stephen Done, the then Curator, on refurbishing the Castle, and researching extensively into the history of the place, and of the Crawshay family. There was very little that he did not know about the family tree, the Cyfarthfa Band, or the photographic work of Robert Thompson Crawshay. If you wanted to know anything, Derek would either

know, or find out. He took great pleasure in searching out new facts and pieces of information, and talked of the family with great enthusiasm. He also had an excellent knowledge of the collection, which is quite an achievement when you consider the number and range of artefacts held here.

When I joined the staff of the Heritage Trust in 1992, it was Derek who showed me the run of the Castle and stores. I remember well our first meeting; he greeted me with his left arm outstretched, and laughingly told me to shake him by his ‘good hand’. From this moment on, his disability was forgotten to me. His ill health never held him back, and he always gave 110%. He did not once complain, or lose heart, even though gradually, his health was declining. To the staff of the museum, he was Derek; always jovial, always seeing the funny side, and trying his hardest to help anyone who asked for anything. The number of students and researchers he helped out and befriended is incredible. At the end of a phone call with Derek he would be on first name terms, would have shared a joke or two, and would have a friend for life. He was able to achieve this through his openness, and his willingness to go out of his way to assist wherever he could. His quick wit, enjoyment of life and the company of others was always apparent. I am sure I speak for everyone who ever met him when I say that he was instantly likeable, and always so cheerful.

Over 200 people attended his funeral, where tributes were made by his closest of friends. They told of his love of cake, his thoughtfulness, in providing little gifts every now and then, his enthusiasm to learn more and more about anything and everything, his wonderful sense of humour shown in his sparkling eyes, cheeky grin, wry smile, or chuckle while he read the paper, and his loyalty to his job, which was his life.

To those of us who worked with him, and socialised with him, we will be thankful that we knew him. He provided the best possible example of how to think positively, looking on the bright side, and getting the most out of life. ■

We will miss him.

Claire Dovey-Evans, Museums Officer
and the staff of Merthyr Tydfil CBC Museums Service

The Federation would like to extend their sympathies to all those who knew Derek, he will be greatly missed.



Newydd-ddyfodiad yn y Gogledd

Newcomers in the North

Cyd-wasanaeth Addysg Amgueddfeydd

Dechreuwyd menter tair blynedd newydd sy'n cynnwys Conwy, Sir Ddinbych a Sir y Fflint ym mis Hydref 1999 i hyrwyddo potensial addysgol yr amgueddfeydd a'r casgliadau yn ardal Gogledd-Ddwyrain Cymru.

Hoffem gyflwyno ein hunain fel y ddau swyddog addysg amgueddfeydd newydd, Jacqui Bentley a Tony Jones. Yn gweithio o swyddfa yn uchel yn nhyredau Castell Bodelwyddan, rydym ni, (Jacqui, fu'n athrawes Celf a Dylunio yng Ngogledd-Ddwyrain Cymru am yr ugain mlynedd ddiwethaf a Tony, a arferai fod yn bennaeth Ysgol Gynradd ac yn Swyddog Datblygu rhanbarthol i'r Ymddiriedolaeth Genedlaethol) wrthi'n galed yn gwella'n sgiliau Technoleg Gwybodaeth yn ddyddiol!

Rydym yn ysgrifennu adnoddau addysgol ar gyfer ysgolion i'w defnyddio yn yr un amgueddfa ar ddeg yn ein hardal. Ein nod yw annog plant i **fwynhau** dysgu tra hefyd yn ei wneud yn berthnasol i ofynion y Cwricwlwm Cenedlaethol. Mae'n pwyslais arbennig eleni ar gynnig profiadau 'ymarferol' i grwpiau ysgolion, wedi'u selio'n benodol ar agweddau ar Gelf a Hanes.

Bydd y ffocws ar gyfer 2001 ar ddatblygu rhaglen ddysgu i oedolion, wedi'i chysylltu â'r fenter 'Dysgu am Oes'.

Os oes gennych ddi-ddordeb mewn sefydlu cysylltiadau â'n gwasanaeth, a fydddech mor garedig â chysylltu â ni, a byddem yn falch iawn o drafod prosiectau posibl.

Castell Bodelwyddan, Bodelwyddan
Sir Ddinbych, LL18 5YA. (☎ 01745 584060)

Gyda chymorth Cronfa Dreftadaeth y Loteri.

Joint Area Museums Education Service

A new three-year initiative involving Conwy, Denbighshire and Flintshire started in October 1999 to promote the educational potential of the museums and collections in the North East Wales area.

We would like to introduce ourselves as the two new museums education officers, Jacqui Bentley and Tony Jones. Based in an office high in the turrets of Bodelwyddan Castle, we (Jacqui, who has taught Art and Design in North East Wales for the past twenty years and Tony, who is a former Primary school head-teacher and regional Educational Development Officer for the National Trust) are beavering away improving our IT skills daily!

We are writing educational resources for schools to use in the eleven museums in our area. Our aim is to encourage children to **enjoy** learning whilst also making it relevant to National Curriculum requirements. Our particular emphasis this year is in offering 'hands-on' experiences to school groups based specifically on aspects of Art and History.

The focus for 2001 will be on developing an adult learning programme, linked to the 'Learning for Life' initiative.

If you are interested in setting up links with our organisation, please contact us and we would be very pleased to discuss potential projects.

Bodelwyddan Castle, Bodelwyddan
Denbighshire, LL18 5YA. (☎ 01745 584060)

Supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Alan Morgan

Since leaving CMW at the end of 1998, Alan Morgan has been busy providing a variety of services for museums and heritage sites, from design and model making to taxidermy and natural history conservation.

His CV includes making models of food, armour and weapons, fumigating and assessing natural history collections, producing education support material and manufacturing interiors and exteriors. In his 28 years Alan's work has included everything from Celtic roundhouses to Victorian shops, with all of the cobbles, flagstones, fire-places associated with them.

His current work includes insect models for Newport Museum, an 18th Century interior and figures for Trefeca Museum, natural history collections for both Neath and Cyfartha Castle Museums as well as Roman armour and weapons for a travelling theatre company. As for the future, Alan is concerned that natural history collections will suffer even more now that CMW has no active Natural History Officer.

Alan offers maintenance visits and practical solutions for this fragile yet important part of museum collections. Contact Alan on 01874 636576.

Cynon Valley Museum

Emyr Morgan has recently started at the Cynon Valley Museum as part time Education Officer. Emyr is a qualified primary school teacher who previously worked as a sites and monuments records officer at the Dyfed Archaeological Trust.

...last but not least!

Conservator **Joel Taylor** has left the Museum of Welsh Life, St Fagans, to become an environmental intern at English Heritage.

Jane Henderson has recently started as a part-time Grants Officer at the HLF, after completing an MSc in Collections Care at Cardiff University.

Rowena Hill from Bournemouth has joined Christine Cheffins as a Conservator at Chepstow Museum.



The Royal Welch Fusiliers Museum Redevelopment

Recollections of a now Older and Wiser Curator!

During a grey and miserable week in October 1998, the Royal Welch Fusiliers museum was dismantled and removed to store after 38 years. Specialist packers from London, assisted by all six of the museum staff, were able to share the delights of carrying boxes down six flights of stairs, across the rain-swept Lower Ward, and out through another tower to a waiting van. Conservators supervised the more delicate aspects of the work.



Instead of an immediate start the weeks passed as we waited whilst the niceties of Scheduled Monument Consent (SMC) were negotiated with CADW. At last, on 11th January 1999, the contractors arrived. First a trackway had to be laid from the Great Hall through the Postern Gate and down some fifty feet to Slate Quay. This was the only route for all materials to and from the site. Large huts and the canteen were constructed on the former site of the Great Hall. Scaffolding and a hoist were erected outside the Queen's Tower as large items would be too big for the stairs. Through an oversight the mullions were removed, unsupervised by an archaeologist, and slight damage was caused. Everyone waited to see if the site manager would end up in prison for two years, the maximum penalty for failing to comply with an SMC!

Before anything else could be done a new electricity supply had to be brought in to the Castle. This involved digging up the main street of Caernarfon and

the entrance to the Castle. On completion the tempo increased appreciably. In overall charge was the designer, John Dangerfield, supported by a Trustee and Chairman of the Design Committee, Michael Burkham, and the two curators, Bownes and Crocker. Between them they drafted text for over 200 panels, selected illustrations, controlled the move of objects to and from conservators, wrote captions, assisted case dressers and liaised with graphic designers and translators. The curators mounted nearly 2,500 individual medals. There were innumerable administrative matters to be resolved, to say nothing of the day-to-day running of the museum.

With hindsight, it was lunacy to embark on a £1.6m project with only one trustee and two curators, especially in a scheduled monument where nothing may be fixed to the original stonework. Everything was urgent and a top priority. Work continued daily until 8pm or later. Evenings were the first luxury to be sacrificed, swiftly followed by weekends and holidays became an unimaginable dream. Problems were compounded by the fact that the museum offices and stores are a mile away from the action. For nearly a month at a critical stage the museum telephone system packed up.

Amazingly, tempers remained calm, and esprit de corps was a feature of 'site life'. The site foreman, Bob Freeman, played a key role in this, and he was ably supported by the 'Quartermaster', Alex, who provided a never ending supply of coffee, chocolate biscuits, bacon 'butties' and so on. Evening sessions in The Anglesey after close of play also helped.

There were some lighter moments: The day the wind were so strong that the portaloos rose into the air to be deposited on the opposite side of the Lower Ward; The looks on the faces of Rachel Howells and Meg Anthony as the good-looking 'Colonel Edgell Wyatt' went up the hoist and was then man-handled into position on the wall by eight helpers; The excellent lunches prepared by Alex out of nothing and served before the monthly site meeting.

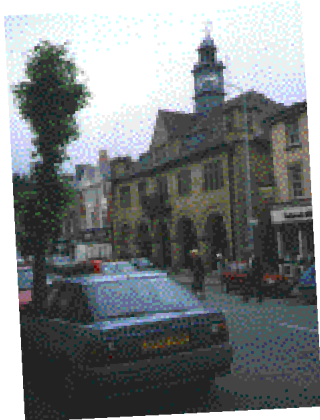
In an ideal world the project would have been completed on time. However, bearing in mind the complexity of the job, it seems a miracle that it opened only three weeks late. A tremendous achievement and a great credit to all involved. Thanks to HLF for their support of this project.

Peter Crocker



HLF Success for Montgomeryshire Museums

Llanidloes Museum was awarded an HLF grant of £160,000 to take over another room in its present venue and exhibit more of its collection.



Llanidloes Museum

Llanidloes Museum was established in 1930 in an old timber Market Hall. In 1993 the museum collections were moved out in order to preserve the building and meet modern standards of collection care. The museum re-opened on the ground floor of the Town Hall.

The project will tackle the two main problems facing the museum today, the poor condition of many of the artefacts, and the lack of space to exhibit them. The new museum displays will be themed to describe how the natural environment of the area has shaped and continue to shape the social and industrial history of Llanidloes.

The natural history collection will be utilised within a Resource Centre looking at the wildlife in nearby forests with the emphasis on modern conservation of the environment, including a Kite Centre with interactive displays and video links to the Hafren Forest.

Newtown Textile Museum has received an HLF Grant of £40,000 to carry out the final phase of its restoration.

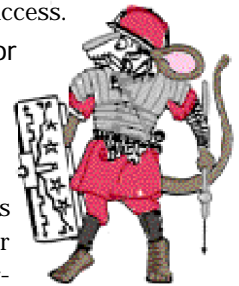
The Textile Museum, is a typical example of an early 19th century weaving shop, consisting of two lower floors of six back-to-back cottages and two large working areas on the second and third floors running the full length of the building. The six cottages have been joined together two by two to form three dwellings and the two top floors have been converted into a museum of the woollen industry of Newtown.

In 1990 Powys County Council took over the building and in 1995 the exterior of the two top floors was restored and conserved and the museum galleries were renovated and refurbished.

The Lottery grant will make it possible to carry out external works to the rest of the building, including general repairs, re-pointing as well as restoration and replacement of windows and doors. The result will be the complete outside restoration of a building which is of great interest both to local history and to the industrial heritage of Wales.

Once this work has been carried out, further funding will be sought to develop the interpretation of the building and to improve the physical access.

Eva Bredsdorff, Senior Museum Curator (Montgomeryshire)



Mice Found in Swansea museum!

When planning our Cabinet of Curiosities Gallery, we wanted a way to make the museum fun for our smallest visitors. Short legs give a restricted view of items in the V&A cases which we were using, and short attention spans would hurry parents away from things that interested them!

Our Curator, Rosalyn Gee, adapted an idea for a tableaux of anthropomorphic mice from Tullie House in Carlisle, where she had worked. We did not have the money for 3-D displays so plumped for a cheaper version of painted mice to be displayed at floor level.

A local artist created twelve mice for the Cabinet of Curiosities. The themes were chosen to reflect a case or display. We researched appropriate clothes for them to wear. The mice are painted onto boards 21cm wide by 28cm high, the height of our skirting boards to which most of them are fixed. The first mice proved so popular that we have since allowed them to "invade" other galleries and now have twenty five. Examples include a Red Mouse of Paviland and a Roman soldier mouse in full armour in the Archaeology Gallery. We have used images from the collection as the models of the mice wherever possible: the Photographer mouse near a display of early photographs is based on John Dillwyn Llewellyn's famous self-portrait.



We are using the mice in other ways to appeal to our young visitors. For some time we have been using colouring sheets to give children something to do while their parents view our temporary exhibitions. This has proved popular so we decided to make colouring corners and use line drawings of our mice. The artist has made more drawings for us and we have bought their copyright so that we can use them in any way we want.

Caught on Camera!

The next step was the creation of two Mice Trails. One for those who cannot read where they just find images, and one which asks questions. Both are popular with adults as well as children – we have watched on the CCTV whole families crawling round the floor in an effort to answer the questions and we get nice comments in our visitor book about them!

We haven't finished with our mice yet: we have a list of 8 more mice to place around the museum and we intend to turn our colouring sheets into a colouring book. Our major project will be to give names to all the mice (Welsh, of course) and to write stories about them so that we can have a Swansea Museum Mouse Book to sell in our shop.

Bernice Cardy Swansea Museum



The Portable Antiquities Recording Scheme

Every year objects of archaeological importance are discovered by members of the public. Many of these finds are made by metal detectorists, but chance finds are also made by people whilst working, digging their gardens or out walking.

In the past little of this material was recorded and a great deal of valuable information was lost. In 1997 the Government launched the Portable Antiquities Recording Scheme (Finding Our Past) as six pilots in England. Following a successful application to the HLF, the Scheme was extended to cover Wales. I was appointed to co-ordinate the Welsh Scheme.

The great strength of the Welsh Scheme is that it involves a variety of different organisations working in partnership. The co-ordinator's post is based at the NMG Cardiff, but by working closely with the archaeological trusts and local museums it has been possible to establish a network of reporting centres throughout Wales to which finders can take their discoveries for recording. The scheme's priority is to disseminate the data as widely as possible and details of recorded finds can be found on the internet at <http://www.finds.org.uk>. Information is also passed on to the relevant Sites and Monuments Records (SMR).

The Scheme is promoted by myself and staff from the regional archaeological trusts and involves attending metal detector club meetings to strengthen links between metal detector users and archaeologists. A promotional leaflet and newsletter were circulated last September and it is intended to produce a set of posters which will contain a space for participating museums to add their details.

Perhaps the greatest difficulty that museum staff face is correctly identifying and dating finds brought in

by the public. This issue was raised at the Scheme's introductory seminars so it was decided to initiate a series of 'finds identification' training days (the first of these is described below). A training day on coins is due to take place in Cardiff on 9th March. It is not possible to provide training days on all of the archaeological find types, so a short bibliography of useful, cheap and in-print books is being prepared for circulation.

Museums participating in the Scheme are helping a large number of people to make a meaningful contribution to the archaeological process in Wales. In passing details of those records on to the SMR's the Scheme provides a way that the public can help to protect the historical landscape and improve understanding of the past. This approach gives the public an active stake in their archaeological heritage, often perceived as the preserve of a small academic elite.

The success of the Scheme is largely dependent on persuading detectorists and others of the importance of reporting their discoveries and demonstrating to the public the archaeological value of that information. Museums in Wales have a central role to play in this work. Already a number of interesting discoveries have been reported, including: a late Iron Age ox-headed escutcheon (Wrexham County Borough Museum), a medieval cosmetic box (Carmarthenshire County Museum) and an early Bronze Age axe hoard (Swansea Museum).

Philip Macdonald, Finds Co-ordinator: Wales

Dept of Archaeology
& Numismatics,
NMGW, Cathays Park,
Cardiff. CF1 3NP.
☎ 01222 573226



Lithics - not just any old piece of rock!

A training event for museum staff working with PARS was held at the National Museum & Gallery Cardiff last December. The event, put together by members of the Lithic Studies Society, aimed to guide museum staff through the pitfalls of identifying and recording different types of lithics and attracted a very respectable 28 people.

The day began with a demonstration of flint knapping and then looked at ways in which lithic finds could be recorded. The importance of lithics to the study of prehistoric peoples was highlighted before the day ended with a whistle stop tour through Palaeolithic, Mesolithic and Post Mesolithic Lithics. Examples of differing types of lithics were handed round the group and there were plenty of examples from the collection of the NMG, Cardiff.

The day was both very informative and enjoyable mixing as it did informal lectures with plenty of hands-on opportunities. Many thanks have to be extended to Elizabeth Walker, NMG, Cardiff for organising the event. Training days on the identification of archaeological material seem to be few on the ground and when most of us have archaeological collections they would be most welcome and I hope to see more organised in the future.

Christopher Wilson, Curator Cynon Valley Museum

Details of Membership of the Lithic Studies Society can be obtained from Francis Wenban-Smith, c/o BM Quaternary Section, Franks House, 38-46 Orsman Road, London, N1 5QJ. The Lithic Studies Society are also holding a Conference at The NMG, Cardiff on 8th-11th September 2000. Details from Elizabeth Walker, email Elizabeth.Walker@nmgw.ac.uk.



Our Friends in the Archives

The editor asked me to write a brief note on archivists in Wales and to make it interesting. When we'd finished laughing and picked ourselves up from the floor we agreed that I could just write a brief note on archives in Wales, so here it is!

Until 1996 the position was relatively straightforward. Each county in Wales had a county record office except for Mid and South Glamorgan, which shared the Glamorgan Record Office. Local government reorganisation produced a mixed effect. The county services of Clwyd, Dyfed and Gwynedd were divided among their nine new unitary authorities, Powys remained the same, and in the south, Glamorgan, Gwent and West Glamorgan continue pretty much as before, serving between them twelve authorities under joint agreements.

These thirteen archive services differ greatly in size, both in terms of their own staff and of the population base they serve. Consequently, budget provision and position within the authority vary. Archivists in Wales have three major organisations addressing their needs. The Welsh County Archivists Group comprises heads of repositories of local government archives and discusses issues thereto pertaining. The Society of Archivists, the professional association open to all who work in archives in any capacity, has established a Wales region. Archives Council Wales was set up in 1995 to represent all recognised repositories in the country, amounting to 20 archival institutions and organisations: National Museum and Galleries of Wales, National Library of Wales, 13 local authority record offices, the Royal Commission in Ancient and Historical Monuments (Wales), Swansea and Bangor Universities, and the two post-graduate archive training courses at Aberystwyth and Bangor Universities. The purpose of ACW is to influence policy on archives in Wales, to raise the public profile of the sector, to provide a forum for debate within the archive community, and to foster co-operation.

In pursuing this last aim, ACW has been working towards the establishment of a computer network, the

Archive Network Wales. ANW will help archivists in Wales to promote their work, and improve both public service and professional communication. ACW already hosts a web site which provides basic information about repositories, opening hours, publications available for sale, addresses etc. (<http://www.llgc.org.uk/cac>). ANW is intended to add to this nucleus collection level descriptions of archives, with digitised images of significant documents as a next step. A bid to fund this project was submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund in June 1999 and a response is awaited.

A second recent all-Wales initiative has been the structural survey of local authority archive services, jointly organised by ACW and the Public Record Office. The purpose of this mapping project is to provide objective evidence of funding needs to HLF and other grant-awarding bodies. The project is based on questionnaires covering accommodation, public access, preservation, finding aids, IT and training and follows the pattern of the survey of 130 local authority archive services in England, the results of which were published in 1997 as 'Our Shared Past'. The Welsh report is expected to be launched in the spring of 2000.

Cause for Celebration

In the meantime, while our current needs are assessed, we look forward to closer working relationships with our colleagues in museums and libraries under some version of a Welsh MLAC. The advantages of a collaborative approach both in terms of service delivery and professional development have already been realised in some authorities, and you should all look forward to getting to know your local archivist(s) more intimately in the Millennium. Now there's something to celebrate.

Susan Edwards, Glamorgan Archivist



Y MaG is edited by Jane Henderson and David Freeman

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, Cardiff, CF5 1QY

Views from over the Bridge

This issue: Alison Lloyd, ex-Curator of Glynn Vivian Art Gallery, Swansea.



Where are you working now and what does it involve?

I am now Director of Penlee House Gallery & Museum, Penzance, which used to be called Penzance and District Museum & Art Gallery. The building underwent a massive refurbishment, re-opening in its present guise just over two years ago.

As it stands, it has five gallery spaces, primarily used for art exhibitions, and a small museum with collections representing the social history, archaeology and industry of the Penwith district of Cornwall. My remit is to develop the Gallery & Museum to its full potential. The physical structure is excellent, with computer controlled environmental conditions and lighting etc, but the marketing, education, exhibitions and staffing all need work. While visitor numbers have gone from 15,000 p/a pre-refurbishment to 30,000 after, this is still not great compared to the Tate St Ives achieving up to 300,000.

Tell us something about the collections at your gallery. What is there, have you any favourites?

The focus of the collections is on Newlyn School paintings (c.1880-1910), very accessible images of fisher-folk, which are hugely popular with the general public. There are some absolute stunners in the collection, particularly Walter Langley's remarkable large-scale watercolours, although my own personal favourites are the later artists, especially Dod Procter. The great thing about the paintings here is the number of people who remember the artists and the models – there is a constant flow of interesting stories from the public.

What do you miss most about Wales and in particular Swansea? (Apart from bilingual captions!)

Friends!!! Having been in Wales for my entire career, moving so far away has been a bit disorientating, to say the least. In Swansea I knew exactly who to pick the phone up to when I needed help, whether it was my lovely colleagues in the Maritime or Swansea Museum, fellow Museum/Gallery folk, artists or any of the other kind and helpful people around Wales.

I landed here knowing nothing and nobody, and although everyone's been amazingly friendly, it has been a very steep learning curve, particularly in the art of standing on my own two feet! I'd therefore like to use this opportunity to say a huge thank you to all of those who gave me such warm and generous support during the 14 years I worked in Wales.

Are you able to keep in touch with any of your former colleagues from Wales?

Not as much as I'd like, although I try to find excuses to get in touch when I can.

A few ex-colleagues have been down to see me, which has been lovely, and Gerald Gabb has been fantastic with help and advice about our education potential. I'm also delighted that Kath Davies has agreed to be my AMA mentor, despite the distance, and I went on a superb Preventive Conservation course recently run by someone by the name of Henderson, who seemed strangely familiar...

This area of Cornwall is spectacularly beautiful and makes a great holiday destination. Penlee House's cafe does excellent lunches and home-baked cakes, so I'm hoping that more of you will be tempted down here and will call in to see me!

What plans do you have for the future?

I'm still working towards the AMA, and one of my personal development aims was "to become a more rounded Museums professional". With the temptation of cakes baking in the cafe, their smell wafting up to my office, and the delicious pasties, Cornwall is making me more rounded by the day!

Seriously, though, I'm frantically trying to learn about the Museum collections and my personal long-term aim is to be as knowledgeable as possible about the Newlyn School artists. For the Gallery, I'd like to make sure that everyone who visits Cornwall knows what and where Penlee House is and to double present visitor numbers.

And outside work, Vince and I are in the final stages (we hope) of buying the ultimate rural retreat, right out on the Penwith Peninsular, not far from Land's End. Having a home of our own here will make us feel much more settled in Cornwall, I think, although we'll keep the Welsh flag flying in this far-flung Celtic corner!



Top: The Zandvoort Fishergirl by Elizabeth Adela Forbes
Left: Tucking a School of Pilchards by Percy Robert Craft
Both from the collections at Penlee House

