ORIEL

CYFEILLION AMGUEDDFA CYMRU
FRIENDS



Côr Meibion Beaufort yn perfformio yn agoriad Streic! 84-85 yn Amgueddfa Genedlaethol Caerdydd
Beaufort Male Voice Choir performing at the opening of ***Strike! 84-85*** at National Museum Cardiff

Jane Richardson

Beth Yw Pwrpas Amgueddfeydd / What Are Museums For?

Ebrill 2025 April

A MESSAGE TO OUR READERS

The front cover celebrates the opening of ***Streic! 84-85 |Strike!***, a major exhibition at National Museum Cardiff. Jane Richardson, Chief Executive of Amgueddfa Cymru, spoke at that event and I am very pleased to have an article from her based on the speech that she gave, which looked at how the function of a museum is changing, how that related to this exhibition and what it means for the sort of projects that Amgueddfa Cymru is engaged in. As a coda, there is also a piece which is a personal response to the exhibition and the stories it tells.

There is a strong ecological theme running through a number of articles in this edition.

The extraordinary-looking creature on the back cover is a worm or, to be precise, a marine bristleworm. It is one of the images to be found illustrating an article about these environmentally important sea creatures, which celebrates their diversity as well as emphasising their strange beauty. Continuing the ecological theme, another article also celebrates sea creatures that can be found in Wales, not as living creatures but as fossils. Trilobites existed for millions of years and their fossils were first discovered in Wales in the seventeenth century. The article looks at the different species that can be found across Wales and the wide variety of different rock strata involved. A third environmentally based article looks at the history of the Gwent Levels and the impact human-beings have had on its landscape, starting with Mesolithic hunter-gatherers whose footprints are preserved in the mud of the Severn Estuary. As well as celebrating its history it also looks at what is being done now to preserve this ecologically important landscape.

How does one celebrate the achievement of someone with abhorrent views? That is the troubling question examined in an article that looks at the story behind a striking new sculpture recently unveiled on the Cardiff Bay Barrage to celebrate the first telegraphic communication across water in 1897 from Lavernock Point to Flat Holm. You will have to read the article to find out who they are and why their political views and prejudices now overshadow their scientific achievements.

On the theme of art there is an article exploring the artistic creations of an artist whose first interest was painting and drawing but then discovered the intriguing possibilities of glass as an artistic medium. A wide range of his works can be seen in National Museum Cardiff thanks to a generous donation of over a hundred of his works to the Museum by his daughter who was inspired by the example of the Davies sisters.

Of course there are also the regular features of Museum News, Friends News and Friends Activities. Museum News looks at the closure of the National Slate Museum in order to carry out a major redevelopment; Friends News focuses on how the money you have raised through your subscriptions and attendance at events is being used to support a number of projects within the Museum whilst Friends Activities reports on two trips made by the Friends last year

I end on a sad note with the passing of Christabel Hutchings. Christabel was a staunch supporter of the Friends and served for many years on the Board of Trustees, organising events and talks for members. In addition, she was a key figure in the production of this magazine. She was a frequent writer of articles for ***Oriel***, which ranged over the historical development of the Museum and fascinating items in its collections as well as ones that reflected her many other interests with her pieces often containing original research, so widening our knowledge in these areas. More than that, she used her extensive network of contacts from her work for other organisations to commission articles, always with the aim that ***Oriel*** should reflect the culture and heritage of Wales as a whole. She will be greatly missed.

Diane Davies

Next Edition

Contributions for inclusion in the October 2025 edition should be submitted by the beginning of July 2025. Please send items, either electronically or by post, to the Editor.

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Front Cover: Beaufort Male Voice Choir performing at the opening of the ***Streic! 84-85 Strike!*** Exhibition at National Museum Cardiff (see article below).
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Back Cover: Sea Mouse, *Aphrodita aculeata* (see article on bristleworms on page 21).
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WHAT ARE MUSEUMS FOR?

That was the question I asked the two hundred assembled guests at the launch of our new ***Strike!*** exhibition at National Museum Cardiff.

'*Closing down!*' shouted someone from the crowd, referring to the funding cuts so many museums and cultural organisations have faced across the UK in the past year. And that is largely why I have been asking myself this question repeatedly over the past twelve months.

It has not been the easiest of years for us at Amgueddfa Cymru. We had to absorb the biggest funding cut in our history and lost many valued colleagues as a result. But the upside of those challenges has been the outpouring of love for our family of seven museums and the widespread expression of appreciation for the work that we do.

So, we know Museums are loved. That became clear during the pandemic when going to museums was one of the cultural things many people really missed.

And we know what Museums do. They safeguard collections. They provide learning programmes and offer opportunities to discover new things. They undertake research and conserve special objects. They actively collect items from the events of today that will become the history of tomorrow. They tell and share stories. They put on exhibitions and events. They organise activities, birthday parties and even sleepovers for children. Often, they provide great coffee in their cultural cafes or fantastic, present-buying opportunities in their collection-inspired shops. But is this what they are for?

Museums are often at the heart of our communities, whether they be volunteer-run small museums in towns and villages, or nationally funded ones in our capital cities. And it is this connection with community that made me realise one of the important things Amgueddfa Cymru is for: we provide safe spaces.

This has been a difficult year not just for Amgueddfa Cymru, or for museums generally. It has been a difficult year for us all. It has been a year of conflict, of financial hardship, of uncertainty. It has been a

year of political change and of extreme weather. It has been a time when communities have been pitted against each-other and there has been a focus on what makes us different rather than what we have in common.

In this turbulent context our museums have been safe spaces. At a time when people have not been able to afford to put the heating on, our museums have offered warm spaces. At a time when the cost-of-living crisis made everything feel so expensive, our museums offered genuine 'free time' thanks to the free entry provided through Welsh Government funding. At a time of division in our society, a time of 'them and us', we have welcomed everyone and anyone, regardless of colour, creed or identity.

Our safe spaces are places of acceptance and connection. We offer supported work placements for young people whose learning disabilities makes regular work very challenging. We hold workshops for asylum seekers and refugees to come together to connect with one-another and the new culture they are living in. We provide sessions (and bus tickets) for low-income families to have fun together and gain confidence around spending time in spaces that might otherwise be unfamiliar to them. We have a community garden where people can dig, prune and plant to improve their mental wellbeing. Our National Waterfront Museum in Swansea was the UK's first Museum of Sanctuary. We are very proud of the safe spaces we offer.

But being safe does not mean being cosy or complacent. I believe that as well as being safe, our spaces should also be provocative. They should challenge thinking and orthodoxies. In our Art of the Selfie exhibition at National Museum Cardiff, we brought together Van Gogh's ***Portrait de l'Artiste*** with Anya Paintsill's highly textural ***Blod***, a work that incorporates strands of the artist's own hair. Our visitors probably did not expect to see these two works together. But just as museums can create new dynamics by bringing differing works of art together, so they can create a powerful dynamic by combining being safe spaces with being spaces of protest.

Protest is a recurring theme for us in Amgueddfa Cymru. It runs through our collections, our research and our community engagement. We believe we can use our spaces to protest against prejudice, injustice and ignorance. Through our collecting, we can protest on behalf of the vulnerable, the unheard, the marginalised. In recent years we have actively collected objects from Black Lives Matter and Pride marches. In our St Fagans Museum, we have celebrated the post-WWI peace petition, which was led by the women of Wales, and hand delivered to the women of the US in 1923.

Safe spaces and protest spaces are not mutually exclusive, they are mutually reinforcing. If people see we take their protests seriously, they will feel safe in our spaces. If people are safe in our spaces, they will feel confident to protest their right to be heard, seen and represented.



Jane Richardson addressing attendees of the opening of the ***Streic! 84-85 Strike!*** Exhibition at National Museum Cardiff.
© Amgueddfa Cymru - Museum Wales

And that is why our ***Strike!*** exhibition feels so relevant. The strikes of 1984/85 were protests that were both social and economic. They shaped our communities in Wales and defined a generation. They championed a largely unrecognised, undervalued working-class culture. It is a culture and community that continues to feel undervalued today. That may be why the spirit of protest of the 84/85 strikes continues to reverberate.

In the exhibition we share the stories and experiences of the 22,000 Welsh miners who were driven into conflict with their government. The visitor route flows through four seasons of protest, exposing the impact of a year of turbulence, hope, vio-



A view of the GRAFT Garden and its seating area at National Waterfront Museum. The garden was created and also being maintained by a team of community participants who meet every Friday. Photo: Diane Davies

lence and hardship. Visitors are encouraged to consider the legacy of that year and are asked to look beyond the binary narrative of miners versus Margaret Thatcher. This was a complex period, defined by complex relationships: the miners and the NUM; mining communities and the media; South Wales police and the Metropolitan police. There was a lot of 'them and us' during that time of social division too.

We could not have put together an exhibition of protest without working with activists. One of the great things about Amgueddfa Cymru is that we have activists working for us, with us and alongside us. They challenge us, force us out of our comfort zones. Ceri Thompson, who curated the ***Strike!*** exhibition is our Senior Curator of Industrial History. He was also a striking miner in 1984/85.

Ned Jones, Alex Matthews and Beli Evans are some of our Amgueddfa Cymru Producers, a group of over one hundred young people who we contract to disrupt our thinking on new projects and policy. Ned, Alex and Beli were born long after the strikes but they have inherited that legacy of protest and are activists within their own valleys communities. We employed them to bring their lived experience to the creation of the exhibition, to make sure it was grounded in, and relevant to, the communities it was representing.

When I asked Ned how the experience of contributing to the exhibition had been for her, she said it had been good but there was lots we could improve. Activists like Ned make us better.

The impact of incorporating this activist perspective is palpable. For the people who walked around the exhibition on that launch evening the connection was so powerful some of them cried. Visitors from mining communities said they had never expected to see people like them on the walls of a place like this. Spontaneous conversations sprang up between miners and government officials; between the photographers who had documented the strike and the photographer who was documenting the event.

Some people might ask why Amgueddfa Cymru would put on an exhibition about a strike when we are known for our extraordinary collections ranging from Monets to molluscs. Part of the answer is that we also have a coal mine, at Big Pit, where retired miners give tours underground and share their experiences of life, quite literally, at the coal face. But even if we did not have a mine, this exhibition would still be the right thing for us to do. Coal and mining shaped Wales. It is part of our national identity and its story should be shared in Wales's national museum. Beyond this, the very principle of protest is part of our history in Wales and is part of our living present. Many of our communities are still protesting to have their rights, their identities, their experiences recognised.

So, what are museums for? The general answer is that they are for lots of things. ,The more specific answer is that what they are for will vary from community to community. Right here, right now in Wales, we are creating safe spaces, where everyone is welcome and where we explore the power, impact and legacy of protest.

Jane Richardson

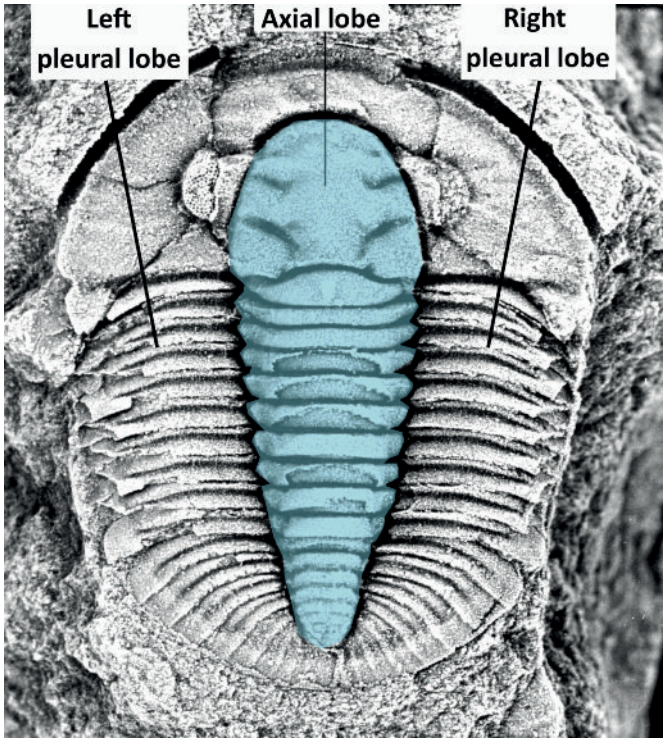
Jane Richardson is the Chief Executive of Amgueddfa Cymru

TRILOBITES IN WALES

If we asked you to name a fossil from Wales, what would you think of? An ammonite, perhaps, one of those lovely spiral shells you sometimes spot on the beach? Or maybe dinosaurs are more your thing and you would choose *Dracoraptor,* the small meat-eating theropod found near Penarth a few years back? These fossils date from the Jurassic, a time period made famous by a string of Hollywood blockbusters. But did you know that most of the rocks in Wales are much older than that? The fossils within them show us the animals and plants that lived millions of years before the dinosaurs. Among the best known of these ancient creatures are the trilobites, whose fossils were first discovered in Wales over three hundred years ago.

What kind of animals were trilobites?

We often describe trilobites as looking like giant woodlice because they both have bodies with lots of segments. Although they both belong to a group of animals called 'arthropods', they are only very distant cousins. The name arthropod means 'jointed leg' because these creatures have lots of those, along with a tough outer shell or skin, known as an exoskeleton. You may not have realized it but you are sure to have encountered a few arthropods. That includes uninvited scuttling guests such as spiders, silverfish, beetles or other insects. If you enjoy watching butterflies and bees visiting the flowers in your garden or local park, then you have been an arthropod fan all along. And would you not agree that one of the most exciting things you can find in a seaside rock pool is a crunchy-shelled crab armed with fearsome claws?



The 3 'lobes' of the trilobite body, showing how they got their name. (Based on *Rorringtonia kennedyi* from the Ordovician period and found near Llandrindod Wells).
© Amgueddfa Cymru - Museum Wales

Trilobites are an extinct group of arthropods. They had a hard exoskeleton and jointed legs, like the arthropods living today, but their bodies were built quite differently. The name trilobite comes from the fact that their bodies have three distinct 'lobes' or areas. The central area is raised and runs down the middle of the trilobite's head, along the length of its body and down the centre of its tail. The two areas either side are mirror images of each other and are usually lower than the middle one, like plains either side of a mountain ridge. Their outer edges curve under slightly to make a hard rim around the trilobite's softer underbelly.

Trilobite legs are known from only a few, very rare fossils. The legs were not hard like the exoskeleton that covered the entire back of the animal, so were less likely to become fossils. They had a pair of jointed legs under each body segment, with a feathery gill for breathing at the top of each leg. They also had a pair of antennae or 'feelers' at the front of their head.

Trilobite eyes were quite special. They had compound eyes, like insects, with lots of small lenses stuck together, rather than having one large lens in each eye, like us. In trilobite eyes, each lens was made of a crystal of the mineral calcite. We are sometimes lucky enough to find trilobite fossils with their crystal eye lenses intact. We can study them to discover how trilobites saw their ancient world. Trilobite eyes are the oldest complex eyes that we know of in the history of life.

How long ago did trilobites live?

Trilobites are among the oldest fossil animals known. The oldest trilobite fossils were found in Spain, Morocco, Russia and USA, and are around 521 million years old. Because a lot of the oldest rocks in Wales were squashed and heated, the oldest trilobites we find here are not quite so old - around 514 million years. Trilobites appeared early in a time we call the Cambrian period, when lots of shelly animals were found as fossils for the first time. This is known as the 'Cambrian explosion', because a great variety of different life forms suddenly appeared in the fossil record. This huge diversity of life just seemed to 'explode' into existence from nowhere, although it is

likely that fossils of the animals that lived before just do not exist because they had entirely soft bodies.

Trilobites were a very successful group of animals and were around for about 270 million years. They died out at the end of the Permian period, around 252 million years ago, in the biggest mass extinction event that has ever happened on Earth. However, trilobite numbers had already been falling for some time before this point. Only a few species belonging to one major group were still around when they were finally wiped out in 'the big dying', along with over 80% of all species living in the sea at that time.

Where did trilobites live and what did they eat?

All trilobites lived in the sea but in a variety of different places and in different ways. Many lived on the seabed, crawling over or burrowing into it. Others lived among ancient reefs made by corals and other sea creatures. Some were predators hunting other animals, others lived by scavenging scraps of food and waste or by filtering food out of the water.

While most trilobites lived in relatively shallow water, some were adapted to living at the bottom of deeper oceans. *Olenus* fossils from North Wales had wide body segments. We think these housed large gills allowing it to survive in deep water where there was not much oxygen. Some palaeontologists even suggest that the gills may have been home to bacteria, which could live on sulphur and provide the trilobites with an alternative source of energy so that they did not need oxygen.

Some trilobites were adapted to swim freely above the sea floor in the open water. For others their way of life is still unknown, such as the tiny pea-sized trilobites called agnostids. It is possible that they floated in the open ocean or lived attached to seaweed or as parasites on larger animals.

How many different kinds of trilobites were there?

Trilobites evolved into a great variety of different types: over 22,000 species are known from their long history and new species are discovered every year. The average trilobite is around 2 to 10 cm long, but they came in a much larger range of sizes. The smallest we find in Wales include *Peronopsis* and *Shumardia,* at less than a centimetre long, and the largest known from the British Isles is the giant *Paradoxides,* at around 50 cm long. The largest complete trilobite found worldwide is the 70 cm long *Isotelus rex* from Canada but fragments of a trilobite that may have exceeded 80 cm have been found in Portugal.

Trilobite bodies had lots of different features to adapt them to their varied lifestyles. Swimming trilobites such as *Degamella* had narrow, streamlined bodies and huge eyes that allowed them to see all around. Other trilobites had eyes on the end of stalks and may have lived partly buried in the seabed. Some had very small eyes or none at all and are likely to have lived down in the dark depths.



Trinucleus, the first named trinucleid trilobite, is a very common group in Wales.
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One very common group of trilobites found in Wales is the trinucleids, which had a very unusual looking head. Trinucleids had a wide sun visor-like brim around a semi-circular head, with rows of holes in it like a sieve. This sieve-like fringe was likely used to filter food out of the water.

Spines are common on trilobites and would have been useful in lots of ways. Those sticking out around the edges would make predators think twice and would also act like a snowshoe, spreading the weight of the trilobite making it less likely to sink into



Eyeless *Cnemidopyge* is thought to have used its long spine to sense its surroundings and stay in touch with other trilobites.
© Amgueddfa Cymru - Museum Wales

soft mud. Some blind trilobites, such as *Cnemidopyge*, had a single long spine sticking out the front of their head which they probably used to sense their surroundings. Intriguing fossils from Morocco show 'conga lines' of similar, related trilobites (*Ampyx*), using their spines to keep in touch with each other as they moved together across the seabed. Other trilobites were as prickly as hedgehogs: did these spines simply keep hungry predators at bay or could they also have been used to display to other trilobites?

The exoskeletons of many trilobites were covered with bumps or ridges. Perhaps some of these had uses, such as for camouflage, sensing their environment, controlling water flow or making it easier to dig but maybe some were for display. The bodies of other trilobites were smooth, making it easier to swim or burrow.

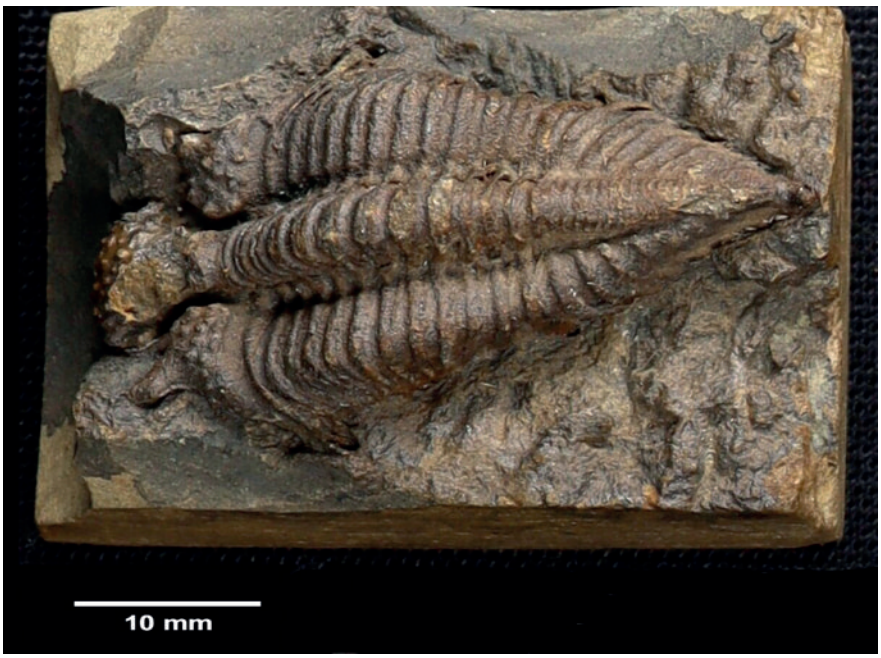
How did trilobites grow up and get bigger?

From some very small fossils, we know what trilobite babies looked like. They started life as a larval form that looked very different from the adults, like insects and crabs do today. Then they grew through several more stages, becoming more and more like adult trilobites at each stage. Once adults, they continued to grow bigger. Like all arthropods, trilobites had to moult to allow them to grow, which they did several times throughout their lives. They grew a new exoskeleton underneath the old one, which they then broke open and threw away. They took in water to expand the new larger one to its full size and let it harden. This is similar to how crabs moult and grow today. One reason why we find so many trilobites is that each animal moulted several exoskeletons during its lifetime, each one being a potential future fossil.

In mid Wales, we can find lots of different sizes (and ages) of some of the more common trilobites, including *Ogyginus corndensis*.

When were the first trilobites found in Wales?

No doubt people in Wales first noticed trilobites and other fossils centuries ago, although they probably did not realise that they were the remains of once living things. They made up stories about the strange shapes they saw in the rock.



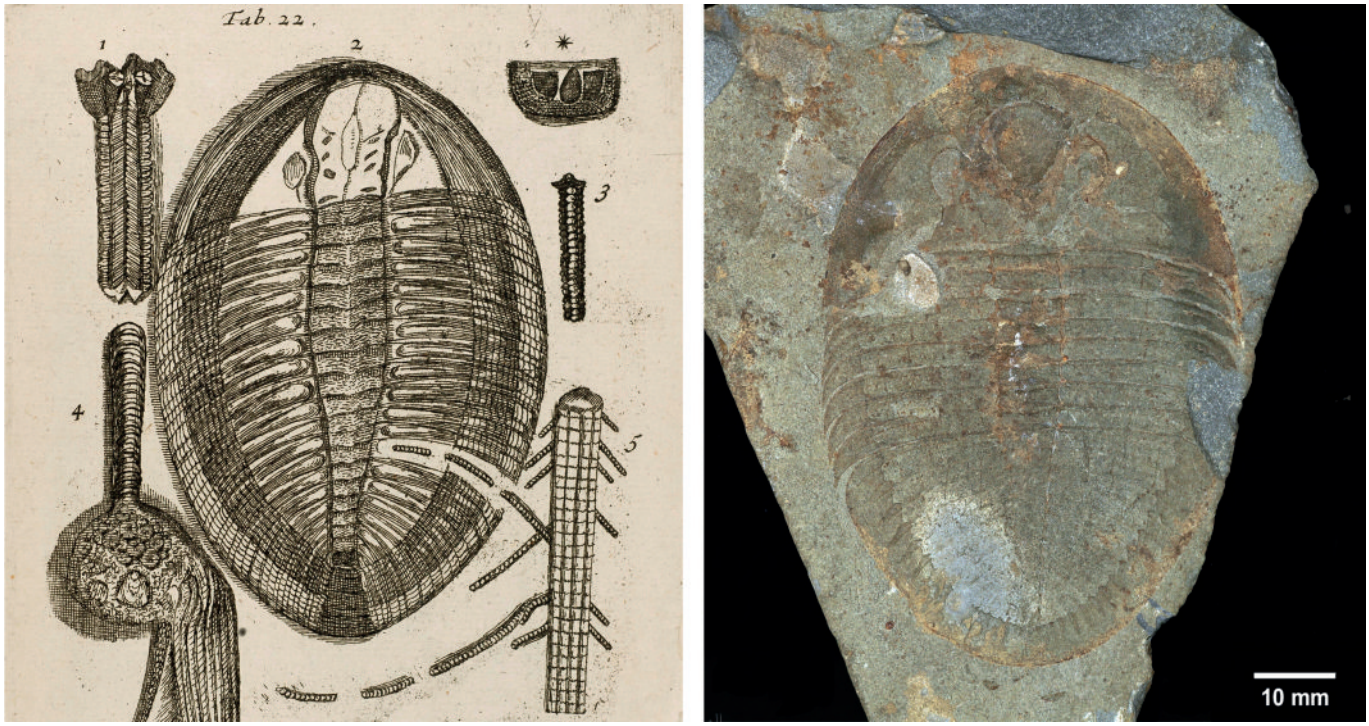
'Strawberry headed' trilobite *Encrinurus* was covered in bumps.
© Amgueddfa Cymru - Museum Wales



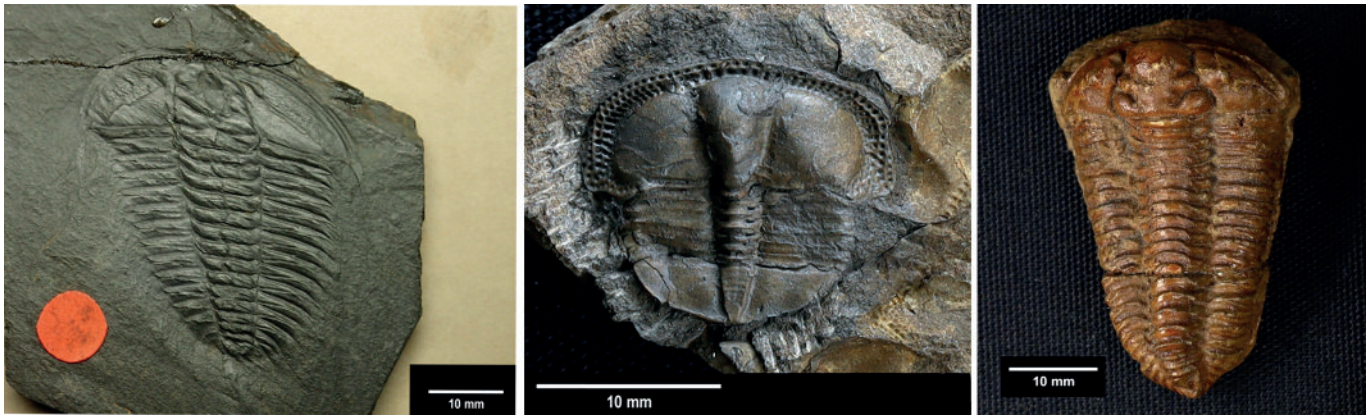
In the past, people believed the tails of trilobite *Merlinia* were butterflies turned to stone by a magic sprite.
© Amgueddfa Cymru - Museum

One such tale was told in the Carmarthen area to explain trilobite tails found in the rocks, which local people thought were butterflies that had turned to stone! The legend goes that the magician Merlin fell in love with a fair sprite, but sadly she did not feel the same way. One day, Merlin was in a cave and the sprite cast a spell to trap him there forever. Some butterflies that were fluttering around got caught up in the magic and were frozen in the rock for all time. Scientists used this story when giving the trilobites their scientific name, *Merlinia.*

Wales has a long history of studying trilobites. The first ever scientific illustrations of these fossils were drawn by Edward Lhwyd, a Welshman well-known for studying natural history, archaeology and Celtic languages. Lhwyd worked at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford and travelled around Wales gathering information for a book about its natural history. His letters about his travels in 1698 included drawings of some trilobites he found near Llandeilo in Carmarthenshire, which were published in a scientific journal later that year. He described the largest of these as the '*sceleton of some flat fish*' because that was the living creature it most reminded him of, and he had no idea that animals could become extinct. We can tell from Lhwyd's clear drawing that this was, in fact, a very common Welsh trilobite now known as *Ogygiocarella debuchii.* A second type of trilobite illustrated by Lhwyd was labelled 'Trinucleum'. This is clearly one of the distinctive trinucleid trilobites with a sieve-



The first scientific drawing of a trilobite, Dr Edward Lhwyd's 'flatfish' (1698), now known to be *Ogygiocarella debuchii,* with an actual fossil on the right.
© Amgueddfa Cymru - Museum Wales



Examples of fossils from three periods and three different areas of Wales: (left) Cambrian era *Parabolina* from Gwynedd; (centre) Ordovician era *Lloydolithus* from Carmarthenshire; and (right) Silurian era *Calymene* from Penylan Quarry, Cardiff.
© Amgueddfa Cymru - Museum Wales

like fringe. A piece of a third trilobite he drew has since been identified as one known as *Atractopyge*.

In the three centuries since Lhwyd made those first drawings of trilobites, we have learnt that they were arthropods, rather than fishes, and dozens of different species have been found in Welsh rocks. But perhaps none of these discoveries has been more exciting than when J. W. Salter found a giant trilobite in Pembrokeshire over 150 years ago. Salter worked for the Geological Survey and visited lots of places looking for fossils. In 1862, he was in a boat off Pembrokeshire, aiming to land at Solva, near St Davids. By good luck, he landed at Porth-y-rhaw by mistake, an inlet a mile to the west. In the rocks there he found fossils of a very large trilobite. Salter named his new discovery *Paradoxides davidis* and it is the biggest trilobite known from the British Isles, around half a metre long.

Where in Wales can we find trilobites?

Most of the rocks beneath Wales' rugged landscape are very old. Just the job when we want to look for fossils of trilobites, some of the oldest animals known. Most trilobites in Wales come from rocks from the Cambrian, Ordovician and Silurian periods, which between them make up large parts of the country. These are the three oldest periods of geological time from which we find recognisable fossils. The Cambrian (485-540 million years ago) was named after the Roman name for Wales, Cambria. The Ordovician (444-485 million years ago) and Silurian (419-444 million years ago) were named after ancient Welsh tribes, the Ordovices and the Silures.

The oldest trilobites in Wales come from Cambrian rocks in Snowdonia and were discovered in the Penrhyn slate quarries in the 1880s. Slightly younger Cambrian trilobites are found south of Maentwrog in Eryri (Snowdonia), on the Llŷn Peninsula, in the St David's area of Pembrokeshire and in the Mawddach Valley near Dolgellau.

Mid Wales is famous for Ordovician trilobites, although a lot of the best-known collecting localities are on privately owned land. 'Trilobite Dingle', near Welshpool, was informally named by 19th century geologist Roderick Murchison in honour of the plentiful fossils found there and is now a protected site (SSSI). Many trilobites from this period have also been found in west Wales, particularly in the areas around Haverfordwest and Carmarthen, in Eryri (a few even from the summit of Yr Wyddfa!), on the Llŷn Peninsula and near Corwen in the north-east.

In the past, Penylan quarry in Cardiff was well known for its fantastic Silurian fossils, including complete examples of trilobites such as *Encrinurus*. Sadly, the site became partly inaccessible when a major road was built, although the remainder of the site is now protected. Silurian trilobites have also been found in lots of other parts of Wales, including in the Haverfordwest and Llandovery areas of west Wales, in Powys around Meifod, Old Radnor and Builth Wells, near Llanystumdwy on the Llŷn Peninsula, and near Usk in Monmouthshire.

The youngest trilobites found in Wales date from the Carboniferous period, around 350 million years ago, and are found rarely on Gower and Pembrokeshire coasts, in the Merthyr Tydfil area and near Llangollen. Carboniferous trilobites are also found on the north coast, among the remains of ancient reefs in areas such as Llandudno and Prestatyn.

Lucy McCobb

Lucy McCobb is Senior Curator: Palaeontology (Arthropods) at Amgueddfa Cymru.

NOT FAIR TO MARCONI?: CARDIFF BAY'S CONTROVERSIAL NEW SCULPTURE

Wales is known for its numerous small coastal islands, such as Bardsey iand Puffin Island at the entrance to the Menai Straits in the north of the country. But none of these enjoys a claim to distinction equalling that of Flat Holm in the Bristol Channel, which, apart from its being the most southerly outpost of Wales, is where the first wireless telegraphy transmission over water was achieved by the Italian Gugliemo Marconi at the end of the nineteenth century.

Flat Holm is under the management of Cardiff Council, while the adjacent Steep Holm is within the jurisdiction of the North Somerset Unitary Authority. Flat Holm has of late been the focus of ***Flat Holm: A Walk Through Time***, a project funded by the National Heritage Lottery Fund and Cardiff Council, which aims to rejuvenate the island and to make it more accessible to the public with the restoration of historic buildings, such as the nineteenth century cholera hospital. As a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest, improvements to benefit both flora and fauna are also part of the project.

Gugliemo Giovanni Maria Marconi, the son of an Italian aristocrat and born in Bologna in 1874, had been fascinated by the possibilities of wireless telegraphy (radio in today's parlance) and, having found little support in his native Italy where the view was that signals transmitted by wire or cable were the future, came to Britain, where opinion was likely to be more receptive to his ideas. After several onshore demonstrations showing that wireless telegraphy was viable, Marconi proved that it was possible to transmit signals across water with the exchange of Morse code messages between Flat Holm and Lavernock Point, not far from Penarth, in 1897. Subsequent transmissions were soon to reach Brean Down on the Somerset coast, west of Weston-super-Mare, and elsewhere. The first transatlantic transmission, from Poldhu in Cornwall to Newfoundland, occurred some four years later, conclusively disproving the hitherto held belief that the curvature of the earth would render a radio signal over a long distance ineffective.

From the time of his arrival in the UK Marconi had enjoyed high level support from the General Post Office and he was assisted in his project by George S. Kemp, a Cardiff Post Office engineer who was to become his right-hand man in future years. It was indeed Kemp who had first suggested Lavernock as a suitable location for the experiment.

Marconi was soon to attract worldwide fame and a (shared) Nobel Prize for Physics in 1909. A striking instance of the possibilities of wireless telegraphy was seen in 1910 when the notorious murderer Dr Crip-



Glenn Davidson, ***Radio Flat Holm*** (Recycled ironwood railway sleepers, Height 4m, 2024).
Photograph courtesy of Gareth Thomas

pen, having fled the country, was arrested on his arrival in Quebec. The extent of the recognition that Marconi enjoyed is reflected in the words of the Postmaster General of the time, Herbert Samuel, who, following the loss of the Titanic in 1912, was reported as saying that those who had been saved owed their lives to one man and his marvellous invention. Two wireless operators had been on board Titanic, of whom only one survived, and it was their distress signal that was picked up by the liner ***Carpathia***, which led to the rescue of many people who otherwise would have perished. This is not to say that everybody was convinced, certainly in the early days no less a figure than Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, admittedly a man susceptible to eccentric ideas, surmised that wireless telegraphy was a form of telepathy, rather than being rooted in the laws of physics.

Marconi's name is honoured at a number of locations in south Wales and more widely both in the UK and abroad. Locally, a small commemorative plaque, also naming George Kemp, was placed on the wall of the church of St Lawrence close to Lavernock Point in 1947. The Marconi Holiday Village is situated nearby and a public house bearing Marconi's name, signposted on the Sully road as one leaves Penarth, is located within the site. In Penarth there is a Marconi Avenue. There exists a little-known commemorative sculpture placed on Flat Holm by the Barry Amateur Radio Society, that superseded a lack-lustre earlier memorial. Not far away as the crow flies, a plaque honouring Marconi existed for several years in Weston-super-Mare. Removed by the local council for 'safe keeping' it is mysteriously yet to reappear.



Gugliemo Marconi in 1908
Photograph courtesy of Library of Congress



Sculpture designed and built by Alf Cornick from recycled titanium and unveiled on Flat Holm in 1997 to mark the 100th anniversary of the first telegraph message across water.
Photograph courtesy of Barry Amateur Radio Society

Marconi's Wireless and Signal Company, set up shortly after his arrival in the UK, was a co-founder of the BBC in 1922 and, when Marconi died in 1937, the BBC observed a two-minute silence as a mark of respect, as did radio stations worldwide. More recently the year 2001 saw the striking of a £2 coin by the Royal Mint to mark the one hundredth anniversary of Marconi's memorable first transatlantic radio signal.

Marconi has at times erroneously been seen as the inventor of radio, an accolade more appropriately attributed to the German physicist Heinrich Hertz (1857-1894). The error is perpetuated in the wording that appears on the new Cardiff Bay sculpture, ***Radio Flat Holm,*** referencing '*the birthplace of radio communication'*. The generally held view in informed circles has it that he might more accurately be described as the first truly global figure in mass communication.



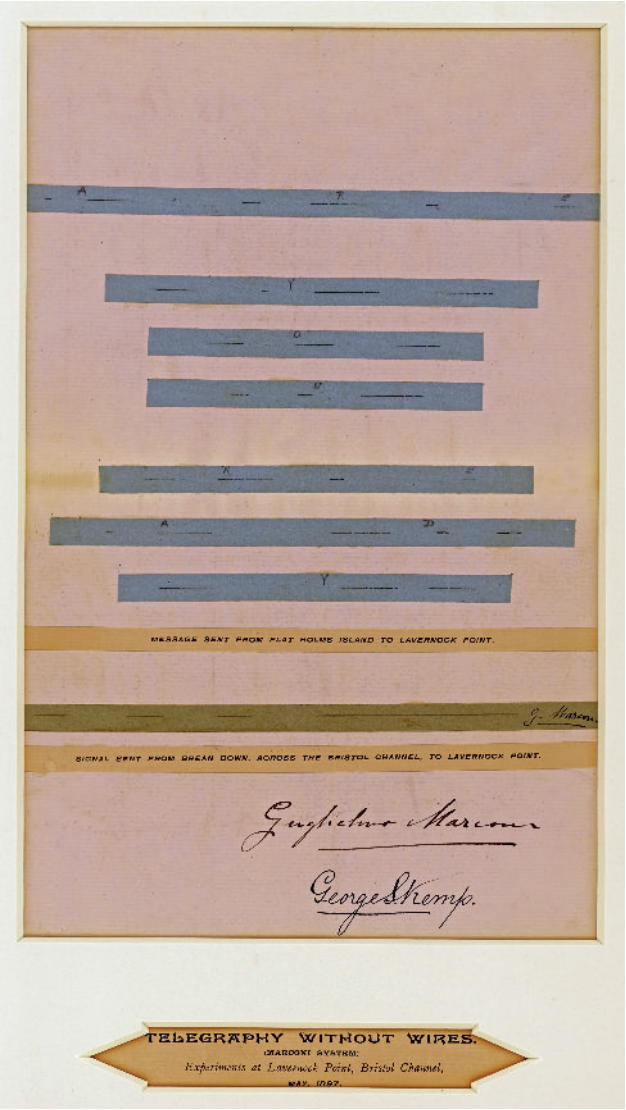
Photograph from May 1897 of the transmitting apparatus and Morse inker used in the demonstrations of wireless telegraphy from Lavernock Point. A caption on the reverse identifies the three men as, from left to right, Mr G.N. Partridge, Superintending Engineer, Mr H.C. Price, Engineer, and Mr S.E. Hailes, Lineman (all Post Office officals). However in 2021 it was suggested that this attribution was incorrect and that, in particular, the central figure was actually George Kemp.
© Amgueddfa Cymru - Museum Wales

The plot thickens in that Marconi became a member of the Fascist party in 1923, subsequently accepting appointment to Italy's National Research Council in 1927. In the year 1930 he was granted automatic membership of Mussolini's Grand Council of Fascism following his appointment to the Royal Academy of Italy, where he invariably blocked the membership applications of Jewish scientists. His standing as a prominent Fascist was recognised in 1937 when Hitler sent a large wreath to Marconi's funeral.

In the light of Cardiff's commitment to the Flat Holm project and with a view to honouring Marconi, an application was submitted in early 2022 for consent to construct a landmark memorial on the Cardiff Bay Barrage. Under the Council's formal appointment process a sculpture some four metres in height, designed by artist Glenn Davidson and inspired by Marconi's historic radio experiment, was commissioned. An artist's impression indicated the general appearance of the sculpture, which was to be constructed using recycled hardwood railway sleepers and employing a modern technique of three-dimensional carving. The design featured a radio transmitter and somewhat incongruously a domestic radio set of mid-twentieth century appearance, Marconi's name featuring prominently in capital letters on one side of the artwork.

Furthermore, celebrations involving those on the opposite side of the Channel were envisaged, while International Marconi Day (traditionally the Saturday nearest to Marconi's birthday) would be observed. The Council's proposals were soon, however, called into question in the light of Marconi's commitment to Fascism in his later years and his known antipathy towards the Jewish race.

Thus it was that Cardiff Council found itself faced with a variant of the classic dilemma: can art be separated from the artist? In other contexts, Richard Wagner writing in 1850 published an essay with the title ***Judaism in Music*** in which he set forth a critical opinion on the influence of Jews on German culture and society. While there has been a reluctance in some quarters to perform the works of Wagner, Daniel Barenboim, the distinguished Argentine/Israeli conductor, expressed the view that



Mounted and framed display of two of the messages sent from Lavernock Point during the experiments. The blue strips show the Morse code for "Are You Ready" which was sent from Lavernock Point to Flat Holm. The green strip is a message sent from Brean Down to Lavenock Point. These paper strips were then later distributed to interested parties.
© Amgueddfa Cymru - Museum Wales

music was either worth playing or it was not, regardless of who had composed it. In other words, Wagner the composer should be separated from Wagner the person.

Closer to home, Cardiff-born Roald Dahl, widely recognised as one of the finest writers of children's fiction, made no secret of his oft-quoted racial prejudice and last year's West End play, ***Giant***, did not shrink from confronting the author's antisemitism. The renaming of the Oval Basin in Cardiff Bay appears, however, to have given rise to no adverse comment when it became the Roald Dahl Plass in the year 2002. Perhaps reflecting a shift in public attitudes, considerable controversy was later to surround the removal of the statue of slaveowner Sir Thomas Picton from Cardiff's City Hall. At the same time Amgueddfa Cymru relocated a portrait of Picton, appending an explanatory note that referred to his reliance upon slavery as the basis of his considerable fortune.

In the light of the perceived difficulty concerning the sculpture an informal review (conducted by senior staff and politicians, it later emerged) was announced, the outcome of which was a 'Hamlet without the Prince' decision whereby the sculpture would still reference the wireless telegraphy breakthrough of 1897 but without displaying Marconi's name. In an embarrassing volte-face a spokesperson for Cardiff Council sought to justify the omission, stating that Marconi's work represented '*just one small part of Flat Holm's fascinating history*'. Past history '*whether good or bad*' could not be deleted but the Council had a responsibility to ensure that it was presented in a way that was '*consistent with Cardiff's values as a tolerant and welcoming city where equality and diversity is championed and celebrated*'.

Some saw the change of plan as bizarre and it attracted a measure of unfavourable press comment. Nor did the decision play well in Italy, with the arts journal ***Finestre sull' Arte***, quoting the Undersecretary for Culture as expressing the view that the decision was '*certainly dictated by a lack of knowledge of the Bolognese inventor.*' The shift in the focus of the original proposal did, however, meet the wishes of those who had disapproved of a Marconi memorial on the grounds that Cardiff could not '*be seen to glorify a fascist and racist*' as one critic who had opposed the proposal put it.

In the world of public art, controversy is often not far away, usually by reference to artistic merit. The Cardiff Bay sculpture, newly named ***Radio Flat Holm***, has evoked criticism not only for artistic reasons but on what might best be described as ideological grounds. Notwithstanding its original justification, the artwork is now characterised as as a minor element in the overall Flat Holm project of which Marconi represents a relatively insignificant part. For others it remains a tribute to Marconi as an internationally recognised genius even though the completed sculpture now defers to the cancel culture phenomenon in not displaying his name.

Perhaps there is no one right answer. As Philip Lee, the founding editor of the Friends' magazine, might have written it is for you, gentle reader, to form your own opinion.

Roger Gagg

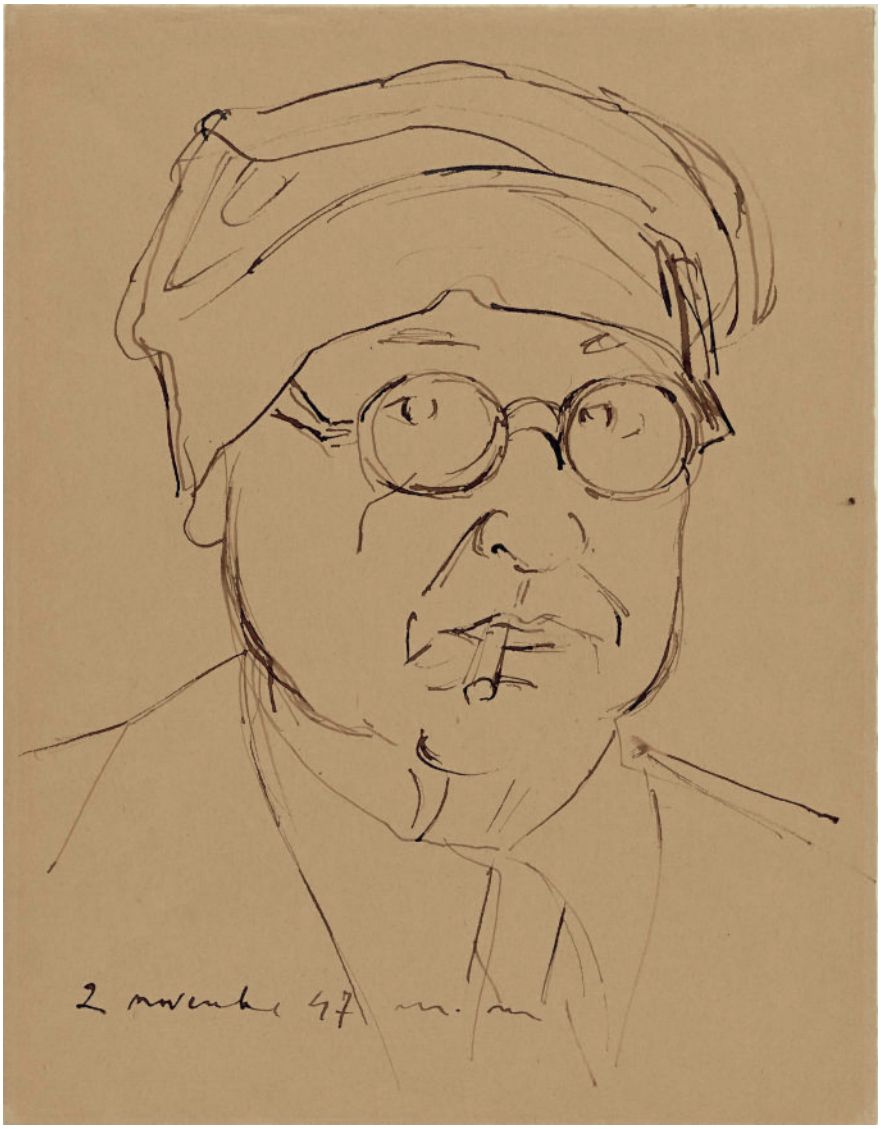
THE WORK OF MAURICE MARINOT

Thirty years ago I was working in the head office of Gooding Group in Park Place and our windows looked across to the impressive front façade of the National Museum Cardiff. At lunchtime, I would pick up a newspaper from the reception area and stroll across to the Museum for a bowl of soup. Then I would look at one or two items, perhaps a painting or a piece of porcelain. I have always felt that you can become intoxicated by seeing too much in any exhibition or gallery.

One day I stood and admired the large case of glass objects made by Maurice Marinot and was struck by their beauty, strength and design. This was glass as I had never seen it before. It was stunning. Marinot was also an excellent painter and I have seen his work in the V&A and in France. But why do we have such a valuable collection in Cardiff, you may ask. Well, first let me tell you about Monsieur Marinot and then I will explain how Amgueddfa Cymru acquired this fabulous collection.

Maurice Marinot was born in 1882 in Troyes, to the southwest of Paris. His father had a small business making cotton caps but Marinot was not interested in that, instead he was keen on art and drawing. So, on leaving school in Troyes, he went in 1901 to the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris and painted in the studio where Toulouse Lautrec and Van Gogh had studied before him. He left there in 1905 and returned to Troyes where he would live for the rest of his life except for holidays in the Auvergne each year.

From 1905 to 1913 he exhibited paintings and drawings with success in Paris, but in 1911 his life took a dramatic turn when he went to visit his friends Eugene and Gabriel Viard who owned the glassworks at Bar sur Seine, about fifteen miles from Troyes. There he saw, and was captivated by, the glass furnace with its heat, smoke and fumes. The Viard brothers kindly left tools and equipment aside for him to use and this experience made him resolve to become a glass maker. His first years working with the brothers were spent designing and decorating bowls, bottles and glasses.



Maurice Marinot, **Self-portrait** (Pen and ink on paper, 36cm x 28cm, 1947).
© Maurice Marinot / Amgueddfa Cymru - Museum Wales





(Above) Maurice Marinot, ***Bottle*** (Mouth-blown glass, height 14cm, 1930);
(Left) Maurice Marino;t, V***ase*** (Mouth-blown and etched glass, height 18cm, 1930);
(Below left) Maurice Marinot, ***Jar*** (Mouth-blown and acid-etched glass, height 22cm, 1929).
© Maurice Marinot/Amgueddfa Cymru - Museum Wales



In 1914, as the First World War began, Marinot joined the French Army and was sent to Morocco to work in the ambulance service. Amgueddfa Cymru holds six drawings he made while stationed there. After the war, he returned to his studio to continue designing and decorating but, by 1922, he decided to concentrate on making glass objects. For the next years he experimented using metal oxides to give colour to glass. He encased coloured glass within clear glass like geological strata and he called that his "sandwich" method. He created the effect of cracked ice by plunging hot glass into cold water and a suggestion of moving water by the careful control of air bubbles in the molten glass. He said of his work at this time, *"To be a glassman is to blow the transparent stuff close to the blinding furnace…to work in the roasting heat and the smoke, your eyes full of tears, your hands dirtied with coal dust and scorched."*

Marinot created the designs on his glass in a variety of ways. When the glass was cold, he could use a wheel, as is used today for making cut glass. Another method was to use acid-etching and the results of that were considered to be early examples of Art Deco. In 1927, Marinot began working on molten glass by blowing it and at the same time working with tools to make patterns on the outside. Marinot was a tireless

experimenter, whose glass inventions were emulated for decades. Personally speaking, I find these pieces to be the most exciting and there are a number in the museum's collection and I have chosen three examples to illustrate this aspect of his work

The decade between 1927 and 1937 was his most productive period but the work was hard, and he was breathing in fumes from the chemicals he used. His production process was "*long and fraught with danger*" and one piece could take as long as a year to reach his standards. In 1937 the Viard brothers closed their glass-making business and Marinot never made glass again. His health had suffered, and he returned to sketching and painting, which he had never abandoned.

During the occupation of France in the Second World War Marinot had chosen to stay in Troyes where he painted and drew, often sketching people who passed by his window. He also used his daughter Florence and his wife Marcelle as subjects and the National Museum has many of those in its collection.

In August 1944 the American army arrived in Troyes and there was a tank battle with the German forces there. A shell hit a German convoy of ammunition trucks and there was a massive explosion, followed by an extensive fire which ripped through the surrounding houses and completely destroyed Marinot's studio and its contents. This loss included two thousand five hundred canvases, thousands of drawings and watercolours and a good deal of glass dating from 1912 to 1944. He must have been heartbroken.



Maurice Marinot, ***Large Goblet-shaped Vase*** (Clear glass with three oval medallions showing a bowl of fruit, vase of roses and tea cups with teapot, height 40cm, 1913).
Gift of Mlle Florence Marinot and © Leicester Museums & Art Galleries

He continued to paint and in the 1950s he became increasingly interested in landscape painting. As a man without a car, he travelled by train or on foot, but he did not go far from Troyes. However, for a man in his seventies he covered much ground. He died in 1960.

In the early 1970s, his daughter Florence began donating his glass and paintings to leading museums and galleries. The National Gallery of Ireland received a collection in 1970 and, in 1973, partly in acknowledgement of the Davies collection, one hundred and twenty-four items were given to Amgueddfa Cymru. This priceless collection included twenty-four outstanding pieces of glass, most of which are now displayed in a cabinet on the north balcony. In 1974, Florence gave a collection to the Leicester Museum and Art Gallery. The Leicester collection is of particular interest as it contains enamelled work from his early career, which Florence wanted to keep together as a group.

Marinot's work in glass was unique. He broke completely with the Art Nouveau tradition in French Glass, represented, for example, by the cameo or cased glass with naturalistic decoration of leaves and insects developed by Gallé. It can be said that he applied the principles of modern art to modern glass. His preference for heavy, massive glass pieces has been enormously influential, affecting both commercially produced glass as well as inspiring other glass artists.

Alun Davies

EXPLORING THE GWENT LEVELS

Where and what are the Gwent Levels? Even people who have lived within a few miles of this unique area of landscape seem unsure of the answer. Older residents knew it as the Moors but this is quite the reverse of mountain upland covered in heather and bilberries.

If you have travelled by train from Chepstow to Cardiff you have crossed the Levels, which stretch from the Wye to the Rhymney River and the flat fields edged by draining ditches or 'reens' are a defining features of the landscape. It is an estuarine landscape, of great significance for its archaeology, history and ecology, which benefited from National Heritage Lottery Funding from 2019 to 2023.

The estuary of the Severn is known for its great tidal range, which created salt marshes with mud flats at the coast and fresh-water wetlands further inland. As glaciers melted after the last Ice Age the sea level rose rapidly, peat was formed over the ancient landscape, to be buried in its turn by silt. This waterlogged environment preserves wood, together with biological evidence of seeds and pollen. Archaeologists working on the intertidal mudflats have found foot-



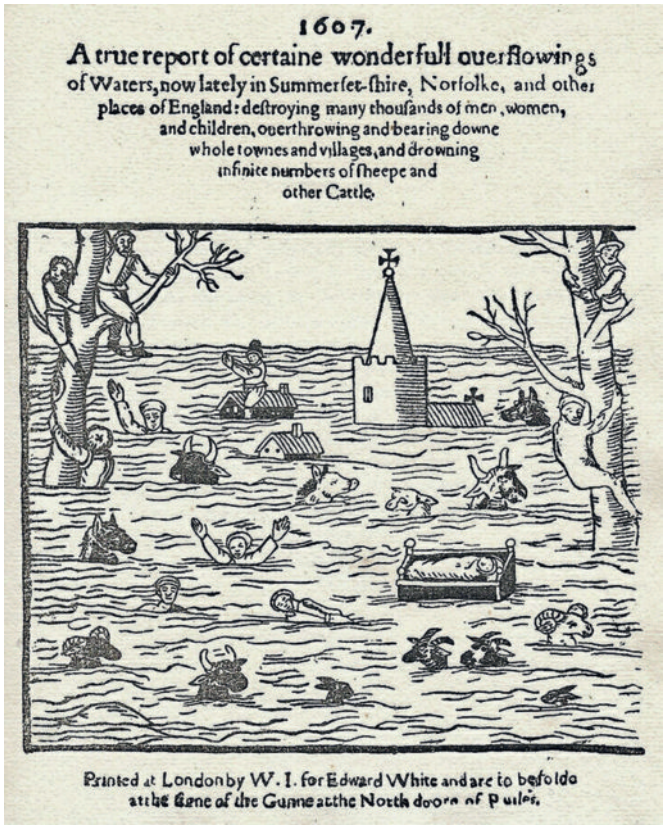
Mesolithic footprints preserved in mud at Uskmouth.
© Amgueddfa Cymru - Museum Wales



Roman inscribed stone (Height: 53cm) found near Goldcliff Priory. The Latin inscription reads: *From the first cohort, the century of Statorius Maximus (built) 33½ paces*.
© Amgueddfa Cymru - Museum Wales

prints of adults accompanied by children, evidence of Mesolithic hunter gatherers from about 6,500 years ago. Casts of some of these footprints can be seen in the prehistoric exhibition in Newport Museum and Art Gallery. Footprints of animals such as red deer, roe deer, aurochs, and wading birds such as cranes, suggest what they may have been hunting. On the mudflats near Redwick Bronze Age remains of four rectangular wooden buildings surrounded by many cattle footprints, on what would then have been salt-marsh, show that people were farming, using the rich marsh for summer grazing. This pattern of using the salt marsh for seasonal grazing continued until the Roman period.

The Romans, however, had organised manpower: based primarily from the soldiers at the Legionary fort at Caerleon and also quite possibly native Silurian slave labour. They needed to create a larger area of pasture for their horses and, perhaps too, for arable farming for corn. So began the process of draining the inland fen. In the National Roman Legion Museum, Caerleon, is a stone, found near Goldcliff, which records the work done by a detachment of soldiers on the sea wall. Some of the long narrow fields, that can be seen on the Wentloog Levels near Peterstone, may



Depiction of the Great Flood of 1607 in a contemporary chapbook (a small pamphlet sold by peddlers, know as chapmen). The church is thought to be St Mary's at Nash. Photo credit: 1884 reprint of a Chapbook (Steve Rippon) and courtesy of Living Levels.

follow the lines of Roman drainage channels, carrying fresh water streams from the uplands towards the coast. To try to visualise the Roman landscape and fortress as they might have looked, a film has been made by Virtual Histories in conjunction with the National Roman Legion Museum. It can be accessed at www.livinglevels,org.uk/roman-caerleon. To prevent regular flooding at high tides, a sea wall was needed, with sluices to prevent sea water flooding the land and, in reverse, so that fresh water could drain off the fields and be taken out to sea.

Caerwent Roman town, (now in the care of Cadw), sits on the edges of the Levels, and could have been reached by boat from the coast up the Nedern. It was probably the tribal centre for the aristocrats of the Silures. One of the most important hoards of Roman coins in Wales was found at Rogiet, near Caldicot, in 1998, three thousand seven hundred coins from the late third century. This is now part of Amgueddfa Cymru's collection.

When the Romans finally left Britain the sea wall and drainage system fell into disrepair. High tides carried silt onto the land nearest the coast. Gradually this flat land reverted to marsh and fen. To explore what it might have looked like at this period, I suggest visiting Magor Marsh, a Gwent Wildlife reserve. Here there are pools, alder and willow carr, and small hay-meadows adapted to traditional farming. Water voles have returned to the ditches and herons, water birds and kingfishers thrive. All can be seen by the patient watcher, hidden from view in the hide.

Drainage began anew after the Normans acquired land in this part of south Wales. Place names along the Levels hold clues as to whether they were old Celtic settlements or English, or perhaps Flemish, incomers. So, we find Celtic Llancadwaladr, Magor and Undy just on the higher ground on the edge of the marshes and Nash, Marshfield and Peterstone as English hamlets where the marshes were drained enough for permanent settlement.

In the Middle Ages, the Cistercian monks of Tintern had two granges (farms) on the Levels and the monks of the Benedictine Priory at Goldcliff may have been responsible for a drainage system mentioned in 1248. This is probably what is still known as Monksditch, which carries a stream down from the Wentwood ridge to flow into the sea through a system of sluices. In places this watercourse is actually above ground level between its holding banks. The land, though, was still vulnerable to flooding. It was Henry VIII who passed the Act of Sewers, (sewers being the watercourses) which appointed Commissioners of Sewers responsible for maintaining draining ditches and the sea wall. This enabled the land to be regularly drained to create valuable farmland. Dairy farming produced cheese and butter which was taken sold in Bristol and elsewhere. Orchards at farms made cider. From the Tudor period until the present century the Court of Sewers was responsible for maintaining the seawall and drainage ditches. If you owned land through which a reen flowed or land which abutted the sea wall, then this maintenance was your responsibility - and fines were payable for non-compliance.

Even so, exceptionally high tides or storm surges could be disastrous, when water overtopped the seawall, flooding the land behind it. This is what happened in January 1607, when the Somerset and Gwent Levels were inundated, with loss of life and of animals. Marker stones showing the height reached by the flood can be seen in the churches of Redwick, Goldcliff and St Brides Wentloog. St Mary's church in Cardiff was damaged and never restored. Fortunately, the present sea wall continues to protect us but, with rising sea levels and increasingly unpredictable weather systems, we may wonder for how long?



Rubin Eynon, ***The Engineer*** (Corten steel, height 2m, 2020) situated at the old jetty at Black Rock overlooking the Severn Estuary and between the two Severn bridges. Photo credit: C Harris/Living Levels

When Cardiff Bay was formed, the Newport Wetlands reserve at Nash was created to compensate for the loss of bird habitat. It is now managed by the RSPB and is a National Nature Reserve. Birds threatened with extinction, such as marsh harriers and bitterns, have bred there recently. The booming sound of the bittern can be heard in spring, although you will be lucky to spot one. The dense reed beds support Cetti's warblers, sedge and reed warblers, reed buntings and so on, which can be heard rather than seen. From the sea wall you can see waders probing the mud, although for this you really need binoculars or a telescope and pick a time when the tide is high. This intertidal zone beyond the sea wall supports a huge variety of species and is important in coastal defence.



Shrill carder bee on lousewort.
Photo: Ivar Leidus and used under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International license

So, this is a unique and historic landscape but you will understand it is also important from an ecological point of view. The Living Levels Partnership was formed in 2014, with the support of National Lottery Heritage Funding. Since then, and despite Covid lockdowns, it has encouraged the restoration of drainage ditches, which in turn benefits aquatic life, plants and animals. Land has been managed for pollinators, including the threatened Shrill Carder Bee. Orchards, which were long a feature of farms and cottages here (and in the Vale of Glamorgan), have been restored or replanted. To celebrate some of the people linked to the Levels there is now a sculpture trail, with four statues created in different media: the Centurion, the Fisherman, the Brinker (a woman farmer) and the Engineer. The last is inspired by Thomas A. Walker who completed the Severn Tunnel and built Sudbrook village for his workers. The Heritage Funding programme ended in 2023, but a new grant will enable citizen science and organised events to continue. In future there will be a replica Iron Age longhouse at Newport Wetlands! Also looking to the future, the new grant will try to encourage positive ways to prepare for changing weather patterns.

Anne Dunton

A CAN OF WORMS: WHAT ARE MARINE BRISTLEWORMS AND WHY ARE THEY SO IMPORTANT?

You might never have heard of marine bristleworms, but they are amazingly important and often surprisingly beautiful creatures. That is what we, as museum curators, think and hopefully you will agree after reading this article!

Amgueddfa Cymru has a vast collection of marine invertebrates: animals that live in the sea and which, unlike you and me, do not have a backbone. Most come from waters around Wales but some were collected from all around the world. They include the sea creatures you may be more familiar with, such as lobsters, crabs, starfish, clams, mussels, corals and anemones but the collection also contains many more that you may not have heard of.

What are bristleworms?

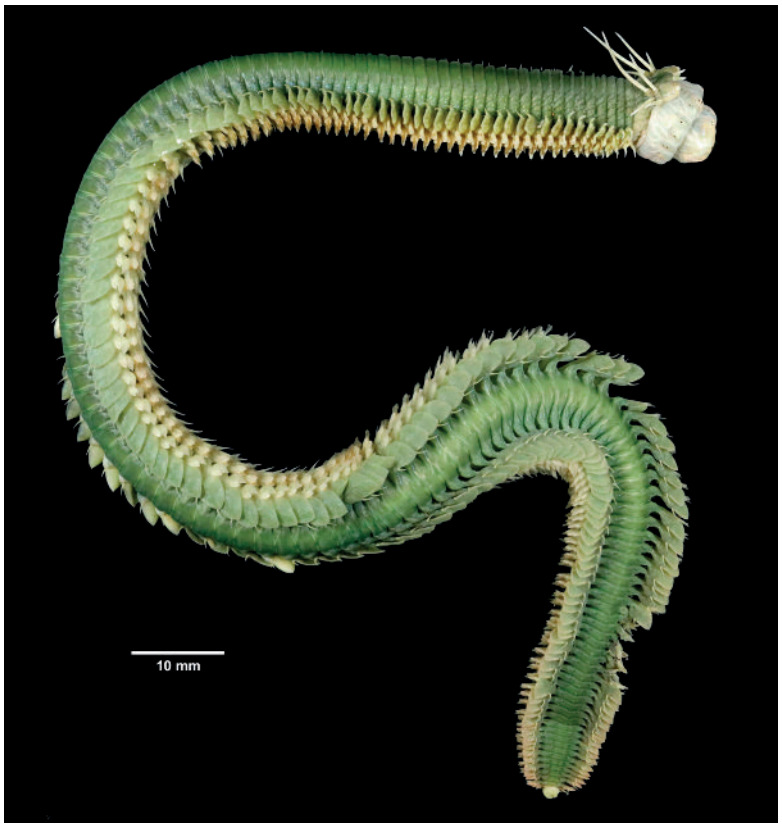
One such group is the sea worms or, more specifically, marine bristleworms. The scientific name for marine bristleworms is polychaetes, a name which translates to "many bristles", as they have many hair-like bristles along their bodies for movement or attachment. They are related to earthworms and leeches, in a group called 'Annelida', the segmented worms. If you have ever studied an earthworm closely in your garden, you will have seen the body is made up of many segments, which give the group its name.



The two species of lugworm, *Arenicola marina* and *Arenicola defodiens* that we find around the UK.
© Amgueddfa Cymru - Museum Wales

Where can I see bristleworms?

Have you ever seen the squiggles of sand across the surface of the beach and wondered what made these strange sandy 'casts'? Well, they are made by lugworms, a common type of marine bristleworm, often used by fishermen to catch fish. The lugworms live beneath the surface of the sand in burrows, munching on the sand to extract nutrients. They then need to get rid of the sand, which they release from their tails, almost like a tube of toothpaste. So, what you are seeing is actually the waste products from the worm - yes, worm poo!



King Ragworm, *Alitta virens*.
© Amgueddfa Cymru - Museum Wales

Another type of marine bristleworm that you may have heard of are ragworms, also used by fisherman as bait. The King Ragworm, *Alitta virens*, can grow up to a metre long and is a scavenger, often feeding on other animals. But do not worry, you do not often see one on the beach.

Why are marine bristleworms important?

Firstly, they often make up a large proportion of the animals that live in the seabed, sometimes as much as 50-80%. This makes them an important part of ocean food webs, providing food for other animals such as crabs, lobsters, fish, sea birds and even other types of worms. Without them, whole food webs would collapse.

Secondly, they are the 'gardeners of the ocean', doing a similar job to earthworms on land. They are constantly turning over the

sediments within the seabed, getting oxygen down into them. Scientists often call them good 'indicator species', which means that they can often tell us about the health and well-being of the oceans. For example, the presence of some bristleworms tells us that the seabed is healthy, whilst others may indicate the environment is polluted. Other worms can build reef-like structures which can be home to all sorts of other animals.

What do bristleworms look like?

So, hopefully, we have convinced you of how important marine bristleworms are, but what about convincing you just how pretty they are? Well, there are over twelve thousand different species of marine bristleworms across the world and we are finding new species all the time. We have well over a thousand species here in the UK and that number is growing too.

So, what do they look like? Marine bristleworms have adapted to live in almost all marine habitats and environments and so they are really variable in their shape, size and colour. A few are really small, so small in fact that they live between the sand grains on the beach, whilst others are said to reach over four metres in length! Some can look very similar to earthworms but many look very different and a few do not even look like worms at all. Some are brightly coloured, looking almost like flowers, others are almost iridescent and shiny and some even look a little scary!

So, let us tell you about several fascinating worms.

- The so-called Sea Mouse, *Aphrodite aciculata*, looks furry but it is actually a worm. They live all around the UK and you can sometimes see them washed up on the beach. Turn one upside down and you can see the segments which tell you that is the case. It is a predator, often eating other worms. However, look at those beautiful and colourful bristles along its body! (See back cover.)
- The Strawberry Spaghetti Worm, *Eupolymnia nebulosa*, gets its name from its strawberry red body with white spots and from the mass of spaghetti-like tentacles on its head used to capture its food. Despite its name, we are not sure it would go well with cream! You can find them hiding underneath rocks on the beach all around the UK.
- Speaking of food, how about an Ice-cream Cone Worm, *Lagis koreni*. These beautiful worms build intricate cone shaped tubes out of sand grains and small fragments of shells. The worms live upside down, digging in the sand using golden bristles, which look a little like eyelashes! You may come across an empty tube on UK beaches.

Why do museums have collections of marine bristleworms?

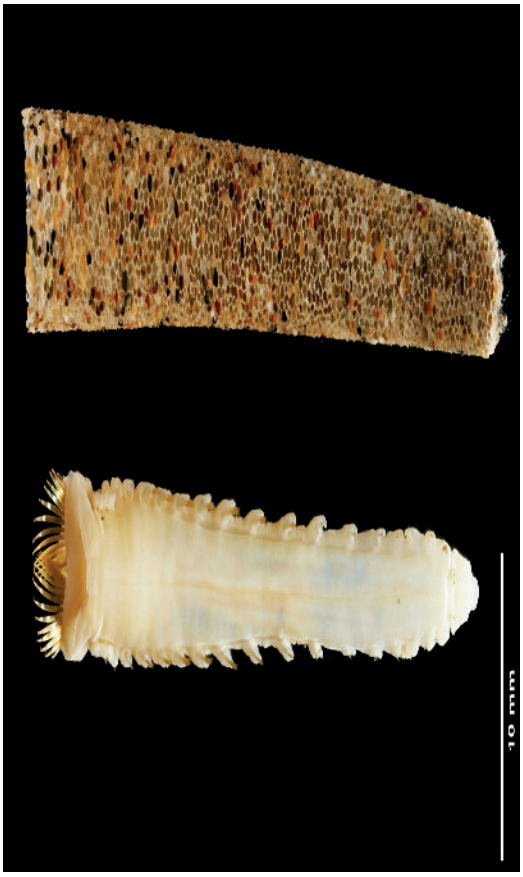
So, hopefully, we have convinced you that worms can be wondrous creatures but why do museums have collections of them? These collections provide an amazing snapshot of which species have lived in different places at different times. This is important so that we can map any changes that might occur due to things like climate change.

Are new species of bristleworm still being found?

We are two specialists in marine bristleworms at Amgueddfa Cymru who study these amazing animals. We are taxonomists, scientists who find, describe and



Strawberry Spaghetti Worm, *Eupolymnia nebulosa* which occurs commonly around the UK gets its name from its red body with white spots. Can you see the bright red gills?
© Amgueddfa Cymru - Museum Wales



The Ice-cream Cone Worm, *Lagis koreni*, builds an intricate tube made of sand and pieces of shell. They live upside down and use the beautiful gold bristles to dig in the sand.
© Amgueddfa Cymru - Museum Wales

name new species and inform others across the world what to look out for. Museum collections are an extremely important resource for this type of research, helping us to learn more about biodiversity on Earth and record and investigate changes to it. You can find out more about the Museum's work on describing species at:
https://museum.wales/curatorial/naturalsciences
and keep an eye on the Museum's blog pages for updates.

Katie Mortimer-Jones & Teresa Darbyshire

Katie Mortimer-Jones & Teresa Darbyshire are both Senior Curators: Invertebrate Biodiversity (Marine Invertebrates) at Amgueddfa Cymru

NEW LEADER, NEW PRINCIPLES, NEW STORIES

I was delighted to be invited to the official opening of the ***Streic! 84/85 Strike!*** exhibition in late November 2024 but surprised when we arrived at the Museum, as the Main Hall was already full of well over a hundred people.

Lowri Angharad Williams, Head of Exhibitions, opened the evening and spoke of how personal ***Strike!*** is for her, as her tad-cu worked in one of the Welsh mines. I also met Ceri Thompson, who, when he left school, worked in Big Pit but is now the Curator for Coal in Amgueddfa Cymru. Ceri curated the Exhibition which must have been a mammoth task. Ceri and his team are to be congratulated on the splendid exhibition they have created.

A coach full of people who had also contributed to the Exhibition in some way had come from the Merthyr Valley and some of them even remembered me as the Headteacher of a local school in Edwardsville, only a short walk from Deep Navigation Colliery where many of our parents worked and were consequently involved in the strike of 84-85.

The Beaufort Male Voice Choir entertained us with a moving performance. Jane Richardson, Chief Executive of Amgueddfa Cymru, gave a welcome speech setting out the principles that govern her philosophy of what Museums are for and if you look at this exhibition it is totally apparent that these admirable principles are applied. She was also kind enough to convert her 'notes' into an article you may have just read. I found it quite inspiring - I hope you do too.

The exhibition itself is very impressive with a quarter scale replica of the headgear which was in Nantgarw Colliery greeting you on entry. Ceri believes that it was made for a model of a coal mine, which was once displayed in National Museum Cardiff but dismantled in 1986, and the main components are now stored in Nantgarw Collections Centre. Media of every sort is displayed: Pit Banners hung aloft, photographs, videos, posters, badges, graffiti and cartoons. There are recorded voices of Margaret Thatcher, Scargill and the miners themselves and, importantly, their wives who raised money, organised food parcels and played an extremely important part in keeping homes going and families fed through the strike.

If you have not been to the exhibition yet, you must go and see it. It is an important part of our Welsh heritage. It brought back memories for me and I am sure for many of you it will too.

Gwen Williams

Gwen Williams is Acting Chair of Friends Amgueddfa Cymru

MUSEUM NEWS

Redevelopment of National Slate Museum



On 4th November of last year the National Slate Museum in Llanberis closed its doors until 2026 in order for the Museum to undergo a planned redevelopment. The Museum is planned to reopen sometime in 2026.

These changes will be far reaching. They involve:

- The conservation and renovation of the Grade 1 buildings plus the building of new facilities so that the visitor experience may be improved by the provision of a new learning centre, play area, shop and café.
- Upgrading the exhibition spaces which will allow more of Amgueddfa Cymru's wide ranging collections to be displayed.
- Improving access to the site as well as how the story of the Welsh slate industry is told which will include opportunities to explore the Museum digitally

The aim is to transform the Museum into a world-class visitor attraction at the heart of The Slate UNESCO World Heritage site so that the site becomes a hub for the six slate areas of Gwynedd that make up the UNESCO World Heritage Site.

In doing all this the intention is to involve local people and communities in telling the story of slate as well as preserving and developing further the traditional skills relating to the slate industry. In doing so it is hoped that people from all backgrounds will learn and develop new skills.

It was felt that the scale of the changes planned for the site meant that for safety reasons it would not be possible to allow the Museum to remain open to the public whilst the necessary changes were made. Although the site itself is closed it is planned to take the Museum on the road to engage with local communities and visitors to the area by having 'pop-up' events in places, where there are local tourist attractions or where community events are taking place.

The current total cost of the redevelopment is estimated at £21 million with much of this coming from the National Heritage Lottery Fund, which funded significant changes to the Museum in 1997, and from the Welsh Government but also from a host of other organisations. The Friends also played a part by helping to fund stage one of the redevelopment This was the provision of the technical reports that were necessary if the requests for the substantial funds necessary to effect this transformation of the Museum were to be successful.

Perspective(s): A Project Re-imagining Welsh History

Seven ethnically and culturally diverse artists from across Wales have been asked to create installations that invite visitors to engage with overlooked or hidden histories that are embedded within museum artefacts. The aim is to bring marginalised voices, experiences and histories to the foreground. The initiative is part of ***Perspective(s)***, a two year programme organised by Amgueddfa Cymru and Arts Council Wales, which has commissioned work that reflects Wales's cultural and ethnic diversity. Each of Amgueddfa Cymru's seven museums has been matched with a visual arts organisation, who in turn engaged a creative professional from a culturally and ethnically diverse background to create new work and displays in response to the specific site and its collections. Their creations can be seen throughout 2025 at the various Amgueddfa Cymru sites.

Nasia Sarwar-Skuse's ***Wales Is ... talking about empire*** can be seen at St Fagans National Museum of History. Its main theme is the connection between St Fagans and the Clive family, in particular Robert Clive (1725-1774), known as 'Clive of India', a coloniser who expanded the British Empire across South Asia, making himself a multimillionaire in the process. One installation is the recreation of a living room from the late-1970s based on memories of growing up in a South Asian household in northern England. For her the room was a safe space away from the racism that she faced outside. However, intruding into this room is a sofa that once would have been owned by Robert Clive.



Sofa c1750 which came from Powis Castle (the home of Robert Clive) in an installation by Nasia Sarwar-Skuse in the Wales Is… Gallery at St Fagans.
© Amgueddfa Cymru - Museum Wales

A second installation is the recreation of an octagonal tent made of painted chintz which belonged to Tipu Sultan (1750-1799). It was thought to be used as a sort of mobile palace. Tipu Sultan was the ruler of the Kingdom of Mysore and died in combat against the British. The tent became one of the looted spoils that was given to Robert Clive and subsequently brought to Powis Castle, where it was used as a marquee for garden parties.

The other artists and featured in ***Perspective(s)*** are:

- Lal Davies explores Wales's copper industry and its imperial links through a digital exhibition integrating film, personal archive objects, photography and text. This work can be seen at National Waterfront Museum.
- Sadia Pineda Hameed traces the South Wales coal industry and its role as an imperial fuel source that shaped lives and legacies across empires. Her work can be seen at Llantarnam Grange Arts Centre and Big Pit National Coal Museum.
- Hannan Jones uses sounds and film work to ignite conversations around alternative histories and unseen narratives. Her work can be seen at National Roman Legion Museum.
- Lucille Junkere focuses on the homespun and woven coarse woollen cloth which was made in Wales from around 1650 and reaching a peak in the latter half of the eighteenth century. It was known known as Welsh Plains and exported for use in the transatlantic slave trade to clothe enslaved Africans who were kidnapped and transported to work on plantations in the West Indies and on American plantations. Her work can be seen at the National Wool Museum.
- Sophie Mak-Schram is researching the ways that power is structured within Amgueddfa Cymru and this is reflected in its collections and their display history of display, to develop 'tools' that challenge or reflect on power and its effects. Her research will be the subject of an exhibition at National Museum Cardiff from May 2025 and then at Chapter Arts Centre from September 2025.
- Jasmine Violet examines the connections between the Welsh slate industry, the Caribbean, and the transatlantic slave trade and her work can be seen at Aberystwyth Arts Centre.

Celebrating the Chinese Community in Wales

A new display has opened in the Wales Is … Gallery at St Fagans telling the story of the various Chinese communities. It features the stories of eight multi-generational people of Chinese heritage living in Wales today, told in their own words.

There have been Chinese communities in Wales since at least the early 1900s. Many of the early settlers were seamen. From the 1940s, changing political

conditions and economic opportunities led to an increase in Chinese migration to Wales. Today, people of Chinese heritage live across the country, creating a vibrant mix of cultures, faiths and languages. There are large, well-established communities in Bangor, Cardiff, Newport and Swansea.

Through personal stories and everyday objects, visitors to the Museum can learn about how and why various individuals came to Wales, and the challenges they faced in building a new life in a country far from their homelands. The stories show how they and their descendants have made their mark on all aspects of Welsh life: through the jobs they worked in, the businesses they built, and the contributions they make to our communities and culture.

The display will be available to see until 12th November 2025.

Diane Davies

FRIENDS NEWS

As you know, every year the Friends give the money you have contributed through your subscriptions and participations in events, such as talks and trips, to aid the funding of various aspects of Amgueddfa Cymru work. In November, the Board agreed to give a total of £32,000 which will go to help fund five projects.

Two relate to the redevelopment of National Slate Museum in Llanberis (you can read more about that in Museum News). £10,000 is going towards the provision of one of the display cases that will house the permanent collection in the new buildings. A further £5000 will help in the creation of a 'Time Walk' for children. This will be part of the landscaping of the site and aims to provide a fun way of helping children learn about the history of the slate industry.

Two other donations are connected to a planned Gwen John exhibition, a major exhibition at National Museum Cardiff, which will open in February 2026 and which will focus on her works on paper and on items from her studio. £10,000 will go towards the purchase of bespoke frames and plinths to be used to display double-sided works. Many of Gwen John's works on paper or board have notes or other drawings on the reverse and these frames will give visitors a chance to see her other thoughts as well as gain an insight into her working practices. A further £5000 will go towards the publication of a book linked to the exhibition which will look in detail at her works on paper and items from her studio.

Last but not least, the Friends will continue to support the monthly organ recitals at National Museum Cardiff. £2000 has been earmarked for the monthly series of recitals in 2025.

Diane Davies

FRIENDS ACTIVITIES

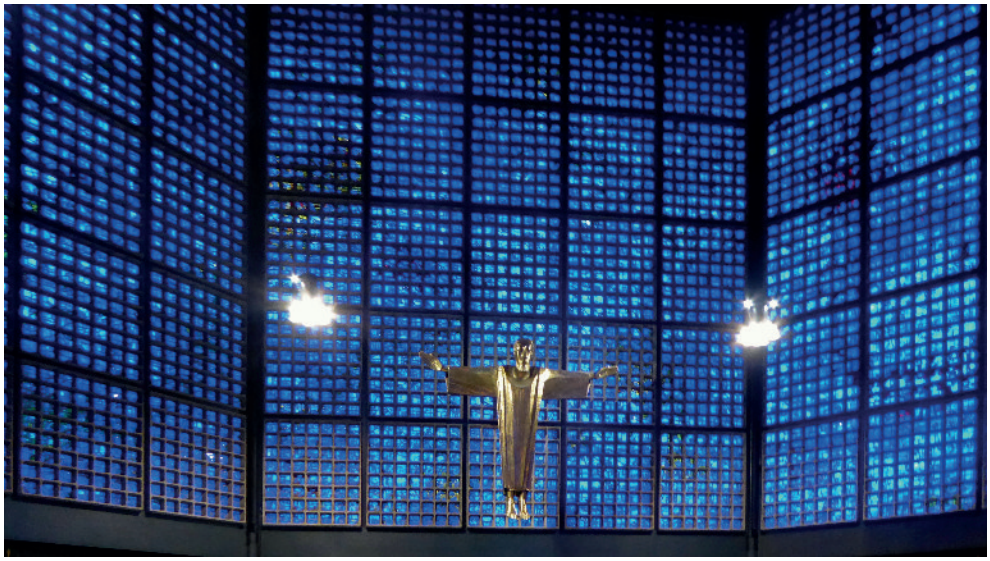
Highlights of Berlin: September 2024

Five travellers to Berlin have agreed to write about each of the five days that we were there, giving their own perspectives on what was seen and experienced.

Say the word Berlin and the brain replies, "Brandenburg Gate". Our five days in Berlin mentally started here as we admired its Grecian format which has metamorphosed from power and vic-



The ***Shalekhet*** installation by Menashe Kadishman, 2008; Jewish Museum Berlin.
Photo: Fiona Peel



Interior of the new Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church with stained glass by Gabriel Loire and the suspended figure of the resurrected Christ by Karl Hemmeter. Photo:Diane Davies

tory to peace and unity. The consequences of WW2 arrested our attention many times on the first day: from seeing a fragment of the Berlin Wall to the ruins of the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church with its lightly damaged lobby with golden and painted mosaics. The ugly new hexagonal church is redeemed by its wonderful blue stained glass.

The new wing of the Jewish Museum was created by the Polish Daniel Libeskind, whose parents survived but eighty-eight members of his family died in the Holocaust. It is a deeply provocative and moving building which opened in 2001 and designed to remove all your natural reference points for security and order. The axes of Holocaust, Exile and Continuity have at their heart the concept of "*an absence of people*" and of "*voiding the void*". The garden of exile is discombobulating with uneven ground and angled stellae and the Holocaust tower is lit by a small slit of natural light: no heating, no 'anything' but high walls and silence. You are powerless and alone.

The ***Shalekhet*** is a distinctly poignant installation; you cannot walk silently over the metal faces that are strewn on the ground- you become part of the destruction of others. A terrible responsibility but one that we must bear.

The exhibition, ***Biographies of Modern Art: Collectors and Their Works*** at the Brücke Museum provoked the visitor to understand the importance of post WW2 provenance, restitution, the influence of collectors, as well as enjoying the direct power of this group of Expressionist paintings. *Brücke* means the bridge between past and present. In future, I will avidly look for the works of Kirchner, Heckel and Schmidt-Rottluff.

Fiona Peel

The Kulturforum area, with its galleries and concert hall was the focus of our Wednesday morning visits. The area was developed from the 1950s onwards as part of the cultural rebirth of West Berlin, when many cultural assets were located in East Berlin. Of particular interest was the Gemäldegalerie, containing one of the world's most impressive collections of Old Master paintings from the 13th to the 18th centuries. It was not until 1998 that the collection, divided for fifty years between East and West Berlin, was reunited and displayed in this gallery. With 1300 paintings on display, our splendid guide focused on some of the highlights. He led us through Botticelli's paintings so expertly that we were transported to Medici Florence! Then the Mantegna, ***Presentation at the Temple***, followed by the Caravaggio, ***Omnia Vincit Amor***, both full of symbolism ably revealed by our guide. **The Gemäldegalerie** also has a significant collection of Rembrandt works: we focused on the ***Mennonite Preacher and his Wife***, again a painting full of meaning. I was privileged to view again the two Vermeers, which had been part of the iconic Vermeer exhibition at the Rijksmuseum last year.

Across the road was the Mies van der Rohe designed Neue Nationalgalerie for contemporary art. This venerated iconic modernist building opened in 1968 to huge controversy. It caused problems to curatorial staff with its glass walls, condensation and awkward display spaces. Now more fit for purpose following repair and refurbishment work headed by British architect David Chipperfield; modernised, but keeping as much of Mies van der Rohe as possible! It houses 20th Century art from Europe and the USA: Dali, Francis Bacon, Paul Klee and Edvard Munch. Two very contrasting visits but hugely inspiring and enjoyable.

Jean Williams

The Pergamon panorama was a marvellous interlude on our Friends visit to Berlin this Autumn. The panorama itself was an artwork created by contemporary artist Yadegar Assisi in collaboration with the Berlin State Museum. And what an amazing collaboration and insight it offered. Yadegar Assisi, born in Austria, but working in Berlin since 1979, made his first panorama inside a former gasometer in Leipzig. His panoramas have since become legendary. His concept, in this instance, was to offer a huge wrap around image of the ancient city of Pergamon during a festival in 129 A.D. honouring the god Dionysus. Pergamon was an important city for the Romans, Byzantines and Ottoman Turks, a city situated in what is now Turkey. The extraordinary imagery created by Yadegar Assisi uses high resolution digital painting created from photos, drawings, sketches and paintings.

Key sculptures and architectural artefacts from Pergamon are on show as you enter the Museum building but then you emerge into the magic circular space housing the panorama. In the centre of the space is an observation platform, from the top of which you can closely view the upper parts of the city and view the temples, the theatre, the sacrificial altars and the workshops producing the sculptures for which the city became famous. The scene gently sinks into dusk with accompanying sounds of a city preparing for an important event, then dawn breaks with animal sounds and the wonderful pervasive music written by Eric Babak, in close collaboration with Yadegar Assisi, for the panorama. As the excellent accompanying literature says, "*The exhibition experience allows visitors to dive deep into a previously unknown world.*"

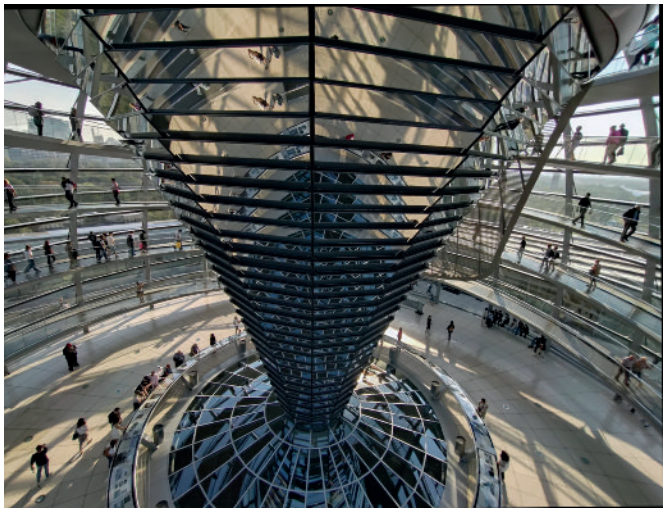
Sue Shields

One of our last visits was to Potsdam, the capital and largest city of the German state of Brandenburg. It is set amongst woodlands and lakes with opulent palaces and gardens, including the delightful Sanssouci Palace, created in 1744 by Frederick the Great as his summer residence. Our lunch break enabled us to visit the charming Dutch Quarter comprising 134 red brick houses constructed in the eighteenth century in typical Dutch style. These little restored houses are now homes to boutiques, craft shops and cafés.

In the afternoon we visited Cecilienhof Palace built between 1914 and 1917, in the manner of a Tudor manor house, by Emperor William II for his eldest son, Crown Prince William, and his wife, Crown Princess Cecilie. It was here, in the Soviet Occupation zone, that the Potsdam Conference was held from 17th July to 2nd August 1945. Germany had agreed to an unconditional surrender nine weeks earlier and the three leading Allies gathered to decide how to administer post-war Germany. This gathering confirmed the agreement already reached: the decision to divide the country into four occupation zones controlled by the Soviet Union, Britain, America and France. Representing the Allies were: Joseph Stalin (General Secretary of the Soviet Union), President



Cecilienhof Palace which is part of the UNESCO World Heritage Site covering the Palaces and Parks of Potsdam and Berlin. Photo: Janet Lee



Reichstag glass dome and spiral walkway.
Photo: Janet Lee

Harry S. Truman (USA) and Winston Churchill (British War time Prime Minister) and Clement Attlee (British Prime Minister from 26 July 1945). Plans were formulated to drastically remake German society by repealing laws passed by the Nazi regime, removing Nazis from the German education and court systems and to arrest and try Germans who had committed war crimes. It was a privilege to be in the room where these decisions were confirmed and to view the grand table and chairs where these major statesmen had gathered. Again, visits of marked difference.

John Wilkins

The Reichstag building was originally the seat of Parliament in the German Empire and Weimar Republic and is now the seat of the German Federal Parliament. During the Second World War, it was heavily damaged and, since 1994, it has been rebuilt and its renovation has symbolised the reunification of Germany. We finished our day by taking a splendid afternoon tea at the Reichstag. Many of us then explored the amazing dome like structure: metal and glass on the roof of the building and inside a spiral walkway. From the circular roof terrace are spectacular views all over the city and definitely the crowning glory of the building - old and new perfectly complementing each other.

Our last visit was to the Charlottenburg Palace, built as a Summer residence for Sophie Charlotte, the wife of Frederick the Great. The decoration of walls, mirrors, ceilings and doors was in the totally overwhelming Rococo style. A few free hours allowed us time to choose to visit more museums or, if 'museumed' out, find a pleasant café to eat, drink or just be merry. We chose to see the Bröhan Museum of Art Nouveau, Art Deco and Functionalism which did not disappoint, with pieces of Art Nouveau furniture, ceramics, glass, fabrics and silver – both functional and beautiful.

Many thanks to Judith Foy for organising the visit, but unfortunately not being able to come herself due to a health issue, and to Thomas Abbott who was his own inimitable self – he spoke German, knew everything there was to know about Berlin and could solve any problem at the drop of a hat. The visit was enjoyed by us all.

Gwen Williams

Birmingham and West Midlands: October 2024

The Friends visit to Birmingham began with a game of First Find the Coach! Filming was taking place in the Cathays Park area so our ever-resourceful driver, Andrew, had to park elsewhere. Fortunately, it was soon located and we set off on a chilly but bright morning towards the first scheduled stop at the Black Country Living Museum.

In style and theme, it is like St Fagans: a recreation of past times with buildings relocated from their original sites. However, being at the centre of the Black Country the emphasis here is on industry with several workshops and small factories demonstrating skills including brickmaking, aluminium smelting and toolmaking. There was an opportunity to join a tour of a Drift Mine - an experience described by those who tried it as interesting but claustrophobic as at times it was in total darkness. As ever, when observing evocations of the past, intriguing memories were stirred. Shop windows displayed long forgotten brands of sweets, cigarettes, toys, clothes and beauty products from pre-war years - all very nostalgic to see again and many comments were heard about grandparents owning such items. Travelling onwards after a busy day it was good to settle into the centrally located Clayton Hotel.

On the first full day we had the pleasure of meeting Mary Moore, a Blue Badge Guide, whose knowledge provided a comprehensive overview of Birmingham's history from its beginnings as a medieval market town to a peak at the time of the Industrial Revolution when it became the centre of British Industry. Mary added greatly to the tour, proving to be an interesting and informative narrator with a great sense of humour.



Birmingham Cathedral West Window: Edward Burne-Jones, ***The Last Judgement*** (1896-7).
Photo: Diane Davies

The first visit with Mary as guide was to St Phillips Cathedral. Originally intended as a parish church it is in the elegant English Baroque style and was consecrated in 1715. Unfortunately, it was bombed in WW2 but, with timely forethought, its greatest treasures had been removed and stored. These are the beautiful stained-glass windows designed by Edward Burne-Jones, the pre-Raphaelite artist who was a native of the city. These glorious windows, Byzantine in style and iconography, depict scenes from the life of Chris: the Nativity, the Ascension, the Crucifixion and the Last Judgement. Burne-Jones had intended to design only one window but, when in 1887 he saw the striking effect of the first, he agreed to create another three. They are considered his finest work and are extremely beautiful with their glowing colours of red, purple, gold and blue enhancing the interior of the church. The day of our visit was overcast but, even with no sun to emphasise their full brilliance, their beauty was impressive. Sadly, Burne Jones died in the year in which they were installed and so did not see his finished masterpiece.

In the afternoon there was a visit to Birmingham's Assay Office one of only four such in the UK, the others being situated in London, Chester and Edinburgh. An informative talk regarding the history, properties and services of the establishment was given in the Silver Room, in which are displayed important pieces of silver and a collection of what are called 'Birmingham toys' which are not playthings but finely crafted miniature objects. A tour of the Hallmarking area followed where laser machines and more traditional punch-style hallmarking methods are in use.

After a busy morning it was relaxing to board a boat on one of the city's many canals and drift slowly, observing various water birds and diverse vessels. Disembarking at the International Convention Centre provided a chance to admire the fine concert halls and other features of this popular landmark as well as the architecturally stunning Birmingham Library building next door with its beautiful Shakespeare Room, which holds many copies and programmes of the poet's work.

The model village of Bourneville was our first destination the following day. This was established by the Quaker Cadbury family for the workers in the chocolate factories. Houses and shops were built here and other buildings were gradually added including the school and the church, the tower of which contains a delightful carillon and on what was a



Interior of Birmingham Library Photo: Diane Davies

bitterly cold day it was a pleasure to hear the Spring like notes of this. In 1916 George Cadbury acquired Selly Manor, a 15th century timber-framed building which had become derelict, together with a smaller second building, Minworth Greaves. Both houses were relocated to Bournville and have been sympathetically restored and hold some fine antique furniture and a unique collection of household objects.



Autumnal colours in the gardens at Winterbourne. Photo: Diane Davies

In another contrast in the very varied and interesting itinerary, the afternoon was devoted to the Barber Institute. Founded by Dame Martha Barber in memory of her husband, the small gallery is considered one of the finest in Europe. The impressive collection includes major works by Manet, Murillo, Rubens, Botticelli and many other notable artists. The Institute also holds an outstanding collection of coins and medals.

Birmingham's famous Jewellery Quarter, Europe's largest concentration of businesses involved in the trade, was the focus of the next day's visit: The many shops display sparkling gems in a variety of settings and attract much attention from those who wish to buy or just interested window gazers. Nearby Warstone Lane Cemetery provided a brief but intriguing contrast to the treasures in the shops. It is noted chiefly for the unique two tiers of circular catacombs below the burial grounds. The morning being gloomy and cold, the group was happy to enjoy hot coffee and delicious freshly baked croissants at the nearby Button Factory, a renovated Victorian workshop which is now a popular cafe.

Suitably refreshed we continued to the Pen Museum sited in the Victoria Works, originally a purpose-built pen nib factory. During the tour we discovered that in the 19th century more than 80% of the world's pen nibs were supplied by this factory until the advent of fountain and ballpoint pens led to a decline in the trade.

The Dickensian atmosphere of the workshop was particularly captivating as we were shown and then allowed to make pen nibs and learned that the workforce was almost entirely female because, we were told, women can multi-task and so can work the complicated presses and talk at the same time!

Our final visit of this day was to Blakesley Hall, a Tudor house dating from 1590. The striking black and white herringbone exterior is what is usually regarded as typical Tudor and was intended as a status symbol which together with the stylish interior would display the wealth of the family.

All too soon the final day of this absorbing tour arrived and the recently reopened City Art Gallery was the last destination in Birmingham. An exhibition, ***Victorian Radicals***, was devoted to the work of the Pre-Raphaelites and the Arts and Craft movement. As well as images by leading artists of this era, there were textiles, jewellery and stained glass to enjoy in a comprehensive presentation. The destination on the homeward journey was Winterbourne House near Edgbaston, a beautiful example of an early 20th century villa with particularly lovely gardens. The rooms remain much as the family planned them and they retain great charm and style together with an airy lightness in contrast to the Tudor properties we had visited. The house was owned by the Nettlefold family: a familiar name in the Cardiff area as the family firm became Guest, Keen and Nettlefold, which was based in South Wales.

This was a journey full of contrasts and enjoyment and sincere thanks are due to Len Metcalfe for arranging and leading it with proficiency and patience. Thanks also to Andrew for his skilled navigation throughout.

Diana Wilson



Welwch chi'r blew lliwgar hardd ar ochrau'r fôr-lygoden, *Aphrodita aculeata*, yma? Mae'r corff wedi'i ffurfio o lawer o segmentau, sy'n dangos mai mwydyn yw môr-lygoden. / Can you see the beautiful colourful bristles along the edges of this Sea Mouse, *Aphrodita aculeata*? The body is made up of lots of segments, which show that it is a worm.