

Friends' Newsletter and Magazine

February 2010

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wales



EDITOR'S LETTER

Dear Friend,

Greetings and salutations!

In this issue, alas only 20 pages, we hope that some if not all of the contents will give you pleasure. We are most grateful to all those who have sent articles, many from the staff of our museums. Graham Davies has sent articles from the Museum's website (www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/rhagor) and his contributions are shown by ♣. We are, as always, most appreciative of his constant support.

Now to end with the words of a fine song that will, I hope, evoke happy memories for you. I had begun to despair that no-one would send their own but, just when I had decided to pen my own, help came from a reader from Tunbridge Wells (E L W) who writes, "*I have your excellent magazine sent to me by a friend and I have followed with a great deal of pleasure your editor's choice of songs. They give me pleasure too and, as he is always urging his readers to send their own, may I be permitted to send the words of a song which I am certain will be very popular. When I hear the words they bring back very happy memories. I am surprised that no one has selected it before*". He is quite right and here it is and I hope that it will encourage readers who are Friends to respond.

Some enchanted evening
You may see a stranger.

You may see a stranger
Across a crowded room
And somehow you'll know,
You'll know even then,
That somewhere you'll see her again.

Some enchanted evening
Someone may be laughing,
You may hear her laughing,
Across a crowded room
And night after night,
As strange as it seems, the sound of her laughter will sing
in your dreams.....

Once you have found her
Never let her go.
Once you have found her
Never let her go!

This must be my all. Pray continue writing to us, we do so much appreciate your observations.

Before I say Bye Bye, one or two last thoughts. Several readers thought that some of our contributions were 'too long'. We shall take note of these remarks. Another observation was just how much they miss seeing so many of our prize possessions now on loan to cities in America. All we can say is that we are given to understand that they are giving our American friends great pleasure and that

their being on display gives them a little of what Wales can offer in the way of its treasures. But take heart. The Museum has recently been offered on loan several masterpieces which may well prove to be a balm.

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Next Edition

Contributions for inclusion in the June 2010 edition should be submitted by the beginning of April 2010.



FROM THE CHAIRMAN ...

So the secret's out! We now have a Picasso - or, more exactly the Museum has a Picasso. It is titled *Still Life with Poron*. What's a poron? I didn't know either - apparently it is a traditional Spanish wine pitcher. Acquired with the assistance of the Derek Williams Trust and the Art Fund, the picture, which dates from 1948, can now be seen at National Museum Cardiff and very fine it looks too. Nearby, one can see Rembrandt's striking *Portrait of Catrina Hooghsaet*, on loan from Penrhyn Castle until 21st March and shown alongside original Rembrandt etchings from the Museum's own collection.

Are museums good for your mental health? If an article in a recent edition of the monthly *Museums Journal* is to be believed the answer is a clear 'yes'. The role of museums and galleries is apparently seen not so much as helping in the treatment of mental illness (which incidentally is estimated to have an annual cost of £77bn nationally) as to prevent problems developing in the first place. A 2008 report of the Government Office for Science posited that mental health needs indeed to be at the core of government policy development, not simply an adjunct. The suggestion derives from the belief that museums are repositories of things that have traditionally been a source of human happiness and of the stories that help people make sense of the world around them. To the layman this seems to make a good deal of sense, as the existing largely 'medical' approach to mental health issues seems unlikely ever to provide a complete answer. All, of course, more easily said than done. For instance, despite free admission, many people still feel that they are not 'entitled or equipped to enjoy what is there' according to recent Art Fund research into museum attendances. These things are never easy.

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At the Annual General Meeting of the Friends on 7th November last, Kathryn Outhwaite was elected to the Committee. I am sure Kathryn will make a valuable contribution to our work in the coming years and I am delighted to welcome her on board.

According to a report in the *Sunday Times*, Tracey Emin is thinking of joining a 'threatened exodus by celebrities, footballers, and hedge fund managers' in search of countries with a 'less onerous tax regime' than that of the UK. I doubt if I was alone on reading this in recalling Ko-Ko's timeless refrain from *The Mikado* - 'They'd none of 'em be missed -they'd none of 'em be missed!'

ROGER GAGG



★ COVER STORY: CRYSTALS AND MINERALS OF WALES

Minerals have played a major role in the economic and social development of Wales since the Bronze Age. Since these ancient times, mineral outcrops and mines have been worked throughout Wales; by Romans and Cistercian Monks, and on into the heyday of Welsh metal mining in the mid nineteenth century, when virtually every outcropping vein or fault was tried by the drivage of adits or the sinking of shallow shafts.

There are currently around 4,000 officially recognized mineral species known to occur globally, of which, 365 have been confirmed from Wales.

Our front and back covers present two of these Welsh minerals for you to enjoy the incredible colours, forms and lustre of these magnificent museum specimens. To see some of the others visit the minerals website at: www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/rhagor/galleries/crystals/

★ CURATOR'S CHOICE: THE PONTNEWYDD TEETH

About 230,000 years old, these teeth from Pontnewydd are the sole physical remains of the first known inhabitants of Wales, early Neanderthals, a species that lived about



150,000 years before modern man. This image shows an upper jaw fragment of a child aged about 11 years with a worn milk tooth and a permanent molar still in place in the jaw.

★ REMEMBERING THE WHITE OX OF NANNAU

On 25 June 1824 one of Wales's grandest 21st-birthday celebrations took place for the son of Merioneth's biggest resident landowner. Held on the Nannau estate, Dolgellau, 200 guests sat down to an extravagant banquet that included a huge joint of beef from the white ox of Nannau. Various items produced to commemorate the event are now in the collections of Amgueddfa Cymru including a candelabrum made from the horns and hoofs of the prized white ox.

Heirs to landed estates

For centuries it was customary for communities to celebrate the coming of age of the heir to a landed estate. This seems to have been especially true in North Wales. Until the Parliamentary reforms of 1832, the region was socially conservative, and its traditional Welsh-language culture remained strong. The best-documented celebrations were those of Robert Williames Vaughan of Nannau.

The young man's father, Sir Robert Williames Vaughan (1768-1843), 2nd baronet, was Merioneth's biggest resident landowner and its sole representative in Parliament for over four decades. A pillar of the community, he took pride in maintaining old Welsh customs and kept open house at Nannau, where the neighbourhood came to dinner daily without special invitation.

Beef for the poor, beer for the rich

The younger Robert Williames Vaughan's coming of age was marked not only by his family but also by the local inhabitants of the nearby towns. It was accompanied by illuminations, fireworks, balloon ascents and cannon fire, and also much eating and drinking, especially of beef, which the poor never otherwise enjoyed, and beer, which the wealthy usually avoided in favour of wine. Oxen were roasted for the poor of Corwen, Barmouth and Bala and

subscription dinners were held in Conway, Dolgellau and Chester.

Tables bent under the weight of good things

The central event was the celebration at Nannau itself on 25 June 1824. A wood, canvas and thatch tent was built in front of the late 18th-century mansion. Here, played in to the tune of *The Roast Beef of Old England*, 200 guests sat down to "a most sumptuous and plentiful banquet". After a fish course, a huge joint or 'Baron' of beef from a prized white ox, weighing 166lbs, was escorted into the room by the family's cowman, Sion Dafydd. The tables literally bent under the weight of good things. As well as wines, enormous jugs of *Cwrw Da* ('beer') were placed at proper intervals on the tables.

The Vaughans had a long tradition of cultural patronage and Sir Robert's toast to his son encapsulates the spirit of the occasion: "*May he fear God and Honour the King; show reverence to his superiors and respect to his inferiors. Heddwch, Dednyddwch a Chymydogoeth dda*".

Owain Glyndwr and the hollow oak of the demon

The white ox was commemorated in a painting by Daniel Clowes of Chester, and the horns and hoofs were made into a candelabrum. Sir Robert also had six special toasting cups made for the occasion. They were made from the wood of the *Derwen Ceubren yr Ellyll*, 'the hollow oak of the demon', an ancient tree at Nannau associated with Owain Glyndwr. These were subsequently cherished by the Vaughans, and are now also in Amgueddfa Cymru's collection.

The 1824 celebration was the highpoint of the family's influence. When the region marked Robert Williames Vaughan's wedding eleven years later, in 1835, feeling in the neighbourhood was still said to be "*worthy of old times when the words Radical & Reform were unknown*", but he never enjoyed his father's prestige and died childless in 1859.

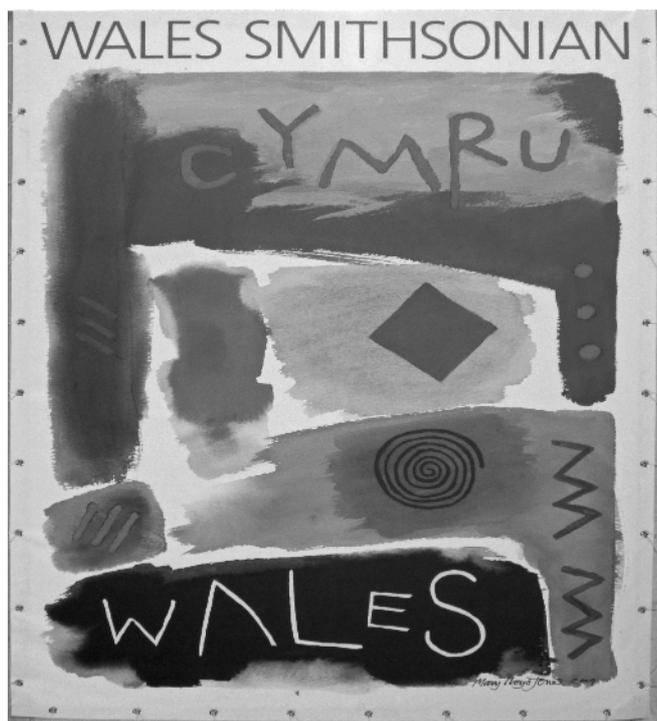
Oliver Fairclough



Daniel Clowes of Chester (1774-1829), *The Nannau Ox with the Family's Cowman, Sion Dafydd* (1829, 65 cm x 85 cm, oil on canvas)

SMITHSONIAN FOLKLIFE FESTIVAL, 2009

Dafydd Roberts



The Banner for the Festival

Earlier this year, for a period of just over a fortnight from mid-June until the start of July, I was fortunate enough to be one of the Amgueddfa Cymru-National Museum Wales members of staff selected by the Welsh Assembly Government to represent our nation at the Smithsonian Folklife Festival. In our midst were colleagues with technical and craft skills, such as Keith Rees from the National Wool Museum and Dafydd Davies from the National Slate Museum, complemented by colleagues with academic and curatorial skills – in their midst Beth Thomas and Dylan Jones from St Fagans National History Museum, and David Jenkins from the National Waterfront Museum. Well over 150 participants from Wales were directly involved, along with many more as members of choirs and bands. What follows are some personal comments on what all of this involved.

Over forty Festivals have been held by now, all of them in Washington DC, and all organised by the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage. Very loosely, it might be said that the Smithsonian Institution is the nearest that the USA has to our network of National Museums. The founder, Mr. Smithson, was an immensely rich philanthropic businessman, who left in his will sufficient money to establish what became a first-rate network of museums and galleries, all sited along “The Mall” in Washington. “The Mall” is the wide, attractive, tree-lined avenue that forms part of the civic centre – it is probably best known to all of us as part of the setting for formal events and

ceremonies, such as, of course, Barack Obama’s inauguration as President. Other than the museums and galleries, “The Mall” provides a setting for iconic buildings such as the Capitol, the White House and the Lincoln Memorial. And it is here, too, on “The Mall”, that the Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage organises the annual Smithsonian Folklife Festival. Being accustomed to our National Eisteddfod, the Folklife Festival looked and felt a little similar, with lots of tents, marquees and exhibition units set up by a dedicated team with endless patience and a huge appetite for hard work.

This year, over one million visitors made their way through the heat and humidity of mid-summer Washington to participate in a Festival which had three main themes. “Giving Voice” dealt with the power of words in African American Culture, with “Las Americas – Un Mundo Musical” charting the value that is bestowed upon music across cultures in Latin America and Latino USA. The challenge for us from Wales, in the words of Rhodri Morgan AM, our First Minister, was to seize this “... exciting opportunity for us to celebrate the deep roots of our heritage in Wales, combined with the vibrancy of Wales today and the ambitions that will shape the Wales of the future.... From international trade interests to community initiatives among neighbours, it is the spirit of an ever-resourceful people that continues to put Wales on the map.”

Wales was, quite literally, at the heart of the Festival. Within our part of “The Mall”, clusters of craftspeople, exhibitors, themed stands and activities were linked with catering facilities providing a taste of Wales. Interspersed were performance areas where, over the fortnight, The Hennessys, Parti Cyt Lloi and Only Men Aloud would draw huge audiences, as well as contemporary musicians and performers such as Sian James, Gai Toms and Gareth Bonello. “Buildings and Landscapes” was the theme which encompassed the slate industry, past and present. As well as Dafydd Davies and myself, two others were involved in our area. Howard Bowcott, from Penrhyn-deudraeth, has attained an international reputation for the quality of his sculptural work in slate, and had brought with him an installation which evolved most pleasingly



John Neilson at work



Dafydd Davies surrounded by an enthralled audience as he splits slate blocks

over the fortnight. The fourth member of our little group was John Neilson from Llansilyn, a letter carver, whose sensitive renditions of *englynion* and poetic verses in slabs sourced from slate quarries across several parts of North Wales were a visual delight. Dafydd Davies, who is one of our team of quarrymen at the National Slate Museum, displayed his skill at splitting and trimming slabs of slate, using traditional hand tools such as a straight edge, a measuring stick, and a trimming knife. My role was to draw all of these activities together, talking to visitors about what was being done by our three craftsmen as they went about their work.

We were, at times, almost swamped by the interest shown! Once Dafydd, Howard or John had started a craft demonstration, audiences flocked towards our stand. People sat or stood, and watched, in rows six or eight deep. People returned, again and again, to see what was happening; the volunteer aiders on the Mall clamoured to be allowed to help out on our stand. From eleven in the morning until late in the afternoon, it was continuously like this. Huge interest was shown in our slate rock; in the craftsmanship being demonstrated; in the history of the slate industry; in us as individuals; and in our language and customs. Many spoke of family links with Wales, wanting to know where towns and villages were located.

All four of us had brought our tools and raw material with us. This also proved to be of interest to our audience. Slate is a heavy, bulky raw material, and we had been fortunate enough - thanks to our sponsorship arrangements here at the National Slate Museum - to be given three tons of the very best quality sawn slate blocks, sourced jointly from the Penrhyn Quarry at Bethesda and from the former Oakeley Quarry at Blaenau Ffestiniog.

Sawn slate slabs have to be kept wet until they are finally split to produce roofing slates. We do this here by storing them outdoors under a water sprinkler system - but how would we ensure that they remained wet for their six week journey from Wales to Washington? The answer turned out to be boxes: large, sturdy plastic boxes, each containing about a ton of slate blocks, with army blankets carefully

wrapped around the slabs, and the box half-filled with water. A lid was then strapped on top, with the boxes then ready for their lengthy journey from Llanberis, initially to Cardiff, thence to Southampton, and then as part of a containerised load to Washington. Yes, they arrived safely and in good heart; and everything returned home to Wales equally safely thereafter, though the army blankets were by that stage indescribably smelly.



THE EDITOR'S POETRY CORNER

I had been leafing through "Everyman's Book of Evergreen Verse" where so many poems come leaping from the pages: "*If all the world were paper...*", "*Here's to the maiden of bashful fifteen...*", "*How do I love thee? Let me count the ways...*", "*When I am dead my dearest sing no sad songs for me...*". There are dozens and dozens of them and yet when I ask you to send your favourite poem, or one of your own, answer came there none. I had almost given up hope when Professor Tony Curtis sent two of his own from *Crossing Over* (Seren Books, 2007). Tony Curtis is a Friend of the Museum and is on the executive of the Contemporary Art Society for Wales. He is also Professor of Poetry at the University of Glamorgan and has published nine collections of poetry.

MOORE

When his mother came back each night
from the laundry exhausted
he would rub liniment into her shoulders
until they eased.
This was the anatomy of love,
the boy learning and exploring,
re-forming the first body.

Run your hand over the surface of her leg,
the solid, ridged bronze, his vision made large-
women as bones, bones under their gowns,
set high against the trees on the hill.
Another essay on the body,
the dynamics of something in bulk and at rest
until you love it back into life.

RICHARD LONG'S BUZZARD

From high soaring on thermals
The tame buzzard lays a flight path
Straight down through the paddock
To the bare oak:

This shallow trench line
Filled with Norfolk flint-
Shards, knuckles, yellow-white bones,
What remains of us.

FRIENDS' NEWS

Summer activities for Friends included a June visit to Umbria and a day trip to Abbey Cwmhir.

Umbria in June 2009

Refreshed from the early start to our journey, we began our first day getting to know Perugia, a city of endless delights - impressive old buildings, mysterious medieval streets, fine museums and galleries, all enhanced by a lively student atmosphere derived from the presence of the university and international college. Together with excellent cafes and enticing shops, Perugia offered us an excellent blend of culture and relaxation.

Maura, our guide, proved to be that perfect blend of knowledge, humour and charm. Her engaging personality set more than a few male hearts fluttering! She walked us round Perugia, explaining its history, showing us its many treasures: from the impressive civic buildings and Duomo, to the surprising medieval quarter, now completely underground though served by modern escalators. Our first day coinciding with the Feast of Corpus Christi, the buildings were adorned with bright banners; a carpet of flowers was spread across the cathedral steps and a colourful procession wound its way through the ancient streets. It all provided a special atmosphere to our first impressions of Perugia.

On each of the following days our coach took us through the landscapes of Umbria so familiar from books and paintings: soft green hills crowned with red-tiled medieval towns; tall cypresses standing like exclamation marks; fields of wheat, rye and maize splashed with the bright gold of sunflowers. Gubbio, Spoleto, Assisi, Arezzo, Cortona and Spello were just some of the towns we visited, each enchanting us in its own special way. Majestic Assisi, place of pilgrimage, is crowned with the impressive basilica of St. Francis and here it was that we saw the fascinating spectacle of 'an angel' seated in a town square illustrating cards while a parade of gleaming vintage cars circled around her. In Spello we wandered tiny narrow streets colour splashed with baskets and pots of brilliant flowers, each more vividly decorated than the last and in Gubbio we arrived on market day with its magnificent displays of enticing vegetables and luscious fruits. The ladies of our party nearly bought out a stall selling pretty straw hats - very necessary in the hot sun.

We became experts on the finer points of fresco painting as we viewed the great works of Giotto, Piero Della Francesca, Pinturicchio and Perugino, Perugia's most fa-

mous son. They all provided beautiful evocations of that distant and fascinating world in which biblical characters appear in medieval dress against backgrounds not too dissimilar to those we were seeing each day.

Culture and history were absorbed with interest but the inner man (and woman) were also catered for as we sampled many of the region's gastronomic delights in long lazy lunches at friendly little cafes. Tasty local cheeses, delicious hams and salads, wonderful Italian ice creams and fruits and the excellent local wines all received our careful attention. One hedonistic memory was particularly memorable. A hair-raising drive along a narrow road winding higher and higher up a forested mountainside, took us to the Alberto Ferreti hotel with breath-taking views. Here

we enjoyed a wonderful al-fresco lunch served by charming young staff while serenaded by a magical chorus of bird song. Never did time pass so pleasantly and contentedly - it was *La Dolce Vita* indeed!

The holiday ended in spectacular fashion with a visit to Orvieto, a town situated on a high plateau of volcanic rock. Ascending via funicular and the local bus, the main square was quite breathtaking. Like a spectacular stage set, the cathedral facade presents a riot

of coloured mosaics, pinnacles and carvings - the effect was fantastic in the true sense of the word. No less fantastic was the interior where we viewed the powerful frescoes of the Last Judgement by Signorelli. As we gazed at details unseen anywhere else in medieval art, portraying a unique interpretation of the end of the world, the skies outside had darkened, the heavens opened and we were treated to a thunderstorm of truly theatrical proportions.

My own special memories include a visit to an unremarkable museum in Cortona and coming suddenly upon Fra Angelico's exquisite *Annunciation* with its glowing 'pink Angel' seeming to light up the room. There was also an unexpected stop at Lake Trasimeno where we watched tiny water snakes poke their inquisitive heads above the softly ruffled waves. And as always we agreed that grateful thanks should go to Val for yet another wonderful holiday with 'Friends'.

Diane Wilson

Abbey Cwmhir in August 2009

The drizzle was noticeable as we drove towards Merthyr Tydfil. Our first stop was Llangoed hall, a former castle in 17 acres of garden and parkland alongside the River Wye. In an atmosphere of elegant comfort and relaxation we were served coffee with biscuits that came straight from



Friends enjoying a taste of Umbria

the oven. We were encouraged to stroll round the building to view the many interesting paintings and photographs before we drove on to Brynafon Country House Hotel, once the Rhayader workhouse. Before lunching, our host provided a short talk explaining that the workhouse had opened in 1878/79 to meet the requirements of social legislation of earlier years. The original design was quite imaginative providing 60 places for the local destitute but by the turn of the century Lloyd George's policy interventions regarding social security steadily reduced the need for such provision.

The sun shone as we progressed by coach towards Abbey Cwm Hir which lies within the Clywedog valley amidst magnificent scenery, deeply hidden amongst the Powys hills. There is very little left of the original Abbey but we know that it was designed and built by the Cistercian monks during the 12th century and that the length of the nave was only exceeded by those of Winchester and Durham. The Abbey has a fascinating but chequered history involving the political shifts of the time and was finally destroyed by Sir Thomas Middleton's forces in 1644, the monks probably making for Strata Florida in West Wales.

Most of the afternoon was spent exploring the nearby grade II house, its gardens, the surrounding woods and a nearby chapel. The house is quite extraordinary and filled to capacity with an Aladdin's cave of splendid artefacts, furniture and collectables. The Hall has been described as one of Wales' finest examples of Victorian Gothic architecture, built in 1834 by Thomas Wilson 'the great Victorian improver'. The Philips family doubled its size by 1869 adding a snooker room in 1894. The Humphreystons bought the empty house in 1997 and have spent most of their time restoring it to its former splendour - their achievements being recognised in such TV programmes as *Discovering Welsh Houses* and *How the Other Half Lives*. Tours are conducted by a family member and at Christmas time all 52 rooms are decorated.

Susan Barnes

New member on the Committee



Kathryn Outhwaite joined the committee in November 2009 following the AGM. She has been associated with Cardiff life for the last thirty years and, taking the opportunity for early retirement, settled there in 2005. She is an accountant and spent most of her working life in the public sector as a manager with the Audit Commission. She enjoys archi-

tecture and the arts and has found a wealth of opportunity to pursue these interests in Cardiff, including membership of various groups such as the Art Fund, NADFAS and CADW.

Roman Rhythm



Replica of a Roman lyre

Music is part of us and either ennobles or degrades our behaviour. These were the words of Anicius Manlius Severinus, the Roman philosopher, and they form the keynote of a new exhibition **Roman Rhythm** that explores why and where different people would have listened to music in the Roman period.

The exhibition is part of Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales 2009 music programme. The exhibition team included colleagues from departments such as Archaeology and Visitor Services. The consultation process also involved the visiting public who voiced their preferences for different versions of panels and displays which had a direct influence on the final design of the exhibition. The overall aims were to challenge traditional ways of thinking about the Romans and to encourage consideration of the harmonious sounds of music rather than the martial sound of the Empire.

Roman Rhythm presented an unusual challenge in that the team were faced not with having to select objects from an incredible collection but with finding a way to present examples of musical instruments when no such artefacts were available in the museum's collection. Not discouraged however, the team found depictions of music on everyday objects such as a shard of Samian pottery and a coin. To complement these objects, a number of replica instruments were commissioned including an exact replica of a lyre from the early part of the second century AD (see picture). Also chosen for the display was an amphitheatre token so that visitors could not only see musical instruments as they would have looked but also place them in the context of how music on a grand scale would have been enjoyed. In addition, an audio-visual presentation was produced by Amgueddfa Cymru staff which included a musical score that allows visitors to hear Roman music as it might have been played two thousand years ago. The film recreated people and places where music would have

been heard, from the luxurious surroundings of the triclinium to the ritual processions at religious ceremonies. Scenes in the film used many of the replica instruments, for example, the lyre mentioned above featured in a depiction of a wealthy Roman party.

Roman Rhythm has received very positive responses and it is open until the end of April 2010 at the National Roman Legion Museum, Caerleon.

Dai Price

Dates for your Diary

Thursday 18th March 2010: The Scientific Heritage of Wales: The Way Forward

If you are interested in the question of how best to preserve the scientific, technological, engineering and mathematical legacy of Wales Catrin Mears invites you to join Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales – on Thursday March 18th 2010 to explore our scientific heritage, how it is currently presented and the way forward.

For more information contact the Events Office at National Museum, Cardiff: Phone: 029 2057 3325 or Email: post@museumwales.ac.uk

Saturday 27th March 2010: Music at Gregynog

Dr Rhian Davies, the Gregynog Festival Artistic Director, will be giving a talk to the Friends about music at Gregynog in the 1920's and 30's at 10:30am in the Reardon Smith Lecture Theatre, Cardiff.

11th-20th June 2010: Gregynog Festival

The festival takes *Pleasure Gardens* as its theme and has been recommended by the BBC, Classic FM and *Gramophone*. The NMW's Wynstay Collection has formed the planning centrepiece with a specially curated programme of international artists who will be performing in the Music Room. Tickets are on sale from January 22nd 2010.

For more information: Tel: 01686 207100 or go to www.gwylgregynogfestival.org



TERRY SETCH

2009 Elected to the Royal Academy of Arts
2009 Winner of the Brian Robertson Trust award
2002 Elected to the Royal West of England Academy

Terry Setch is not a native of Wales. He was born in an East London suburb. However, the outbreak of war in

1939 resulted in a disruptive period of family moves which may well have influenced the focus and direction of his subsequent artistic skills. From the outset he was criticised for doing his own thing, testing materials and using his imagination rather than following a set curriculum designed for employment in printing and design. His approach to landscape painting also set him apart from many contemporary views - he particularly admired the dark and emotional format of Graham Sutherland's post war paintings for example.

Following National Service in the army, Terry enrolled at the Slade for a period of four years where his interest in abstraction, the avant-garde and the more radical techniques associated with Richard Smith and Robyn Denny were enhanced and developed. It was during this period that he became particularly stimulated and attracted by the work of Jackson Pollack who talked about '*being in the painting*' during the creation of pictorial images. It was when Terry moved to the Leicester College of Art in 1960 that he actually stopped painting and moved into the production of suspended images and contrasting reliefs comprising a mixture of opposing materials such as metal, leather and plastic. Together with his Leicester colleagues an exhibition of these constructions entitled *The Inner Image* appeared in London in 1964. In the same year he moved to the Cardiff College of Art as a senior lecturer in painting. It was then that this idea of art as a conduit for transforming aspects of the environment, of behaviour and of attitudes, became and continued to be an important part of Terry's work.

It was when he moved to Penarth, a seaside resort not far from Cardiff and lying on an estuary that his surrounding environment became much more to do with the detritus of shipping and trading in coal and oil, intermingled with family holidays and the leisure facilities of the pier. It was here that his interpretations of findings on the beach came to reflect many of the conflicts inherent in contemporary life and it was here that he began to develop his wax techniques which have remained an important feature of his paintings to date.

Terry Setch has mounted 35 solo exhibitions in the UK, including a UK wide touring Retrospective. He has also taken part in international touring exhibitions and every year since 1956 has participated in one or more group exhibitions. Venues in the UK include Tate Gallery; National Museum Wales; Victoria and Albert Museum; Hayward Gallery; Royal Academy; Whitechapel Art Gallery; Glyn Vivian Gallery; Serpentine Gallery; Royal West of England Academy; Walker Art Gallery; Rugby Museum; Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art, and private galleries throughout the UK.

Sources

Martin Holman, *Terry Setch* (Lund Humphries in association with Broken Glass, 2009) ISBN: 978-1-84822-923-2

More information at: www.terrysetch.co.uk

**TERRY SETCH at the
NATIONAL MUSEUM CARDIFF**



left: Terry Setch (b. 1936) Yeah
(2003, 200cm x 86 cm).

The picture has been on loan from the Derek Williams Trust since 2004 and it is reproduced with their kind permission.

below: Terry Setch (b. 1936)
Oil Sketch for NMW Restaurant Cardiff Bay
(1992, 20 cm x 50 cm, oil and wax on board)



❖ A PASSION FOR PLANTS: BOTANICAL ILLUSTRATION BY WOMEN ARTISTS

The Museum's collection of botanical illustrations consists of more than 9,000 prints and drawings. Many of the works in the collection have fascinating and courageous stories linked to them. In particular, there are stories of the women artists who took part in scientific discovery.

A combination of neglect and dismissal of these women artists has undermined their achievements and their contribution to the science and art of botanical illustration.

Women's role in botanical illustration

It was sometimes thought that botanical illustration was only for women with time on their hands, who dabbled in a spot of watercolour before ordering afternoon tea! This might have been true for some, but not all. Several intrepid and independent women emerged as accomplished botanical illustrators.

The 17th century

Maria Sibylla Merian (1647-1717) was one of the finest botanical artists of her time. From an early age, Maria was interested in insects and caterpillars, and the plants on which they fed. It is believed that her uncle had a silk



Maria Sibylla Merian, *Cerasus Major*
From *Raupenbucher* (Book of Caterpillars), 1679

factory that led to her fascination in the life cycle of the silk worm.

In 1679, she published the first of three volumes on European insects illustrated with her own engravings. Her careful and deliberate portrayal of insect and host plant together established a precedent in scientific literature.

After 17 years of marriage, Maria left her husband and joined an exclusive sect called the Labadists in a castle in the Netherlands. In 1698 Maria sold her collection to fund an expedition to study and describe insects in their native habitat.

For two years she devoted all her time to discovering and drawing many new plants and insects. Eventually she returned to Europe due to ill health and was working on some drawings when she died of a stroke aged seventy.

The 18th century

Elizabeth Blackwell (1700-1758) was recognised as an accomplished artist. Her husband was sent to debtors prison for two years after he opened a print shop in London without the required apprenticeship.

Looking for a way to save them from their financial difficulties, Elizabeth was encouraged by Sir Hans Sloane, President of the Royal Society, to produce a definitive herbal of medicinal plants. Elizabeth embarked on this



Berthe Hoola van Nooten, *Carica Papaya*



Elizabeth Blackwell, *Prunus Amygdalus* from *The Curious Herbal* (1737-39)

major project, engraved her own images on copper plates and then hand-coloured the prints herself.

This prodigious task was entitled *A Curious Herbal*. The first volume included 500 plates and was published in 1738.

Although her drawing is not exceptional, it was an excellent record for its time and its success lay in fulfilling a need for identification.

The 19th century

The Victorian era was a time of great progress. The expansion of the British Empire meant that many new and exotic plants were being sent to Britain.

Upper class women often published books anonymously, since it was considered shameful to link a woman's name to any commercial venture. An excellent illustration of this point is an 1849 book entitled *Specimens of the Flora of South Africa by a Lady*. This 'Lady' was visiting South Africa with her husband and to amuse herself she painted the exotic flora of the region. She published the volume anonymously until it became known the author was **Lady Arabella Roupell**.

Berthe Hoola van Nooten (fl. late 1800s) also published her work to make ends meet. Her husband died while they were travelling in Java, leaving her alone to bring up two

daughters. In 1863, she published *The fruits and flowers of Java*, which has vibrant and strong illustrations (see the illustration on page 11).

In accordance with the social traditions of the day, Berthe writes an apology in the introduction, explaining she has been forced to utilize her talents as a botanical artist as a buffer against 'penury and a refuge in sorrow.' This is an illuminating insight into the expectations and status of women in the 19th century.

Miss Sarah Anne Drake (1803-1857) became an accomplished botanical artist and produced an enormous body of work. Her specialism was orchids and she contributed magnificent plates to Bateman's *Orchidaceae of Mexico and Guatemala* – one of the most famous orchid books ever published. Perhaps the most esteemed results of her career were the 1,100 splendid plates she executed for Sydenham Edwards' *Botanical Register*. The Australian orchid 'Drakea' is named in her honour.

Jane Webb Loudon (1807–1858) was orphaned at the age of 17. In order to support herself, she wrote a novel set in the 21st century called *The Mummy*.

This caught the attention of John Loudon, a well-respected landscape gardener who Jane later married. Finding many of her husband's gardening books too technical, she wrote *Instructions in Gardening for Ladies* (1840) in clear simple language. This book proved extremely popular, selling more than 20,000 copies.

She went on to write *The Ladies Flower-Garden* in 1840 and *Botany for Ladies* in 1842.

Anna Maria Hussey's (1805–1877) most important work was *Illustrations of British Mycology*, published in 1847-9 in two volumes. The book includes a series of colour plates accompanied by biological information and general commentary, blending science, anecdote and literary reference. The puffball *Husseia* is named in her honour.

Maureen Lazarus and Heather Pardoe



EDITOR'S BOOK REVIEW

Lisle Hull, *Castles of Glamorgan* (Logaston Press, 2007)

If you are a castle buff and enjoy discovering the local countryside here is a book that will make you hop and skip with sheer delight.

Did you know that there are 86 castles here in Glamorgan and any one of them may easily be seen within a day's excursion from Cardiff. As we have suggested so many times before, when your visitors ask "Where can you take us

that will be interesting and will tell us of your history, and at the same time show us a little of your countryside”, you can accommodate them by arming yourself with this fine book, and with a map, stout shoes you and your friends will have a fine day.

There are details - some rather brief - of all 86 castles, and what is particularly attractive is that so many of them qualify as being well and truly off the beaten track, so locating them will lead you to some glorious parts of our County.

The book touches on all periods of our history: from prehistoric cairns to Roman era forts, from the time the Normans came to the medieval farmsteads, and from the mines to the chapels. If you find the grandeur of our big and imposing castles to your taste, then the castles at Caerphilly, Coity and Oystermouth will appeal to you. There are other types of castles which are fortified manor houses and again there are small piles of stones and brick-works where very little remain of the original buildings. What is rewarding is to locate the site and then obtain a book that will give you the full history of the castle.

We would like to give you a full flavour of the contents of this book, but here are the headings of some of the chapters:
Early Castles in Glamorgan;
Castles and the Industrial Age;
Castles and the Apogee of Castle building in Glamorgan:
A list of Further and Recommended reading.

At the dinner table you can easily turn the conversation to the subject of local castles and if you have been diligent and done your homework you will set the table alight and your chums will look at you in awe!

This book does not pretend to unlock all the doors regarding local castles but if you wish to have a working knowledge of all our castles in Glamorgan, it must be on your list.

Before we close, do ensure that you have stout boots, a map and, if the building appears to be on private land, do ask permission. This is a daft thing to say as no Friend would ever contemplate such a wicked deed!



LETTER TO THE EDITOR

As soon as I saw Philip Lee’s article in the June edition of the Newsletter about *The Banker and His Wife* I was inspired to respond with a few lines on another Flemish painting that I love. It is in the Metropolitan Museum, New York and it carries the same self-conscious promotional message.

Petrus Christus, *Portrait of a Goldsmith*, painted sixty-five years earlier, shares many of the same characteristics: the wealth of detail and the details of the wealth portrayed. The most obvious, at first glance, is the circular convex mirror placed on the table at the front of the painting, showing the artist’s skill and reflecting the clean, well-ordered, Flemish town life beyond the shop front. This is important as it establishes the secure setting in which to indulge oneself in life’s little luxuries.

The jeweller is now thought to be Willem van Vlueten of Bruge, (not the patron of goldsmiths, St Eligius) who provided the rings for the marriage of Mary of Guelders to James II of Scotland (ruled 1437-60) in 1449, the year of this portrait. This is his proudest moment. Here he is, weighing a pair of gold wedding rings for a court lady, dressed in cloth of gold, one of the luxury items produced in this area, like the fine linen of her fashionable head dress. Her escort wears a fur lined velvet jerkin with an embroidered silk collar to stop the fur rubbing his neck from which hangs a heavy gold pendant bearing the rampant lions of the Guelders.

Flanders was the first area to establish such a prosperous artisan class servicing the luxury trade of the emerging European courts. Generations of wealthy Dukes of Burgundy promoted art, sculpture, goldsmithing and tapestry production of the area through personal patronage and subtle gifts to contemporary rulers.

This idea of self-promotion is portrayed in these paintings. Did the Jeweller or the Banker and his wife really dress in the finest fur-trimmed woollen garments, or were they just promoting the image of their success to inspire confidence and to attract new customers? These expensive paintings were investments to hang in the working area of their homes. They display not only the tools of their trade but, in the later case of the banker, also how he is able to provide for his young wife who leafs through her illustrated *Book of Hours*, an extremely expensive possession. These trappings demonstrate that they are established, pious and therefore trustworthy. Particularly important in the case of bankers!

There are many more of these paintings with stories to unravel. They are not based on biblical or classical events but shine a clear northern light on how the world was changing and expanding the lives of ordinary people – and they carry us on the equally quiet but intriguing interiors of Vermeer. All this in a part of Europe through which war raged for centuries.

Petrus Christus was active between 1444 and 1473. He was a citizen of Bruge and is thought to have been a pupil of Van Eyck (remember the mirror in the Arnolfini portrait?). This painting can be seen at:
www.metmuseum.org/toah/ho/08/euwl/ho_1975.1.110.htm

Diane Soffa

BANKSY versus BRISTOL MUSEUM

Pat Thirkettle

It is with trepidation that I write this article for your award-winning magazine, however your editor assures me that all will be well. I left Cardiff thirty four years ago, and the only link is another museum.

Bristol Museum and Art Gallery, housed in an imposing Edwardian baroque building, is the epitome of establishment, and was awarded designated status by the Museum and Galleries Commission, which celebrates pre-eminent collections of national and international importance in non-national institutions.

Banksy, on the other hand is a Bristol graffiti artist, once wanted for vandalism. Under a cloak of secrecy, with only four people in the know, the museum closed for two days and re-opened completely 'Banksied'. He paid for it all himself, nothing is for sale, there are no brochures or postcards, but photography is allowed. The queues are legendary, up to a four hour wait. Luckily our family group of four, ranging in age from eight to seventy years, went straight in once and queued five minutes the second time, both at the end of the day. We all took away something different from the visit, and the eight year old was more than happy to go a second time. 3500 plus people visited daily, and the comparative July attendance figures for the last two years are: 21,000 in 2008 and 110,000 this year.

The place buzzes with excitement, more like a theme park than a museum. This may strike regulars with horror, but there were people of all ages looking round the whole building, and many I suspect for the first time. The clever trick is that at first glance the display looks normal, and it is only as you look closely that you see all is not normal at all. Admittedly there is not usually a burnt out ice cream van sitting in the atrium surrounded by oil drums and tyres, doubling as the information centre. However the



The ice-cream van in the atrium

classical sculptures on plinths surrounding it look convincing, until you see that the Venus de Milo look-a-like is carrying bags of designer shopping, and the naked Adonis wears a mask and has a bomb belt strapped to his chest. Some permanent exhibits have found additions – the beautiful caravan now has an “evicted” notice on its door, and the large stone lion seems to have acquired a self satisfied smirk as he holds a whip in his mouth, with the shredded remains of his tamer’s clothes below.



A Millet Gleaner taking a well-earned rest

The art galleries appear normal, but as you look at paintings individually you find a few are by a ‘local artist’. Examples are: Millet’s *The Gleaners* has one of the peasant women cut out, and relocated sitting on the frame having a fag, and Claude Lorraine’s *Flight into Egypt* has the Holy Family facing a hoarding being pasted up with Easy Jet’s budget Cairo deal!

Part of the main exhibition is entitled “Unnatural History”, where spotlighted zoological exhibits (brought to life convincingly by animatronics) punctuate the surrounding darkness. Here we find a typical leopard enclosure, the difference being that its branch-reclining inhabitant has been turned into a coat, and Tweety Pie, now old and bald, is perched forlornly behind bars with only a bell for company. Further examples include a white rabbit sitting in front of a dressing table applying makeup, a CCTV camera ‘mother’ guarding her brood of camera ‘chicks’ in the nest, and an ape sitting in his cage holding a palette as he produces quite a good painting.

Adjacent to these is a gallery containing Banksy’s paintings. The largest is approximately twelve feet long depicting the House of Commons, and the members are monkeys. It is beautifully painted; all the monkeys have a different expression. The paintings include a still life where the ham joint is crawling with bluebottles; a hooded and masked terrorist with tears running down his mask, a rickshaw pulled by a small child contains two fat tourists laughing while they photograph him, and next to it, two destitute

children in a waste land, one wearing a tee shirt with 'I hate Mondays' on it. Another painting depicts two hastily sketched figures, in a heavy museum-type frame, one saying, "Does anyone actually take this all seriously?" and the other replying, "Never underestimate the power of a big gold frame."

Banksy seems to be holding a lens up to our modern way of life. Is this not what all artists have done for centuries? We may not always like acknowledging the truth, but are forced to confront some of society's ills such as the gap between rich and poor, exploitation of animals, terrorism, greed, urban waste lands and litter. Much of the visual humour is brilliant in its absurdity, with its reversal of normality. It has been a summer to remember for Bristol Museum and for many thousands of people, young and old. Banksy must be having the last laugh and we can only congratulate him.



REMBRANDT IN FOCUS



Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-1669) *Portrait of Catrina Hooghsaet* (1607-1685) (Oil on canvas, 126 cm x 98.5 cm. 1657) Private collection

Rembrandt's *Portrait of Catrina Hooghsaet*, a special temporary loan, is currently at the centre of the *Rembrandt in Focus* display in the museum's Art in the Netherlands gallery. A masterpiece in portraiture, it hangs alongside

some of the artist's original etchings as well as other Dutch and Flemish portraits from the museum's own collection.

Rembrandt painted Catrina Hooghsaet in 1657, when his work was entering its most mature stage. He had a particular flare for capturing the natural appearance of his subjects through pioneering techniques. The portrait is an exquisite example of his combining fine detail, blurred impressions, and dramatic effects of light and shade.

In his portraits especially, he had developed an unrivalled ability to capture character and emotion. In this painting Catrina makes no grand gestures, but simply sits with a gentle enigmatic gaze. At the same time Rembrandt makes her appear independent, determined, and mildly eccentric - not unlike the artist himself.

Artist and sitter had a number of aspects in common. They were of the same age and suffered similar ordeals in their personal lives. Both had been widowed early in their first marriages, and were troubled by the relationships which followed. Rembrandt's affair with Geertje Dircks had ended in a bitter legal battle, and Catrina's second marriage to a Mennonite preacher was not a success. When Rembrandt painted Catrina's portrait she and her husband were living apart. She must have been strongly independent to sustain such an unconventional living arrangement, both in character and financially. With both hands on the arms of her chair, Rembrandt has given her a fittingly authoritative pose.

Catrina's sombre black and white costume was typical for women of the austere Mennonite religious sect, of which she was a member. Rembrandt painted other Mennonites too and may even have been one himself.

In spite of the Mennonite disdain for material luxury, it is clear Catrina had no shortage of money. As well as her commissioning a portrait, the silk of her dress, her tassled handkerchief, her lace cap and gold 'hoofdijsertgen' (head irons) with pearls show refined and expensive tastes. The Asian table rug and South American parakeet were also the type of valuable status symbols frowned on by Mennonite preachers.

Rembrandt also liked to flaunt his wealth through his large art collection and grand Amsterdam residence. In 1656, the year before he painted Catrina, he was forced to declare himself insolvent, and to sell his house and artworks. His reputation as an artist did not suffer, however, and he continued to receive important commissions.

Through all the trials of his personal life Rembrandt's works became evermore masterful. His *Portrait of Catrina Hooghsaet* is evidence of his enduring artistic genius.

Anne Pritchard

The exhibition runs at Amgueddfa Cymru/National Museum of Wales, Cardiff until 21st March 2010.

ENGLISH POTTERY AT AMGUEDDFA CYMRU

Andrew Renton

When the former Cardiff Municipal Museum began to collect ceramics in 1882, its understandable priority was to develop as definitive a collection of Welsh pottery and porcelain as it could. By 1895 the Museum reported that it had ‘good reason to think that these collections are now the best and most representative in existence’, and its agenda began to shift to other areas of interest, such as English and continental ceramics.

A key figure in these developments was the Cardiff chemist, naturalist and antiquarian, Robert Drane, who balanced his interest in natural history with a passion for ceramics. Best known now for his exceptional collection of Worcester porcelain, he also selected the Museum’s first acquisitions of Welsh porcelain. In 1896 he was appointed an honorary curator by the Museum and was instrumental in the decision to borrow from the South Kensington Museum a ‘collection to illustrate the ceramic products of various countries and ages.’

At the same time, the Museum was pushing the case for a national museum for Wales, asserting its claim to be the embryo of that new institution. In 1902 it rebranded itself ‘The Welsh Museum of Natural History, Arts and Antiquities’ and talked of ‘the growing national character of its collections.’ One outcome of this ambition was the decision to create a collection of English pottery, its rationale explained in the 1903 report:

‘It had long been felt that the collection of Welsh porcelains and earthenwares required for their educational development a representative series of British ceramic products generally, that is, a collection in which all the more important British wares would be represented by judiciously selected typical examples.’

This was the collecting priority for the year, with Drane playing a cen-

tral role. Within only a few years, Drane brought together much of the English pottery now at the National Museum, representing all the major strands of the English pottery tradition, from late mediaeval types to stoneware, slipware and delftware of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to a range of the industrially produced wares pioneered in Staffordshire from the middle of the eighteenth century.

This broad survey collection included some outstanding objects: a rare and magnificent seventeenth-century slipware dish by Ralph Toft of Staffordshire (shown left); an important stoneware mug enamelled with the arms of Farmer and dated 1706; and a remarkable Brislington delftware dish dated 1680 that exposes to public rebuke two Somerset squires who kidnapped a pair of conjoined twins from their parents in Isle Brewers so as to exhibit them as a money-raising venture. The Museum’s pride in its achievement was obvious. ‘Very few of these dishes are known to exist,’ said the 1905 report of the Isle Brewers dish, ‘and the Cardiff example is perhaps the best of them.’



Brislington delftware dish, 1680)

Drane’s efforts were supported by others. Wilfred de Winton, for example, the Breconshire banker who later gave the National Museum a huge collection of European porcelain, gave English pottery to the Cardiff Museum.

His gifts included an amusing pearlware beer jug (shown left) moulded with faces showing the progressive stages of drunkenness, its handle in the form of a merman peering into the jug. Inscribed with the name of John Hughes of Llansamlet near Swansea and thought at the time to have been made at the local Cambrian Pottery, it is one of many supposedly Welsh pieces in the collection that have proved to be English – in this case, probably made by Ralph Wedgwood in Staffordshire or Yorkshire in the 1790s.



Pearlware beer jug (probably Wedgwood, 1790s)

Ernest Morton Nance’s large bequest of Welsh ceramics in 1952 also included interesting pieces of English pottery then thought to be Welsh. Nance was particularly proud of what he called the ‘Cambrian Pottery’ jug, believing that Swansea was the site of its

painted views of a pottery. In fact, this jug was also most likely made at Ralph Wedgwood's Ferrybridge pottery in about 1800.

Generations of benefactors have ensured that the collection of English pottery continues to thrive. In 1942 Lord Boston bequeathed a collection of lustre pottery and in 1981 Miss E A Nicholl left over one hundred mid-nineteenth-century pot lids, while in 1995 Mrs H Hastings gave an extensive collection of Victorian Staffordshire figures. In 1994 W J Grant-Davidson, an organ-builder and scholar of Welsh pottery, included interesting examples of Staffordshire pottery in his larger gift of Welsh ceramics. An important early creamware teapot of about 1743 by Enoch Booth was the highlight, along with an unusual slip-cast white stoneware bowl of about 1740 and a beautiful red stoneware teapot of the early 1760s moulded with Chinese subjects.

Acquisitions such as a red and gold lustre dish by William de Morgan and a vase designed by Frank Brangwyn for Royal Doulton in the 1930s show the Museum also focusing on modern pottery. To these can be added good examples of modern design from the collection of the Museum Schools Service – designs of the 1930s by architect Keith Murray for Wedgwood, for example – and, in particular, an excellent representation of Susie Cooper's ceramics from the 1920s to the 1970s generously donated by Mick Richards.

The collection continues to grow and to attract interest. The most recent acquisition is an appealing creamware teapot of about 1765, commemorating the radical politician John Wilkes.

Andrew Renton is Head of Applied Art at Amgueddfa Cymru.



ORIEL Y PARC



View of one of the galleries

'Oriel y Parc' in St Davids Pembrokeshire was formally opened by the First Minister in November 2008. It is the result of two organisations working together to achieve an exciting new facility for Wales – one that offers fresh approaches to learning about the landscape and creative insights into what the landscape can mean to us.

After the displays of the Graham Sutherland collection at Picton Castle closed, the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park stayed closely involved in discussions concerning the future of the Sutherland works. The Museum had identified its preferred location at St Davids, where an award winning new visitor information centre had been opened. Designed by Peter Roberts and Richard Smith, the building was a model of sustainable design and, crucially, occupied a site that was self-contained and capable of expansion. With the close support of the Museum, 'The Park' pursued funding for a redesign and expansion of the centre, gaining both EU and other support. Key new elements were identified: galleries capable of taking high value and fragile loans from the national collections, education facilities, a flexible 'studio' space, and better visitor facilities, including a cafe/restaurant. Sutherland's works were to be presented as the centrepiece of a broad introduction to the landscape of Pembrokeshire.

It is important to consider the impact of the building itself. Its external details are telling: for example, a grass roof covers a sunken wing which contains the galleries; this provides a level of insulation and security which minimises power usage. Timber from renewable sources provides the structure. Rainwater is collected from the roof through hoppers for use in toilets. Inside, learning and studio spaces open from an expanded visitor information area, while a cafe with services such as internet access for visitors is a busy focus of activity.

The quality of design for the two main gallery spaces means that Amgueddfa Cymru is free to present a full range of exhibits which will be renewed annually. The first year began with a show entitled *Hidden Landscapes* themed by Sally Moss, the commissioning curator, who included artefacts from the Solva Trilobite to the Tregwynt hoard, alongside works of art from the 17th century to the present day. Sutherland's studio was featured alongside a group of key works from his gift, and works by artists he knew and admired. The next change of display, in November, saw a complete re-presentation of Sutherland and other works from the collection devised by Brendan Stuart Burns, who will also show works from his time 'in residence' in the studio over the summer. This has been curated by Bryony Dawkes, who will also be devising a new display for spring 2010, on the theme of the 'changing landscape'. A 'winter' programme of talks and events will follow this year's 'pilot', involving the local Friends' body as well as other interest groups and experts. Emphasising a 'year round' attraction and dialogue between art and other disciplines, the programme will continue to grow and evolve.

Mike Tooby

DEAD CATS, THE SPANISH CONSUL'S DAUGHTER AND A SEVERED LEG

Eric Fletcher

Last July saw the 150th Anniversary of Cathays Cemetery, Cardiff. Covering over one hundred acres, it is Wales' premier and largest burial ground and carries a Grade II star listing. The chapels were designed by Robert G. Thomas; born in London of Welsh parents, his father was a native of Llanmynech, Montgomeryshire. In celebration of the cemetery's 150 years, the chapels have been re-roofed at a cost of £300,000 using slate from the same area of North Wales as the originals. This is the first stage in the renovation of the two chapels – one non-conformist, the other Episcopalian. Cardiff Bereavement Services and Friends of Cathays Cemetery are working together to find a suitable end-use for these landmark buildings.

During re-roofing, the contractors needed to erect interior scaffolding and, to that end, removed an area of wooden flooring just inside the entrance. Underneath, surrounded by 150 years of accumulated dust, was the skeleton of a cat. In these so called enlightened times, it is hard to understand how important superstitions were to our forbears. Any disturbance to the ground, such as erecting a new dwelling, was especially troubling and required some form of 'spirit appeasement'. The medieval equivalent of a site foreman would often trick a victim to the building site and secretly measure his height, often by assessing the length of his shadow, then that measure, usually in the form of a length of timber, would be buried under the new building in the belief that it acted as an equivalent to human sacrifice. As time went on human sacrifices, either real or *shadow substitutes*, were replaced by animals. Initially horses or bulls, both being regarded as sacred, were used and this continued for centuries. People remembered the old ways, magic and witchcraft continuing to have a place in their lives.

Although horses' skulls were the most commonly used offering to satisfy the spirits, cats were often placed in the fabric of new buildings. Cats have a special place in folk lore as good luck tokens - the ancient Egyptians, for example, thought cats were the earthly manifestation of Gods, she-cats representing the moon and tomcats the sun. And a witch's familiar is almost always her cat, usually a black one. It was also believed that placing a cat in or

under a building would ensure freedom from rats and mice. There are other examples of cats' skeletons being found in Welsh buildings. The King's Arms in Brecon, demolished in 1983, had one in its outer wall, as did Carlyle House, formerly the Brewery House, in Merthyr Tydfil - that unfortunate animal was in the walls of the old stable, *'flattened like a sheet of parchment'*. The cemetery chapels are not the only Welsh religious buildings to have a dead cat to ward off evil spirits: St. David's in Blaenau Ffestiniog, built thirty years earlier, has one, found a little way from the main entrance under the floor boards. As in Cathays it was assumed evil spirits enter through the main doorway. The site manager in charge of re-roofing at Cathays felt it prudent to leave the skeleton where it had lain for the past 150 years: *"You can't be too careful. We don't want to tempt fate"*.

Many Welsh churches and chapels have horse's skulls placed under the floor often below the choir stalls. It was thought that they not only kept evil spirits at bay but that they also improved the building's acoustics. Llandaff Cathedral in Cardiff has at least two under the south aisle! And the practice of burying cats, horses' skulls and other objects to ward off evil spirits is not confined to these shores. Many examples have been uncovered in other countries, mainly America and Australia.



Front view of the two chapels from the south entrance

Although there is no surviving tombstone, we know that the first burial in the new cemetery at Cathays was a 25 year-old typhoid victim whose name was Maria Dolores de Pico, the eldest daughter of the Spanish Consul in Cardiff. Moving forward to the present day, Cardiff is once again the home for an increasing number of consular officials – thirty countries, mainly European, have offices in Wales reflecting the increasing international standing of both Cardiff as a city and of Wales as a country.

Cathays is no different from any other large cemetery: the famous lie alongside the infamous, the law abiding next to the criminal, the tax payer next to the fraudster. Of course this variety and juxtaposition of burials is common to all large cemeteries, as is the unusual and the unexpected. If a prize were to be given for the strangest, the most quirky internment at Cathays, it would have to be awarded to Samuel Chivers, a vinegar manufacturer of Richmond Road. The burial took place on April 16th 1883. A week or so earlier Mr. Chivers had been involved in a serious accident, knocked over by a runaway horse and cart and badly injured. The heavily laden cart ran over one of his legs resulting in amputation. And that is what was buried on that Monday in 1883 - just his leg!

Presumably Mr. Chivers imagined he would be re-united with his severed limb at some time in the distant future. Perhaps he got so accustomed to the wooden replacement that he forgot about the real one buried at Cathays. Perhaps it had just seemed a good idea at the time. Mr. Chivers had not purchased the original plot so without a doubt it had been used for other subsequent burials - a very common practice at the time. Infant mortality was so high in the 19th century that it was not unusual for more than a dozen unrelated children to be buried together in some unmarked grave. A few years after the accident, Mr. Chivers and his expanding family - Mrs Chivers, twelve children plus a cook and other domestic servants - moved to Llandough near Penarth. On his death in his early eighties, he was buried in a local Penarth cemetery, a dozen or so miles from Cathays and his leg.



A DIET OF WORMS

Alien species continue to establish in the British Isles, despite awareness of the problems they can cause (think Grey Squirrels or Japanese Knotweed). Sadly they are not always so easy to detect and may at first be mistaken for harmless native species. The more obscure or exotic the creature, the harder it is to trace its origins, and specialists in Museum biology departments are often the only people placed to help.



An adult Ghost Slug, about 7 cm long – the head is lower left with two extended tentacles that carry the vestigial eyes. Photo by James Turner, BioSyB.

The saga of the Ghost Slug illustrates this well. The first we saw was unearthed by a member of the public in his garden in Canton, Cardiff in 2007. A skilled gardener, he was concerned it was a New Zealand Flatworm, an introduced predator that has devastated earthworm populations in the northern half of Britain. But this animal was a slug (a mollusc, not a flatworm), and a bizarre one at that. Keeping it in captivity for a few months confirmed our suspicions: like the flatworm, it feeds only on live earthworms and will not touch plants.

It took some time to track it down using the Museum's library and collections, using literature dating back to 1812 and largely in Russian or German. This was evidently the first sighting in western Europe of the Trigonochlamyidae, a family otherwise restricted to the Caucasus region and poorly known even there. The Ghost Slug is bright white in colour, and able to stretch to become very worm-like in shape. It has vestigial eyes and spends nearly all its time beneath the soil surface, moving through cracks and earthworm burrows. Differences between the Ghost Slug and its relatives in the Caucasus led us to describe it as a new species, *Selenochlamys ysbryda* ("ysbryd" being Welsh for "ghost"). One poll ranked it among the "Top Ten" new species of 2009.

After publishing our findings in the *Journal of Conchology*, we appealed for other sightings. Among over 200 responses received from all over Britain and Ireland, there are now 21 verified records of the Ghost Slug (the others concerning other slug species or unverifiable). The species has an unexpected distribution: it occurs throughout Southeast Wales (west to Gorseinon, north to Hay-on-Wye, and east to Newport) and this year was found living in neighbouring England (Bristol). Although these areas share a similar climate, the Ghost Slug is able to tolerate winter frosts and some variation in soil conditions. More likely this is just the extent to which it has spread in the few years since it arrived, which implies it may go further in future. Species like this are spread rapidly in soil or compost around the roots of plants, perhaps in this case imported direct from the Caucasus.

The earliest Ghost Slug record dates to 2004, when two slug collectors preserved a specimen in Brecon but misidentified it as a young Shelled Slug (*Testacella* species). The Shelled Slugs are yet another group that subsist on a diet of worms. They are not regarded as a serious threat to earthworm populations, but are efficient predators nonetheless. Welsh zoologist J G Jeffreys considered them "scarcely inferior to the tiger or snake in cunning or ferocity" (*British Conchology*, Vol. I, 1862). This was characteristically colourful prose, as our new exhibition of his life, work and letters attests (Main Hall at Cathays Park, until February 2010).

It is a pleasure to provide identifications but unfortunate that so many give cause for concern. In June 2009 a gardener from Tenby brought flatworms to Glanely for examination. Using a key from one of our library's journals, I could console him it was not the New Zealand Flatworm. Instead, it was the first sighting in Wales of another alien species, *Kontikia ventrolineata* (the name alludes to its Pacific origin and global wanderings). No threat to earthworms this time - it feeds on slugs!

Ben Rowson

See the Museum's Rhagor page at <http://bit.ly/3Nawwp> for a downloadable Identification guide to this and similar species.



Front cover: Delicate spray of redgillite crystals from Eaglebrook Mine. Photo: D.I. Green

Back cover: Gemmy red proustite crystal (1 mm tall) from Dolyhir Quarry, Old Radnor. Proustite is one of the rarer Welsh species and highly sought-after by collectors. © D.I. Green.