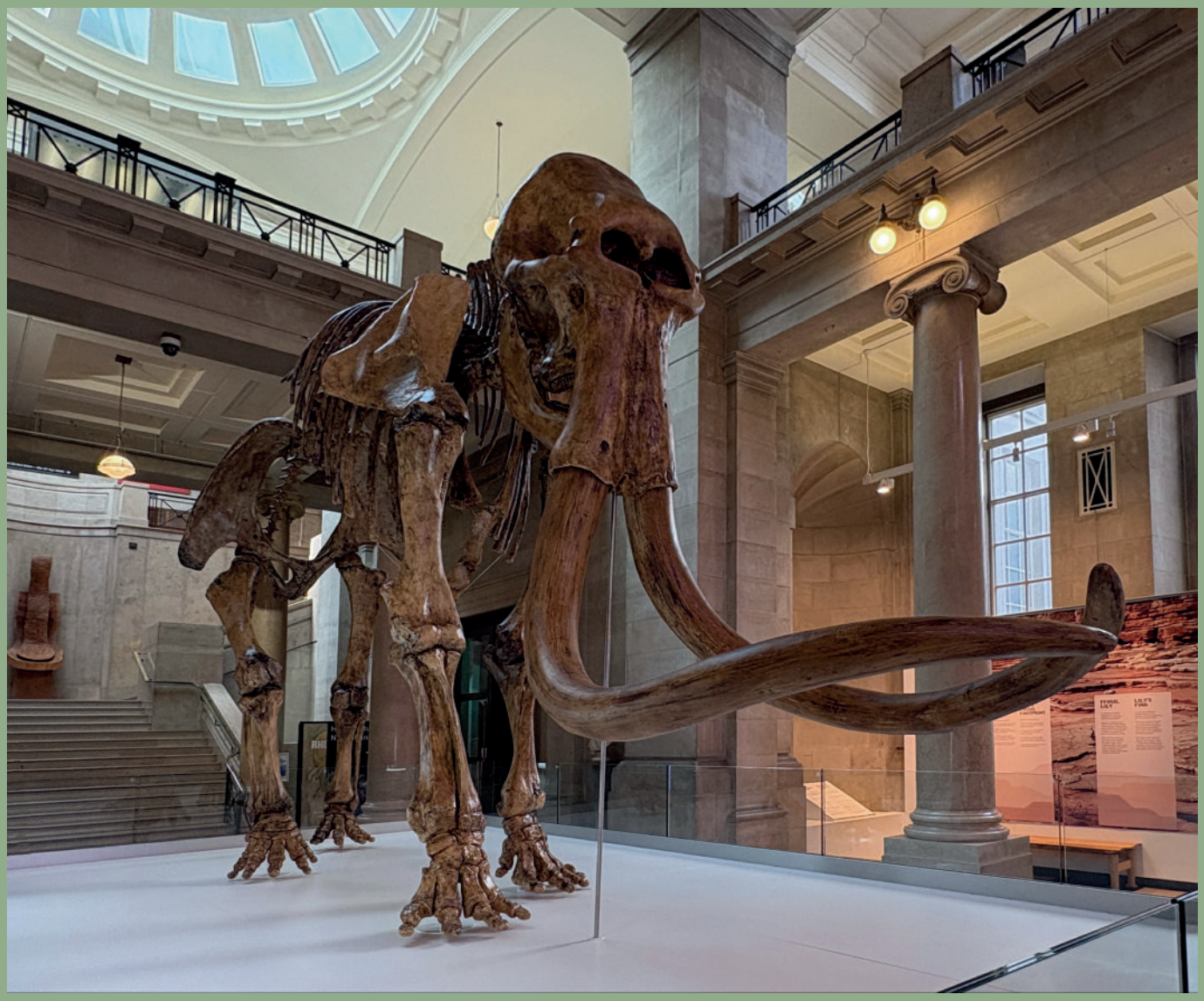
ORIEL

CYFEILLION AMGUEDDFA CYMRU
FRIENDS



Y mamoth ym mhrif neuadd Amgueddfa Genedlaethol Caerdydd / The mammoth in the main hall of National Museum Cardiff.

Cindy Howells

Mamoth newydd i Amgueddfa Genedlaethol Caerdydd
A New Mammoth for National Museum Cardiff

Hydref 2025 October

A MESSAGE TO OUR READERS

Natural History features strongly in this edition.

The woolly mammoth that graces the front cover has been created using 3D-printing of the bones of a mammoth discovered on the borders of Wales in 1986. You can read about the discovery of these bones and why this replica now occupies pride of place in the Main Hall of National Museum Cardiff. The article also looks at a number of other mammoths which can be seen in the natural history section of National Museum Cardiff.

The back cover shows an illustration from ***A Curious Herbal***, an 18th century equivalent of a pharmacopeia. It was both written and illustrated by Elizabeth Blackwell, who, from an early age, had shown a talent for botanical illustration (one of the areas of art that was socially acceptable for women to practise). The herbal details the five hundred varieties of plant that could be found in the Chelsea Physic Garden. The Museum has a copy of the herbal and the article looks at the history of the book and the story of her life.

Then there is an article about a 19th century pioneer in the study of mollusc shells. John Gwyn Jeffreys was from Swansea and was a solicitor then a barrister by profession but his real interest was in the new field of conchology. He retired early enough to devote his later life to this passion for shells. The Museum has a range of artefacts relating to his work and the shells he collected.

Finally on this subject there is a short article on the wildflowers that can be seen at St Fagans.

The National Waterfront Museum has a new Head and I am pleased that she has agreed to provide an article on the changes that are planned for the site and the reasoning behind them. One of the changes is already in progress and concerns the Warehouse, a building from 1900 which was incorporated into the brand new National Waterfront Museum when it opened in 2005.

Some of you may well have attended a fascinating Friends talk on Lee Miller by her son, Anthony Penrose earlier this year. Her life was extraordinary, but more importantly she became a trail-blazing photographer particularly as a fashion photographer and then as a war correspondent when she followed the Allied troops from shortly after the D-Day landings until the end of the war. So, a chance for all of us to learn more about this courageous and talented woman.

Then there are a couple of shorter pieces. One is a review on an artwork that could be experienced at the Roman Amphitheatre at Caerleon as part of the Museums ***Perspective(s)*** project. The other looks at how curators at St Fagans coped when a film crew descended on the site to use the Oakdale Institute and Gwalia Stores as the setting for scenes in a costume drama series that is currently being made.

Finally, there is an article by our Chair, Gwen Williams, who is standing down at this year's AGM after seven years. She looks at the changes and challenges the Friends face as an organisation as well as introducing the person who will take over the role.

Just two of the regular features. Museum News looks in depth at the Picture Post exhibition currently to be seen in National Museum Cardiff and highlights amongst other things recent developments at National Slate Museum and the fact that the National Waterfront Museum is up for an award. Friends Activities gives a taster about three of the many events organised for us this year.

Diane Davies

CORRIGENDUM

In the article, ***Not Fair to Marconi***, the island of Bardsey was linked to Pembrokeshire. It is, of course, off the island of Anglesey.

Next Edition

Contributions for inclusion in the April 2026 edition should be submitted by the beginning of January 2026. Please send items, either electronically or by post, to the Editor.

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© Amgueddfa Cymru - Museum Wales

Back Cover: The Dandelion: the first plate in ***A Curious Herbal*** by Elizabeth Blackwell (see article on page 9).
© Amgueddfa Cymru - Museum Wales

WILDFLOWERS OF ST FAGANS

In spring and summer, the grounds of St Fagans National Museum of History come alive with colour as wildflowers bloom across meadows, hedgerows and gardens. These flowers are not only beautiful but have played an important role in Welsh rural life for centuries. From the wildflower meadows at the museum to the herbs grown in traditional cottage gardens, these plants connect us to the land and history of Wales.

St Fagans is home to several wildflower meadows, each carefully managed to support biodiversity. At the front of the museum, a meadow welcomes visitors with a mix of native wildflowers, buzzing with pollinators throughout the summer. Another special meadow can be found in the apple orchard in the castle gardens; this Coronation Meadow is part of a UK-wide initiative to restore wildflower-rich grasslands. Among the wildflowers found in these meadows are yellow rattle, a plant known as the 'meadow



Chicory in the wildflower meadow at the front of the main entrance to the museum.
© Amgueddfa Cymru - Museum Wales



Coronation meadow in the Castle orchard.
© Amgueddfa Cymru - Museum Wales

maker' for its ability to weaken grasses and allow other flowers to flourish, and dandelion, whose jagged leaves resemble a lion's teeth. The daisy, meaning 'day's eye,' opens with the morning sun and closes at dusk. In nearby woodlands, bluebells, known as clychau'r gog (*cuckoo bells*) in Welsh, carpet the ground in a sea of blue; their name is linked to the arrival of spring and the call of the cuckoo.

Wildflowers have long been a part of Welsh cottage gardens too. Several historic houses at St Fagans, such as Nantwallter, Abernodwydd and Hendre'r-ywydd Uchaf, feature herb gardens where families grew plants for cooking and medicine. These gardens are recreated using traditional methods and appropriate plant varieties to reflect the way of life of their former inhabitants.

The garden of Nantwallter represents a farm labourer's garden in Carmarthenshire in the late 18th century, when families relied on their gardens for food, medicine and household essentials. The family would have been largely self-sufficient through growing vegetables and herbs. Alongside cultivated crops, they gathered wild plants for their practical and medicinal properties. These gardens would have included plants such as tansy, an aromatic plant once used to repel insects, and betony, which was used in traditional treatments for headaches and anxiety and was also commonly used to treat wounds.

Many of these medicinal plants were also used by the Physicians of Myddfai, legendary healers from Carmarthenshire whose herbal knowledge was recorded in medieval manuscripts. The herb bed at Nantwallter contains plants linked to the Physicians, including fennel, wormwood and cowslips. These herbs treated all sorts of different ailments and their use has been passed down through generations.

Wildflowers are not only a connection to the past, but they are also important for supporting wildlife. In recent years, initiatives like No Mow May have encouraged people to stop cutting their lawns for a month in order to provide shelter and food for insects, such as bees and butterflies, and small animals.

During the summer, you can see wildflowers blooming at St Fagans. They were an important part of everyday life in the past, valued for their practical uses. Today, they are just as important, supporting wildlife and reminding us of the connection between people and nature through the ages.

Elin Barker

Elin Barker is a Garden Conservator at St Fagans: National Museum of History.



Herb garden at Nantwallter. © Amgueddfa Cymru - Museum Wales

A NEW MAMMOTH FOR NATIONAL MUSEUM CARDIFF

Visitors to National Museum Cardiff from late-March onwards have been greeted by a large new exhibit in the Main Hall. We have got another mammoth! You might say that we already have one in Evolution of Wales Gallery (EOW), and you would be correct. But this new one is here to add something a little bit more exciting in the vast entrance hall. The new mammoth stands tall and proud and its story is enhanced by two, touch-activated, computerised screens so that visitors can explore more of its environment and life-story.

The new mammoth is actually a replica of a replica, being a 3D print of the cast we already have. Unfortunately, we were not able to get ours scanned as it is tucked into a tight corner, so the scan was taken from its twin in the Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre in Craven Arms, which itself is a cast taken from original bones found at Condover in Shropshire in 1986.

The Condover mammoth lived towards the end of the last Ice Age. Vast ice sheets had covered much of northern Europe for over a million years, advancing and retreating according to fluctuations in actual temperature, and by 14,000 years ago the ice was finally melting for possibly the last time. Woolly mammoths thrived on the unique environment situated on the edges of these ice sheets. They needed cold, dry conditions, with little snowfall, dry ground and rich but dwarf vegetation and were perfectly adapted for this. Mammoths had a thick layer of sub-cutaneous fat, and a dense warm undercoat of fur covered with a layer of very long hairs which allowed snow to slide off. They had tiny ears and eyes, with a short tail.

As the climate warmed, mammoths would have started to struggle in the warmer, damper conditions. Many herds would have migrated north and east, sticking to the edges of the retreating ice sheets and leaving Britain. It is possible that our mammoth was one of the last few here as there have been no younger finds.

As the ice sheets melted and broke up, some huge blocks of ice were left half buried in the ground and as these melted they formed steep-sided pools called kettle-holes. Our mammoth was found when excavations in a gravel-pit broke through into one of these ancient kettle-holes and discovered a pile of bones where the animal must have become stuck and unable to escape.



The Condover mammoth in the Evolution of Wales Gallery
© Amgueddfa Cymru - Museum Wales

The mammoth is a male, of around twenty-eight years old. It seemed to have been in relatively good health apart from a healed break to one scapula (shoulder-blade). So, it is assumed that this injury may have left the mammoth with a weaker front leg, maybe a limp, and probably meant that after slipping into the pool it was unable to climb back out. It was the only adult mammoth found in here, although there were a few juveniles close by.

After the bones were spotted, the quarry agreed to pause work in that area long enough for a rescue operation carried out by Shropshire Museums Service. The bones were taken to Ludlow Museum where they could be studied in detail and they are now permanently housed within the Ludlow Museum Resource Centre. Amgueddfa Cymru thought that this was such an important discovery from the Welsh Borderlands that we should feature it in our new ***Evolution of Wales*** exhibition, and so an agreement was reached whereby the Museum borrowed the bones, stored them for a number of years and organised them to be cast and mounted.

The museum already had a mammoth cast on display: the huge Oscar from Bavaria, found by fifteen year-old Bernard von Bredow in 1975 and excavated over a number of years. Oscar had been initially borrowed from its home in Siegsdorf for our ***Mammoths and the Ice Age*** exhibition in 1989. This exhibition was the second in the Museum's run of 'block-busters', following on from ***Dinosaurs from China***, and featured several dioramas set within sculpted stone cave walls.



The robotic mammoth in the ***Mammoths and the Ice Age*** exhibition held in 1989.
© Amgueddfa Cymru - Museum Wales

Oscar was exhibited alongside a cast of the mummified baby mammoth *Dima*, a model of a woolly rhino, plus a bison, and a real leg, skin and hair of a mammoth borrowed from Paris. Also, there was a revolutionary new robotic display of an adult and baby mammoth being confronted by three Dire wolves - an extinct wolf with powerful jaws which is thought to have preyed on large mammals. The mammoth moved its leg and head, and its trunk curled and uncurled, whilst the wolves moved their heads and howled, truly a totally new concept for that time! The robotics had been put together by Roby Braun (from New York), a model maker, designer and sculptor. As many of you will know, these robotic mammoths were re-installed in EOW and over the years have moved less and less, as the old robotic technology has gradually broken and can no longer be replaced. Now, finally, we have admitted defeat, so they are stationary and no longer scare small infants!



Oscar in the ***Mammoths and the Ice Age*** exhibition held in 1989.
© Amgueddfa Cymru - Museum Wales

In 1999, the Museum dismantled Oscar and sold that skeleton to the National Museum of Ireland, Dublin, who were looking for a mammoth cast for new displays. The new Condover cast was then mounted in its place, on a raised plinth covered with sand and rock, where it still forms the impressive centre-piece of the Ice Age section.

This year, the Museum is making a big effort to improve its visitor experience and wanted to try to get more iconic specimens into the Entrance Hall. As we had not been able to tell the story of the Condover mammoth in any detail, it was decided to make this the central feature, allowing us to tell the story of its life, death and discovery through new interactive media, along with AV technology to bring it back to life.

In August the exhibit was still further enhanced by the introduction of real archaeological and palaeontological specimens installed into new display-cases nearby, thus telling the stories of mammoth interaction with humans and other late ice age animals.

Cindy Howells

Cindy Howells is Palaeontology Curator at Amgueddfa Cymru.

A NEW VISION FOR NATIONAL WATERFRONT MUSEUM

In February I took over from Steph Mastoris as the new Head of National Waterfront Museum. Since joining the museum, I have had many inspiring conversations with the amazing team here, who have shared their vast knowledge of our collections, our visitors and our museum spaces. It has been wonderful to engage with the heritage of Wales we share at National Waterfront Museum and the other Amgueddfa Cymru sites. I have enjoyed getting to know the local area better, as well, and understand the role our national museum plays within Swansea and Wales more widely.

A key objective of my role is to strengthen the Museum's identity and improve the visitor experience and our Visitor Experience Team had valuable insights to share in this regard. Visitors very often ask, '*Where is the museum?*' Depending on which of our three entrances visitors use, the distance to museum content can indeed be considerable. Visitors also tend to find their own way through our galleries, rather than follow the recommended route. This may add to their reported confusion about what is the Museum's central story. A further contributing factor is many visitors' expectation, based both on our name and location, to encounter primarily maritime narratives.

I was particularly struck by visitors' interest in our historic Warehouse. The Warehouse was built in 1900 beside South Dock, now Swansea Marina. Its history is still legible in the surrounding historic environment, which includes the former office building of Swansea Harbour Trust and the Pump House, which controlled the hydraulic machinery of the dock. Through the rail tracks visible within the Museum, the Warehouse was part of Wales's connections to markets beyond the sea.



The new-look Warehouse with views out onto Swansea Marina.
© Amgueddfa Cymru - Museum Wales

The authenticity and strong sense of place of the historic Warehouse gives character to National Waterfront Museum. The Warehouse is already home to our Sea gallery, exploring some more recent stories of ports, sea trade and communities. Building on this strength, we plan to sharpen our focus on Wales's diverse stories of living, working and trading across the sea. The sea becomes the lens through which we examine a uniquely Welsh experience across our national collection of archaeology, art, social history and industry.



Replica of the Penydarren locomotive after its return from Darlington and arranged to allow visitors to meet it 'face on'.
© Amgueddfa Cymru - Museum Wales

While the process of determining the specific stories we would like to tell is still ongoing, we have already made some decisions concerning key museum spaces, working closely with our conservation colleagues. Windows that were previously shuttered have now been re-opened in the Warehouse. During the autumn, we plan to dismantle underused exhibition infrastructure which is currently blocking views out to the Marina. Based on early visitor feedback, we are confident that these seemingly small interventions will improve the visitor experience. The



Model of three-masted schooner M.A. James (Length 490cm) (original was built in Porthmadog in 1909) in its new location in the Warehouse and, in the background, a view of the Pump House.
© Amgueddfa Cymru - Museum Wales

Warehouse's connection with its historic environment is once again visible from within the space, and this has also brought in much-needed light.

The Weston Hall, which connects the New Gallery and Warehouse, will be decluttered and turned into a dedicated welcome space. Selected 'Wow' objects will serve both as focal points to draw visitors into the Museum and as signifiers of our identity. An example is the 1842 South Bishop Lighthouse optic, which we plan to mount on a support column with its clockwork drive mechanism reinstated. The optic will be wound up once a day during opening hours which will light the top, providing a fun and interactive highlight for visitors. Besides its obvious connotations of maritime safety, the optic will also be a talking point about our status as the UK's first Museum of Sanctuary, within the fabric of Swansea City of Sanctuary. Another collection item we plan to move into the Weston Hall is a covered railway van of the type used to move goods into and out of the Warehouse through the colonnade. This will visually draw attention to the rail tracks while also providing an immersive interpretation of the history and function of the Warehouse.

We also have some exciting plans for our café, which have been designed with our visitors in mind. Currently situated inside the Marina Entrance, we hope to move the café to the upper floor, which will make better use of the balcony overlooking the marina. This provides the opportunity to extend the welcome space from the City Entrance to the Marina Entrance. It is our intention to give the Marina Entrance much greater prominence as one of our main entrances, not least due to the increasing footfall on this side of the Museum, and to reinstate the building's historic connection with our location on the marina.

National Waterfront Museum currently does not have a bespoke temporary exhibition space and this is something we are keen to address. Past temporary exhibitions were mounted in the Weston Hall which could be confusing to first time visitors. These exhibitions, by necessity, also needed to be movable which, together with a lack of environmental controls, has limited our options in the type and quality of exhibition we could offer. We will now create a dedicated space for temporary exhibitions on the mezzanine level of the New Gallery, where current displays are under-used by visitors and lack thematic coherence.

The main displays in the New Gallery and Warehouse will be redeveloped according to current exhibition standards in a future phase of the project and we will develop detailed interpretive plans for these spaces within this financial year. Until these plans can be implemented, we will focus on temporary exhibitions and small-scale interventions in our permanent galleries that highlight the many ways in which life in Wales has been shaped by the sea. Our approach will always remain committed to involving individuals and communities and sharing their unique perspectives on the collections and stories we display in National Waterfront Museum.

It is an exciting time for the Museum as we move ahead with these plans. I am grateful to the whole team here, who have been so enthusiastic in sharing ideas for how we can be a living museum with hands-on and joyful experiences for everyone who visits us, celebrating Wales's heritage and culture as seen from the sea.

Nicole Deufel

Nicole Deufel is Head of National Waterfront Museum.

A CURIOUS HERBAL RE-EXAMINED

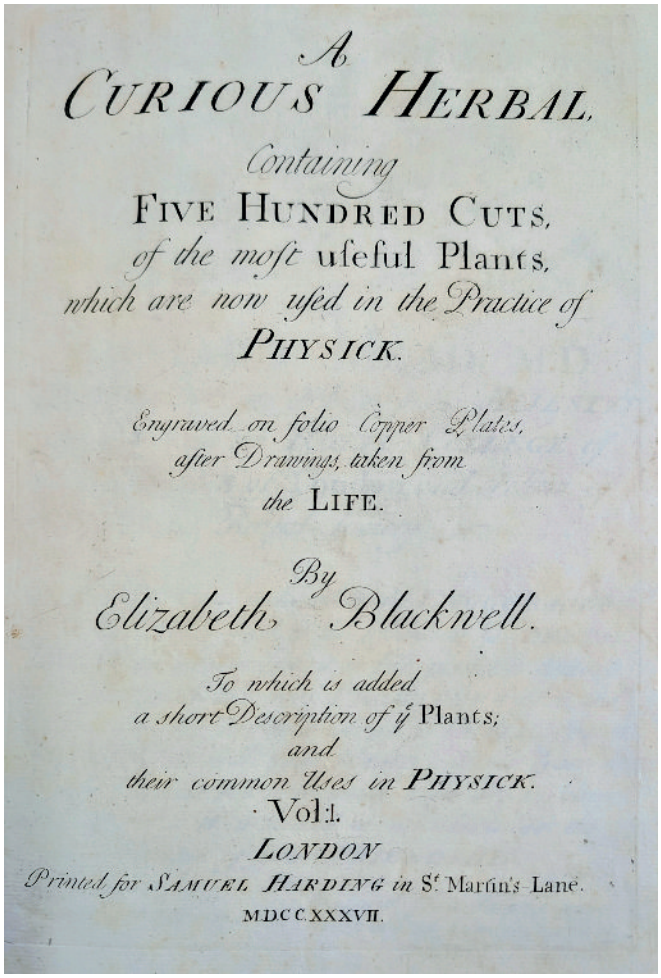
Elizabeth Blackwell (1699-1758) was an extraordinary woman who used her artistic talents to save her family from financial ruin. Almost single-handedly she took on the task of producing a beautifully illustrated herbal, largely based on plants growing at the Apothecaries' Garden (now known as the Chelsea Physic Garden). Recent research has revealed new details of her remarkable life.

Interest in Elizabeth Blackwell has revived in the last few years, partially in response to work by American researcher Janet Stiles Tyson, who studied Blackwell for her doctoral thesis. Dr Tyson has toured libraries in both Europe and the United States, to examine and digitally log over ninety extant copies of the work. Serendipitously, she discovered a unique autobiographical preface, revealing many previously unknown facts about Elizabeth Blackwell's life, in a copy of the herbal in the Rubenstein Library at Duke University.

Elizabeth Blackwell was born in London on 23rd April 1699, the daughter of Alice and Leonard Simpson. Tyson observes that her father, a painter, had instilled in her a facility for drawing, a strong sense of initiative, and a practical approach to business. This was a time when women were not expected to earn money for themselves or to be linked to any commercial venture. Despite losing her father when she was still very young, Elizabeth continued to draw and aspired to produce a series of legible, large-scale depictions of plants.



Portrait of Elizabeth Blackwell (1699–1758) from 1757.
© Amgueddfa Cymru - Museum Wales



A
CURIOUS HERBAL,
Containing
FIVE HUNDRED CUTS,
of the most useful Plants,
which are now used in the Practice of
PHYSICK.

Engraved on folio Copper Plates,
after Drawings taken from
the LIFE.

By
Elizabeth Blacknell.

To which is added
a short Description of y^e Plants;
and
their common Uses in PHYSICK.
Vol: I.
LONDON
Printed for SAMUEL HARDING in S^t Martin's-Lane.
MDCCXXXVII.

The title page of ***A Curious Herbal***.
© Amgueddfa Cymru - Museum Wales

She married Alexander Blackwell in 1733 and the couple moved to London where they opened a print shop on the Strand. However, this was illegal since Alexander had not completed his apprenticeship and was not fully qualified. He was prosecuted and later declared bankrupt. Their troubles culminated in Alexander being sent to debtors' prison for two years.

Through friends in the medical profession, Elizabeth discovered that there was a need for a definitive herbal. The curator of the Chelsea Physic Garden, Isaac Rand, encouraged her to record and illustrate the medicinal plants that grew there. She was supported by the leading botanists, physicians and apothecaries of the day, including Sir Hans Sloane (physician to Queen Caroline), Joseph Millar, Isaac Rand, and Richard Meade.

The four-acre garden, owned by Sir Hans Sloane, but leased for a peppercorn rent, was run by The Worshipful Society of Apothecaries, the regulatory body for those engaged in preparing and purveying medicinal treatments. Here trainee apothecaries could learn to identify medicinal plants and discover how they might be used effectively. Furthermore, the garden supplied raw botanical materials such as mint, sage, rue, sweet marjoram and pennyroyal, to the Society's storeroom and laboratory.

Elizabeth set herself the challenge of producing a herbal depicting five hundred medicinal plants growing in Chelsea Physic Garden. She took lodgings in Swan Walk, close to the garden. Every day she went to the garden and drew the plants there. She also etched and engraved the copper plates and hand coloured the engravings. Her husband, a linguist, may have helped with the text from prison.

Each week, for one hundred and twenty-five weeks, Elizabeth produced a fascicule consisting of four



Exotic species, such as this Guinea Pepper, were also featured in the Herbal.
© Amgueddfa Cymru - Museum Wales

plates and a brief description of the plants depicted. She used the Royal College of Physicians' ***Dispensatory*** of 1721, the standard pharmacopeia of the day, to select the plants. Apothecary Joseph Miller had given her permission to base the descriptions on his work, ***Botanicum officinale*** (1722). Elizabeth summarised his descriptions and added her own observations. In the preface, she apologises for the lack of order in the herbal, but she explained "*My being obliged to take the Designs from Live Plants, as I could get them according to their several seasons, & this hasty Publication made the Ranging them in Order altogether impracticable.*" Her work was published between 1737 and 1739 under the title ***A Curious Herbal***.

The uncoloured fascicules sold for a shilling and the hand-coloured versions for two shillings. She may have employed watercolourists to assist her. Nevertheless, her dedication and the quantity of her work was remarkable. On completion, subscribers could decide how they wished to have the fascicles bound. ***A Curious Herbal*** was the first complete herbal reference of the period and the first to use a simple key, linking the text and images.



This fine illustration of Blackberry (genus Rubus) by Nikolaus-Friedrich Eisenberger (1707–1771) is from the Hebarium Blackwellianum. The style of the text is quite different from that found in ***A Curious Herbal***.
© Amgueddfa Cymru - Museum Wales

The work received great acclaim and was also a commercial success, allowing Elizabeth to free her husband from debtors' prison. Sadly, his chequered career did not end there. He moved to Sweden and became embroiled in a treason plot, for which he was tortured and subsequently executed in July 1747. The couple are thought to have had three children, although two died in infancy. Elizabeth Blackwell remained devoted to Alexander and, after his death in 1747, stopped working. She is buried at Chelsea Old Church.

Elizabeth Blackwell is also credited as the first female author to identify a new plant species, wild ginger, *Amomum verum* Blackw., in 1757. This species name is still in use today. ***A Curious Herbal*** is a superb record of the plants growing at the Chelsea Physic Garden at the time. Before modern medicine, people relied on apothecaries, with their knowledge of plant medicinal properties, to create remedies for their ailments. The herbal was published during a period when the traditional view of ailments, as caused by imbalances in bodily humours, was changing and, instead, disease was seen as an outside force. Although generally scientifically accurate, there were some errors in Blackwell's herbal for which she has been criticised. The prominent German doctor and patron, Christoph Trew (1695–1769), commissioned a professional artist, Nikolaus-Friedrich Eisenberger (1707–1771), to improve and supplement Blackwell's drawings. The revised herbal, published 1754-73, was entitled ***Herbarium Blackwellianum***, in honour of Elizabeth Blackwell.

Museum Wales is fortunate to hold a copy of ***A Curious Herbal***, purchased in 1996. Even after three



The fine detail of Blackwell's etchings can be seen in this black and white illustration of sage.
© Amgueddfa Cymru - Museum Wales

hundred years the folio-sized illustrations are vibrant with colour. Handling this copy evokes a sense of connection with Elizabeth Blackwell. The two volumes comprise five hundred illustrations. Whilst many of the illustrated species are familiar, the herbal also includes newly introduced exotic species, such as tobacco and cacao from the New World, the fynbos aloe from Africa and tea from China, together with unexpected organisms such as coral. Dr Tyson admired the copy held by Amgueddfa Cymru as a particularly fine copy.

In addition to the herbal itself, the Museum holds twenty-six loose illustrations by Blackwell and Eisenberger, mainly from the Cymmrodorion collection and the D.A. Jones collection. Although similar, the differences in style between Blackwell and Eisenberger can be seen when examined side by side. Some of the loose illustrations are uncoloured. Although less striking, fine details such as the fine hairs on stems or the serrated edges of leaves are more easily discerned. Dr Tyson has contributed an essay to a delightful reproduction of ***A Curious Herbal*** which was published in 2023. Tyson recently observed that "*that her herbal impressed Linnaeus and other continental botanists, despite not incorporating Linnaean classification, arguably makes its recognition and adaptation all the more impressive.*"

Heather Pardoe

Heather Pardoe is Principal Curator Botany at Amgueddfa Cymru

JOHN GWYN JEFFREYS: WALES'S PIONEER OF DEEP-SEA EXPLORATION

John Gwyn Jeffreys (1809–1885) was one of Britain's most eminent 19th-century conchologists (mollusc shell experts) with a passion for dredging and deep-sea exploration. From his early beginnings exploring Swansea Bay in a rowing boat, he went on to lead deep-sea expeditions in British and European seas, finding life at previously unknown depths. We owe much of our knowledge of deep-sea life to the pioneering work undertaken by Jeffreys and his fellow explorers of the time.

"There is a magnet-like attraction in
These waters to the imaginative power
That links the viewless with the visible,
And pictures things unseen."

(***Lines on the View from St. Leonards*** by Thomas Campbell quoted by Jeffreys in a lecture in 1881.)



Photograph of John Gwyn Jeffreys (1809-1885) (date unknown).
© Amgueddfa Cymru - Museum Wales

Who was John Gwyn Jeffreys?

John Gwyn Jeffreys was born in Swansea on 18 January 1809 and was a descendant of one of the oldest families in Wales. From a young age he was interested in natural history and it was at Swansea Grammar School that he had his first lesson in shell collecting, putting him on a path that he would not deviate from for the rest of his life. At the age of seventeen, Jeffreys was apprenticed to a Swansea solicitor but he continued to develop his passion for shells and collecting by being active in the local natural history community. Here he met Lewis Weston Dillwyn (1778–1855), well known for Swansea pottery production but also a keen natural historian. It was under his influence that Jeffreys was encouraged to produce his first scientific paper, when he was nineteen years old.

Jeffreys was successful as a solicitor in Swansea for many years and this allowed him to indulge in natural history during his spare time. He devoted his holidays to finding new species and varieties of molluscs, initially dredging from a rowing boat and later from his yacht, the ***Osprey***. His desire for unusual and new species took him north, especially to Shetland where he could dredge the deeper waters close to shore. This hands-on approach gave him a valuable insight into more than just the shells but also how the molluscs lived, the habitats they survived in and how different species lived together and interacted.

In 1856, Jeffreys and his family left Swansea so that he could become a barrister in London, where they remained for 10 years. At the age of fifty-seven, Jeffreys made the decision to retire from the law and moved to Hertfordshire, so that he could finally fully dedicate himself to his primary passion for natural history.

Letters from afar

"The dredge surpasses all other methods of investigating the fauna of the ocean" (John Gwyn Jeffreys, 1862)

Jeffreys communicated with almost every European conchologist of his time and kept a meticulous record of each letter that he sent out. In 2009, Amgueddfa Cymru acquired two volumes of his early letters, written

between 1840 and 1854 when he was living in Swansea. The letter-books reveal the intricate business of conchology at work, including plans for future voyages and scientific discussions. This is well illustrated by the fifty-one letters to Edward Forbes, a fellow passionate dredger and one of the founders of British marine biology. Although great friends, they were also potential competitors, both aspiring to publish the definitive book on British molluscs.

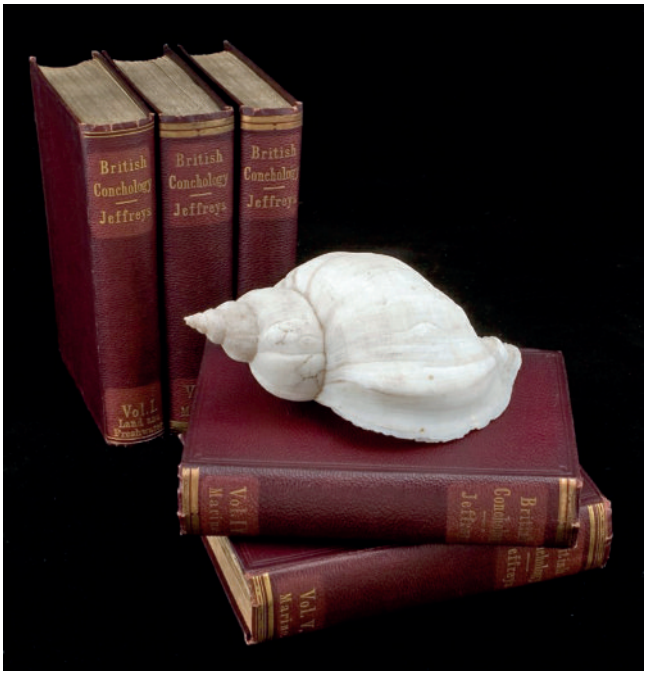
Many of the famous naturalists of the day are included in these books; there is even a letter written to Charles Darwin! However, Jeffreys was never able to accept the theory of evolution, believing that species do not change over time.

During his life Jeffreys published around two hundred scientific papers, but his most significant publication was ***British Conchology***. This series was issued in five volumes between 1862 and 1869, featuring one hundred and thirty-two plates of beautiful shell illustrations. It is an important work, as it gives descriptions of each species with accounts of their biology and where they are found, both in British waters and elsewhere. It is still a standard reference today.

Jeffreys used this series to try to popularise the study of shells; he made the pages pleasant reading and non-technical where possible. However, this did cause the series to be longer than necessary, more costly and, therefore, too expensive for many working conchologists. Within everything Jeffreys wrote on shells, he described forty-one new genera (named groups of closely-related species, such as *Homo*, our own genus) and five hundred and eighty-five new species.



A selection of species named after Jeffreys in the Melvill-Tomlin collection at National Museum Cardiff.
© Amgueddfa Cymru - Museum Wales



The five volumes of Jeffreys's ***British Conchology*** series.
© Amgueddfa Cymru - Museum Wales

Jeeffrey's shell collection

"I know the collection to be unrivalled and as perfect as probably any … can be; and I have not spared pains or money to complete it … The arrangement of the collection would occupy you probably two or three years and when arranged it would be 'a sight fit for a King'" (Letter from Jeffreys to William Clark, 4th February 1849)

Jeffreys amassed a large and comprehensive shell collection. It was described as unrivalled for British marine molluscs at the time of his death. The collection contained examples of over seven hundred mollusc species, averaging fifty specimens per species! It held examples of every new species described by Jeffreys in his work ***British Conchology*** and in his subsequent papers. It also contained the original collections of other early British naturalists such as William Turton, Joshua Alder and William Clark, whose collections he had acquired.

The sale of the collection

At the age of forty, Jeffreys considered selling his collection. At this time, he estimated its worth at £1000, the equivalent of around

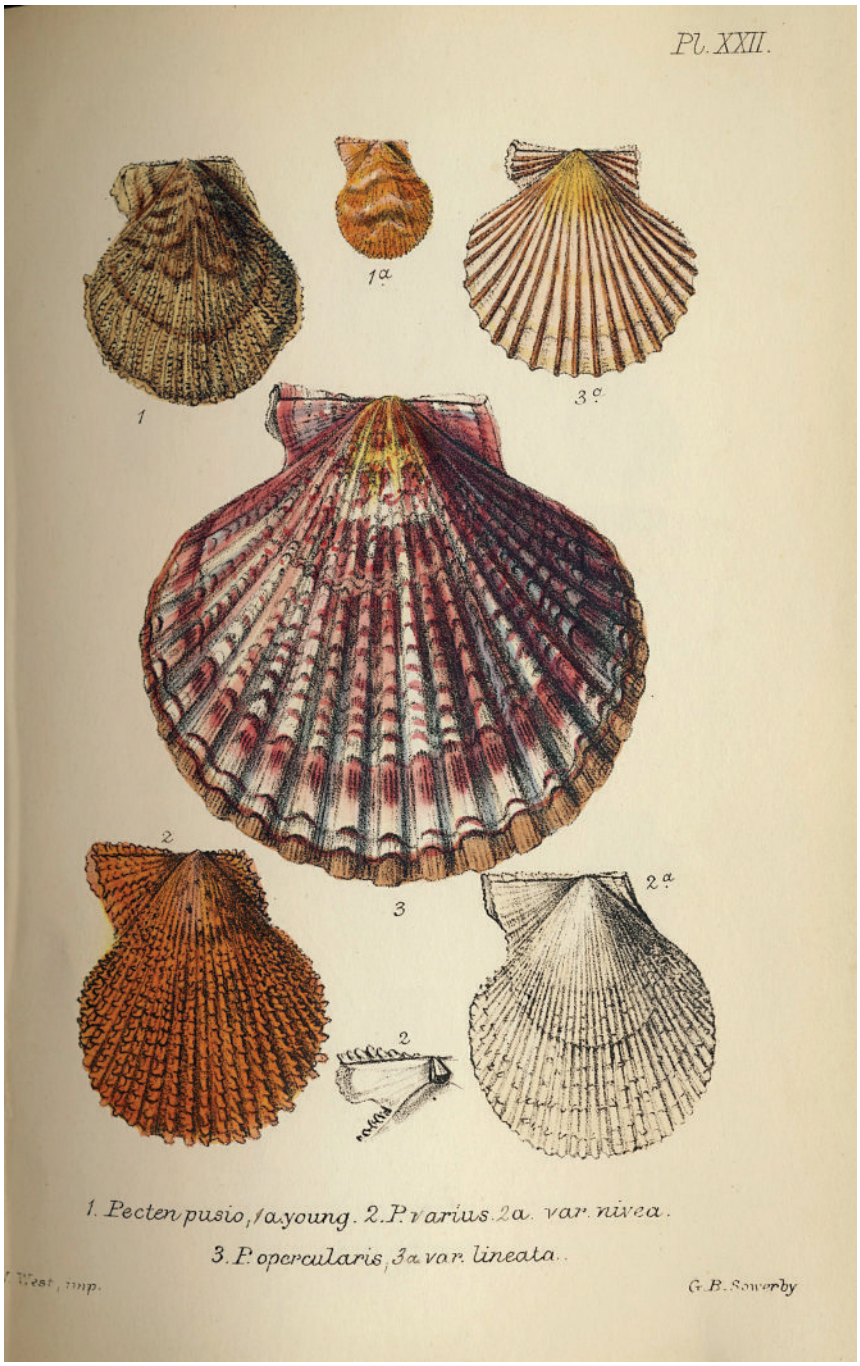
£150,000 in today's money. In his later years, Jeffreys offered his collection to the Natural History Museum, London, but the offer was not accepted – owing to a lack of space, not because they did not want it.

The collection was eventually sold to the American collector William Dall for £1050, who then sold it on to the Smithsonian Institution. This sale was described as "*a grievous loss, not only to Britain but to European conchologists*" and as "*a national tragedy*". The Jeffreys collection is still at the Smithsonian Institution, USA, although some shells from most of the expeditions he worked on are held at the Natural History Museum, London.

At Amgueddfa Cymru, there is a small collection of Jeffreys's Welsh freshwater molluscs, which was donated to us by the Smithsonian Institution in 1970 and 1971. In addition, the Melvill-Tomlin collection also contains specimens collected by Jeffreys from several of his deep-sea expeditions.

Jeffreys's shell cabinet

Whilst living in Swansea, Jeffreys commissioned a cabinet to be made to hold his extensive shell collection. This cabinet was acquired by Amgueddfa Cymru in 2004 and it now has pride of place in the library of St Fagans Castle. The main body of the cabinet has double doors, which open to display two columns of glass-topped mahogany collection drawers. The entire cabinet is expertly hand-made from Cuban and Honduran mahogany, including the use of book-matched pieces for the veneer that give a symmetrical, fiddle-back appearance. On the cabinet top is an ornate wood carving, heavily pigmented to form a dramatic silhouette. A scallop shell forms a fan at the centre and the shell of a female paper nautilus sits at either end, giving just a hint as to what might once have been inside.



A plate from John Gwyn Jeffreys, ***British Conchology***.
© Amgueddfa Cymru - Museum Wales

The provenance of the cabinet is unclear. It was sold at Sotheby's in 2001 and Christie's in 2004, as a Victorian Gillows piece. This would place its production in London. However, our Amgueddfa Cymru furniture conservator has identified it as a possible a William IV or early Victorian cabinet, dating from the second quarter of the 19th century, and suggests it may be an important piece of Welsh furniture.

There is evidence that both Jeffreys's cabinet and his collection had a five year stay at the Museum of the Royal Institution of South Wales (now the Swansea Museum). Jeffreys wrote to Dr Nicol, the Honorary Secretary, in 1854 explaining that it would reside there, "*…until I return to this neighbourhood or have other reasons for desiring its*



The decorations on the top of Jeffreys's shell cabinet with (left) the scallop shell and (right) one of the shells of a female paper nautilus.
© Amgueddfa Cymru - Museum

removal" and he went on to say, "*When I return I hope to have leisure to complete the arrangement, and then the collection will at all times be accessible to the members of the Institution.*" A train label on the underside of the cabinet tells us more about its history and reveals that it travelled from Swansea to Jeffreys's London residence in 1859, when Jeffreys was working there as a barrister.

Is there life at the bottom of the ocean?

"I detest the sea for its own sake, but put up with the discomforts for the sake of science or natural history"
(John Gwyn Jeffreys)

The belief that sea life did not exist below 550m was known as the 'Azoic theory' and was proposed in the 1840s by Jeffreys's friend Edward Forbes. The theory was commonly believed for nearly three decades.

In the 1860s, the feasibility of exploring much greater depths using deep-sea dredging evolved and the British pioneers W. B. Carpenter and C. Wyville Thomson requested support from the Royal Society and the Admiralty "*with a view to ascertain the existence and zoological relations of animals at great depths*". In 1868 they were granted use of ***HMS Lightning*** for an experimental cruise and, although blighted by bad weather and cut short, a successful haul was brought up from 1189m.

A year later, they extended their research on the first ***HMS Porcupine*** expedition. Jeffreys was the scientific leader for the first leg of this historic voyage, which included dredging to 4289m in waters south-west of Ireland. This was by far the deepest dredge haul ever attempted and, by bringing up a mass of mud containing many kinds of animals, they blew Forbes's Azoic theory out of the water.

Jeffreys continued to take part in many deep-sea expeditions, notably ***Porcupine II*** (Atlantic and Mediterranean, 1870), ***Valorous*** (Greenland, 1875) and the French ***Traveilleur*** expedition (Bay of Biscay, 1880).

Jeffreys's other scientific work

Jeffreys identified and wrote scientific reports on molluscs from the following expeditions:

- ***Josephine*** **expedition, 1869**: A Swedish expedition, mainly dredging among the Azores and in the West-Indies.
- ***Shearwater*** **expedition, 1871**: Carpenter led this expedition from England to the Red Sea, via the Mediterranean. He was particularly interested in continuing his research into deep-water oceanic currents between the Atlantic and Mediterranean, which he had started on the Porcupine II expedition.
- ***Travailleur*** **and** ***Talisman*** **expeditions, 1880–1882**: In 1880, by invitation of the French government, Jeffreys and his colleague, Dr Norman, went together to dredge in deep waters off the Bay of Biscay. This was part of a series of French expeditions working in the area from the Bay of Biscay to the Sargasso Sea, and south to Senegal.
- ***Washington*** **expedition, 1881**: An Italian expedition in the Mediterranean, operating off the west coasts of Italy and Sicily, in depths from 60m to 3630m.
- ***Triton*** **expedition, 1882:** This expedition was commissioned to investigate the Wyville-Thomson Ridge, in the Faroe-Shetland Channel.

Harriet Wood

Harriet Wood is Curator: Invertebrate Biodiversity (Mollusca) at Amgueddfa Cymru

Source

This article has been brought together using material from the ***Hurrah for the Dredge!*** exhibition curated by Harriet Wood, Jennifer Gallichan and Anna Holmes in 2009.

THROUGH THE LENS OF LEE MILLER: HER LIFE IN PHOTOGRAPHS

Introduction

Although until recently the name of Lee Miller was only known to the 'cognoscenti', since the release of the film Lee starring Kate Winslet, she has become familiar to a far wider public. Lee Miller's name resonates today with a complex legacy - her life, in many ways, mirrors the turbulence and transformation of the 20th century itself. Her lens captured not only beauty but brutality and. through her pioneering spirit and unwavering eye, she helped redefine the roles women could play in art, journalism and throughout society.

From Poughkeepsie to Paris: A Journey into the Avant-Garde

Elizabeth "Lee" Miller was born in 1907 in Poughkeepsie, New York, the middle child of three with two brothers. Her father, an amateur photographer, was an early influence, encouraging her interest in cameras and appearing to treat her intellectually as an equal. Lee was his principal subject and he spent much time photographing her and explaining the various techniques of photography. Eyebrows were raised about his habit of photographing her nude, which continued beyond puberty until she was a young woman.

However, Miller's childhood was also marked by trauma. At the age of seven, she was raped by a family friend with whom she was staying in Brooklyn. The violation left her with gonorrhoea for which at that time there was no cure. She was obliged to endure all manner of douching and intrusive treatments during her childhood. Her mother, who had been a nurse, was fortunately at hand to perform these interventions but it is impossible to believe this did not cause the child lasting physical and psychological damage. That trauma may later have shaped her confrontational, unflinching approach to photography in facing the brutal, horrific events she encountered as a photojournalist in the Second World War.

In 1925, aged eighteen, Miller spent a year in Paris, where she studied lighting, costume, and design at the Ladislas Medgyes School of Stagecraft. Being in Paris was thrilling for her after small-town America, but she returned to New York in 1926. Back there she joined an experimental drama programme at Vassar College, taught by Hallie Flanagan, a pioneer of experimental theatre. Soon after, Miller left home at nineteen to enrol in the Art Students League of New York in lighting and painting.

A chance encounter on the streets of New York led to Miller becoming a 'supermodel'. She was saved from falling in front of a vehicle quite fortuitously by Condé Nast, who signed her up to model for Vogue straight away. That she was extremely beautiful probably helped! She made everything she wore look wonderful. Her modelling career foundered, however, when, without seeking her permission, Kotex, a sanitary towel company, used her image to promote their product. This was a disaster. But being in front of the camera never satisfied her anyway: she really wanted to be behind it taking the pictures.

In 1929 she moved to Paris and sought out Man Ray, the Surrealist artist and photographer, demanding he teach her photography. Their relationship blossomed into an affair, and she quickly became his muse, collaborator, and creative equal. Man Ray and Lee Miller together accidentally devised the technique of solarisation. While they were working in the dark room, Lee felt a rat run across her foot. Horrified, she turned on the light then quickly switched it off. The resulting effect upon the pictures they were developing was a halo around the image which was attractive and different in an ethereal way - solarisation.

Her early photographs - mannequins, fragmented bodies, dreamlike compositions - shared the Surrealists' penchant for juxtaposition and psychological depth. Lee Miller and Man Ray were at the centre of a crowd of 'glitterati' of the artistic world. Among Miller's friends were Duchess Solange d'Ayen (the fashion editor of French Vogue), Pablo Picasso and fellow Surrealists Paul Éluard and Jean Cocteau.

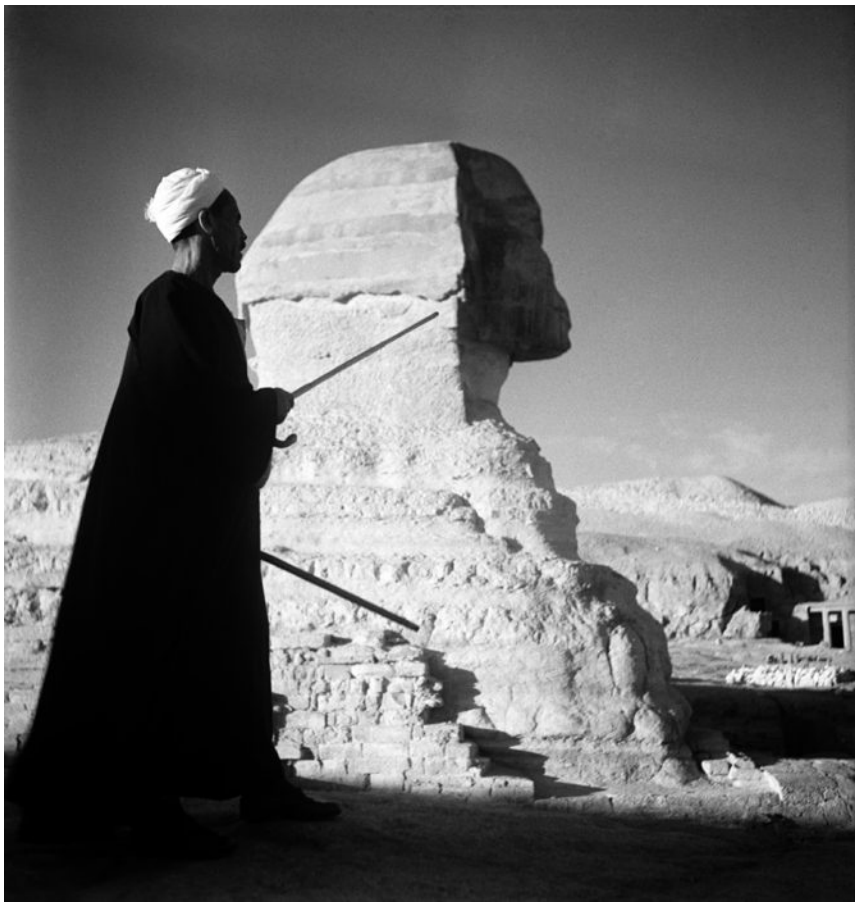
However, ever restless, she returned to New York in the early 1930s and established her own studio, photographing fashion, portraiture, and advertising. But in 1934, out of the blue, to everyone's surprise and alarm, Miller abandoned her studio to marry the Egyptian businessman and engineer, Aziz Eloui Bey, who had come to New York City to buy equipment for the Egyptian National Railways. She moved to Egypt and although she did not work as a professional photographer during this period, the photographs she took while living in Egypt with Eloui, including ***Portrait of Space***, a desert landscape seen through a torn fly screen, are regarded as some of her most striking surrealist images. In Cairo Miller took a photograph of the desert near Siwa that Magritte saw and used as inspiration for his 1938 painting ***Le Baiser***. She also contributed an object to the ***Surrealist Objects and Poems*** exhibition at the London Gallery in 1934.

By 1937 Miller had grown bored with her life in Cairo. With an acquiescent husband, ever conciliatory, she

returned to Paris and went to a party the day she arrived. There she reconciled with Man Ray and met the British surrealist painter and curator, Roland Penrose, with whom she fell in love. They travelled about Europe together before she returned eventually to Egypt.

But, by 1939, Penrose appeared in Egypt with a surrealist photobook, a love poem for her, called ***The Road is Wider than Long***, and a pair of golden handcuffs. It was clear that the marriage to Aziz Bey was over. The split was amicable and she left for Europe with his financial support, a steamer ticket and his love, which continued until he died just a year before she did.

Miller and Penrose lived in Hampstead until they moved to Farley Farm in 1949. Their only child, Antony, was born in 1947 and they were married. Wherever they were, a crowd of the glitterati of the art world gathered about them. Their son, Antony, became used to playing football with Miró or sitting on Picasso's knee. Miller had a spell of taking up cookery and making up new recipes but never seemed to entirely embrace motherhood in a traditional sense. Fortunately, Antony had a nanny who took the sort of care of him that his mother seemed unable to give.



Lee Miller, ***Man standing in front of sphinx, Giza, Egypt*** (1936).
© Lee Miller Archives, England 2025. All rights reserved.

It was only latterly, after the discovery of the archive of 60,000 photographs hidden in the attic, that the enormity of what his mother had lived through dawned on him and offered some explanation for her apparent indifference.

The Turn to Photojournalism

When the Blitz began in 1940, Miller became a freelance photojournalist for British Vogue. Her reports defied the conventions of fashion magazines. Instead of glamour, she showed women working in factories, manning anti-aircraft guns, and enduring bomb raids. These images documented how war transformed everyday life and gender roles in Britain. She could have returned to the USA at this time and was, in fact, advised by the US Embassy to do so. Instead, she chose not to leave.

Ever needing to be in the eye of the storm, as the war progressed and America entered the conflict, Miller secured accreditation as an official war correspondent for the US Army. She had been advised by a fellow war photographer, the American David E. Scherman, to apply, as she had been rejected by the British Army, which never granted accreditation to women. The US Army gave her the position of Honorary Captain, which allowed her access to the Women's Royal Air Force, the Women's Royal Naval Service, and US Army facilities in Britain. This achievement was rare, as very few women were granted such access.

Her relationship with Scherman became very close, so that at certain times he lived with Miller and Penrose in a ménage à trois. They were together in the front line at St Malo, the Vosges and Ardennes, and the liberation of Paris. Under fire she demonstrated bravery and a calm competence.

She was among the first photographers to document the liberation of Nazi concentration camps, including Buchenwald and Dachau. Her photographs from this period are some of the most harrowing in wartime history. Under her unflinching and unsparing gaze, the world was shown the reality of the cruelty of the Third Reich and forced to confront the meaning of genocide.

Even if Lee Miller is unknown to the wider public, many would have been



Lee Miller, ***The Model Elizabeth Cowell wearing a Digby Morton Suit, London*** (1941).
© Lee Miller Archives, England 2025. All rights reserved.

aware of a remarkable picture: a good-looking woman sitting in Hitler's bath. It is an unforgettable image which has become iconic: she is seen bathing in Adolf Hitler's bathtub in Munich on the day of Hitler's death, her muddy boots on his pristine bathroom mat - a final insult. It is a deeply symbolic photograph, part vengeance, part defiance, part surrealist performance. Taken by fellow photographer David E. Scherman, the two of them had happened upon his empty Munich apartment after work photographing the camps, very much in need of washing facilities - an irresistible opportunity. It remains one of the most provocative visual footnotes of the 20th century.

However, the psychological toll on Miller was immense. Like many war correspondents, she suffered from what would now be recognised as post-traumatic stress disorder. The combination of her early abuse and the horrors of war left her battling depression and alcoholism in later life. Her post-war work became sporadic, and her photographic output slowed significantly after 1950. In addition, she might well have been suffering with postpartum depression after Antony's birth.

Legacy

Lee Miller died in 1977 of cancer of the lung, largely unrecognised for her contributions. For decades, her reputation was eclipsed by the trivia of her physical beauty and numerous relationships. Her own photographic archive lay neglected in the attic of her Sussex home, Farley Farm.

It was Miller's son, Antony Penrose, who rescued and revived her legacy. Since the 1980s he has worked tirelessly to archive her work and promote her rightful place in art history. The Lee Miller Archive now holds over 60,000 negatives, prints, and documents and is an invaluable resource for curators, researchers, and educators.

In recent years, major exhibitions at the V&A, the Imperial War Museum, and Tate Modern have explored Miller's multiple identities. Here in Wales, at National Museum Cardiff, we are holding an exhibition showing the place of ***Picture Post*** in the cultural life of Britain between the 1930s and 1950s, reflecting the everyday lives and aspirations of a dramatically changing society. Lee Miller's photographs are here.

Perhaps the most enduring aspect of Miller's legacy is her challenge to the male-dominated gaze in both art and journalism. As a woman photographer, she inhabited spaces traditionally closed to women - combat zones, press rooms, locker rooms, morgues. Her perspective was unique and it reshaped how war could be seen.

In her fashion photographs, she imbued women with strength and intelligence. In her war reportage, she refused to sanitise horror. In both, she resisted the objectification she had once experienced as a model - being seen rather than seeing.

Her life also invites difficult but necessary discussions around mental health, trauma, and the personal cost of professional excellence. For many years, Miller coped by compartmentalising. Her post-war roles as a cook, hostess, and wife masked the intensity of her past. Only in the posthumous reassembly of her archive did the full picture emerge.

She has been described as The Legendary Lee Miller and with justification.

Judith Foy

Editor's Note

You can see an exhibition of Lee Miller's photographs at Tate Britain in London until 15th February 2026.

LOOKING BACK AND LOOKING FORWARD

I have always enjoyed meeting new people and learning useful transferable skills along the way. I have found that when you start in an organisation, in whatever capacity, you can often have a new perspective on how changes can be made to benefit the organisation without changing its core purpose. People need to understand the reasons for change and you have to work with them to achieve that end. People make up our organisation, have different roles, different ways of supporting us and we value their support.

After training at Homerton College, Cambridge I was a teacher of young children and thoroughly enjoyed my career. I taught in London Boroughs and Wales for thirty-nine years and a term. I became a Headteacher and joined the National Association of Headteachers. I negotiated with the Local Authority, helped and advised other Heads who had problems and represented Wales on the National Executive in London. I was elected to the General Teaching Council for the first eight years of its existence and also became involved with Teacher Support Cymru, a charity which helped teachers in difficulties. Through my working life I learned the skills that I still use today.

I was confirmed as Chair of the Friends Board of Trustees at the 2018 AGM, succeeding Richard Carter and now I feel it is time to stand down after nearly eight years in the post. I look back at what I wanted to do then and what I and the Board of Trustees, past and present, actually achieved and I have no regrets.

It is with some sadness that I resign as Chair but there have been some very positive and enjoyable sides to my time in the post but I have had to cope with both sad and joyous occasions. The saddest event was the unexpected death of Christabel Hutchings, a Board member who died suddenly in November 2024. She is still sorely missed. I have worked with some very committed, knowledgeable, idealistic, efficient, diligent and inspirational people both in the Friends' organisation and within all seven sites of Amgueddfa Cymru. I have met artists, curators, scientists, journalists and writers whom I would never have otherwise met in normal life. So I have no regrets.

Our relationships with the Museum Staff have been exemplary. All departments have been more than helpful with any queries or requests we make of them. Jane Richardson, Chief Executive, after her appointment came to a Board meeting to talk to us about her previous work and experience and some of her plans and ideas for Amgueddfa Cymru. It is wonderful to see them unfolding and we do appreciate the full support she and her staff give to the Friends.

One of our main achievements is coming through the digital age relatively unharmed and making a lot of progress. We can boast a website that tells our members and the World how our organisation works and monthly Newsletters that keep our members up to date with events and other news. We use digital platforms to communicate with our followers but also take into consideration our members who do not use computers.

Emrys Jones, Membership Secretary is also standing down. He has dealt with his task on the front line both efficiently and knowledgeably, dealing with any problems or queries that arise with subscriptions, changes in addresses and new phone numbers. I thank him for his support. Rosie Marx will take over the post from Emrys, subject to acceptance by the AGM. Others have resigned too: Judith Foy, who arranged and planned many talks with interesting and often high profile speakers, Margaret Lewis, our Events co-ordinator, and Marje Sheen, who dealt with posting our news on Social Media. Some members are remaining to provide a degree of continuity: Diane Davies, Heather Graves, Len Metcalfe, Lyn Owen and John Wilkins. I have enjoyed working with all Board members past and present and really appreciate the ideas and work they have put into our organisation.

Our membership recently has dropped significantly due to changes in bank accounts. Without our members, whose subscriptions are our main income source, we will not survive. We are relying on ALL our members to help us increase our membership in various ways. Please ask your friends to join us or post messages on Facebook, telling the world how much you have enjoyed a talk or a visit to the Museum. Bring a friend to a talk or leave membership



(Left) Gwen Williams, the outgoing Chair of the Friends and (right) Nigel Morgans, the incoming Chair.

forms with the other organisations to which you belong. Please let us know of your ideas as to how you think we could all accomplish this task. Our members are our life blood and we rely on them to keep Friends of Museum Wales alive.

Looking to the future we have some very enthusiastic and willing new members coming on to the Board, bringing many different and diverse skills and all keen to become involved with the Friends. My post will be filled by Nigel Morgans, who has been proposed unanimously by the Board. He is dynamic, has a wealth of ideas and his working life in industry has taught him that deadlines need to be met and within budget. He has an MA degree in Regional History and is already organising talks and visits abroad. He keeps calm in new situations as they arise and has been a pleasure to work with. He communicates and relates to people well and has a sense of humour. What more could we want? I will stay on the Board as an ordinary member to assist Nigel as he takes over and becomes familiar with the post of Chair. I know he will be the source of many positive ideas which he will see through to fruition.

I am going to fill my spare time with a return to our garden - the chickweed, bindweed and other pernicious weeds don't know what's going to hit them - but I also will have time to keep in touch with all the friends I have made along my journey.

Thank you all for your kind support and friendship.

Gwen Williams

Gwen Williams is Chair of Friends Amgueddfa Cymru.

FILMING AT ST FAGANS

Recently, a major drama series was being filmed at St Fagans with the production taking place over seven days. It was a massive operation with one hundred and fifty film crew attending, filming in two locations (Oakdale and Gwalia), involving horses and carts, massive cranes to hold up lighting and blue screens, a small 'village' full of catering facilities, trailers and lorries, with the production taking over large parts of the site's car park. It involved late nights and early alarm clocks and working weekends. The whole project was arranged through the Museum's commercial hire team, who would have been approached by the film team's locations scouts with a request to use our site.

Because the historic buildings and their contents were going to be impacted by the project, conservation and curatorial staff were roped in to advise and oversee the three stages of preparation, filming itself and deconstruction of set-build. For us, in particular, this meant attending several 'recces' with the aim of nailing down what the production was trying to achieve and what that would involve: namely, what collections of ours they would want to remove from the filming locations and what alterations they had in mind for the rooms and the building. Following the recce, the film crew would submit an 'Intentions Document' with a breakdown of everything they would require and method statements of any proposed alterations. We would then get a chance to feedback on this and comment on what was and was not possible. In this case it included things like wanting to put a tinted film onto the windows, changing blinds, laying down lino, applying new tile-effect surfacing to walls, covering up logos in the entry way to Oakdale and disguising modern fixtures such as fire alarms, exit signs etc.

On the days prior to the crew arriving, we prepped the rooms by moving furniture and social history collections. Members of the Building and Estates team were involved in overseeing changes to doors and light fittings. On the set-up days for the crew we would condition check any props that they were introducing into the building to make sure none of them were infested with any pests or mould and we would ask them to apply pads to any of the items they were going to place on our own tabletops.

On the filming days members from commercial hire company helped to reiterate to a new team of people that we are a non-smoking site, that neither food nor drink can be brought into the buildings and that aerosols cannot be used. Sometimes we would be expected to deal with last-minute requests from the



Filming outside the Oakdale Institute.
© Amgueddfa Cymru - Museum Wales



Filming outside Gwalia Stores.
© Amgueddfa Cymru - Museum Wales

director. Apart from that, we had to try and be as unobtrusive as possible so as not to get in the way of the crew's work, who were, of course, under pressure to get their shots in that day. Finally, the remainder of the days were used up to 'strike', i.e. to take down all the sets and return the buildings to their normal arrangement. In particular, we had to have an eye out to make sure the crew did not inadvertently remove any of our own accessions in their hurry to move on.

These big filming events involve a lot of pre-planning and staff time but they are a great opportunity for working with different staff teams across the site. They also provide a substantial income source for the Museum. This specific film project alone has generated £43,700 in income which has translated into £26,500 in Net Profit. With another week's worth of filming coming up in early January, this time concentrated in St Fagans Castle, we are looking forward to being involved in the excitement of once again seeing the skill of the film crew at work. We are hoping things might run even more smoothly as the crew are getting used to our requirements and parameters of working within our historic buildings.

Kim Thüsing

Kim Thüsing is Senior Conservator Textiles at Amgueddfa Cymru.

PERSPECTIVE(S): *A FRONTIER IN DEPTH* BY HANNAN JONES

In the April edition of ***Oriel*** Jane Richardson posed the question, "*What are museums for?*" Do we "*use our spaces effectively to challenge thinking and orthodoxy*"? How much should we "*use our spaces to protest against prejudice, injustice and ignorance*"? The project ***Perspective(s)***, which is a joint venture with Artes Mundi, is one way that Amgueddfa Cymru is finding an answer to her question.

Artes Mundi has long worked with the Museum to break new ground in conceptual and multi-format art. The Artes Mundi Foundation does much more than just fund a biennial international art prize. Throughout this year it is giving the opportunity for selected artists to work in all of the Museum sites to find ways to retell or discover new ways to consider the past, present and possibly future; to explore our perceptions of who we are and, thereby, develop anti-racist inclusivity. The title of the project is ***Perspective(s)***. One of the projects was ***A Frontier in Depth***.



Roman Plaque in the form of a Tragic Mask (Ivory, Height 10cm, Thickness 1cm).
© Amgueddfa Cymru - Museum Wales



Aerial view of the Roman Amphitheatre at Caerleon.
© Cadw and used under Open Government Licence

Hannan Jones chose the Roman Amphitheatre and National Roman Legion Museum as her partner to explore, through sound installations, a number of short films and community led pottery workshop, ways to refresh our views of what creates the present. The Roman influence pervades Caerleon, but as the films show there are many ambiguities about who played what part. Gods are not always obvious and some of the carved faces that have been unearthed could be Barbarians. But were they actually representations of local people or immigrants? Little is known about individuals who were not Roman "heroes" and yet Caerleon has been and still is a place which has seen many foreigners coming and going, with shifting boundaries of rivers, politics, and economics.

In one of Jones's short films, the Curator, Dr Mark Lewis, brings out of his temperature- and atmosphere-controlled stores a plaque of a head. Against a background of echoes and the moan of empty vessels he discusses the stories it might tell; his admiration of the work is infectious.

Hannan Jones translated these ambiguities into sound and community pottery. In the amphitheatre, for a single day only, the all-round sound system bombarded visitors not with the tread of soldiers marching but with eerie sounds, quiet at first and building up to very loud, through recordings of what seems to be mystic sounds, distant booms and possibly a train rumbling through the countryside. Interspersed with these were rather inaudible words – or maybe poetry. But the question has to be, "*was it a life-enhancing experience*" or just an unfathomable interference in the simple enjoyment of the amphitheatre? From discussion with visitors, it seemed to be the Marmite test. But that may be just what it should be. Complex ideas are difficult to tell visitors looking for the 2nd Augustan Legion!

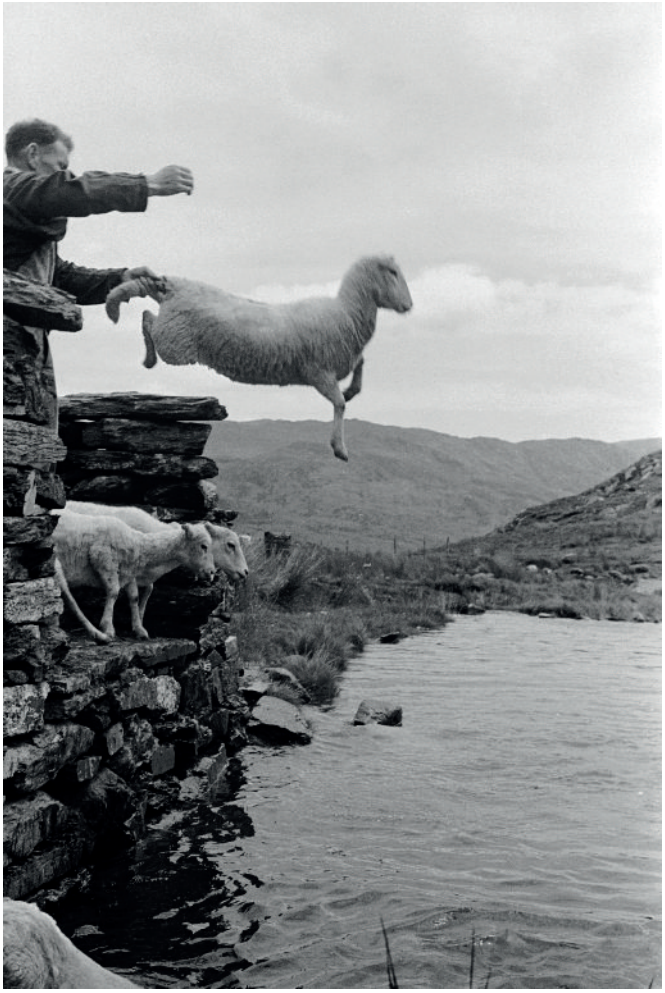
Fiona Peel

MUSEUM NEWS

Picture Post: A 20th Century Icon

A new photographic exhibition has opened at National Museum Cardiff which traces the history of ***Picture Post***. Founded in 1938, ***Picture Post*** was the leading British example of an international phenomenon - the rise of photojournalism and the photo-essay. It provided news in a visual form before the rise of television and at its peak it had a readership of 1.3 million but during the 1950s readership declined and it closed in 1957.

The magazine was the inspiration of a Hungarian filmmaker, photojournalist and author, Stefan Lorant who summed up his use of images, "*I tried to use photographs as a composer uses notes*". He left Britain for America in 1940 and his assistant, Tom Hopkinson was appointed as Editor and it was he who established the core values of the magazine: editorial independence and priority of photographs in telling a story. He



Grace Robertson, ***Sheep being thrown into the stream in Hafod y Llan, Eryri*** which was used in an article ***Shearing Time in Snowdonia*** (11th August 1951).
© Grace Robertson /Picture Post/Hulton Archive/Getty Images

also had the knack of choosing some of the finest photographers to work for the magazine.

The exhibition looks at the work of ***Picture Post*** in three main areas.

The first is entitled, "Society and Politics". The exhibition includes images from articles about the Clydeside shipbuilders, Welsh Miners (one that intrigued me was taken in the Rhondda by Edith Tudor-Hart) and London's East End. In its international coverage it was at the forefront of raising awareness about the persecution of Jews in Germany particularly with a landmark article about Kristallnacht entitled ***Back to the Middle Ages*** (26th November 1938).

In the second area, "Conflict and Empire", there are images stressing the importance of the soldiers from across the Empire who fought in WWII. It also looks at a key moment in the history of ***Picture Post*** with a display focusing on the photographs that Bert Hardy took to illustrate a projected article on the Korean war, which was intended to illustrate the mistreatment of prisoners of war by the South Korean army. The article was rejected by the owner of the magazine, Edward Hulton, on the grounds that they would give "*aid and comfort to the enemy*" and Tom Hopkinson resigned in protest. The magazine never really recovered from this and there began a steady decline in readership.

The third area looked at is "Culture and Leisure" covering the changing fashions, pastimes and trends in everyday life with a focus on famous faces from sport and popular culture. Here you can see one of Lee Miller's fashion photographs taken to illustrate an article, ***Travel Light for Whitsun***.

Two articles about Welsh life are highlighted: one was on sheep-shearing in Snowdonia (see the image) and the other looked at life in the the village of Tryweryn as it was facing the threat of being drowned in order to provide water for Liverpool.

The exhibition has been organised in conjunction with the Hulton Archive (Getty Images) and the Tom Hopkinson Centre for Media History (Cardiff University). It runs until 9th November.

Developments at National Slate Museum

Quarrymen from the National Slate Museum, who usually hold demonstrations at the Museum in Llanberis, are instead demonstrating their skills and craftsmanship at Penrhyn Castle.

Penrhyn Slate Quarry established by the Pennant family, dominated the Welsh slate industry for almost 150 years and was notorious for its harsh working conditions. In 1900, over 2000 workers went on strike for better wages and working conditions - a culmination of several years of dissatisfaction and unrest. Known locally as the Penrhyn Lockout, the strike lasted for over three years and was one of the longest and most bitter industrial disputes in British history. It caused incredible hardship for the Quarrymen and their families and ripped apart a community, dividing it into strike 'faithfuls' who remained on strike or left to find other work elsewhere, and 'bradwrs' (traitors) who returned to work.

Many in the local community still regard the Castle as a symbol of wealth and oppression. Historically, Quarrymen would not have crossed the threshold of the Castle and many of their families have struggled to do so since then. Now managed by National Trust Cymru, Penrhyn Castle and Garden has been working with artists and the local community for over a decade to explore more about this history and re-engage with its local community.

For the National Slate Museum, the opportunity to have their quarrymen demonstrating at Penrhyn Castle is a key feature of its campaign, ***Museum on the Move***, which will run whilst redevelopment work takes place at the Museum.

As part of this almost the entire collection – around 10,000 objects - has been moved off site to a new dedicated accessible collections centre at Llandygai just outside Bangor so making it available to visitors

while the museum is closed temporarily. A programme is being planned which will provide opportunities for people to visit and experience and work with the collection in its new temporary home.

Also, news has come through that The National Lottery Heritage Fund is providing £12m by for the redevelopment of the National Slate Museum, The grant is a significant milestone in the plans for the Museum. It means that work on the redevelopment can move forward to the next stage, thereby guaranteeing the future of the Museum and its role in telling the story of the North Wales slate industry.

Wales REACH

A new collaboration project has been launched which aims at celebrating the heritage, creativity, and untold stories of communities across Wales. The initiative is Wales REACH (Residents Engaging in Arts, Culture and Heritage) which is working with three specific communities: those in Butetown in Cardiff, Dyffryn Nantlle in Gwynedd and Sandfields in Port Talbot as well as with people with learning disabilities in Rhondda Cynon Taf and the Vale of Glamorgan and with people in rural communities in Pembrokeshire.

The aim is to uncover hidden histories, spotlight local talent, and explore Amgueddfa Cymru's collections. At the heart of the project will be heritage and creative workshops, designed not just to explore the past but to bring people together in order to help them develop new skills and build lasting relationships. It is hoped the project will culminate in a set of online showcases as well as a physical exhibition.

Wales REACH is a partnership between thirteen organisations led by Amgueddfa Cymru and The Open University. It is funded with a grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and the current phase started in autumn 2024 and is scheduled to run until autumn 2026.

National Waterfront Museum shortlisted for a Family Friendly Museum Award

The National Waterfront Museum has been shortlisted for the Kids in Museums Family Friendly Museum Award. The charity, Kids in Museums, has been running this prestigious annual award since 2004 and it is given to the most family friendly heritage sites in the UK.

It is unique in the UK as the only museum award to be judged by families. From February to late April, families across the UK voted for their favourite heritage attraction on the Kids in Museums website. A panel of museum experts, children and young people then whittled down hundreds of nominations to a shortlist of eighteen heritage attractions in various categories. The National Waterfront Museum is vying three other museums in the Best Medium Museum Category.



Installing one of the heat pumps at St Fagans.
© Amgueddfa Cymru - Museum Wales

Over the summer holidays, each museum will have been visited by undercover family judges assessing each museum against a set of guidelines as to what makes a great museum visit for visitors of all ages. The winners will be announced at an awards ceremony in October.

Lowering the Museum's Carbon Footprint

Amgueddfa Cymru is looking to the future by implementing low carbon heating solutions across four of its seven sites. This will transform the way these sites are heated, through the installation of air source heat pumps (ASHP), which will result in a saving of nearly fifty tCO_2e a year (tCO2e stands for metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent and is a standard unit for counting greenhouse gas emissions regardless of whether they're from carbon dioxide or another gas, such as methane).

The participating sites are St Fagans National Museum of History, the National Slate Museum, the National Wool Museum and the Big Pit National Coal Museum. At St Fagans, five natural gas fired boilers are being replaced with ASHPs. The upgrades are taking place at the main building, as well as at Ysgubor Fawr, Oakdale and Gweithdy buildings. The National Slate Museum, in Llanberis, is replacing a ten year-old oil-fired boiler whilst Big Pit is replacing a twelve-year-old natural gas fired boiler. Finally, the National Wool Museum is replacing two of their liquefied petroleum gas- fired boilers with ASHP systems.

Diane Davies

FRIENDS ACTIVITIES

West Yorkshire: April 2025

Having had a very enjoyable tour of North Yorkshire in 2023 it was thought that the Friends would be keen to explore another part of the county. Mills, museums and machinery featured on the itinerary together with the possibility of studying the colourful works of local artist David Hockney and the literary genius of the Brontës.

The journey began early and heading steadily northwards a first stop was made at Denby Pottery Village where there was time to browse at a variety of outlets and have some lunch. Our main destination, though, was the historic Tudor/Jacobean mansion, Temple Newsam, situated on the outskirts of Leeds. First mentioned in the Domesday Book, it has, over the centuries, passed through many styles of building and been owned by various families. The imposing exterior has been compared to that of Hampton Court and the spacious grounds were designed by Capability Brown. The house contains many treasures including some fine French furniture and a collection of Chippendale, which is on permanent loan. One outstanding item is a beautiful picture frame covered in exquisite beadwork and showing great skill in its intricate working. Among the previous residents was Lord Darnley, who was born here in 1545 and was the ill-fated second husband of Mary Queen of Scots.

Saltaire, the model village and now a World Heritage Site, was the focus of the first day's visit. It was established by Titus Salt for the workers in his mills - moving them from the slums of Bradford and so providing better living conditions. These included a school for the children, alms-houses, a hospital and washhouses. Salt was a notable philanthropist, manufacturer and politician who acquired his great



House and formal gardens at Temple Newsam.
Photo: Diane Davies



Interior of Saltaire Congregational Church (now United Reformed Church) commissioned and paid for by Titus Salt.
Photo: Diane Davies

fortune by his discovery that spinning and weaving the soft wool from alpacas produced a fine cloth which became highly popular throughout Europe and beyond.

Guides vary greatly and, while waiting for the arrival of our designated escort, there was speculation whether he or she would be knowledgeable, interesting and not too vague or lengthy in explanations. There was much surprise to see a lady dressed in shabby clothes and battered flower decked straw hat join the group. This proved to be our extraordinary guide, Maria Glot whom we soon discovered to be a most entertaining and knowledgeable raconteur. Maria began her talk by assuming the character of a poor mill worker and, in highly amusing and entertaining manner (which involved some members of the group), she told of the life of the mill workers and their families, of their poverty and good humour and the tricks they employed in evading the restrictions of living in the tightly controlled village.

Continuing in more serious mode, she related the life of Titus Salt, explaining that, although he is rightly

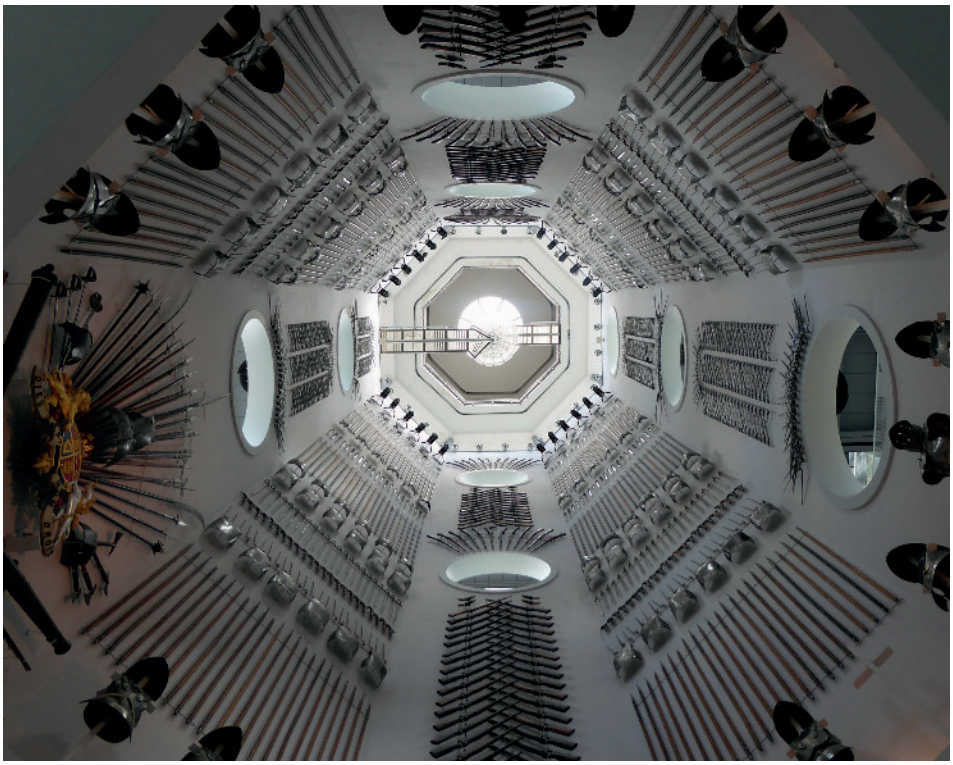


The Brontë Parsonage at Haworth. Photo: Diane Davies

regarded as a benefactor in founding the village, his chief motivation was to enhance his name and amass a great fortune. This was illustrated by studying the vast building in which she gave her talk, the United Reform Church which is decorated with numerous plaques inscribed with his monogram and with his assumed coat of arms, which had been designed by him some time before he was knighted. The resulting effect appears more like a temple to himself than that of a sacred edifice.

This was a long talk followed by a walk around Saltaire to see the different types of houses and the rather forbidding watchtowers on the street corners, from which inspectors employed by Salt could report on the residents and check that they were keeping to his rules. These included a ban on public gatherings and restrictions on recreational activities. Across the road from the Reform Church stands Salts Mill, now a centre for the arts and providing an opportunity to study some of the works of David Hockney on display there. It also contains an excellent book department and several welcome places to eat.

A visit to Haworth Parsonage Museum was an opportunity to study the Brontë family. Patrick Brontë, the father of the family, was the local vicar and resided here with his daughters Charlotte, Emily and Anne, the celebrated authors, and their brother, Branwell. The house itself survives much as it was in the 19th century and maintains the atmosphere in which the sisters produced their celebrated works. It was intriguing to imagine them in the rather cramped conditions of the parsonage, writing by lamplight and breaking off to attend to the household chores. In the excellent introductory talk, it was explained that admirers come from all over the world (chiefly from Japan and USA) to see where the great novels, ***Jane Eyre***, ***Wuthering Heights*** and ***The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*** were created. A walk around the village revealed that although inevitably a 'tourist trap', it retains enough original



The Hall of Steel at Royal Armouries Museum: A staircase adorned with 2,500 items displayed as they would have been in the Tower of London in the 17th century.
Photo: Diane Davies

features to visualise the lives of those who once lived in this corner of Yorkshire. A journey on the local steam train, which featured in the film ***The Railway Children***, carried the group five miles from Haworth to Keighly and the end of a day filled with interest and variety.

Leeds, the largest city in West Yorkshire, was developed as a mill town in the Industrial Revolution and is now a thriving modern city. It is celebrated for its elegant Victorian arcades and has a fine art gallery, five universities and several museums. One such is the Royal Armouries Museum, situated in a spacious modern building on the banks of the River Aire. It is part of the National Collection of Arms and Armour originally housed in the Tower of London. The variety of the collections held here is extensive and covers many facets: from magnificent war elephants displayed in fighting armour to elaborate arrays of swords arranged in dramatic patterns from traditional Samurai apparel to costumes from famous films plus historic documents relating to global warfare. All are clearly exhibited with detailed explanations. Talks and demonstrations are frequent: crossbow skills, falconry and jousting among the diverse topics covered by the knowledgeable staff.

The next destination was Sunny Bank Mills, which gave an insight into the importance of the textile industry. The former mill was owned by the Gaunt family and it was John Gaunt, a sixth-generation member of the family, who explained the history of the older part of the mill containing ancient looms and various items used in the weaving process. In another gallery there were displays of many fabrics, both historic and modern. A comprehensive collection is held here together with patterns and sewing implements. The mill is now a business and artistic community and has been recently used as the setting for the TV programme ***Great British Sewing Bee***.

The last day of this fascinating tour was to be spent in Bradford, City of Culture for 2025. While waiting for the National Science and Media Museum to open there was time to admire the striking central square with its large fountain and the enormous City Hall. However, on entering the museum it appeared that it is at present only partly open, with most departments remaining inaccessible following the closure in 2023 to construct two new galleries. It was possible to view the beautiful ***The Four Seasons, Woldgate Woods***, a video installation created by David Hockney, full of colour and light, which consists of four screens, each representing a season which is constantly shifting and moving. Other than this and the Kodak display and an area devoted to games for children there was little to see, so the decision was taken to set off for Cardiff earlier than planned.

This was an excellent tour, full of variety and interest, with many absorbing venues and themes. The Thorpe Park Hotel provided a comfortable and welcoming base with helpful staff. As ever, sincere thanks are due to Len for his organisation and careful planning and also to our excellent driver Steve, who had only been notified of the assignment the previous evening!

Diana Wilson

Batsford Arboretum and Chastleton House and Garden: May 2025

On a warm sunny day in May an almost full coach of Friends set off for a morning visit to Batsford Arboretum and an afternoon visit to Chastleton House and Gardens, both in the Cotswolds. I do enjoy exploring gardens and Batsford Arboretum, in particular, proved to be an unexpected delight in that respect.

Its role as an arboretum could be said to have started in 1886, when the Batsford Estate was inherited by the impressively named Algernon Bertram Freeman-Mitford (so a relation of the famous and infamous Mitford sisters) and who, in 1905, became plain Lord Redesdale. During the 1860s he worked for the Foreign Office, mainly in China and Japan, and he fell in love with the landscapes of these countries. Then in the 1870s he worked for the Ministry of



Bronze Foo Dog with one paw on a cloisonné ball. A Foo Dog is actually a lion and helps to ward off harmful spirits. Photo Diane Davies

Works which had charge of Kew Royal Botanic Gardens.

Thus, when he inherited the Estate, he had a very clear vision of what he wanted to achieve. He, therefore, set about changing the formal gardens that he found there into a garden more like those he had seen in the Far East, creating an artificial water course and planting in a very naturalistic manner.

On his death it was bought by Gilbert Willis (who became Lord Dulverton). During World War II the gardens became neglected so, when his son inherited, he decided to turn the estate into an arboretum and created the trails and spaces that can be seen today. His planting concentrated on beautiful and/or endangered species, primarily of Birch, Maple, Oak, Mountain Ash and a range of conifers. On his death the Arboretum was left to the Batsford Foundation, a charity which promotes research and education in relation to the natural environment and which runs the Arboretum today.

So the Arboretum is a mixture of well over a dozen areas, some of which emphasise the interest of Lord Redesdale with a Japanese feel or that of the second Lord Dulverton with a host of specialist trees to admire or that of the Trust that now runs the Arboretum, such as a recently created wildlife lake and flower meadow - together with combinations of all three.

Be that as it may, what it means is that the gardens were a real pleasure to walk around, with all sorts of interesting discoveries to be found as one wandered along the various paths enjoying the shade on what was turning out to be a very hot day for May. On my



Chastleton House from the Best Garden.
Photo: Diane Davies

way around I came across a hermit's cave, a thatched cottage, a Japanese Rest house complete with a dragon to ward off evil spirts and various intriguing sculptures nestling in some of the grassy areas, including a Buddha, two Japanese Deer and a Foo Dog with one of its paws on a globe - all from Japan and installed in the garden in 1900.

Chastleton House and gardens was a much smaller site to explore. The House dates to Jacobean times and still looks very much as would have done in that period thanks to its owners often being in debt and certainly never having enough money to indulge in the latest fashion in stately home design. Indeed, the last owner retreated to living in just a few rooms of the house, whilst the remainder deteriorated around her. On her death in 1991, it was acquired by the National Memorial Heritage Fund and given to the National Trust. The Trust had to carry out extensive conservation work before they were able to open it to



Batsford House (now privately owned) from a glade in the Arboretum.
Photo: Diane Davies

the public in 1997. What struck me in touring the house was the ornate plasterwork ceilings and especially the barrel vaulted ceiling of the Long Gallery complete with grotesque masks, rather than a dragon, to ward off evil spirits.

Many thanks to Heather Graves and Len Metcalfe for organising such a fascinating and enjoyable day.

Diane Davies

Hidden Gems of London and Beyond: June 2025

Our first day's destination was Windsor but *en route* we had the bonus of a stop in Bath for elevenses in the vicinity of Bath Abbey and the Pump Rooms. From Windsor we enjoyed a chartered boat trip with afternoon tea on board and an interesting running commentary on the Eton College buildings, playing fields and boathouses funded not only from fees but also income from land all over England, bequeathed by parents in lieu of fees.

The next morning, we had a leisurely stroll from our hotel via Kensington High Street to nearby Sambourne House in Stafford Crescent which proved to be a Victorian time capsule where art was cherished for art's sake. Edward and Marion Sambourne filled their house with pictures on William Morris papered walls in rooms filled with furniture, despite Marion sometimes protesting at "*yet another delivery of chairs*" according to the diaries of their children Maud and Roy. Maud's daughter, Anne (mother of Anthony Armstrong- Jones) founded the Victorian Society here.

We continued to nearby Leighton House, the home of leading Victorian sculptor and artist Frederic, Lord Leighton (1830-1896). From its construction in the 1860s until his death this house absorbed all his time, money and effort. Designed by the architect George Aitchison, the south facade facing the street gives the effect of an Italian Palazzo while the North facade, overlooking a substantial garden, is dominated by a large studio window on the first floor. The only bedroom is surprisingly modest. His trip to Damascus laid the foundations for the wonderful tiles that line the walls of the Silk Room (1894-5) completed only months before Leighton's death at home in the only place where he was truly happy.

The following morning we visited Syon House and Gardens, home to the Dukes of Northumberland since 1597, whose ancestors included the brother of Jane Seymour, the third wife of Henry VIII and mother of Edward VI. This house was built on abbey foundations and during Mary Tudor's reign there was still a nunnery but Elizabeth I expelled the nuns. The house contains many notable portraits including one of Walter Raleigh, who played his part in founding the colony of Virginia. The 18th century architect, Robert Adams, transformed the Tudor Great Hall into Regency splendour using sixty-two gilded and painted Corinthian pilasters, along with classical stucco mouldings, to replace heavy Jacobean panelled walls. In 1994, ***The Madness of King George*** was filmed there followed by Jane Austen's ***Emma*** in 1996 and



The River Thames with Windsor Castle in the background Photo: Dorn Swaffield

Gosford Park in 2001. Upstairs we visited two bedrooms furnished for visits by the young Victoria and her mother, the Duchess of Kent. Apparently, Victoria enjoyed the relative informalities of Syon House compared with the strict rules of Kensington Palace.

After lunch at Syon House, we set off to Strawberry Hill House in Twickenham where Horace Walpole, son of Britain's first Prime Minister, Robert Walpole, transformed a modest house into his own 'little gothic castle' with the result that Strawberry Hill is a magical house with a magnificent vaulted gallery, which Walpole described as "*all Gothicism and gold, crimson and looking glass*". Sadly, Walpole's collection of antiques and curios was dispersed in the mid-nineteenth century but the house itself survives and has been restored to the decorative state it was in at the time of Walpole's death.



Architectural embellishments at Dorney Court. Photo: Dorn Swaffield



Inner courtyard of Syon House. Photo: Gwen Williams

After checking out of our Kensington hotel we departed for a visit to Dorney Court for a guided tour of this four hundred and fifty year-old Manor House with a small farm, gardens and a garden centre. Our tour began in the Palmer family Church of St James (now a popular wedding venue) where our guide pointed out the palm carved above the Palmer family pew to show that their name derived from the palm brought back by pilgrims to the Holy Land. A sixteenth century family tomb shows that five of fifteen children predeceased their parents and the surviving boys were not deemed worthy to inherit Dorney Court. Instead, it was left to one of their sisters who, however, predeceased her parents so the house reverted to the male line. But even to this day, if the firstborn is a daughter she may inherit if she so wishes.

The house itself was restored to its Tudor appearance after a Regency facade was removed and as much as possible of the Tudor interior and furnishings have been reinstated after having been sold off in the 18th century to stave off bankruptcy. A wooden staircase was installed in place of the original rope ladder descending from a trapdoor which meant that an expectant mother unable to safely negotiate a rope ladder would be confined to her bedroom for many months. Dorney-House is Grade 1 listed and with its lake and celebrated arboretum is considered the finest rural settlement west of London.

Margaret Phelps



Dant y Llew: yr ysgythriad cyntaf yn ***A Curious Herbal*** gan Elizabeth Blackwell
The Dandelion: the first plate in ***A Curious Herbal*** by Elizabeth Blackwell.