

# Friends' Newsletter and Magazine

October 2012

friends  
national  
museum  
amgueddfa  
cymru  
wales



## A MESSAGE TO OUR READERS

Our front and back covers continue the theme of our Welsh heritage which we have been dipping into over the past year or so. You can read more about the choice of the two pictures in *Cover Stories*.

The front cover also links to an article tracing the story of folk dancing in Wales. We are very grateful to both Richard Edwards at St Fagans and to Kay Kays at the National Museum Cardiff for their help in obtaining the images used to illustrate this article. Further thanks need to go Kay Kays for the image on the back cover.

The second article had its seeds in a talk given earlier this year as part of the Friends' programme of events. That talk was on the poet R S Thomas and his poetic response to paintings. In the talk it emerged that his wife was a painter but one who lived in his creative shadow and the article hopes to start to redress the balance. We would particularly like to thank Morigan Mason from the Bodelwyddan Castle Trust for supplying and giving permission for one of the images used in the article and Katrina Morphet of The Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital NHS Foundation Trust for permission from the Trust to show images from the *Dance of Life*.

The third article is on the scientist Emyr Alun Moelwyn-Hughes. He was not a man to suffer fools gladly and so, even if you are not partial to the history of science, we hope you enjoy the anecdotes that pepper the story of his life.

We are very pleased to have an item on new developments at the National Wool Museum, particularly because we have not had many opportunities in the past to publicise what is going on in the smallest member of Amgueddfa Cymru's family. Those of you who recently took advantage of a coach trip to the Museum organised by the Friends would have had the opportunity to see the new developments at first-hand.

Again we must thank Graham Davies for the opportunity to include articles that have recently appeared on the Rhagor website. The first is on the coming together of two parts of an ivory diptych, one half of which has been in the possession of Amgueddfa Cymru for many years and the other was discovered to be held by National Museums Liverpool. The half held by Amgueddfa Cymru has now been completed by a laser-generated replica of the part held by Liverpool. You can see the diptych in the Origins Gallery at the National Museum Cardiff and we wonder if you would have realised that one half was brand new if we had not told you. The second article is on a mining disaster and subsequent rescue of trapped miners at the Tynenydd Colliery, Porth in 1877. The story bears a surprising resemblance to the recent rescue of the miners in Chile, in that it captured the attention of world's media during the days it took to reach the men. Finally, there is

an article on the unexpected use for an ingredient of vinegar in the Geology Department.

There is a Book Review, this one on a publication to mark the fortieth anniversary of the National Slate Museum, which we celebrated with an article in the June edition.

The final pages are again our News section. There is plenty to report on what has been happening at Amgueddfa Cymru. Two items must be highlighted here: one is the success of the application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for the redevelopment of St Fagans, which was outlined in an article in the June edition, and the other is news of record-breaking numbers of visitors. The biggest Friends News item is the planned rise in the subscription fee after so many years at its present level. Roger Gagg, our Chairman, uses his column, *From the Chairman*, to go into the reasons for the rise and why membership should still be considered good value.

Some of you will spot that two out of the three main articles are written by the editors. This is not because we like to see our names in print, though both of us clearly like following-up interests and putting pen to paper (strictly speaking finger to keyboard or touchscreen). We would much prefer to give pride of place to other people's articles. So once again we end with a plea for contributions. Remember the remit is wide: it stretches from the work and activities of the Friends or the Museum to illuminating the cultural history of Wales.

**Diane Davies & Judy Edwards**



## FROM THE CHAIRMAN

I foreshadowed the need for a revision in subscriptions in the last edition of the Newsletter and Magazine and I can now let Friends have an update following careful consideration of the matter by the Friends' Committee.

With the start of the new subscription year in March 2013 it will be seven years since the last revision. An increase is now indicated because we need, in the present economic climate, to maintain the level of our financial contribution to the Museum and to take account of the upward trend in prices generally. With these thoughts in mind we have taken account of two factors - (a) the movement in the Index of Retail Prices since 2006 and (b) the level of subscriptions required of their members by comparator Arts-support organisations.

At this time it is worth reminding ourselves what it is that Friends get for their money. Firstly, there are the lectures, excursions, and holidays both in the UK and abroad - all sensibly priced as the high level of support testifies. For the Saturday morning lectures Friends who pre-book enjoy

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**Front cover:** Cardiff Morris Group perform in Carmarthen and are shown finishing a Nantgarw stick dance by surrounding Idris, the mascot. (Image courtesy of Wikipedia)

**Back cover:** Adriaen van Cronenburgh, *Katheryn of Berain, 'The Mother of Wales'* (Oil on oak panel, 97cm x 69cm, 1568)

## Next Edition

Contributions for inclusion in the February 2013 edition should be submitted by the beginning of December 2012.

Please send items, either electronically or by post, to either one of the Co-editors:

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a 20% discount by comparison with the public admission price at the door. In addition, membership of the Friends brings a 10% discount in Museum shops and catering facilities. The award-winning Newsletter and Magazine is greatly appreciated by many of our members. Finally, Friends benefit from an insight into what is going on in the Museum (Friends' Day is but one example) and most importantly belonging to the Friends confers membership of a cohesive social group.

At present the annual subscription rate is £20 for couples and £15 single. These will rise to £30 joint and £20 single as from next March. A by-product is that the differential as between the two rates will then be fairer and I am sure that, even with the new levels, Friends will be getting excellent value for money.

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So the Olympics have come and gone. A sometime penchant for nonsense verse (perhaps a sign of a misspent youth?) prompted me as a sixth-former at the time of the Melbourne Olympic Games in 1956 to compose a purported explanation of the Games' origin:

*In ancient Greece some time BC  
When men played lutes and the beer was free  
There lived in Athens a certain lad  
Whose Christian name was Olympiad.*

This opening stanza gives the flavour and is doubtless quite enough anyway. Let it not now be said that London 2012 prompted not a single mention in the Newsletter and Magazine!

**Roger Gagg**

## THE ARTIST MILDRED ELSI ELDRIDGE

Diane Davies

Some of you may remember a talk earlier this year on the "painting poems" of RS Thomas (referred to here as RS). It was a fascinating talk about the poet's response to various early 20th century paintings he had seen. From the talk it emerged that one artist for whose work he had no poetic response was his wife, Mildred Eldridge. In the 1930s she was seen as an up-and-coming talent but after her marriage to RS seems to have disappeared from history. It intrigued me sufficiently to wish to find out more. What I discovered was a committed artist who continued to work throughout her life producing work of great sensitivity and ethereal beauty, described once as, "*strange otherworldly paintings, some of them sinister, others wistful .... of a time that never was.*"

Her son, Gwydion, described her as "*a small tough woman, she had the most amazing hands, very slender but incredibly strong*". There was always a strangeness and focus about her, shown by her response to her father's death, when she drew him in his coffin and commented "*everyone looks rather lovely when they are dead. He was always good looking ... but not nearly as beautiful as when the ivory skin was drawn tightly over the fine bones.*" When she was living at the rectory at Manafon she took to hanging dead animals in the apple tree and waiting for the skeletons to emerge.

She was born in Wimbledon but in 1925 the family moved to Leatherhead, when her father progressed from being an assistant in a jewellery shop in London to becoming the owner of a jewellery shop. That year she began a course at Wimbledon Art School and found for the first time that she was doing something that really interested her, despite the fact that she found the teaching uninspiring.

In 1931 she received a scholarship to study at the Royal College of Art. At the end of her time there she entered for the Prix de Rome Scholarship. The theme was "Music" and she submitted a 5ft x5ft piece *The Telling of the Bees*. She won the second prize, a travelling scholarship worth £100, which allowed her to visit Italy. According to her unpublished autobiography (fragments of which, particularly of her early life, can be found online) she was relieved that she did not win the main prize, since it would have obliged her to remain in Rome. It was an opportunity to see paintings and sculptures as well as meet significant cultural figures of the period, notably Bernard Berenson, the leading art historian of his day, at his villa I Tatti.

On her return, and from 1934 and 1936, she worked with three other artists on a series of paintings to decorate the Hall of Prendergast School, Brockley, London with modern-life representations of Aesop's Fables. Her subject was *The Birdcatcher and the Skylark*. The theme prefigured a central theme of her work, the natural world and man's destructive impulses. It was also the start of a

successful artistic career with a number of solo exhibitions, including one at the Beaux Art Gallery, London. That show was extremely well-received but her reaction, though, was to vow, "*never to have another one*".

Instead in 1937 she fled London and found a job teaching art at Oswestry Grammar School. There is a suggestion that her move away from London was spurred by the break-up of her relationship with the painter Vincent Lines after her rejection of his proposal of marriage. Her version is: "*Lines and I were standing in the middle of a large blackberry bush, picking fruit when he suggested we should get married. ... A thorny place and a thorny problem. I had to sadden him for who could marry a person whose work one did not admire and whose hand steamed in cold weather.*" Her son Gwydion puts the move down to, "*a certain withdrawal-from-the-world tendency in my mother.*"

The move did not stop her artistic career. She soon had a commission to create a design for the East window of the church at Llanpumsant, which was completed around 1939. However, the move also led to a more momentous change in her life. She was living at Bryn Chord Guest House, Chirk which also happened to be chosen by RS who had just taken up his first appointment as a curate at Chirk parish church. She describes how they decided to get married: "*RS and I were on the moor at Bwlch y Fedwen, the wind blowing across the bleached grass and grey stone and the golden plover calling when we decided that we could live together.*"

They married at Llanycil, near Bala, on 5th July 1940. After the marriage they moved to Hanmer when RS be-



Mildred Eldridge, *Peat Cutting Cefn Coch Montgomeryshire* (Watercolour and drawing on paper, 37.5cm x 30cm, 1943) (© Victoria and Albert Museum, London)

came curate there and in 1942 they moved to the rectory at Manafon, near Gregynog, when RS was appointed rector. There was no electricity and water was piped from a nearby spring but to Mildred, "It seemed like Paradise. The apple orchard beside the river was full to the brim with white Poet's Eye narcissus, red squirrels in the trees, the river only a short path's length from the back door". She recalls the hunt chasing a fox into the grounds of the rectory, and her letting it into the kitchen and waiting for the hunt to pass by before releasing it. Wales was now her home: "Wales has almost everything I need now, tawny grass and good greystone moss and lichen covering the bleached bones of the horned sheep up in the mountains behind us where mercifully we can still escape crowds."

As well as a painter she became an illustrator of natural history books and guidebooks as well as stories for children. This led to being selected to be part of the wartime Government's **Recording Britain** scheme run by the Pilgrim Trust. The many watercolours she did show an emphasis on recording old traditions, crafts, customs and beliefs which were on the verge of dying out. One such work is **Peat-cutting, Cefn Coed, Montgomeryshire** (shown on page 4) which shows the art of cutting peat for fuel with its traditional division of labour: the man doing the cutting and the woman stacking them to dry. It is primarily a study in yellows and browns broken by the white of the sheep and a splash of red indicating the woman's cloak.

On 29th August 1945 her only child, their son Gwydion was born. In 1953 he was sent away to boarding school. The reason RS gave was that it was in order for his wife to have time to work but she then began to have to teach so as to pay the fees. She did extra-mural classes on art appreciation for the University of Wales, travelling all over mid-Wales. By all accounts she was a popular teacher, as well as a progressive one: she insisted on practical painting sessions which the University had refused up to then, as they considered such sessions undignified. Later in life Mildred felt guilt for a decision which made Gwydion deeply unhappy and denied her a deep relationship with him but it remains unclear who was primarily responsible for the decision to send him to England to board.

In 1951 she was commissioned to create a sequence of oil on canvas paintings to decorate two walls of the dining room of a new nurses home at the Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic and District Hospital, Gobowen. The finished work, entitled **The Dance of Life** consisted of six panels, each 1.6m in height and of varying lengths, but which in total stretched over 30m in length. She worked on it between 1952 and 1956 which meant that everything had to be moved from Manafon because during this period RS accepted a position as vicar at Eglwys Fach on the Dovey Estuary near Machynlleth. The art historian Peter Lord speaks of the "tremendous achievement given the difficulty of painting on such a scale without a proper studio". The fee was £900 (nearly three times RS's annual stipend) plus £138 for materials.

When the dining room was refurbished in 2005 the paintings were put in storage. Not until 2011, after installation



View of the foyer of the Creative Industries Building at Glyndŵr University, Wrexham with the **Dance of Life** in situ.

in the new Creative Industries Building at Glyndŵr University, Wrexham could they be seen once again.

The impression on first viewing is of the sheer scale of the work and the variety of imaginative content that makes up the totality of the composition. The sequence is set in a sombre landscape, reminiscent of that of Wales, and under a melancholic sky but there is the richness of detail in the portrayal of the natural world which range from chaffinch, dunnock and great tit being fed by a young girl, to waders feeding amongst seashells (shown below) and to a sinuous cat with its fur bristling.



Detail from the third panel, **The Natural Beauty of Decay**

The first panel, **Musicians and Beekeepers**, shows an idyllic scene with musicians and dancers in a rural landscape. On the left a woman solemnly stares out, providing the only eye contact between those participating in the inner narrative and the viewer (shown on page 6). She is emphasised by being the only one in shadow, the rest are in full sunlight, and it has been suggested it is a self-portrait.

The second panel, **Man Cares for Animals**, shows sheep feeding amongst corrugated shelters but the eye is drawn to a blood-red river of bracken running down the hillside, hinting at mortality in an Edenic scene (shown on page 6). The third, **The Natural Beauty of Decay**, is a seashore with the skeleton of a boat and the fourth, **Birds on a Seashore** is similar but smaller in size and the only one without any evidence of human presence.



Detail from the first panel, **Musicians and Beekeepers**



Detail from second panel, **Man Cares for Animals**



Detail from fifth panel, **The Creation**

She described the subject matter of the fifth panel, **The Creation** as follows:

"in the background the monotonous row of houses suggests the monotony of life that man has created in the towns. The papers are the evil of the printed word, received by some with open arms, some with complete misunderstanding and some with sorrow. In the top right-hand distance the human being seeks to escape from the man made city to the open world from which it came and where, in the bottom left-hand corner, nature draws life from the disintegration of man." The most striking image, though, is the skeleton being enticed forward by a musician (in contrast to the first panel where musicians play to entice the bees) .



Left-hand end section of sixth panel

The sixth panel is the most surreal but also the one with the strongest narrative content. Peter Lord describes one of the most surreal images in this panel, choristers caged within huge steel buoys, as man being a "prisoner of his own inventions" (shown above) and the image is echoed in the same panel by one of a chaffinch in an open cage, again the cage is open but the bird seems unwilling to escape. In the final section (shown below) jet fighters roar overhead and parachutists descend from the sky. As one reads the whole panel from right to left one sees those parachutes being recycled and then becoming veils that seem to entrap humans as they attempt to reach the sea shore.



Right-hand end section of sixth panel

Overall, the idyllic harmony of humans and nature in the first two panels is in strong contrast to a society trapped by the domination of human technology in the last two panels. However, although the society that supports that technology is subject to death and decay, it also contains the potential of escape. Moreover, the final image, of a



Mildred Eldridge, *Death's Head Hawk Moth* (Watercolour, 47cm x 40.5cm, 1973), [From the Clwyd Fine Art Trust collection at Bodelwyddan Castle]

young child feeding birds, suggests a re-establishment of a harmony with nature. With the domination of nature in the middle two panels, one has the feeling of viewing a triptych that is a spiritual celebration of nature.

As time passed her work became more and more concerned with expressing her love of landscape, birds, animals and flowers as she portrayed in detail the form and character of birds and animals in their natural setting. They vary from detailed description of the natural world such as her illustration of the *Death's Head Moth* (shown) to watercolours of birds and animals in their natural habitat often used to illustrate greetings cards for the Medici Society.

In 1967 they moved to Aberdaron when RS became the vicar there and, in 1978, when RS retired, they moved to a cottage down the road in Rhiw. They each had a work room at opposite ends of the cottage. RS's room was a light, airy extension that they had built. Her room was so cold she kept her feet in a cardboard box (until she put in an electric fire as well and badly burned her feet). They had had central heating installed but she found the pipes and radiators unaesthetic and had them ripped out.

Towards the end of the decade, she developed a thyroid condition but the treatment caused her to swell-up like a balloon. From having an outward-going personality she turned into a recluse and remained so even when the condition was rectified. She died in 1991 and her ashes are

buried at Llanfaelrhys marked by a piece of slate with, "*Mildred Elsi Thomas 1909-1991*".

It would be a mistake to assume that marriage stifled her creatively, though living with RS must have been particularly difficult. Indeed, the work that is regarded as her masterpiece, *Dance of Life* was painted well into that marriage at a particularly creative period. As important a reason for her neglect must be her own choice to retreat from London to the quiet of rural Wales. It was a self-contrived isolation from main artistic trends to follow her own path. However, it has meant that few of her works are to be found in public collections. For instance, despite the fact that most of her working life was spent in Wales, Amgueddfa Cymru holds none of her works.

### Sources

Byron Rogers, *The Life of RS Thomas* (Aurum, 2006)

Peter Lord, *Parallel Lives?* in *Planet*, vol 129, June/July 1998

There is a dearth of material on Mildred Eldridge. I have drawn heavily on Byron Rogers biography of RS Thomas which is well-worth reading for its account of RS's life as well. The article by Peter Lord, the art historian, gives useful insights and includes illustrations of work not included here.



## THE LLANDAF DIPTYCH

**Medieval diptychs and triptychs were two- and three-panel images intended to aid devotion and meditation of Christ's life and suffering. A right hand ivory diptych panel from Llandaf, housed in the collections at Amgueddfa Cymru, has recently been reunited with its left hand panel for the first time in over a century.**

Medieval ivories are known from secular sites in Wales, such as gaming pieces from castle sites and a small shield from Caerleon (Monmouthshire). A figurative ivory with devotional significance has been excavated from Dolforwyn Castle (Montgomeryshire), while a carved ivory diptych from Valle Crucis Abbey (Denbighshire) was reported in 1866. However, as in England, many objects of private devotion in Wales were destroyed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; many diptychs in museums are now incomplete, the partner panels becoming separated in antiquity. Occasionally, missing elements are rediscovered and reunited. One such moment occurred in 2007 during research for the Origins archaeology galleries at National Museum Cardiff.

### The Llandaf diptych

For over 100 years, the right hand panel of an elephant ivory diptych from Llandaf has been considered a rare survivor with a Welsh provenance. Made in Paris about 1340-60, it depicts Christ on the Cross, flanked by the Virgin Mary on the left and St John the Evangelist as a

young man on the right, holding a book and turned away from the cross. The figures are positioned beneath an architectural canopy composed of three Gothic trefoiled arches, each surmounted by a triangular gable with crockets and finials.

According to museum records, it was discovered by Mr Henry Bird of Cardiff during the demolition of 'the old well-house' at Llandaf in May 1836. After passing through several hands, it was purchased in 1901 by the Cardiff Museum (precursor of the National Museum Wales) from the estate of John Storrie (curator 1878-93).

Research has revealed that the decorative details, dimensions, condition and hinge positions of the Llandaf piece corresponded very closely to a left-hand ivory panel now in the collections of National Museums Liverpool. This left hand panel shows the Virgin and Child flanked by Saints Peter (bearing keys) and Paul (with sword), providing a neat visual counterpoint to the Crucifixion scene on the right panel. The architectural canopies on each leaf are the same, while the style of execution of the figures and size of the borders also correspond.

The Liverpool panel was acquired in 1953 from the estate of Mr Philip Nelson, who purchased it from a dealer in Bath in 1934. The right hand leaf was bought by John Storrie from a shop of Mr L. Roberts. Could both have

been found at Llandaf in 1836, to end up in different hands, or were they separated at an earlier date?

Llandaf, whose focal point remains the cathedral rebuilt by Bishop Urban (1107–34) and his successors, abounded in wells. Two of the better known examples are St Teilo's holy well (Ffynnon Deilo), and the "Dairy Well" in the grounds of Llandaf Court, a house used as the Bishop's Palace from 1869 to 1940. The latter became, for a time, the resting place for a late tenth- or eleventh-century cross shaft and head, set into its end wall in 1870. The thirteenth-century fortified Bishop's Palace lies to the south-east of the cathedral: could this have been the location of the original diptych?

Today the Llandaf diptych panel is displayed with a laser-cut resin copy of its partner, commissioned from National Museums Liverpool (Conservation Technologies). The latest technology was used to create an accurate replica of the Liverpool piece. A great advantage of this replication method is that it involves no contact with the original artefact surface and, therefore, no risk to the object whatsoever.

### Mark Redknap

Mark Redknap is a Curator of Medieval & Later Archaeology at Amgueddfa Cymru



Married again: the two leaves of the Llandaf diptych. Left leaf (c) National Museums Liverpool. (Image is roughly actual size)

## A LOST WELSH INTELLECTUAL?

Michael Spencer

**E**A Moelwyn-Hughes (the initials were for Emyr Alun) was an eminent Welsh scientist in the middle of the last century. Although from a North Walian family, he was born in Cardigan in 1905. A tall, dark-haired man, he was an imposing presence in any company and one of his research students Ian Fells, remarked that he looked more like a poet than a scientist. As with many Welsh intellectuals he was the son of a highly regarded Welsh Minister - the Rev. Dr J. G. Moelwyn-Hughes, who was also a literary figure. He wrote the well-known Welsh hymn *Y Ddinas Gadarn*, often sung at funerals and indeed sung at Lloyd George's funeral in 1945. The Moelwyn-Hughes family achieved much: "between the father and the children they had five doctorates, three in philosophy, one in science and one in medicine". Emyr Alun's brother, Goronwy, a lawyer, was the MP for Carmarthen for many years.

The family moved to Birkenhead in 1917, so it was not surprising that in 1923 Moelwyn-Hughes was enrolled as a student in Liverpool University. His brilliance showed early and he gained three degrees at Liverpool: his BSc in 1926, his PhD in 1928 and his DSc in 1933, at the unusually young age of 28. In 1930 he moved from Liverpool to Oxford University. Here he developed his interest in chemical reaction kinetics. In later life Moelwyn-Hughes described the life of research students at Oxford in the 1930's as consisting of performing experiments in the morning, then going off to play tennis in the afternoon. Even in the 1950's that sounded to us like a golden, "Brideshead Revisited", age.

In 1934, after a post-doctoral year at Frankfurt, Moelwyn-Hughes went to the University of Cambridge where he stayed for the rest of his life, except during the Second World War. From 1940 to 1945 he was seconded to the Ministry of Supply and did research, probably on chemical weapons. His academic career flourished at Cambridge. He became the leading authority on the kinetics of chemical reactions in solution. It was a time when many physical chemists were more interested in reactions in gases, because they believed they were easier to understand, but

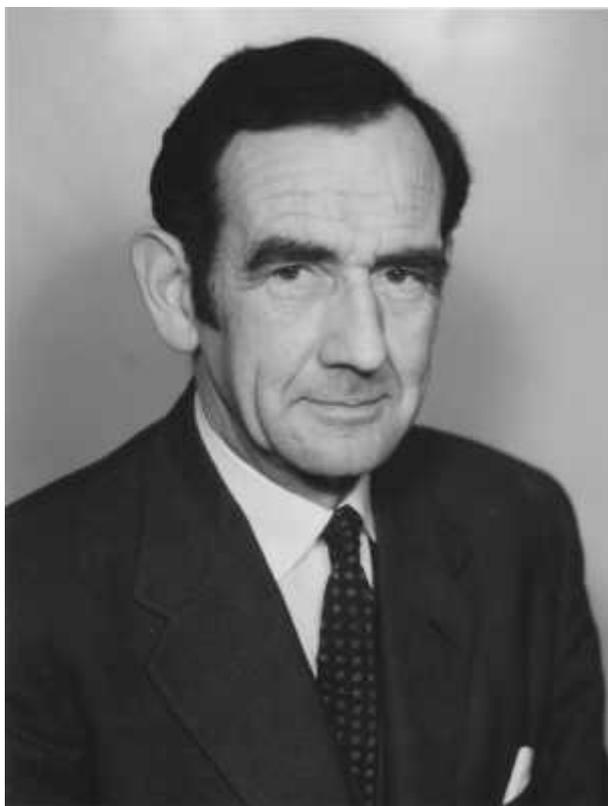
Moelwyn-Hughes, with a penetrating approach, showed that much could be deduced about and learned from the more complex liquid systems. His lectures were characterised by a similarly rigorous attitude that was invigorating to most students but rather too demanding on some! Many of his research students went on to have highly successful careers. Sir John Meurig Thomas wrote in an appreciative obituary: "As a teacher in Cambridge, and as an extraordinarily successful author of several standard texts, he influenced the careers of countless young scientists ... They were taught at the time when his own experimental contribution was at its apogee".

In addition to his achievements as a research scientist and as a teacher, he was probably as important and rather more influential as the author of several textbooks. These were characterised by refreshingly new points of view and intellectual rigor, all with a skill in writing and a wit that led to them being highly regarded. He had a felicitous ability for memorable phrases: "Belief in the essential simplicity of things is one of the chemists articles of faith"

(a re-statement of Occam's Razor) and "Energy among molecules is like money amongst men: the rich are few, the poor numerous". Although a scientist, he inherited his father's literary abilities and once preached in Welsh in King's College Chapel, Cambridge.

He wrote his first book, on the kinetics of reactions in solution, at the start of his career. It was published in 1933 when he was 28, and established the topic as a coherent subject. His last book, bringing the same subject up to date, appeared in 1971 when he was 66, at a time when he was ill and only seven years before he died. But his magnum opus was *Physical Chemistry*, a general text on the subject for students, which held its position as the leading book on the subject for a couple of decades.

In the preface he gives its origin: "Since I first studied physical chemistry, I have become increasingly dissatisfied with its textbooks, and vowed to write one of my own, on new lines." Its genesis was not without difficulty: work was well under way when, with the onset of the Second World War, "... like so many other and more important projects, it stopped in 1939". He published what was essentially the first half of the book in 1940. He took up the task again in 1945, when he had returned to Cambridge and the teaching of undergraduates, and the complete book was published in 1957. It was widely praised by reviewers, especially for its comprehensive analysis and its emphasis on experimental results. Some suggested that lecturers would learn as much, if not



E A Moelwyn Hughes (1905-1978)

more, from it than the students would! On the first page Moelwyn-Hughes wrote: "*The complete physical chemist blows his own apparatus and solves his own equations.*" This doctrine of self-help became well known and much quoted but it must appear almost incomprehensible to young research students today, with all the subsequent changes in experimental techniques and in the analysis of results.

It is probably not a coincidence that Moelwyn-Hughes worked early in his career with two people who later were awarded Nobel Prizes. At Oxford he was a junior collaborator with C. N. Hinshelwood, who, receiving many honours in the course of his career became Sir Cyril Hinshelwood, OM, FRS, President of the Royal Society from 1955 to 1960 and received the Nobel Prize for Chemistry in 1956. In 1939 a young student, J. C. Kendrew, started research work with Moelwyn-Hughes but after a few months he was called to military service in the Second World War. After the war Kendrew returned to Cambridge but moved to more biological studies, culminating in being awarded, with Max Perutz, the Nobel Prize in 1962 for elucidating the structure of globular proteins. In contrast few honours or awards came Moelwyn-Hughes' way. It is true he did not make a discovery that reshaped chemistry, but his contributions to the understanding of chemical reactions in solution and to bringing greater intellectual rigor to physical chemistry should have been recognised. He held the Messel Fellowship of the Royal Society from 1936 to 1940 but he was never elected to full fellowship. He was not made a professor in Cambridge nor did he become a fellow of a Cambridge college until very late in his career. Awards were not handed out quite as readily then as now and it is difficult at this distance to know why he was not honoured. Perhaps it was a personal matter: to quote again from Sir John Meurig Thomas' obituary: "*His coruscating, if sometimes caustic wit was much enjoyed (and occasionally feared)*". Wyn Roberts (a chemistry professor at Cardiff) told me that Moelwyn-Hughes had invited him to give a talk on his work at the Physical Chemistry Department at Cambridge, which he did. At discussion time after the lecture, Moelwyn-Hughes asked his questions in Welsh, to which Wyn replied in both Welsh and English. It is likely that this Welsh chauvinism would not have gone down well with the English establishment!

In the 1950's Moelwyn-Hughes had also become rather deaf and used a hearing aid. Unlike today, when these devices are small and discreet, his apparatus was a substantial black box with various wires. At symposia in Cambridge he would, almost ostentatiously, switch off his hearing aid whenever R.G.W. Norrish, the head of department, rose to make a contribution to the discussion. Disputes between the two men were well known but it was less than tactful to do this!

Listening to Desert Island Discs some years ago when Lord Porter, then President of the Royal Society, and many years previously one of my supervisors at Cambridge, was the guest, I heard a question from Sue Lawley. She asked him if he thought all Fellows had done work to justify their

position and his answer was that yes, he thought they all did but acknowledged that there were scientists whose work would also justify election and not been elected due to a restriction on the number elected each year. Then, as ever, friends in high places were needed to win awards and honours.

### Sources

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## COVER STORIES

The catalyst for the front cover is an article, in the present edition, on the long tradition of folk dancing in Wales. The picture shows the Cardiff Morris Group with their mascot, Idris the Dragon, dancing a Morris dance from the Nantgarw tradition.

The back cover is a portrait of Katheryn of Berain (c.1540-1591) by the Dutch artist, Adriaen van Cronenburgh (1525-1604). She was the only child of Tudor ap Robert Vychan of Berain in Denbighshire and Jane Velvile. Her grandfather was an illegitimate son of Henry VIII and a Breton. Her second husband (she went on to have four) commissioned the portrait after their marriage in 1567. He was Sir Richard Clough, from Denbigh, who was a wealthy merchant and royal agent. The artist shows his technical virtuosity in the richness of detail in the intricate embroidery of the fashionable style Spanish dress and in the gold necklaces, chain and jewellery which she wears. The show of wealth is offset by the presence of a *memento mori* and the prayer book in her right hand. Her direct descent from the Tudors and the lineages she created from her six children are the reasons why she has been christened the "Mother of Wales".

Our front and back pictures could both be said to offer starting points into the questions that arise from the concept of Welsh heritage which we have been exploring in some of our items over the past year. In particular they illustrate the complexities and difficulties which surround the concepts.

The Nantgarw tradition could be said to be little more than thirty to forty years old which is when these dances began to be performed again. The tradition itself could be said to be less than one hundred years old because it was written down in the early years of the 20th century from the recollections of Margretta Thomas (1880-1972) who could remember dances she saw in her youth which, as the article goes on to point out, was under pressure from Nonconformism. The tradition bears a strong resemblance to the Lichfield Morris dances; Nantgarw was once

the centre of a thriving pottery industry and it has been suggested that the dances were brought by potters from Staffordshire who came to work in the Nantgarw potteries.

Katheryn of Berain may be 'Mam Cymru' but she was really the mother of the landowners and gentry of Wales who, after the Act of Union, increasingly turned their back on their Welsh roots as they sought the power and influence that now was available from the Tudor Court in London. However, she was part of a small minority that remained aware of their Welsh cultural traditions and at the same time conscious of cultural trends in Europe. The picture is symbolic of this building of European cultural links both through the choice of portraiture which acknowledged the Renaissance emphasis on the individual and in the choice of a Dutch artist which showed a critical awareness of their greater skill over artists of the 16<sup>th</sup> century British school.

Perhaps, in the past the incorporation of outside influences might have been seen as dilution of a traditional heritage but now it is surely recognised as an enrichment.

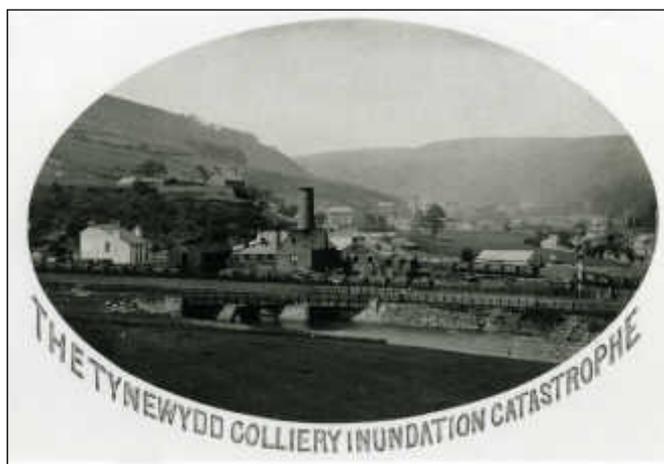
**Diane Davies**



## MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

In August 2010 a roof fall at the San Jose copper/gold mine in Chile trapped 33 miners 700 metres underground. After 69 days underground and a massive rescue operation, which involved NASA and more than a dozen international corporations, all 33 men were rescued over a 24 hour period. After winching the last trapped miners to the surface the rescue workers held a placard up for the cameras reading "Mission accomplished Chile". This was seen by an estimated television audience of more than a billion viewers around the world.

**Tynewydd disaster**



Postcard commemorating the disaster

The Chilean rescue reminded many of a similar incident which occurred in the Rhondda Valleys over 130 years before. On the 11<sup>th</sup> April 1877 Tynewydd Colliery in Porth became flooded by water from the abandoned workings of the nearby Cymmer Old Colliery. At the time of the inundation fourteen miners were underground at Tynewydd and rescue attempts were begun to find them.

Five of the survivors were located after sounds of knocking were heard and rescuers had to cut through twelve yards of coal to reach them. Unfortunately, when the area was broken into, one of the trapped men was killed by the force of the air rushing out through the rescue hole. There were now nine men unaccounted for.

### Desperate rescue attempts

Further sound of knocking were heard from working places beneath the water line which led to the rescuers assuming that there were other survivors trapped in an air pocket. An attempt was made by two divers from London to reach the men but the amount of debris blocking the roadways made this impossible. It was decided that the only way now was to cut a rescue heading through 38 yards of coal.

During the ten days it took to reach the five trapped men, the rescue attracted the attention of the world's press and telegrams were even sent by Queen Victoria who was concerned about the men's plight. The trapped miners



Five of the survivors

were reached on Friday, April 20th; they had been without food and had only mine water to drink for ten days. The five rescued miners were found to be suffering from 'the bends' because of the rapid decompression of their air pocket and had to spend time in hospital but otherwise recovered fully. The four other missing miners were all drowned.

### Brave and heroic rescues

Although the incident was a minor one in terms of loss of life (an explosion at Cymmer Colliery had killed 114 men and boys in 1856), the perseverance of the rescue teams attracted great press and public interest. Twenty-four First and Second Class Albert Medals and other presentation items were awarded to the rescuers in a ceremony held at the Rocking Stone above Pontypridd. It was estimated that up to forty thousand people attended.

The Tynewydd rescue was the first time that Albert Medals had been awarded for bravery on land. Five of these medals are now held by Big Pit: National Coal Museum along with examples of presentation silverware and other items connected with the rescue.

### Ceri Thompson

Ceri Thompson is a Curator at Big Pit: National Coal Museum



## FOSSILS IN STONE: ACID PREPARATION OF FOSSILS

We rarely find fossils in perfect condition. When we collect them, most of them are partially or almost completely concealed in rock. To study them in detail, or to prepare them to be displayed, we must carefully remove the rock.



A limestone rock, from Southerndown in south Wales, containing fossil shells. (*Gryphaea arcuata* – Devil's toenails).

It is not easy to remove the rock from the fossils, which are sometimes extremely delicate. It can be a long and painstaking process. Sometimes we use hand tools, such as

pins, scrapers or little chisels. We can also use specialist tools, like pneumatic pens similar to engraving devices. A third option is to use an air-abrasive machine that is a little like a miniature sandblaster.

An alternative is to dissolve the rock in acid. Most fossil shells were composed originally of calcium carbonate, and many are preserved in limestone, which is the same chemical make-up. In some circumstances, however, the calcium carbonate of the shells dissolves away and is replaced by silica, but the enclosing limestone remains unchanged. Because limestone dissolves readily in acid, but silica doesn't, we can extract these specimens with chemicals.

### Vinegar, no salt please

The acid we commonly use is acetic acid: the same acid that is in vinegar. We use highly concentrated acetic acid (80%) but dilute it with water to about 5%. We immerse the rock sample containing fossils in the diluted acetic acid, which almost immediately starts to fizz as it reacts with the limestone. The rock can take anything from a few days to many months to dissolve completely, depending on its specific composition. The reaction with the rock gradually neutralizes the acid, which needs to be refreshed from time to time. At the end of the process all that remains is some



Fossil shells (*Gryphaea arcuata* – Devil's toenails) after the rock has been dissolved in acid.

slushy rock residue, and the silicified fossils. Many silicified fossils are very delicate; they have to be handled with extreme care and we often need to strengthen them with adhesives.

The fossils are now ready for research or for displaying. Many are exquisitely preserved: 450-million-year-old silicified shells sometimes look as if they have just been picked up from a modern beach!

### Christian Baars

Christian Baars is a Technical Research Officer at Amgueddfa Cymru

## FOLK DANCING IN WALES

Judy Edwards



May Fair 2001 at St Fagans National History Museum

It is difficult to imagine any part of human society that has not enjoyed and participated in dancing of one kind or another; maybe as part of a seasonal festival, an adjunct to the celebration of a Saint's feast day, or forming part of a local custom. Folk dancing has formed an integral part of Welsh culture for centuries and given the immensity of social change, it is more than a little surprising that its popularity shows little sign of diminishing, both in the face of modern trends in dancing and, more particularly, remembering a period when there was a real threat of its extinction.

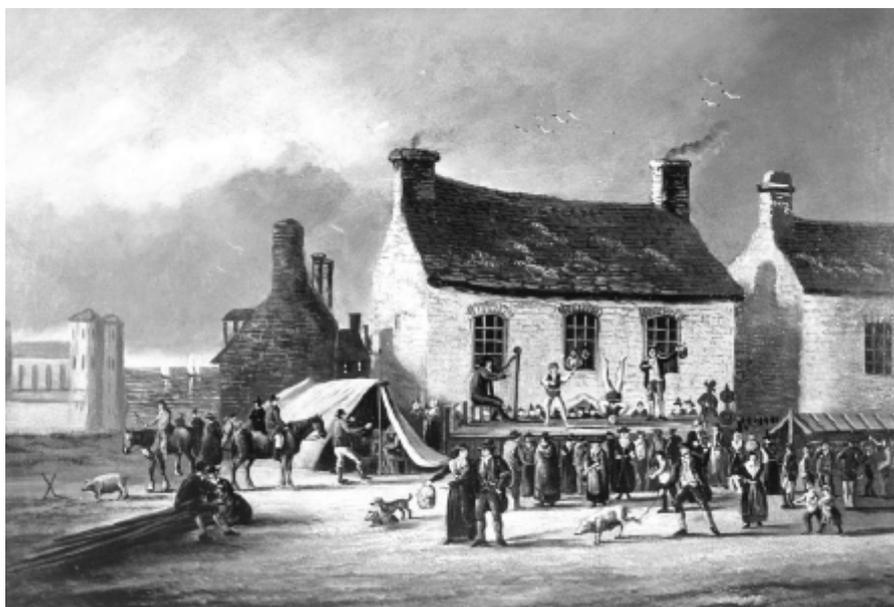
Traditional folk dancing has had, in fact, an unexpectedly colourful and varied history in Wales: that is what I discovered when looking into its origins. At the outset, however, one is reminded that diarists and historians of long ago, from whom we can take a peek at the past, may well have misinterpreted the meanings of folk customs given the absence of writing skills within folk dancing groups of the time, and where ancient beliefs, superstition and prejudice would be common place. Trefor Owen for example reminds us that there is a tendency to overlook the fact that, "...folk customs existed side by side with less picturesque practices as part and parcel of the same world".

Who would have expected to find that Geraldus Cambrensis had made notes of the folk dancing he observed on his famous travels through Wales in the 12<sup>th</sup> century? However, he was a clear sighted observer of all manner of social and religious events with a liking for a little fun as well and it was after he attended the curative festival of Saint Almedha in a Breconshire churchyard that he reported in his

*Itinerary through Wales* (1188): "you may see men or girls, now in the church, now in the churchyard, now in the dance, which is led round the churchyard with a song, in a sudden falling to the ground as in a trance, then jumping up as in a frenzy, and representing with their hands and feet before the people, whatever work they have unlawfully done on feast days ...".

The survival of local and traditional customs, such as folk dancing, has been largely dependent on a social setting and way of life prevalent in rural Wales up to the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century: almost self-contained rural areas based on a high degree of economic subsistence. Country craftsmen would make articles to meet local need and most of the food eaten was produced locally. It was a way of life that was inward looking, relying on local resources, well integrated socially, as well as geographically isolated. In this context it is interesting to note that in 1894 Thomas Jones wrote that the boundaries of mountain sheep farmers '...are with few exceptions, what they were six or seven hundred years ago!' They were perhaps no different from any other social group that comes together on occasions to make life 'more interesting' and thus building up a social life over and above work requirements; for example, sheep farmers coming together for shearing (a working group) but including a recreational element involving banter, jokes, story-telling and perhaps ballad singing as part of a festive meal. On the heels of summer events would come the harvest festivals about which the poet and scholar Lewis Morris (1701-65) wrote to his brother Richard in the August of 1760, describing the enthusiastic dancing and feasting taking place in a north Cardiganshire barn while a fiddler played. "With their bellies full they danced till they were dripping sweat with a large jug of beer at their side and a piece of tobacco for each one. That was living!"

Dancing would often enliven an annual church festival; seasonal fairs and festivals such as May Day would also provide opportunities for dancing, furnishing that rare



Samual Ireland, *Aberystwyth Fair* (copy of an aquatint, 1797) [Note the harp and fiddle, the two instruments which dominated Welsh popular music-making in the 18<sup>th</sup> century]



C. Cullen , *Dancing on the Green*

opportunity to escape daily routines and join in with communal celebration. Confirmation of the church having a dual role was evident in the record of 'A Trip to North Wales' in 1700 where the church yard was described as '...*servicing the dead for burying and the living for a dancing place every Sunday when you will see a blind harpist mounted upon a gravestone making admirable harmony*'. Even towards the latter part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, travel writers were reporting that dancing was still being enjoyed by the common people. In *A Walk Through Wales*, the Reverend Richard Warner describes his experience of 'a genuine Welsh ball' in 1798. The party were obviously quite captivated by the entertain-

ment and would have joined in except for their "*complete inability to unravel the mazes of the Welsh dance*".

By the end of the century, however, a Presbyterian Minister in Cheshire was denouncing maypole dancing on the riverside from the pulpit saying that it was "*...a rabble of profane youths and doting fools, woefully blaspheming the Sabbath with music and dancing*". In the same period, a school master of Michaelstone-super-Ely uses the term 'riots' to describe the revelry associated with wakes and revels taking place at St Fagans, Fairwater and Whitchurch.

Folk customs such as the Marie Lwyd and the Gwylmab-sant probably had a pre-Christian religious origin which eventually changed in character because the social groupings of peasant society began to form part of a larger society comprising a town and market place, a court and a traditional religious centre. Such changes all helped to both foster and change the content of customs largely to do with entertainment and the work/leisure divide. The improvement of roads, the coming of railways and the motor car, the rise of the Methodist movement and the market economy all contributed to the opening up of comparatively isolated rural communities.

The zeal of religious reformers meant that both potentially harmful and harmless customs were attacked indiscriminately. All idle past-times distracted everyone from the main task of cultivating a spiritual life and achieving



Peter Roberts, *Singing to the Harp and Dancing* (Coloured copperplate from *The Cambrian Popular Antiquities of Wales*, London, 1815)

## MADE IN WALES

salvation. Travelling preachers impressed on the Welsh peasantry that anything that stood in the way of this ideal was both foolish and sinful. The old customs were attacked as being superstitious and 'popish'. Belonging to a chapel came to be an increasingly important element of peoples' lives and was given greater consideration than coming from a particular village. The increasing influence of Nonconformist attitudes towards folk customs, such as folk dancing, played a major role in its decline at a time when rural life was also being affected by public transport improvements which offered new opportunities to engage in alternative leisure activities further afield. Chapel teaching defined Welsh folk arts and customs as sinful and not in keeping with the Christian ideal. Thomas Charles of Bala for instance, did his best to stamp out all kinds of 'sinful' folk entertainment particularly mixed dancing which involved close contact between partners, seen as both frivolous and corrupting. There were few who could resist the level of peer pressure that abounded and then only when the curtains were drawn!

However, all was not lost. Cecil Sharpe, who was the founder of the English Folk Dancing Society in 1911, urgently began writing down the remembered movements of dances that had passed down from one generation to another. In Wales, Lois Blake, an English woman who had moved to Denbighshire in the 1930s, did the same and almost single-handedly rescued sizeable fragments of what was once a common Welsh tradition. Instructive pamphlets began to be printed and distributed with the steps and music to long forgotten dances such as *Lord Caernarvon's Jig*, the *Llangadfan Set* and the *Llanover Reel* popular at Llanover Court near Abergavenny. Others, such as William Jones of Llangadfan and Edward Jones of Bardd y Brenin, had also recognised the damage being done to Welsh culture and began with others to record dances on paper. The Welsh Folk Dancing Society was established in 1949 and the introduction of folk dancing to the Eisteddfod stage, as well as the Barn Dances and Twmpaths of the 1960s and 70s, secured a firm foundation for the future of Welsh Folk Dancing. Today there are over 20 adult teams and many hundred teams in schools and Urdd clubs across Wales; the Urdd National Eisteddfod attracts thousands of young people every year. Many of you will have seen folk dancing at St Fagans; in addition Cardiff holds the St. John's Eve Festival (Gwyl Ifan) every mid-summer, one of the great events of folk dancing, attracting hundreds of adult dancers from all parts of Wales wearing traditional costume. That is how a traditional folk custom has survived the onslaught of disapproval and social change.

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The Welsh Woollen Industry was the most important and widespread of all Welsh rural industries. The villages of the mid Teifi Valley became the main centre of textile manufacturing in Wales during the second half of the nineteenth century. Dre-fach Felindre in particular became an important textile village and a domestic and factory industry flourished for nearly half a century; by 1900 the area was home to 52 mills. Dre-fach Felindre was a true industrial village: almost all of the people of the village, dubbed the 'Huddersfield of Wales', were concerned with some aspect of the woollen manufacturing process. Most worked in the local mills, while others were engaged as outworkers making up shirts, shawls and underwear. The village was also within reasonably easy reach of the industrial valleys of South Wales and when the railway reached Newcastle Emlyn in 1895 it provided the means of taking the products of the industry to its main market in South Wales.

The National Wool Museum tells the story of this industry in Cambrian Mills, one of the largest and most important of the Dre-fach woollen mills. The museum closed between 2002 and 2004 when it underwent a £2.8 million re-development. This project has safeguarded historic industrial buildings, resulted in a museum with improved visitor facilities and access to the collections through lively new displays.

At the museum, the visitor experience begins with a journey through the process of woollen cloth manufacture and ends with a visit to the Textile Gallery, which showcases the products of the mills. The Wales & the World gallery was developed in order to tell the story of what happened to the cloth produced by the mills. Previously this was achieved by interpretation panels although it was always our intention to develop this area. Now we have in place three new displays, a Drapers counter dating from around 1900's, a Market stall from the 1950's and a display about Craftcentre Cymru, established in the 1960's.



Drapers counter at the National Wool Museum, based on the one in Emlyn Davies's shop at Dowlais

In the early twentieth century Drapers' shops were an essential part of the high street selling cloth and fabrics by the yard. Clothes were made at home or by local dress-makers or tailors, therefore rolls of cloth were cut to meet individual customer's specifications. With the development of coal mining and the iron industry in south Wales during the nineteenth century many people left rural Wales to seek employment. Emlyn Davies was one such young man, born in Newcastle Emlyn he moved to Dowlais and worked as a shop assistant for J.S. Davies Drapers. In 1898 he opened his own drapers shop, Emlyn Davies.

We were very fortunate that Alan Owen, the grandson of Emlyn Davies, gave the museum a copy of his research regarding the family business, which has enabled us to re-create this Drapers display. The counter is mainly based on his memory of the shop and he kindly arranged for us to meet his cousin, Gwyneth Jones. Her father, Morley Davies was a brother to Emlyn Davies and worked as an apprentice at the drapers before establishing his own Drapers Shop at Dowlais, mainly trading in cotton.

Emlyn Davies was primarily a flannel merchant and purchased most of his stock from Cambrian Mills, Dre-fach. David Lewis, the owner of Cambrian Mills would travel through the South Wales valleys collecting orders for flannel, the woollen cloth would then be sent to Dowlais by train from Henllan Station. In the collection we have three flannel sample books which David Lewis would have taken with him on such visits.

The flannel would be made into shirts and underwear for the local colliers and the iron workers. They wore Welsh flannel because it was extremely hardwearing and excellent at absorbing the sweat of heavy labour. Working conditions were hard and they were in constant danger from fires. Wool is a natural fire retardant and Welsh flannel was the clothing of choice until the 1920's.

Emlyn Davies was a credit draper, people would buy their goods on credit terms paying small amounts off their bill each week. He would travel to the nearby towns collecting orders and delivering the goods the following week; he also had a market stall at the weekly market in Brecon.

The Flannel drapers enjoyed prosperity until the 1920's. The introduction of knitwear produced by the hosiery manufacturers of the East Midlands combined with the influx of cheaper printed cottons and mass produced readymade clothing marked the beginning of the decline. This combined with strikes, political unrest and the great depression in the industrial valleys saw many drapers close down. Emlyn Davies's business peaked in 1920 but from there it was in a steady decline until his death in 1937. Thereafter his daughter Miriam ran the business, selling cottons and mass produced clothing and the business finally closed in 1962, when Miriam retired.

There was a change in the character of goods manufactured by the woollen mills in the 1930's. Prior to this a large part of the production was concerned with the man-



Market stall at the National Wool Museum, based on one in Carmarthen Market c. 1950

ufacture of shirt and underwear flannel, knitting wool and heavy tweeds. Mills began to manufacture blankets and patterned bedcovers and by the mid 1930's the tourist trade of West Wales had increased to such an extent that direct selling to the public from the mills became increasingly popular, with some of the woollen mills becoming tourist attractions. Following the Second World War mills were producing blankets, double-cloth (tapestry) bedcovers, furnishing fabrics and tweeds. Many woollen mills also sold direct to the public at market stalls and, because we have many images in the collection of market stalls, we have based our display on such a stall at Carmarthen Market c. 1950. Stalls sold woollen goods, welsh blankets, children's welsh costume, knitting yarns and socks along with other haberdashery products.



Item from the Dafydd Bowen Lewis Collection

During the 1960's Wales' tourist trade expanded rapidly. Craftcentre Cymru was established by Dafydd Bowen Lewis to meet the needs of the tourist market in mid and north Wales, the shops having a strong emphasis on selling locally produced Welsh crafts such as woollen goods and pottery. Dafydd founded a garment making business called Dillad Dwyrdd, which used the very fashionable tapestry cloth to make fashion garments. Using talented Welsh designers like Anna Roose, Beryl Gibson and David Bond, from London, the clothes were sold throughout Britain and exported to America and Canada by means of direct mail order. Beautiful tweeds and fabrics were commissioned and woven in mills throughout Wales, to be made into fashionable clothes under the new brand name of Dafydd Snowdon. It is with thanks to the generosity of Dafydd and Christine Bowen Lewis that we are able to create this display.

The Wales & the World gallery now illustrates how the demand for Welsh woollen goods has changed dramatically over the last one hundred years, from being the essential clothing of the working class to today providing us with decorative soft furnishings to complement our homes.

The Craftspersons at the museum currently weave blankets, throws and cot blankets that are inspired by the National Collection, these are sold through Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales shops. We will also be producing knitting yarn from this autumn (2012). The museum is also home to the commercial weaver, Melin Teifi, who continue the tradition of weaving flannel at the mill, and are in fact the last flannel producers in Wales.

### Ann Whittall & Mark Lucas

Ann Whittall is Museum Manager and Mark Lucas is Collections Management Officer at the National Wool Museum



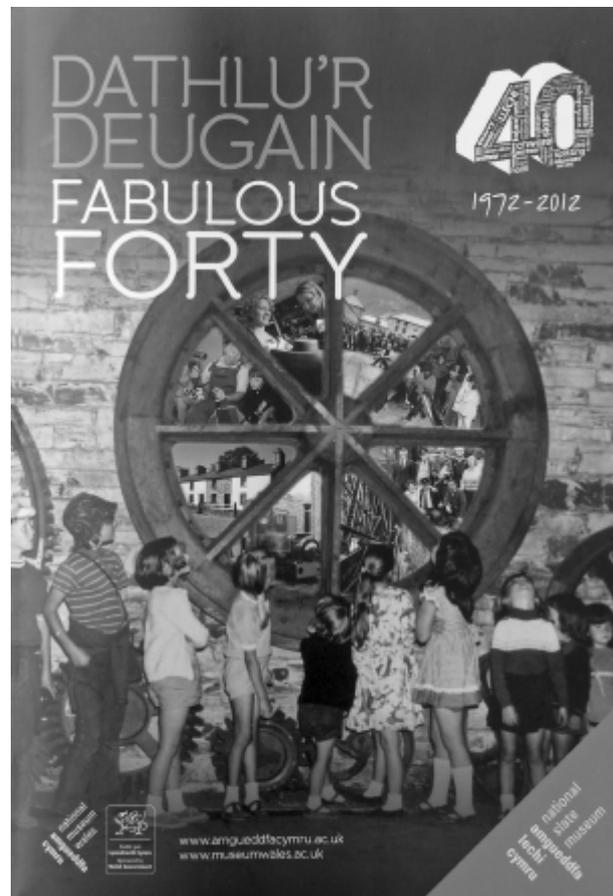
## BOOK REVIEW

### Dathlu'r Deugain / Fabulous Forty

In the June edition we included an article on the fortieth anniversary of the National Slate Museum. To mark the anniversary, the Museum has produced a sixty page booklet *Dathlu'r Deugain / Fabulous Forty* which explores the history of the site and the people involved.

It follows the development of the Museum from its founding on the site of the old Dinorwg Quarry up to the present day. The story is told by those who were involved in the creation of the Museum and those who currently work there, giving a fascinating kaleidoscopic insight into its history.

They tell of the ground-breaking co-operative work that was required to set up the Museum, and the feeling that the



newly opened Museum had of being a place that the last workers had just left. That unique feeling remained until a Heritage Lottery Fund grant allowed the transformation of the site into one of the chief attractions of North Wales, one which currently hosts nearly one hundred and fifty thousand visitors each year.

The booklet provides a fitting tribute for the fortieth anniversary. If you would like to obtain this insight into the life and work of the Museum, the booklet is available from the National Slate Museum.

### Diane Davies



## MUSEUM NEWS

It is always a pleasure to begin with 'good news' and the number of visitors to our National Museum reached the record breaking level of 1.69 million during the last 12 months. Of course the launch of the new National Museum of Art, successful exhibitions such as that of John Piper and the Wildlife Photographer of the Year, as well as the re-opening of natural history galleries must have played an important role in this achievement.

The next piece of good news is that Amgueddfa Cymru has been successful in obtaining £11.5 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the largest grant ever awarded by the HLF in Wales. The money will go towards *Making*



Crescentic plaque from Llyn Cerrig Bach, Anglesey (Bronze, 18.3cm diameter, 200 BC to 50 AD )

included a decorated bronze plaque the size of a dinner plate (shown), blacksmith's tongs, a sickle, a bridle bit and a 3-meter-long iron gang chain. Archaeologists from Amgueddfa Cymru and elsewhere have been examining and researching these objects in depth and now believe that Anglesey's famous Druids were depositing objects in Llyn Cerrig Bach as offerings to the gods between 300 BC and 100 AD.

During the summer there was some ground-breaking activity at the museum, involving BBC Cymru and five people from across Wales. If you have ever wondered what it means to curate an art exhibition, this was an experience to follow. The TV series *The Exhibitionists* allowed viewers behind the scenes and to watch two of the five candidates browse some of the museum's treasures in order to select and put together an exhibition for real!

Looking forward, there is still the Museum's Christmas programme to come so may we remind you of the important dates and times:

**History**, the project that will transform the much loved museum at St Fagans. The time-line of the stories told at St Fagans will now be extended so that visitors can follow the peoples of Wales from the very first inhabitants to the present day and beyond, taking in over 230,000 years of history. The archaeological experience for example, will extend out into an open air site within which one of the courts of the Princes of Gwynedd will be re-created and which will provide opportunities for school children to stay the night.

The Waterfront Museum at Swansea is now in the process of undertaking the examination of school records from the year 1875. This, if you remember, was only five years after attendance at school was for at least six years made compulsory, when deaths from the ordinary infectious diseases of childhood were common and the protection of children from the cruelty inherent in private schools of the time, was minimal or non-existent.

Thanks to the partnership between National Museum Wales and Anglesey's Museum Oriel Ynys Môn, you will see until 11th November, a very special collection of archaeological finds that were first discovered 70 years ago. These "*spectacular Iron Age artefacts*" were discovered near the RAF base at Valley. When the base's runway was being extended to accommodate the larger and heavier American Aircraft, a small nearby lake, Llyn Cerrig Bach, had to be drained. While dredging the lake, W.O. Roberts and his colleagues uncovered a group of amazing objects which

#### At the National Museum Cardiff

**Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> December** at 1:00pm: Lunchtime Concert comprising festive music performed by students of the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama.

**Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> December** at 3:00pm: Carols with mulled wine and mince pies.

**Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> December** at 11.30am: Coffee Concert at the Reardon Smith given by the Richards String Quartet playing the music of Ravel and Christopher Painter. Tickets in advance from the New Theatre Box Office (029 20878889) Adults £8.80 & Concessions £6.60 or £10 at the door.

#### At St Fagans

**Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> and Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> December** from 11:00am to 1:00pm and 2:00pm to 4:00pm: Making Christmas Decorations inspired by the museum's collections.

**Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> and Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> December** at 1:00pm and 3:00pm in English and at 2:00pm in Welsh: A Tudor Holiday at St Teilo's Church; what was happening 500 years ago?

**Wednesday, Thursday and Friday 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> December** from 6:00pm to 9:00pm: Christmas Nights at St. Fagans so wrap up warm and bring a torch for carols, bands, children's entertainment, food, drink and more! Call 029 20878440 for Family Tickets at £25 (2 adults & 2 children) or single adult at £8.50 and single child at £5.50.

**Judy Edwards**

## FRIENDS NEWS

We hope that the calendar of events which included summer outings, trips to the continent and a Saturday morning lecture series, has given pleasure and satisfaction to all, or most of you, and we on the committee would want you to know how much your support is appreciated. As to next year, you will find enclosed with this Newsletter the calendar of events for 2013 as well as flyers for events during the next few months but remember details can also be found on the Friends' page of the Museum's website. If you have not tried a trip with Val Courage, you can read about the pre-trip preparations for the one to Alsace below. Those who came with us to Lydiard Park in August may like to know that we will follow up on the inclusion of a view of Fonmon Castle on one panel of the astonishing triptych in St Mary's Church Tregoze.

You will be hearing about the increase to the Friends Subscription at the AGM and our Chairman explains the reasons for this in his article on page two. To improve contact we are going to ask all new and existing Friends to provide us with an e-mail address where possible. This is to reduce any unnecessary postal costs and to have a back-stop position if there is a problem with the usual postal service.

### Friends and BAfM

The committee has been very pleased that Marion Drake will now be representing us at The British Association of Friends of Museums (BAfM). The association has recently published a new-look magazine with a cover picture of the Glynn Vivian Art Gallery in Swansea and an article about the Friends of the Gallery within. There was also quite a lot about the role of Museums in creating and supporting learning environments for children and their families. There was reference to an independent charity called Kids in Museums together with a manifesto aiming to promote a 'Can Do' culture for family visits to Museums. It was good to know that the National Museum Wales has already done much to ensure that the twenty ways of making a family visit a friendly and enjoyable one, are already in place. If you saw *The Exhibitionists* in Cardiff you will certainly be interested to know that the seventh most popular exhibition at the Wallace Collection was conceived by twelve children between the ages of 9 and 11 from a local state school. The Director of Kids in Museums said, "To have 10 year olds talk with such passion and knowledge about Dutch paintings and French ceramics is extraordinary". Their achievements included aspects of design, marketing and finance. Two quotes from participants say it all. "I think our exhibition is a great success and we thought a lot about the visitor's point of view such as disabilities", said Sarah. "I have learned many things from this exhibition; I learned how to speak and listen to a wide audience and give guided tours to both children and adults and to make sure they feel good to ask questions", said Robbie.

In addition the BAfM journal reminded us of the cultural Olympiad that caused quite a buzz four years ago as the

cultural and heritage sector talked about a contribution to 'the games'. Nothing would have been possible without the support of volunteers and Friends like yourselves. Wales took up the challenge with the creation of *Cauldrons and Furnaces* in partnership with Cadw and the Arts Council and supported by very many volunteers. Eight historic sites were chosen: Bleanavon Ironworks, several castles including Laugharne and Caerphilly, as well as St David's Bishop's Palace, the purpose being to "bring the story of our small nation alive".

### Judy Edwards

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### Planning the Alsace Visit



Friends' trip organiser Val Courage has been exploring Alsace, the smallest region of France. Whilst the pretty capital Strasbourg is well-known as the home of the European Parliament, the familiarisation visit revealed that there are many other attractions in this lesser-known French region. Val, who was with a party of other group travel organisers, visited diverse attractions including the Musée de l'Automobile, France's national motor museum with the world's largest collection of Bugattis, the Alsace Memorial Museum that brings the region's history to life, a glittering new attraction that showcases Lalique jewellery and ornaments and the charming town of Colmar where the Unterlinden Museum contains the Grünewald Isenheim altarpiece, the greatest and largest work by the German artist Matthias Grünewald.

Following the June visit Val organised a Friends' trip to Alsace for the first time in September and hopes to plan another visit in the future.

"I really enjoyed it as there are so many different things to see, there are many quaint towns and villages and the countryside is beautiful," said Val, who is pictured with the familiarisation group. "Among the 'musts' are the memorial museum and Colmar museum to see the magnificent altarpiece and I included these in my trip."

### Jeannine Williamson

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