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Penrhys gan / by Ernest Zobole

Hydref 2024 October

**Y Cymoedd: Arddangosfa yn Amgueddfa Genedlaethol Caerdydd /
Valleys: Exhibition at National Museum Cardiff**

A MESSAGE TO OUR READERS

The covers for this edition celebrate exhibitions. You may well recognise the image on the back cover as one of Amgueddfa Cymru's iconic paintings. At the moment of writing, it is to be found in Paris but, by the time you get to read this, it will be in Washington DC. That is because it forms an integral part of an exhibition celebrating the 150th anniversary of the start of Impressionism. An article on the exhibition in Paris outlines its central role not only in publicity for the exhibition but in a virtual reality world created so that visitors can experience the artistic life of Paris in 1874 at the dawn of Impressionism. The front cover celebrates a more traditional exhibition but one you can see in Cardiff. This explores how the people and landscapes of the south Wales valleys have inspired artists over the centuries. You can read about the artist who painted it in Museum News, which also highlights other major exhibitions being hosted by Amgueddfa Cymru across its various sites.

Art also features in a major article on the life and work of Ray Howard-Jones based on a book the author has recently written about her. She was a 20th century artist who was inspired by the seascapes of south Wales and particularly that of Pembrokeshire where she made her home. The article emphasises her contribution to Welsh art and how a significant proportion of her work is held by Amgueddfa Cymru.

When the Friends was originally founded in the 1950s, its main purpose seems to have been the purchase of artefacts for the Museum's collection. One such artefact was a Cambrian Pottery mug, made to commemorate the death of Nelson at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805. So there is an article telling not only the history of the mug but also the surprising story of a visit by Nelson to the Pottery in 1802 as part of a tour of south Wales along with his mistress and her husband.

When we think of conservation it is often in terms of bringing the best out of great art. However, the

breadth of Amgueddfa Cymru's collections means that all sorts of objects require conservation and that can often present special challenges. This edition has two articles on this topic. The first looks at preserving two banners recently donated to the Museum; they were used in the 1980s in campaigns in Wales against the apartheid regime of South Africa. The banners are both artworks and social documents and the article looks at the problems in preserving both aspects for future generations and how they were overcome. The second looks at the conservation of taxidermy model of a Dodo that the Museum bought in 1915. After over one hundred years it was in need of a makeover and the article looks at how a bird, that died out before taxidermy was invented, was created and what was needed to make it look as good as new.

Volunteers play a huge role in the backroom work of cultural institutions. A recent initiative by the Welsh Government has been in digitising items held by public organisations such as county archives and record offices. The article looks at the work of **#CrowdCymru**, which uses volunteers to create digital records of historic photographs, letters etc to allow all of us to gain digital access to them.

Volunteers also feature in an article about the celebration of Halloween at St Fagans. It describes the important part volunteers play in constructing a Wicker Man; individualised heads are constructed for attaching to straw bodies ready for the three nights of celebration which take place in St Fagans at the end of October.

Friends Activities has articles on a five-day trip to Southern England and a visit to Bath. Finally, Friends News celebrates the restart of the organ recitals at National Museum Cardiff after the hiatus caused by the Covid lockdowns.

Hope there is something for everyone to read and enjoy.

Diane Davies

Next Edition

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

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Front Cover: Ernest Zobole, *Penrhys* (Oil on canvas, 81cm x 59.5cm, c.1951) (see piece in Museum News on page 25) © Amgueddfa Cymru - Museum Wales

Back Cover: Pierre-Auguste Renoir, *La Parisienne* (Oil on canvas, 163cm x 108cm, 1874) (see article on page 3) © Amgueddfa Cymru - Museum Wales

IN SEARCH OF THE BLUE LADY: A TALE OF TWO EXHIBITIONS

On Monday 29th April this year Meurig and I were at London St Pancras station waiting to catch the Eurostar train at 10:31 to Paris, Gard du Nord. We had decided, having discovered that we were free of commitments for a whole week and after being inspired by an article in *The Guardian*, we would take advantage of the time by going to Paris to see *La Parisienne*, known here as 'The Blue Lady.' The painting by Renoir is currently on loan to the Musée d'Orsay from Amgueddfa Cymru as part of the exhibition, *Paris 1874: Inventing Impressionism* which marks the 150th Anniversary of the birth of the Impressionist Movement in Paris.

We had tickets for the Exhibition for the day after we arrived. There was queue upon queue upon queue – the longest being the one for those without tickets. There must have been over a thousand people waiting

to go in. We even met visitors from California sitting alongside us and, like us, having the obligatory coffee on arrival.

There had been a lot of publicity in the national press about the Exhibition in Paris. The Musée d'Orsay has a huge collection of Impressionist works but has also borrowed some from art galleries worldwide including our 'Blue Lady' by Renoir, a compelling painting which I am sure most of you have seen in our Museum. It really stands out from the other paintings that are there, for a number of reasons, mainly because of its large size, the emphasis on the bustle dress the Lady is wearing, all shades of blue with little else to distract you and of course the way it is painted in true impressionist style. Images of her were being used for publicity on the Metro and at the ticket office; *La Parisienne* even met us in the Virtual Reality experience and guided us through it. The marketing had obviously been vigorous as the crowds of people from across the world showed.

Before 1874 the ‘official’ exhibition at the Salon, an annual event, had been the main showcase for artists’ works, which were carefully selected by a jury under the control of the Directeur des Beaux-Arts. Often up to two thousand paintings were hung frame to frame and they were a world away from the ‘too freshly painted’ works of the future impressionists, whose works had often been rejected. It was of course through the Salon that work was sold.

In 1874, the exhibition, which opened its doors on the 15th April at eight o’clock in the evening in the famous photographer Nadar’s former studio, brought together independent artists who had chosen to exhibit their works outside the official Salon. The painters involved included Claude Monet, Auguste Renoir, Berthe Morisot, Paul Cézanne, Camille Pissarro and Edgar Degas. Some two hundred works, selected by the artists themselves, were exhibited with no involvement from a jury or a dealer, which had been the practice until then. The artists had taken control of the presentation of their work and hopefully how it was sold.

Back to the present-day exhibition - we walked through at least six rooms exhibiting the works of art we had come to see which included paintings, drawings and sculptures by these and other very famous artists. They all illustrated an obvious desire to embrace change.



Queuing for the exhibition outside the Musée d’Orsay.
Photo: Gwen Williams

Their paintings were ‘impressions’ of what they saw. It was also how they perceived people and landscapes. It was in the subjects of their paintings, which included how people lived and the menial tasks many of them undertook: the washerwoman, the house painter, the woman ironing. They observed their environment closely. They painted outdoors and noted the influence that light had at different times of the day on water, on buildings, on the sky. The recent invention of ready mixed paint in metal tubes enabled them to give spontaneity to their new methods of applying paint to a canvas and they no longer had to paint in their studios.

The final room to visit took us on a virtual journey, through the headsets we were given, to the moment that Impressionism was born one hundred and fifty



The Musée d’Orsay, Paris as seen from the north west.
Photograph: Daniel Vorndran DXR and used under Creative Commons BY-SA license



Advertisement for the exhibition on the Metro.
Photo: Gwen Williams

years ago. We walked into a black room but, through the eye pieces and earpieces attached to our headsets, we could see the Blue Lady who welcomed us and instructed us to follow her to Nadar's former studio, where Renoir and Degas were finishing hanging their paintings. It was quite disconcerting at the beginning to be in an environment that you had never experienced before, until you got accustomed to the technology.

Outside the studio we could observe Paris nightlife, with horse drawn carriages clattering close to us. Parisian gentlemen in top hats and ladies in bustles were enjoying the nightlife which Paris has always offered. Café culture was alive and well then too. We looked through windows at Haussman's newly built Boulevards; we walked onto balconies where we saw artists painting on easels outside; we spent time with the young artists; we travelled by steam train to Bougival, west of Paris, where many of them worked; we were tempted to sit on a very inviting red velvet covered settee in a living room which was actually not there but we could see it though the technology in our headsets. We were taken outside close to the edge of a cliff where an artist was painting the seaside landscape and we did not dare to go any closer for fear of falling from the edge of that cliff.

There were other live people besides us in the room but we could only avoid them when they appeared in front of us as white wire covered human shapes. Through our headsets, we were guided to change

direction. Our eventual way out was up some steps which seemed precariously narrow but of course were just a flat surface. It was with some relief that we finished our journey – feeling quite exhilarated but drained by the amazing immersive tour we had had thanks to modern day technology. I would not have missed it for the world.

We spent our last day in Paris visiting Sacré Coeur and then home again to London on Eurostar. We reflected on our decision to go to see the Blue Lady – delighted that we went, a unique experience and well worth it. She is off to Washington next and then back to her adopted home in Cardiff after her tour halfway around the globe. I am sure she will be pleased to come home and we will

be pleased to see her.

Back in Cardiff, the Van Gogh *Portrait of the Artist* (1887), which is on loan to Amgueddfa Cymru from the Musée d'Orsay, has of course become the centre-piece in the exhibition entitled *The Art of the Selfie*. The exhibition explores the question, "Is the self-portrait the original selfie?" Selfie, of course, is a relatively new word in our vocabulary and indeed selfies are used as a means of self-expression or to document different times in our lives. The exhibition in Cardiff looks at how artists see and represent themselves and there is a well-chosen selection of artists, which includes Rembrandt, Brenda Chamberlain, Francis Bacon, Bedwyr Williams and Anya Painstil, who certainly illustrate that. There is no single style of painting that all of the artists follow and the common link, of course, is their subject matter: they are all portraits but portrayed according to the artist's interpretation. Their images are very different and the chosen artists certainly illustrate that.

All art is, I think, subjective. The artists, in both *The Impressionists in 1874* and *The Art of the Selfie*, saw and portrayed subjects as they saw them and interpreted them in their own style of painting. It will be seen by observers, however, who often react in very different ways. If they appreciate the painter's interpretation, they will doubtless like the image too. It may stimulate a reaction or emotion which is neither liking or disliking an image but that can change over time.



Anya Paintsil, **Blod** (Acrylic, wool, hair, synthetic hair and alpaca, 140cm x 110cm, 2022).
© Amgueddfa Cymru / Museum Wales

My favourite portrait on display in *The Art of the Selfie* is a textile piece by Anya Paintsil. She is of Welsh-Ghanaian heritage and created an image of herself as Blodeuwedd, a mythological woman made from flowers. It is a very different interpretation from the others on show. I like the fabric mediums she uses and her unusual interpretation of the subject. Brenda Chamberlain's portrait does come a close second, a stunning portrait which raises questions: what is she thinking? where is she? and why is she there? The artist makes us examine her soul.

I have compared and contrasted these two exhibitions and, although Amgueddfa Cymru's art collection is a fraction of the size of Musée d'Orsay's, I firmly believe we are extremely lucky to have such an amazing museum here in Cardiff. Putting on any exhibition must take an inordinate amount of knowledge, imagination, time, planning, organisation and of course, money. Apart from the latter we have all the

other capabilities within the whole of the seven sites of Amgueddfa Cymru. We were extremely fortunate to have had the legacy of benefactors and philanthropists, such as Gwendoline and Margaret Davies who actually bought the Blue Lady and gave it to the Museum as part of their legacy. Culture in its many forms is a civilising influence on society and we should strive to preserve it in all its forms.

As a postscript, I hope the Blue Lady enjoys her travels to France and America and that they love her as we do and realise how lucky they are to see her in reality. The exhibition in Washington finishes on 19th January 2025, so hopefully we can give the Blue Lady a good Welsh welcome when she comes home again to Wales.

Gwen Williams

Gwen Williams is Chair, Friends Museum Wales

RESEARCHING THE ARTIST RAY HOWARD-JONES AT AMGUEDDFA CYMRU

One of the largest single-artist collections of work at Amgueddfa Cymru is by Ray Howard-Jones (1903-1996), the renowned Welsh woman war artist, sea painter, mosaicist, community theatre pioneer and Christian mystic. It comprises around 1,800 catalogued works. The actual number of images, however, is probably at least double that due to 95 sketchbooks, allocated only one number, containing numerous pages. Until recently it has been a little understood and largely untapped resource.

I knew the artist in her last decade, while working for the museum service in Pembrokeshire in the latter half of the 1980s. I used to visit her on the coast at Marloes where she spent several months of the year living in a caravan. On four occasions I drove her, in her own vehicle, back to her home in London. Later, some time after Ray had died, I became interested in researching her life and work. Only much later, when I had more time to devote to the project, did I embark seriously on writing a comprehensive account of her life and work. In 2023, my illustrated biography, *Ray Howard-Jones: My Hand is the Voice of the Sea*, was published by Bird Eye Books. It was the culmination of many years of research in public and private collections as well as consultations with a wide range of people.

Of particular importance to researching Ray's life and work have been two complementary public collections in Wales: that at Amgueddfa Cymru and the artist's large personal archive at Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru / National Library of Wales. Originally the two were bequeathed by her to the Museum and accepted by the then keeper of art, David Alston. Most of the archival items were later transferred to the National Library for convenient access. Spanning many periods of her life, these consist of correspondence, records of letters, catalogues, exhibition papers, press cuttings, programmes, diaries, journals, writings, poems, sketchbooks, photographs and slides. Although these have been carefully catalogued at the library by Rhiannon Michaelson-Yeates, it took a long time to work through this material and to make meaningful links with the artworks at the Museum and elsewhere. Not all the Museum's works by Ray were bequeathed. A few were purchased or gifted and several were acquired when the Arts Council's collection was distributed.

I had, over many years, consulted the works at the Museum, but it was only during Andrew Renton's time as Keeper of Art that I carried out most of the necessary systematic detailed assessments. These were particularly facilitated through the interest, enthusiasm and stalwart support of the Head of Fine and Contemporary Art, Nicholas Thornton. I am also grateful to many other members of the art department who provided access to the collection.



Ray sketching in Renney Slip.
Courtesy of David Phillips; Photograph © Estate of Roger Worsley

A particular advantage of my assessment of the collection at the Museum was that I was able to contribute knowledge of the artist's work to the Museum's collections management system. This coincided with a national art digitisation project led by Dr Melanie Polledri. Many of Ray's artworks, after being assessed for materials and fragility by Senior Paper Conservator, Fiona McLees, were photographed by Robin Maggs using exceptionally high-quality digital equipment. Together with the enhanced artwork descriptions, several hundred of these images have been made accessible on the website *Celf ar y Cyd* (loosely translated as *Art Together* or *Art in Partnership*) (whose website is at www.celfaricyd.wales) - which is



Ray Howard-Jones, *Gabrielle as Sleeping Dancer* (Wood engraving, 9.5 x 10 cm, 1925).
© Nigel Howard-Jones;
Photo: © Amgueddfa Cymru / Museum Wales

part of the National Contemporary Art Gallery for Wales. On this site it is possible to explore individual pages within some of Ray's sketchbooks.

There were challenges in assessing the Museum's artworks. As the works mostly remained with Ray at her death they, inevitably, varied greatly in quality from the slightest childhood sketches to works of great complexity from her mature years. Many were unframed. The materials used also ranged considerably from the finest quality sketchbooks to, often, sophisticated paintings on pages from newspapers and magazines. When Ray was short of art materials, and in a desire to keep working, she had no hesitation in using what was to hand.

The Museum's collection of Ray's work is a rich source of material which, given its wide chronological span, needs to be understood in a biographical context. Rose Mary Howard-Jones (soon shortened to Rosemary), Ray's birth name, was brought up in Penarth, with her brother, by her wealthy maternal grandfather. She attended the progressive London Garden School and the Slade School of Fine Art. The museum's collection includes sketches of early family life and pets as well as holidays at Llangors Lake and Tenby. Charming illustrated childhood stories also survive as do school artworks and notebooks.

From the Slade School of Fine Art in the early 1920s

are numerous life and composition studies, designs for textiles and preliminary details for an underwater-themed mural. Several wood engravings and their print-blocks have survived from Ray's student days including one of her sister Gabrielle as a dancer, sleeping, for which she won a Slade prize. Also from this period are botanical watercolours, sketches in the Channel Islands and ink drawings of church furnishings.

Rosemary's early career was blighted by non-pulmonary tuberculosis, a life-threatening operation and years of recovery back in Penarth. Only in 1935 did she adopt the professional name 'Ray' and launch her career as an artist in London. She worked as an illustrator at Amgueddfa Cymru in the 1930s where she befriended notable archaeologists, including William F. Grimes, who, obligingly, posed for a life study as did his family. During this period she became artistic director of the East Moors Players in a deprived area of Splott and several of her costume designs are in the collection.

Ray made a significant contribution to recording the impact of the Second World War in south Wales. The War Artists' Advisory Committee acquired many of her paintings, including several of preparations on merchant shipping for D-day, and it commissioned her to record the heavily fortified Bristol Channel islands of Flat Holm and Steep Holm. Many of these works are distributed around public museums



Ray Howard-Jones, **Western Approaches (Flat Holm)** (Gouache, 38.5cm x 57cm, 1945).
 © Nigel Howard-Jones; Photo: © Amgueddfa Cymru / Museum Wales

including the Imperial War Museum. At Amgueddfa Cymru are many sketchbook drawings of gun emplacements, military activities with boats and personnel on these islands. A significant wartime gouache, **Western Approaches**, depicting the lighthouse and a gun emplacement on Flat Holm, was presented to the museum by the Contemporary Art Society for Wales. Other gouaches include **Balloon Station**, **Windy Weather**, showing a barrage balloon and its attendant team behind Llandough Hospital, and an intriguing portrait, **WAAF Tester**, **Air Crew Selection Board**, of a woman in uniform surrounded by model aeroplanes. Ray also painted wartime scenes at Ravenscourt Park in Hammersmith and goats, chickens and dogs at Rookery Farm in Suffolk, the home of her sister Gabrielle.

After the war, in need of respite, Ray was awarded a place, in 1946, at the post-graduate art school at Hospitalfield in Arbroath to develop her work with the warden James Cowie. There are in the Museum's collection watercolour and gouache sketches of nearby Scottish landscapes.

In the late 1940s she settled in London and met Raymond Moore, a mature graduate from the Royal

College of Art, with whom she would live for two decades. During their time together Raymond developed from a painter into a distinguished photographer. Through the 1950s they regularly spent summers on the Pembrokeshire island of Skomer followed, in the 1960s, by seasons on the nearby mainland coast. At this time she had five successful and influential solo exhibitions at the Leicester Galleries in London. She also designed two major mosaics in Cardiff and Edinburgh. The design for the former, a three-storey mural on the old *Western Mail* building, sadly demolished in 2008, is in the Museum's collection together with alternative designs. Ray split with Moore in 1970 and the collection includes some drawings, lithographs and photographs by him. Ray continued to visit Marloes until she was quite elderly and she became increasingly celebrated in Wales.

One of the prevailing themes in the collection are studies of the Pembrokeshire coast, particularly of Skomer and, notably, around the mainland coast of Marloes. There are large numbers of studies of the ever-changing visual relationship between the structure of rocks, the sea and sky affected by seasons, times of day, tides, light and weather. Many

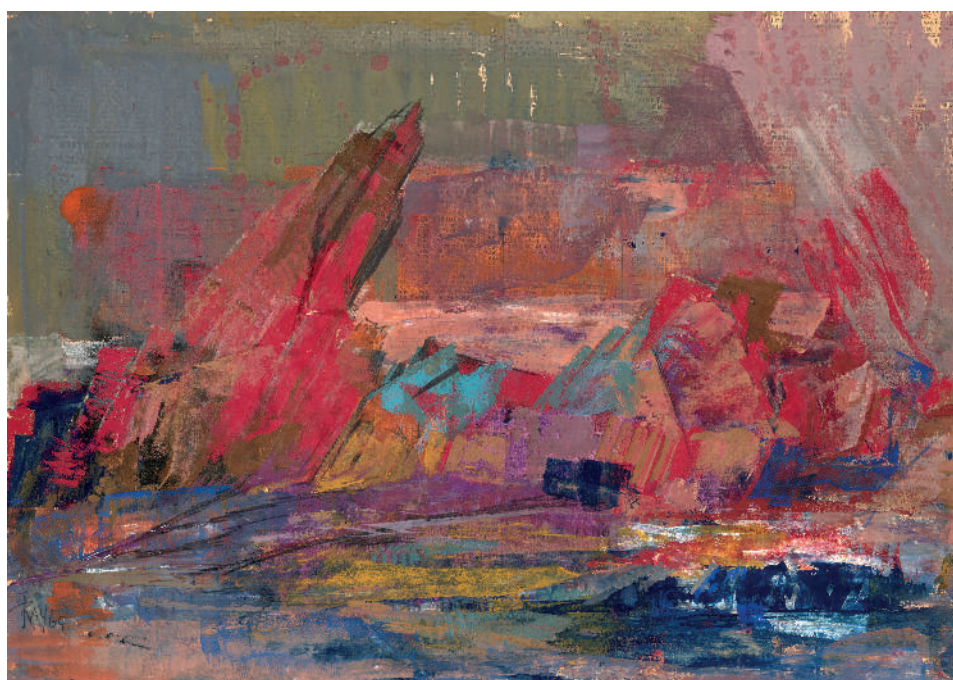


Ray Howard-Jones, **Seals** (Watercolour and pastel, 40cm x 55.5cm, 1952).
 © Nigel Howard-Jones; Photo: © Amgueddfa Cymru / Museum Wales

of these were made in Renney Slip, a bay to the south of the Deerpark, which could only be reached by a treacherous path down two-hundred-foot cliffs. During the 1960s these works became more abstract and displayed an often-dazzling variety of combinations of colours, shapes and textures derived from close observation of the coast between the Deerpark, overlooking Skomer, and Marloes Sands. Rockpools were often a source of inspiration. The majority are graphite drawings, chalks, watercolours and gouaches but there are also oils, mixed-media

collages, charcoal and crayon drawings and, particularly later in life, pastels. Her rocks often have a surreal quality, being anthropomorphised and attributed with names such as **The Brother**. Ray also gave bays personal names, notably **Easter Bay**. From Skomer are images of the farmhouse with horses and, at Marloes, the cottage which, for many years, she used as a studio. There are remarkable sketches of seals, wood mice, rabbits, gannets, shearwaters, hermit crabs, starfish and butterflies.

Ray Howard-Jones, **Abstract Study of Rocks** (Gouache on newspaper, 30cm x 41.5cm, 1969).
 © Nigel Howard-Jones;
 Photo: © Amgueddfa Cymru / Museum Wales





Ray Howard-Jones, *Evensong of Fabled Rock* (Gouache and chalk on paper, 51.5 x 63cm, 1987).
 © Nigel Howard-Jones; Photo: © Amgueddfa Cymru / Museum Wales

Ray's later work is often characterised by a more contrasting and vibrant use of colour and a strong sense of mysticism. Ray had a profound Christian faith and much of her work was driven by a need to bring her closer, through a deeper understanding of the natural world, to God. Raised in a strict Anglican household and a regular attender at church, her faith seems to have been reinforced after exposure to the wildness of Skomer in the 1950s and, subsequently, to the mainland coast around Marloes from the 1960s. In the 1970s she frequently stayed alone in a caravan on the coast, even through the stormy winter months.

A particular rock which she repeatedly drew was a triangular one in Renney Slip that she called *Te Deum*, an abbreviation of *Te Deum Laudamus*, a Latin hymn in praise of God. She was also attracted to the spirituality of Monk Haven, close to the early monastic site of St Ishmaels. Following an encounter in London with the abbot of the Anglo-Catholic order of Benedictines at Nashdom Abbey in Buckinghamshire, she would become an oblate, taking solemn vows. There are numerous sketches of churches as well as unexecuted designs for altarpieces and richly decorated crosses on bookmarks.

Only an overview of the collection has been possible as it covers much wider ground, with studies of other landscapes and historic sites in west Wales as well as Gower and mid-Wales. London features less frequently, highlighting Ray's Welsh focus. Her travels abroad include Alderney, Tuscany, Cyprus, the United States and Portugal. Portrait sketches may be found of her niece Nicola, her friends Professor Mary Williams and the painter-poet David Jones, as well as the pianist Alberto Portugheis.

The Ray Howard-Jones collection is a significant resource, recently made more accessible on-line through *Celf ar y Cyd*. Now that the wider context of these works has been comprehensively researched their considerable educational and interpretive potential may be realised.

David Moore

David Moore is a writer, researcher, independent curator and museum/gallery consultant with a particular interest in modern and contemporary visual art collection development in Wales.

Reference

David Moore, *Ray Howard-Jones: My Hand is the Voice of the Sea* (Bird Eye Books, 2023)

CONSERVING ANTI-APARTHEID BANNERS

In July 2022 three anti-apartheid banners from the 1980s were acquired by Amgueddfa Cymru, two by Anthony Evans and one by Gerda Roper. The banners were made for and used by the Wales Anti-Apartheid Movement (WAAM). This group vigorously campaigned for an end to racism and the apartheid system in South Africa. They began as a regional branch of the British Anti-Apartheid Movement (AAM), but they split in 1981 when it became clear that they would garner more support with a distinctly Welsh identity. Under the leadership of Hanef Bhamjee, WAAM was active until the first democratic election in South Africa in 1994.

The two banners by Anthony Evans, who was an active member of WAAM, were treated in the Amgueddfa Cymru's painting conservation studio. They presented very different challenges, as both were created with materials at hand with the purpose of being taken out onto the streets rather than hung in a museum.

The Nelson Mandela Banner

This banner was made in the mid-1980s with household paints applied onto an unprimed canvas. The

banner is covered in signatures of protesters and supporters of WAAM. According to Evans, it was made with the intention of being signed as, "*an autographed book*". The signatures date from both the protests in the 1980s and from the memorial service for Hanef Bhamjee held in June 2022. Quite a few of these later signatures went onto the bare canvas, which was exposed due to paint loss.

The banner was in a very vulnerable state when it came into the studio. Years of protests, of being unrolled and rolled again, had taken a toll on the banner. Lines of paint loss follow where the banner had been folded. The entire painted surface was cracked and the paint was actively flaking off. The canvas was stapled to a wooden batten along the top edge but there was nothing else to hold it in place and provide a support for the paint layers. Movement of the canvas could cause more paint loss in the future.

As a paintings' conservator, I (Sarah Bayliss) am used to working on artworks that were made to be hung on a wall with the purpose of inviting admiration and interpretation. In the case of this banner, I was very aware that I wanted to treat it differently, even if the materials and artist's technique were similar to those used in a modern painting. The banner's condition was a direct result of how and why it had been made, and how it had been used by protesters. While we



The **Nelson Mandela** banner after treatment .
Banner: © Anthony Evans;
Photograph: © Amgueddfa Cymru / Museum Wales



Detail of the **Nelson Mandela** banner showing extent of paint loss and flaking.

Banner: © Anthony Evans Photograph: © Amgueddfa Cymru / Museum Wales

needed to find a way of stabilising the banner so it could safely be displayed and stored, many of the go-to conservation methods for stabilising such a damaged painting would change the appearance and structure of the banner, which we wanted to avoid.

Future risk v. intervention

In conservation you often have to make decisions about balancing risk to the object against being able to see and appreciate the artwork as it was intended. Risk can come in different ways: it can come from a method of treatment changing something fundamental about the object or from not intervening at all and the object deteriorating over time or it can come, perhaps, from the environmental conditions needed to display it (for example, fading might occur from being displayed in the light). As conservators, we are constantly trying to balance these risks. For this banner, not doing anything would result in its continued deterioration. However, to make sure no paint fell off in the future, we would have to do something drastic, such as flattening and lining the canvas and stretching it onto a stretcher so the paint was properly supported. This would mean the paint was safe, but it would also change the appearance of the banner and remove some of the features that show its history and character.

To strike a balance, I decided to pursue a course of action that would stabilise the banner enough to be displayed but would leave it in a condition that would need to be monitored over time and would reduce the ability for it to travel.

Treatment

The flaking paint was consolidated with isin-glass adhesive. Every part of the banner was consolidated several times to make it secure enough to move off the table we had unrolled it onto. The banner was then attached onto a wooden frame, which allowed me to brush a different adhesive onto the back of the canvas. An insert was made for the back using a fluted polycarbonate board and polyester wadding to support the canvas. The front of the banner was held onto the wooden support by Perspex clips. This allowed us to display the banner upright with enough support but without changing the appearance of the banner.

The paint losses were left unfilled so that the later signatures that went onto the canvas could remain visible as we also wanted to place a greater value on the history of the banner rather than the painted image.

The Sanctions Now Banner

Anthony Evans's *Sanctions Now* is made from alkyd paints and an old plastic movie projector screen. A wooden beam adds support to the upper edge of the banner as well. The image on the front of the banner is a copy of a now-famous photograph taken during the Soweto Uprising in South Africa by Sam Nzima on 16th June 1976.

Black school children led a series of demonstrations against white-minority rule after Afrikaans was introduced as the instructional language in black schools. An estimated 20,000 students gathered in the streets of Soweto to protest and were quickly met with police brutality. The image captured by Sam Nzima is of twelve-year-old Hector Pieterse, who was fatally shot by South African police. He was carried to a clinic by Mbuyisa Makhubo while Hector's sister,



Detail of the **Sanctions Now** banner before paint consolidation (left) and after (right)

Banner: © Anthony Evans

Photograph: © Amgueddfa Cymru / Museum Wales



Sanctions Now banner after conservation treatment: (left) Front and (right) back.
Banner: © Anthony Evans; Photograph: © Amgueddfa Cymru / Museum Wales

Antoinette Sithole, followed. Nzima's picture became an icon of the Soweto Uprising and helped galvanize the anti-apartheid movement (Baker 2016).

An amended logo from the Anti-Apartheid Movement adorns the back of the banner. Anthony Evans added the Welsh dragon to the Group's taijitu, or yin yang, symbol due to the importance of Welsh identity within WAAM.

Flaking paint on both sides of the banner was consolidated to prevent further loss of material. Lascaux Medium für Konsolidierung was applied to the plastic surface with a soft bristle brush, before a silicone tipped tool and siliconized Melinex were used to press down the paint flakes. Once the paint was secured, the banner needed to be cleaned. Smoke sponges were rolled across the surface of the banner to remove loose contaminants, such as dirt and dust, without causing stress to the plastic. The mould stains and residues were removed with a cotton swab dampened with Adjusted Water (pH 6.5).

After conservation treatment was complete, *Sanctions Now* was wrapped around a large cardboard tube (40

cm x 2m) covered in ALUVP (a triple laminate of low-density polythene, aluminium foil and a white polyester flock lining) to create a barrier layer between the cardboard and the banner to protect the banner from the potential acidity of the cardboard tube. To prevent contact with itself when rolled, the banner was sandwiched between silicon coated paper before it was rolled. The silicon coated paper will prevent the transfer of paint. Polyester sail cloth was used to cover the rolled banner and protect it from dust. Cotton tape keeps the banner from unrolling.

Madalyne Epperson and Sarah Bayliss

Sarah Bayliss is Senior Paintings Conservator at Amgueddfa Cymru and Madalyne Epperson was an intern at Amgueddfa Cymru (2022-2023) on placement from Durham University.

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Aryn Baker, *This Photo Galvanized the World Against Apartheid. Here's the Story Behind It* (Time Magazine, 2016)

Y Grŵp Cymreig/The Welsh Group: Anthony Evans at <https://www.thewelshgroup-art.com/anthony-evans>

THE WICKER MAN AT ST FAGANS

The Halloween celebrations at St Fagans have become an extremely popular attraction for all the family. For three evenings around the end of October the museum opens its doors at night for a myriad of activities to entertain children and adults alike. Tickets sell as soon as they go on sale and it is regularly sold out. The highlight of the celebration is the burning of the Wicker Man each evening.

The origin of the Wicker Man is rather lost in history. Julius Caesar wrote that the Gauls punished their criminals by burning them alive inside huge effigies of men and it is generally assumed that this also happened in the British Isles. However, we have no proof of this and it was not until the 1970s that the film, *The Wicker Man*, instigated the legend. Whatever its history, the Wicker Man at St Fagans has become a huge draw and links the celebrations of Halloween with Bonfire night.

Our Wicker Man is not actually made of wicker, but huge bales of straw carved and shaped into a torso and legs. The only wicker part is the head, which is made of old and broken wicker baskets that have been used in the gardens. As volunteers, we were delighted to be asked to decorate these baskets to make them into heads for three wicker men

There are always three wicker men as one is burned each night of the celebrations so each needs a head.

When we arrived at the Gweithdy, we were delighted to see a large selection of baskets for us to choose from to create heads for the Wicker men. They were all shapes and sizes and we were told that we could use them in any way we liked, as long as they fitted the base of the wicker men. Unfortunately, we had not seen the bases and had to rely on the assurances of the museum staff that all the baskets were of suitable size. Luckily, they all were.

We split into three groups, with two or three people in each, and set to work. This involved firstly covering the basket bases in paper mâché, to make a firmer base for the decorations. This took the whole of the first session as we had to wait for them to dry before beginning to decorate. In fact, we had to add extra sessions to our usual planned monthly meetings, as we obviously had a deadline and otherwise would not have finished in time.

Our next sessions were a mixture of design, experimentation and planning. My partner, Anna, and I decided to cover our head with foliage, except for protruding red eyes and lips, moulded in paper mâché. Caroline and Elaine decided on a double height figure, with antlers and beard, and Sue's group decided to let the head develop as they worked, which actually was very successful indeed.

Our working days were a combination of painting, sticking, stitching and stapling, weaving, plaiting, and disentangling. This was combined with a lot of



The three individually designed wicker heads awaiting attachment to their straw bodies for the 2023 celebrations.
© Amgueddfa Cymru / Museum Wales



A Wicker Man *in situ* ready for burning.
© Amgueddfa Cymru / Museum Wales

foraging for leaves, twigs, branches, and ivy and other trailing plants. We discovered that by painting the leaves with PVA glue, they would last, and would easily stay intact until the day of the wicker burning. But this made things take longer as they had to dry before being used. We all suffered from sticky fingers, which were very difficult to clean, and these sticky fingers were usually coloured with whatever paint we were using and looked rather disgusting.

Our heads were really starting to develop personalities. Anna and I had soon realised that ours resembled the Green Man, covered as he was with sycamore and oak leaves, so we found berries to cover his cheeks and ears and gave him a beard made from fronds of ivy. Caroline's was rather fearsome: his head was much taller than the others because she had put two baskets one above the other, and his tall antlers made out of branches meant that he towered over the other heads. Sue's was of a more modern appearance, and some of us felt he looked rather like a zombie, with his tall hat and red eyes, very appropriate for a modern wicker man. We regularly invited museum visitors passing by to come in and chat when we were making the heads and they often of-

ferred suggestions or made valuable comments that helped.

Eventually the heads were completed and the staff seemed very pleased with the outcomes. Each of the Wicker Men was transported to its field of execution early in the morning, before the museum was open, and apparently it was a rather surreal sight. Each was transported upright on the back of a tractor, which had to move very slowly, and many of the museum staff came out to watch the procession.

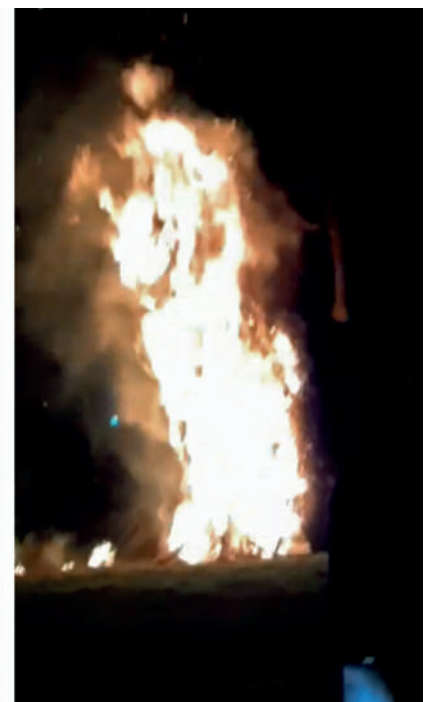
The celebrations began after the museum had closed for the day and the lucky people who had managed to buy tickets queued up for entry. There were lots of activities for children included in the cost of the ticket but the culmination of all of these was the burning of the Wicker man.

The field was full of visitors, and excitement rose as the burning torches approached. To begin with the straw smouldered and smoked but the flames soon leaped upwards and the whole figure was engulfed in fire. Before long the structure began to disintegrate and slowly began to slide towards the floor. Once this began there was no stopping the crashing of the figure to the ground, accompanied by shrieks and cheers from the onlookers. Before long the flames had died down and the Wicker Man was no more - until the next night.

Marjorie Sheen



The burning of the Wicker man.



© Amgueddfa Cymru / Museum Wales

THE NELSON MUG: A FRIENDS' DONATION

Recently there has been a lot of attention focussed on Amgueddfa Cymru's collection of Welsh ceramics. In 2022, *Flourish: A Golden Age for Ceramics in Wales* was published, which looked at the history of the great ceramic factories centred at Swansea and Nantgarw, through artefacts which feature in the Museum's collection of ceramics. Then last year there was an exhibition of items decorated by Thomas Pardoe, to commemorate the 200th anniversary of his death, at Nantgarw China Works and Museum, in which a significant proportion of the works on display were lent by the Museum. One item in the Museum's collection, decorated by Thomas Pardoe and produced by Cambrian Pottery in Swansea, was donated by the Friends in 1956. So, I thought I would follow up my article on the portrait of Katheryn of Berain in the October 2023 edition of *Oriel* by looking at what might lie behind another early donation by the Friends.

The object in question is a mug which features a portrait of Admiral Horatio Nelson (1758-1805); it was made by the Cambrian Pottery around 1805-6 to

commemorate his death at the battle of Trafalgar on 21st October 1805. Nelson was a national hero because of his naval victories over the French in the Napoleonic wars, and Cambrian Pottery clearly saw the production of Nelson memorabilia as being good for business. However, a second strand to the story emerges through Nelson's relationship with Emma, Lady Hamilton – though it could be thought of more as a *ménage à trois* as Nelson remained a close friend of Sir William Hamilton and the three were inseparable. Their famous relationship had started in 1793 when he had visited Naples where Sir William Hamilton was Britain's Minister at the Court of the Sicilies in Naples; William Hamilton had conceived a great liking for the young sea captain and Nelson had conceived a great liking for the elderly Sir William's young wife.

I will start with where the mug was made. Cambrian Pottery was situated on The Strand in Swansea, a road that ran alongside the River Tawe, allowing easy import of the clay and coal for the kilns as well as the export of the finished products. The pottery was founded, under the name Swansea Pottery, by William Coles in 1764. By 1789 it was being run (somewhat unsuccessfully) by his sons. George Haynes (1745-1830) (a ship-owner and businessman from



Mug produced by Haynes, Dillwyn & Co and decorated by Thomas Pardoe (Pearlware, height 16cm, diameter 11cm, 1805-6).
© Amgueddfa Cymru / Museum Wales

Philadelphia, though born in Kingston-upon-Thames in England) came to Swansea in 1789 and became a partner in the Swansea Pottery. He and John Coles (one of those sons) rebranded the firm as the Cambrian Pottery and went more up-market by producing pearlware, a white pottery with a blueish glaze developed by Josiah Wedgwood in Staffordshire. In 1802 William Dillwyn, a Quaker from Pennsylvania who had family links to Haynes took a controlling interest in the firm and his son Lewis Weston Dillwyn took over the running of the Cambrian Pottery. In 1806, he opened the Cambrian Warehouse, as a retail outlet in London, where the pottery's best pieces including this mug and other items commemorating Nelson were sold - unfortunately the venture was short-lived, closing after just two years.

At the time of the making of the Nelson Mug, Thomas Pardoe (1770-1823) had been working at the Cambrian Pottery for around fifteen years. He was born in Derby and served his apprenticeship at the Derby Porcelain factory but in 1790 when just twenty, he was head-hunted by George Haynes to improve the quality of decoration at the Cambrian Pottery. He soon became its chief painter and was even its acting manager between 1802 and 1804. The last edition of *Oriel* contains an article on the life and work of Thomas Pardoe.

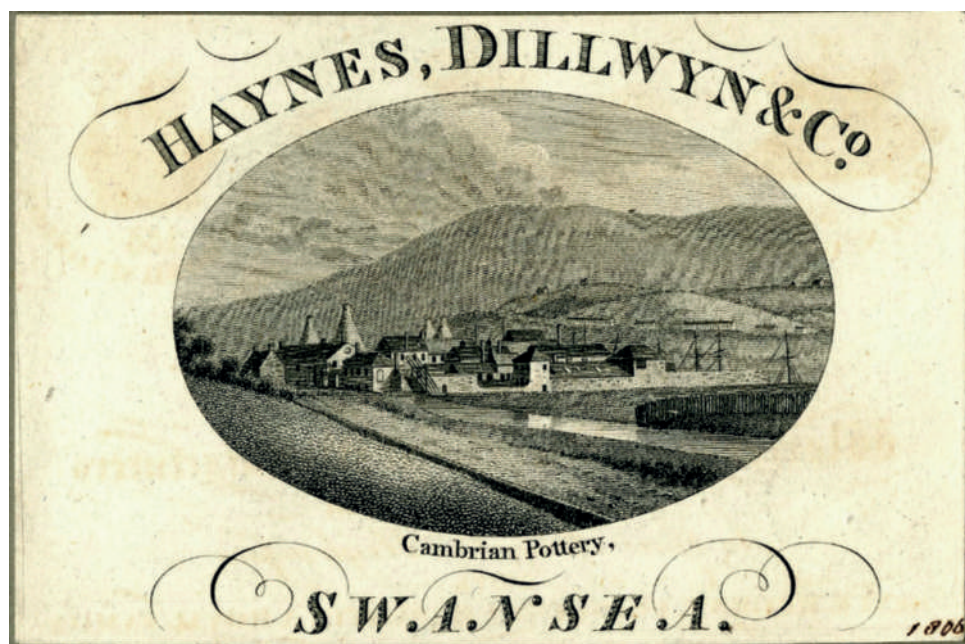
The mug's gilding has been definitively attributed to Thomas Pardoe; that includes not only the decorative border around the portrait and handle but also the designs to be found either side of the handle; on one side a wheat ear and small insect and on the other foliage with acorns and a butterfly. The portrait itself is also now thought to be by Thomas Pardoe (initial attribution was to William Weston Young based on its style; Young worked as a painter at the Cambrian Pottery alongside Pardoe).

The image chosen to decorate the mug derives from a portrait from 1797 by Lemuel Francis Abbott (c.1760-1803). It depicts him in the uniform of a rear-admiral wearing the star and ribbon of the Order of the Bath and the Naval Gold Medal awarded for his victory at the Battle of St Vincent which

had taken place earlier that year. Abbott painted numerous portraits of Lord Nelson but the one he painted in 1797 became the most widely recognised of the whole Nelson iconography, so much so that he painted around forty copies. Overwork caused by painting so many portraits of the great and the good is said to have contributed to his being committed to Bethlem Hospital as insane in 1798.

Pardoe is perhaps more likely to have seen a mezzotint of this portrait, which was produced a year later by Richard Earlom. However, there is a certain air-brushed quality to the face in the painting and mezzotint and it is suggested in *Flourish* that the coarser face on the mug may well be more of a true likeness. This is possible because Pardoe probably met Nelson in 1802 when Nelson visited the Cambrian Pottery.

So how came Nelson to be in South Wales in 1802? We need to go back to 1801 when the Treaty of Amiens brought about a temporary ceasefire in the conflict between Britain and France, leaving Nelson at a loose end. In addition, he had also formally separated from his wife and recently had a daughter, Horatia, with Emma Hamilton. Emma had found a house, Merton Place, near Wimbledon where the three of them could live, plus, of course, Sir William Hamilton. Now Sir William had extensive estates in Pembrokeshire, which were managed by his nephew Charles Greville. His nephew wished to develop the harbour in and around Milford (see an article on the development of Milford in the April 2023 edition of



Cambrian Pottery trade card dated 1806.

© British Museum



Sir George Hayter, **Lewis Weston Dillwyn** (Oil on board, 35cm x 30cm, 1834-7).

Oriel) and Sir William felt the need to visit to see things for himself.

As an aside, I feel I should mention that Emma was the former mistress of Charles Greville. After the death of Sir William's first wife, Greville was concerned that his uncle would remarry and that this marriage might produce a male heir who would destroy his chances of inheriting Sir William's properties. So, he had the cunning idea of passing on his mistress to the elderly Sir William to avert this danger. It must have been quite a shock when he discovered that Emma and Sir William had got on so well that they married in 1791.

Back to the visit to South Wales. Hamilton's need to visit his estates developed into a leisurely tour through South Wales and the Midlands which lasted nearly six weeks. A large party led by Sir William, Emma and Nelson set out from Merton Place on 21st July for Milford with stops in Wales at Monmouth, Brecon, Merthyr Tydfil and Carmarthen before reaching their destination on 31st July, in time to celebrate the fourth anniversary of the Battle of the Nile on 1st August. Of course, everywhere they stopped there were celebrations honouring Nelson as the hero of

British naval victories over the French. Rather than stay with Greville, they stayed at the New Inn and with local gentry until they began their return journey via Swansea, Cardiff, Newport and Chepstow. They reached Swansea on 13th August and, on the 15th, they inspected the town and its harbour; this included a tour of the Cambrian Pottery works, where the meeting with Thomas Pardoe is presumed to have taken place. Nelson was evidently impressed with his visit as he wrote afterwards stating, "*I shall be very happy to receive your pottery ... I hope this service will be of use to Infant Manufactory*". Unfortunately, it would appear that Nelson never actually bought or owned any Cambrian pottery.

Finally, how did the Friends come to acquire this mug? According to the Annual Report 1956/7 of the Friends, the first owner of this particular mug was David Morris, who was the Member of Parliament for Carmarthen Boroughs. What the report says is doubtful: although he was their MP, it was from 1837 to 1864, and, when the mug was made, he would have been two years old. If it is unclear how and when he obtained the mug it is certain that he did come into possession of the mug at some point, as it became a family heirloom that was passed down through a further two generations of the family. However, the final owner decided to sell it. It came up for auction at Sothebys on 20th March 1956 and the Friends resolved to bid up to £75 to purchase it for the Museum. In the event they obtained it for £60 (around £1800 at today's prices). It was their fourth purchase for the Museum.

Diane Davies

Acknowledgements

My thanks to Kristine Chapman, Librarian Amgueddfa Cymru, for her help in consulting the Annual Reports of the Friends and the Council Records, and to Maeve Heath, Departmental Administrator in the Art Department of Amgueddfa Cymru, for allowing me to consult the documentation relating to the mug.

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#CROWDCYMRU: DIGITAL ARCHIVES VOLUNTEER PROJECT

This digital archive volunteer project began back in 2022. It was run jointly by Gwent Archives, Glamorgan Archives and Cardiff University Special Collections & Archives and was originally funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. The idea for the project was born from a need to demonstrate a swift, proactive, and collaborative approach to modernising their services to meet the ambitious roadmap of the Welsh Government's *Digital Strategy of Wales* which aimed to "improve the lives of everyone through collaboration, innovation and better public services". Moreover, the pandemic had forced archive services to revisit their purpose, reach and value as well as adapt their services within a broader local, national, and international context.

This project was formulated to equip people with digital skills in order to remain well-connected across communities, to take full advantage of opportunities in the workplace and for improving their wellbeing. It also hoped to transform opportunities for archives services to develop new models for remote volunteering without the need to travel, that supported the Welsh Government's ambition to reduce our carbon footprint.

All the work our volunteers do is via a crowdsourcing platform established by those very clever people at the National Library of Wales. This fully bilingual online platform enables remote volunteers to tag and transcribe the digital heritage collections held within these repositories. Archive services across Wales hold millions of irreplaceable records but many are only minimally catalogued and, therefore, difficult to find and identify. This project has harnessed the knowledge of individuals in communities across Wales and beyond to enrich our collective heritage for the benefit of current and future generations - locally, nationally, and globally.

Most volunteers come from Wales but we also have sign-ups from USA, Canada, Australia and even South Korea. They transcribe handwritten documents and tag and describe photographs. The project partners were mindful to ensure that the collections put forward would be varied and interesting enough to keep everyone engaged.

Cardiff University Special Collections & Archives started the ball rolling with two fascinating collections for transcription. The first was the Edward Thomas Literary Archive, just under 500 letters written by

Thomas to his friends and family. Poet, critic, and biographer, Thomas wrote all his poetry over a brief three-year span, 1914–17. During the second year of the First World War, he enlisted and was killed two years later in the Battle of Arras. Even though everyone struggled with Thomas's handwriting, they worked through the collection within a few months, many finding the content powerful and moving.

The next collection was nine wartime diaries written by Priscilla Scott-Ellis, daughter of the eighth Lord Howard de Walden. Brought up in the luxury of Belgrave Square, London, and Chirk Castle near Wrexham, what makes Priscilla exceptional is that she volunteered as a nurse during both the Spanish Civil War and the Second World War. Moreover, whereas her Spanish Civil War diaries were posthumously published in 1995 as *The Chances of Death: Diary of the Spanish Civil War*, her Second World War diaries have never been published, making this a very important transcription project. As well as transcribing these diaries, the volunteers were also asked to tag names and places, to make searching the diaries easier in the future.

Glamorgan Archives offered up the first photographic collection with the Cardiff Dockland Community



Student in the optometry class at Cardiff University, circa 1970, from the Cardiff University Institutional Archive. © Cardiff University Special Collections & Archives



Photograph of an anonymous young man in the Cardiff Docklands Community Collection.

© Glamorgan Archives

Collection. These portraits of individuals (see above) and groups, including women and children from the Cardiff dockland community, were taken between 1900-1920. This area, commonly known as "Tiger Bay," became one of the UK's first multicultural communities with people from over fifty countries, including Somalia, Yemen, and Greece, settled here by the outbreak of the First World War and working in the docks and allied industries.

Gwent Archives added the Newport Rugby & Athletic Club photographic archive charting the history of the club and containing images of groups, teams, committee members and sports days (see image on right) along with some wonderful images from the early 1900s of children playing in snow (see image on next page), men in plus fours skating on frozen lakes and scantily clad lads diving into dangerous canal locks!

The final collection to be added before the National Lottery funding came to an end in November 2023

comprised handwritten newsletters produced by the Gwent Lesbian and Gay Group during the 1980s. Established in 1986, the group wanted to offer an alternative to the Cardiff gay scene and organised monthly discos, newsletters, meetings, trips and writers' groups. They also worked to disseminate information on HIV and AIDS whilst struggling to find venues owing to prejudice about the AIDS crisis.

From December 2023 through to June 2024 the project was fortunate enough to be funded by the National Library of Wales. This came as part of the library's work on the *Our Heritage, Our Stories* project which aims at linking and searching community-generated digital content to develop the people's national collection. During this period, another collection for transcription was put forward by Gwent Archives, the early Minute Books of the Llanwenarth Women's Institute. Minute Books are a fascinating chronicle of activities and our volunteers have thoroughly enjoyed the experience. Initially surprised at the sheer amount of work the Institute managed to cram in, they have become enchanted with this window looking into a "forgotten world". The Books begin just after the First World War with activities consisting of fundraising for lectures (always a top priority), competitions, fetes, concerts, days out, and, of course, the obligatory whist drives. Then as the years roll by, we see the



Heather Brewer and Jennifer Middleton at the Welsh Lawn Tennis Championships in Newport in 1954 from the collection of Newport Rugby & Athletics Club.
© Gwent Archives



Children playing in the snow, circa 1902, from the Newport Rugby and Athletics Club Archive. © Gwent Archives

group prepare for the Second World War by growing vegetables, knitting mittens for the troops and partaking of home nursing classes.

Managing remote volunteers is challenging; we have learnt that, if not looked-after, they can fall away quickly and quietly! Therefore, we provide ours with a monthly email newsletter, online training sessions, online social gatherings and a closed Facebook Group for them to chat to each other.

We have an active Twitter [X] account to promote progress, highlight collections and foster support for other archive, library, museum and heritage accounts. We have also had live listings on websites such as *Adult Learners Week Wales*, *Black History Wales* and *World Digital Preservation Day*. We have been featured in numerous publications including *Who Do You Think You Are* magazine and *ARC*, the magazine of the Archive & Records Association. Posts have been uploaded to the Archives and Records Council Wales and Archive & Records Association blogs and we also recorded a podcast for The Archives & Records Association, as part of their *Out of the Box* series. All past activities to date can be viewed on the Gwent Archives website, via their Partnerships and Projects page.

From the 1st July, we have had new funding from the Welsh Government to take us through to 31st March 2025. This phase will be particularly exciting as we are now looking for new partners from the sector to join the project. We want new blood, different perspectives and more volunteers to welcome into the fold

plus diverse new collections for our established volunteers to get their teeth into. Therefore, if you are an organization who would like to join us, or an individual thinking about joining our merry band of volunteers, do please get in touch (email: jennifer.evans@gwentarchives.gov.uk).

Jennifer Evans

Jennifer Evans is Digital Volunteering Project Officer at #CrowdCymru



The Author on the #CrowdCymru stall at the Dementia Awareness Day event held in St Fagans National Museum of History.

NEW LIFE FOR AN OLD BIRD

The Dodo bird was first documented in 1598 on the island of Mauritius in the East Indies but, unfortunately, it became extinct by 1700, before modern taxidermy processes were discovered and used for the preservation of animal specimens. However, some replica taxidermy models exist. One of these is at Amgueddfa Cymru. The museum purchased it in 1915 from Rowland Ward Ltd. for £15 (roughly the equivalent of £1288 today).

The materiality (e.g. the types of paint, plaster, construction materials, etc) of the Dodo model is a document of how Victorian taxidermy models were made, particularly at Rowland Ward Ltd. By identifying the materials, we were able to establish details about how Dodo birds were understood at that time as well as the scientific and artistic processes involved in creating the models.

Before conservation, little was known about Dudley and how it was made. X-radiographs revealed the internal structure of the model, and Fourier Transform Infrared Spectrometry (FTIR) was used to understand the composition of Dudley's feet, face, and dressing (the external parts of taxidermy specimens, including the feathers and skin). X-ray fluorescence (XRF) and scanning electron microscopy with elemental analysis indicated arsenic had been used as a preservative for the skin to prevent pests from consuming it, so extra safety precautions had to be taken when handling Dudley.



The Amgueddfa Cymru replica Dodo model circa 1938 together with a dodo skeleton which is also in the Amgueddfa Cymru collection.
© Amgueddfa Cymru / Museum Wales

The analysis results were then compared with Rowland Ward's methods of mounting specimens, described in a book written by Rowland Ward in 1880. Letters between William Hoyle, the Museum Director at the time, and Rowland Ward Ltd also revealed that Dudley had a tail when he first arrived at the museum, but it had since been lost. An image of Dudley dated to circa 1938 also showed it had a tail in the past.

All the investigations showed that iron rods make up the skeletal frame in the legs, extend through a wood base made of two boards held together with glue and dowels and are attached to a thin board cut to the shape of Dudley's body. The neck is probably circular and made from a separate board from the body. Dudley's head and feet are plaster, and tempera and oil paints were used to add colour to both parts. A piece of canvas connects the head to the body. The body is stuffed with wool, and the dressing includes real, natural bird skin and feathers (down, contour, and flight feathers). Polyvinyl acetate (PVA) between some toenails indicates that Dudley was conserved sometime after 1930. When the model first arrived at the museum, it should have had a tail with feathers that curved away from the head.

Condition Before Conservation

Being over a hundred years old, Dudley's skin had become dry and brittle and many feathers had fallen out particularly around the head, neck and legs. The plaster in the feet was crumbling. A claw was missing from one of the talons, feathers were missing from one of the wings, and the tail was missing. There was also a layer of dust on the entire model.

Conservation Treatment

First, dust was removed from Dudley with a soft, sable brush towards a low suction vacuum. The vacuum nozzle was covered with a fine mesh to ensure no feathers or skin were collected into the vacuum. Then, the plaster on his feet was consolidated with a polyvinyl butyral resin (Buvtar 98) in ethanol. A replacement claw was made with Thibra thermoplastic painted black and adhered with an ethyl methacrylate and methyl acrylate copolymer resin (Paraloid B72). Feathers that had fallen off Dudley in the past were stuck back on with Paraloid B72. New feathers had to be purchased to replace the ones missing from the wing and tail, but the new feathers were bright white and did not match the appearance



(Left) Dudley before his conservation treatment and (right) after conservation. © Amgueddfa Cymru / Museum

of the rest. So, acrylic paints were diluted with isopropyl alcohol and airbrushed onto the new feathers. Once dry, the tail feather was curled to the proper shape with steam. All the new feathers were then placed in their proper positions with entomology pins.

With an improved appearance and stability, Dudley is now ready to meet the public! Dudley's visit to the conservation lab also allowed the conservation team to learn more about how the model was constructed, which will allow the Museum to better preserve it for current and future generations to enjoy.

Lindsey Sartin

Lindsey Sartin is an MA Conservation Practice student at Durham University on placement at National Museum Cardiff.



MUSEUM NEWS

New Exhibitions

There are three new exhibitions, at various Museum sites, which you may be interested in visiting. Plus, do not forget that *The Art of the Selfie* at National Museum Cardiff, featuring a Van Gogh self-portrait, continues its run at National Museum Cardiff until 26th January 2025.

Layers at National Slate Museum

Layers is the first solo exhibition of Rhiannon Gwyn, who was born in Sling, a slate quarrying village near Bethesda in North Wales. She has developed an innovative technique of melting and shaping Welsh slate, subjecting it to a metamorphism which mirrors that which produced the slate over geological time. The slate is then combined with handmade ceramic bowls, which are painted with glazes made from natural materials such as the gorse flowers and slate. The title of the exhibition relates to the various colours, textures and materials she finds in her home landscape of Eryri, as well as referring to the various layers of history, cultural heritage, memories and language that continue to strongly influence her creative practice.

She says of her work that, ‘By working with local materials, most of which are a by-product of processes used by local industries and organizations, such as Welsh Slate discarded by the local quarry, gorse ash from Eryri National Park’s gorse clearance on Moel Faban and clay found on nearby riverbanks, I can explore how materials can act as identity markers; influencing the way in which we view ourselves and the world around us through the imprinting of emotion onto our surroundings.’

One of her works *YNefoedd yn Toddi i’r Tir* has been recently acquired by Amgueddfa Cymru after it was exhibited last year at the National Eisteddfod of Wales *Y Lle Celf* exhibition and also in the Museum’s



Rhiannon Gwyn, *Y Nefoedd yn Toddi i'r Tir* (Porcelain and slate; Height: 16.0cm, length 24cm, width: 20cm; 2022)

© Rhiannon Gwyn /Amgueddfa Cymru - Museum Wales

Rules of Art exhibition. She has also won the 2023 Emerging Maker award at the International Ceramics Festival in Aberystwyth in 2023.

The exhibition is free of charge and runs until 3rd November.

Valleys at National Museum Cardiff

This exhibition reflects on how artists from across the world have been inspired by the south Wales Valleys since the 18th century. It consists of over two hundred works from the Museum's collection to reveal how the lives and landscape of the Valleys and the people who lived and worked there were transformed by iron and coal, and how these communities made a vital contribution to the modern world. The exhibition profiles the work of over sixty artists and includes several works which have not been displayed before, alongside a group of new photography acquisitions, which have been made possible with generous support from Art Fund, as well as introducing the work of collier artists and makers such as Nicholas Evans, Harry Rodgers and Illtyd David.

Nicholas Thornton, Head of Modern and Contemporary Art at Amgueddfa Cymru, said: *'We're excited to open this major exhibition which tells new stories about the south Wales Valleys through the art collections at Amgueddfa Cymru. The exhibition focuses on the people of the Valleys, the communities whose work, resilience and strong sense of place has been so central to one of the most important, and all too often overlooked visual traditions of the modern world.'*

One of the artists featured in the exhibition, Ernest Zobole, is highlighted on the front cover. He was born in 1923 and spent most of his life in the Rhondda, principally in Ystrad. He was the son of Italian immigrants who came to south Wales in 1910. His father worked at a local mine and mother kept a small shop in Ystrad.

He trained at Cardiff College of Art and had a spell teaching at Llangefni on Anglesey from 1953 to 1957 but he found the area un conducive for painting and he returned to the Rhondda to take up teaching posts at Aberdare and Treorchy before becoming a lecturer at Newport Art College until he retired in 1984. He died in 1999.

Throughout his life he painted, believing creativity in the visual arts found its highest expression in painting, and his subject was always the people and landscape of the Rhondda. He was seen as a member of the Rhondda Group, an informal group of artists from the Rhondda, who saw the landscape of the industrial valleys of south Wales as an appropriate subject for fine art. He was strongly influenced by the work of Chagall and many of his paintings have a dreamlike quality and a wish to break with what he saw as the *"tyranny of perspective"*. The painting on the front cover, **Penrhys**, comes from early in his career and still retains a sense of naturalism in its depiction of his beloved Rhondda.

The exhibition is free of charge and runs until 1st November.

Making Waves: RNLI Cymru 200 at National Waterfront Museum

This year Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) celebrates two hundred years of saving lives at sea and to mark this achievement National Waterfront Museum is staging an exhibition reflecting on the enormous contribution the organisation has made to safety at sea around the Welsh coastline. Indeed, the RNLI's volunteer lifeboat crews and lifeguards have saved an incredible 13,195 lives during two centuries of lifesaving in Wales, more than one life saved every week in its 200-year history.

The exhibition focuses on the lifesaving work of the charity's volunteers around the Welsh coastline.

From shipping disasters to stranded holidaymakers, the types of rescues have significantly changed since 1824, and with that so has the equipment needed to carry them out. The exhibition will feature a Rigid-hulled inflatable Lifeboat (RIB) built from the prototype mould of the original RIB developed at Atlantic College, alongside a D class lifeboat. Visitors will be able to get on board, try on some RNLI equipment and have a taste of what it feels like to be on a lifeboat.

Josh Stewart, Coxswain at The Mumbles RNLI, expressed his appreciation: *'We have been busy celebrating 200 years of the RNLI, and National Waterfront Museum has given us a great opportunity for the crew to share their experiences and preserve some of their stories for future generations. We are looking forward to visiting the exhibition, and hope it inspires the next generation of lifesavers in Wales.'*

The exhibition is free of charge and will run until 16th March, 2025.

Diane Davies



FRIENDS NEWS

I am pleased to report that the monthly organ recitals in National Museum Cardiff on the Watkin Williams-Wynn organ restarted at the end of April. These have been sponsored by the Friends for many years but the last one was in February 2020 just before the start of the first lockdown caused by the Covid epidemic. So, it was quite an occasion when at the end of April the first of a new set of monthly recitals, sponsored by the Friends, took place. This was given by the internationally renowned concert-organist Margaret Phillips, who played a special forty-five minute programme to launch the series. They take place once a month, usually on the last Friday of the month, and the last one this year will be in November.

You may be interested to learn a bit more about the history of the organ before it entered the Museum's collection.

It came from the London home of Sir Watkin Williams-Wynn (1749–1789). He was perhaps the greatest patron of the arts Wales has ever produced. He collected Old Master paintings as well as commissioning works from many artists and sculptors. In addition, he was a patron of architects, designers and gardeners, had a passion for music and loved the theatre. Although he was the head of a great landed family, owning an estate of over 100,000 acres in



Margaret Phillips at the console of the Williams-Wynn Organ in April ready to give the opening recital of a new season of monthly concerts at National Museum Cardiff. Photo: Gwen Williams

north Wales and Shropshire centred on his country house, Wynnstay, near Ruabon, he spent a large part of his time in London. So, between 1772 and 1775, he employed the neo-classical architect Robert Adam to build a house in St James's Square for him. Adam's reputation was based on his skill in designing all aspects of a building, and for this wealthy and enthusiastic Welsh patron he designed everything including mirrors, carpets, furniture and the table silver.

For the Music Room Adam designed a monumental case for an organ, with carvings done by Robert Ansell; it is the only one of a small group of monumental Adam organ cases to survive. It housed a chamber organ made by John Snetzler, the principal organ builder of his day; the organ cost £250 (around thirty thousand pounds in today's money) and comprises a great and a swell organ. In 1783 the organ was enlarged and then in 1864 moved to Wynnstay, his house near Ruabon, where blue was added to its original colour scheme of green, white and purple. When the organ was moved to National Museum Cardiff, in 1996, a back was constructed so that it could be free-standing rather than recessed into a wall as it was at Wynnstay.

Diane Davies

FRIENDS ACTIVITIES

A Cultural Journey through Southern England: 10th -14th June 2024

An early start saw the Friends' coach set off on the much-awaited Cultural Journey through Southern England. We headed towards the Surrey hills and our first destination: the Arts and Crafts gem that is the Watts Gallery and Artists' Village, close to the village of Compton.

The Watts Gallery is dedicated to the work of the Victorian-era painter and sculptor, George Frederic Watts (1817-1904), who is recognised as one of the greatest painters and sculptor of modern times and is one of only a few galleries in the UK devoted to a single artist. It has at its core an unrivalled collection of some two hundred and fifty paintings and eight hundred works on paper by Watts, displayed as the artist himself intended.

Upon arrival, we were split into two groups, and the first destination of our group was nearby Limnerslease, where George and his artist wife, Mary Watts (1849-1938), established their home at Compton from 1891. The hall in Limnerslease contains five elaborate ceiling panels, made of low-relief gesso by Mary Watts, representing different spiritual cultures: Buddhism, Hinduism, and Judaism from among the living religious traditions; and ancient Assyrian and Egyptian from antiquity. The ceiling panels in the Anson Red Room are intended to suggest the joy in work, that Mary felt characterised her husband, and signify energy, industry and the fruits of labour.

A short walk leads to the Watts Chapel and Cemetery. The Watts Chapel is a Grade 1 listed Arts and Crafts

Chapel and is regarded as one of the most important art nouveau buildings in Britain; it was built by Mary Watts and the villagers of Compton between 1895 and 1904. As you approach the Chapel it seems, from the outside, as if a Byzantine or Orthodox Church has been dropped onto the hillsides of Surrey. A further delight awaits the visitor as much of the interior is made up of large panels with plaster designs in low relief, with detailing in felt, rope and other materials, and the whole interior painted in the richest colours - an immensely powerful experience.

After a very busy day, we headed towards our hotel in Royal Tunbridge Wells, the very friendly and efficient Spa Hotel, for the first of our four nights' stay there. The following morning, we set off on our journey to Brighton, where the main attraction was the Royal Pavilion. The Royal Pavilion was originally a simple farmhouse that George, Prince of Wales, rented when in Brighton. However, in 1787, George hired architect Henry Holland to transform it into a modest villa which became known as the Marine Pavilion. With his love of visual arts and fascination with the mythical orient, George set about lavishly furnishing and decorating his seaside home. He especially chose Chinese export furniture and objects and hand-painted Chinese wallpapers.

In 1811 George was sworn in as Prince Regent. At that time the Marine Pavilion was not suitable for the large social events and entertaining that George loved to host. Accordingly, in 1815, George commissioned John Nash to begin the transformation into the magnificent palace that we see today, with an exterior inspired by Indian architecture. Nash superimposed a cast iron frame onto Holland's earlier construction to support a magnificent vista of minarets, domes and pinnacles on the exterior. And no expense was spared



Interior details of Watts Chapel, Compton designed by Mary Watts and created by her and villagers from Compton. (Left) the apex of the roof and (above) part of the decorative work around the wall.
Photos: Diane Davies



Exterior view of Brighton Pavilion.

Photo: Diane Davies

on the interior, with many rooms, galleries and corridors being carefully decorated with opulent decoration and exquisite furnishings.

Although the Royal Pavilion is a gloriously stunning vision of excess, there was, in contrast, an exhibition on the contribution of Indian soldiers in the First World War and how two thousand three hundred wounded and recuperating Indian soldiers were cared for in the Royal Pavilion.

The next morning, we set off for Standen House and Gardens, a renowned Arts and Crafts family home, built for the Beale family, which is in the beautiful Sussex countryside and is a Grade 1 listed building. The House itself was designed by Philip Webb (1831–1915), who was a British architect and designer, sometimes called the Father of Arts and Crafts Architecture, and it has Morris & Co. textiles throughout including wall hangings, cushions, curtains, and bedspreads. There are also many pieces of William de Morgan (1839-1917) ceramics, which with their vibrant colours and captivating designs are among the most attractive, recognisable, and enduringly popular decorative arts of the late Victorian period.

A visit to the garden, which is divided into many outdoor 'rooms', each with its own theme, colours, texture and detail, and was almost entirely the creation of a self-taught gardener, Margaret Beale, who was inspired by the Arts and Crafts movement, is a joy for the visitor. On our visit we had the additional pleasure of viewing the works of the Surrey metalwork sculptor, Alison Catchlove, *in situ*, in the garden.

In the afternoon, we travelled to the nearby National Trust property of Nymans, where we visited the wonderful house and gardens that were created by plantsman and designer Ludwig Messel (1847-1915), a German émigré of Jewish descent, in the late nineteenth century. The garden contains ruins, statues and significant international and heritage plant collections and is regarded as one of England's most exquisite and important gardens. It is a pleasing mix of formal and informal areas.

The house at Nymans is now part ruin, part house. When originally bought in 1890, Nymans was a large but simple early Victorian house but the distinguished architect Norman Evill, with the instructions of Ludwig's son Leonard, created a romantic, idealised country house. Sadly, the house was ravaged by fire in 1947 and the once Gothic mansion is now more a romantic ruin.



Friends on a guided tour of the gardens at Nymans admiring the Giant Sequoia, one of its champion trees. Photo: Diane Davies



Alison Catchlove, **Peacock** (Galvanised steel) on the South Terrace at Standen. Photo: Diane Davies

The following day's first visit was to Charleston House, near Lewes, the modernist home and studio of painters Vanessa Bell (1879-1961) and her friend and lover, Duncan Grant (1885-1978). They moved into Charleston in 1916, along with Duncan's friend the novelist David Garnett (1892-1981). It was the height of the First World War and Grant and Garnett, as conscientious objectors, needed to find farm work to avoid conscription. As is still visible to the current visitor, upon their arrival, Bell and Grant began to paint every surface in the farmhouse, transforming Charleston into a living, breathing work of art, each room containing its own individual delights of painted panels and pictures. The whole site is a delightful time capsule that allows the visitor to examine a world that has now vanished.

Our next destination was a short trip to Farleys House

and Gallery, where we were treated to a fascinating guided tour of the Sussex home of photographer Lee Miller (1907-77) and the surrealist artist Roland Penrose (1900-84). They moved to Farleys, in the Sussex countryside, in 1949 and for the following thirty-five years filled their home with a collection of contemporary art treasures. Today Farleys is the base of the Lee Miller Archives and The Penrose Collection.

Lee Miller was born in New York and became a model for Vogue and Vanity fair magazines before moving to Paris to study photography with Man Ray. Lee then set up her own photographic studios in Paris and New York. A chance meeting with Roland Penrose in 1937 led her to move to London at the outbreak of World War II. They married in 1947. Her Surrealist images along with her pack shots, portraits and extraordinary World War II photographs have earned her a key place in the history of art as one of the most fascinating figures in twentieth century photography.

We concluded our time at Farleys with a visit to the Farleys Sculpture Garden, which was designed by Roland Penrose. It contains a mixture of sculptures from the permanent collection and some by contemporary artists.

Our return journey to Cardiff on the Friday involved a much-anticipated visit to the Royal Horticultural Society Garden at Wisley covering 240 acres. It contains numerous formal and informal decorative gardens, several glasshouses and an extensive arboretum. The Bicentenary Glasshouse, which opened on



Sophie Ryder, **Dancing Hares** at Wisley with the lake and Bicentenary Glasshouse in the background. Photo: Diane Davies

26th June 2007, covers three quarters of an acre and overlooks a new lake built at the same time. It is divided into three main planting zones representing desert, tropical and temperate climates.

Our visit over, we all returned to the coach and our splendid coach driver Andrew then delivered us safely back to Newport and Cardiff. Many thanks to Gwen Williams for organising this trip and to all those who assisted Gwen in making this a most memorable and delightful experience.

Nigel Morgans

A Visit to Bath

At the beginning of June, I took the opportunity to go on the Friends' trip to Bath on a day that did not feel like summer even though it remained dry and bright throughout. Bath is a World Heritage Site: it has significant Roman remains particularly the bath complex based on the hot springs that were situated at the heart of the Roman town of Aqua Sulis. In addition, there is the famous Georgian town with its Palladian-styled crescents, terraces and squares, all made of that lovely yellow Bath stone. With so much to see there were no planned visits and, once there, we all dispersed in order to seek out the multitude of attractions that Bath offers.



View of Bath looking to the west from the tower of Bath Abbey and looking down on the Roman Baths (bottom left).
Photo: Diane Davies



Fan-vaulted ceiling at the eastern end of Bath Abbey created in the 1500s by Henry VII's master masons.
Photo: Diane Davies

As a first target I was torn between the Abbey and the Roman Baths, which are next door to each other but the queue for the Baths were already substantial (clearly you need to book in advance if you intend to visit the site) and so it was to be the Abbey. The Abbey was founded in the 7th century as a convent before becoming a Benedictine monastery and cathedral. That was replaced in the 15th century by the present Abbey, being completed just in time to be dissolved as an institution by Henry VIII, when it became just the parish church for Bath. Significant restoration was made in the late 19th century by Sir Gilbert Scott and restoration was also carried out after bomb damage in World War II. However, when you enter what you see is a very fine example of late Gothic perpendicular architecture so wonderfully light and airy and, for me, the most stunning feature is the vaulted roof stretching over the nave and choir.

The highlight of the visit, though, was a chance to have a guided tour of the tower with the prospect of climbing 212 steps up a narrow spiral staircase (with breaks on the way) to enjoy views over Bath from the roof of the tower. The first stop was in the belling room where we were given an introduction to the art of belling and the complexity involved when all eight bells are rung by hand. That is hard physical work, as the sound is made by the moving the bell to strike the internal clapper. In the 20th century two simpler methods were



The Holburne Museum at the entrance to Sydney Gardens.
Photo: Diane Davies

introduced for striking the bell. A system was invented where simply giving a tug on one of eight ropes caused a hammer to strike a bell and then the process was mechanised with an electric motor to do the work and this is the method used to produce the chimes that nowadays ring out every quarter of an hour. Our second stop was the next floor up which housed the bells. The biggest weighs over 1500 kilograms. Our guide struck this with its hammer and, although she emphasised that the sound produced was only 4% of its potential, it was still deafening.

Then, after a visit to see the clock, we made the final ascent up to the roof to enjoy the views. The Abbey remains the highest building in Bath so from the roof there are stunning vistas over Bath and the hills that surround it.

My second target of the day was the Holburne Museum. The backbone of its collection was formed by Sir Thomas William Holburne (1793-1874), who was the second son of a baronet. So he became a naval officer but, with the death of his elder brother at the end of the Napoleonic Wars, he succeeded to the baronetcy. He was an avid collector of a whole host of collectables: silver, porcelain majolica and 18th century paintings amongst others as well as small items such as seals, gems and snuff boxes. By the end of his life he had amassed over four thousand artefacts which were then bequeathed to the citizens of Bath by his sister. Since then, the collection has been

continually augmented whilst trying to maintain the character of the original collection.

In 1916 the collection moved to its present home, the former Sydney Hotel which was situated in a pleasure garden at the end of Great Pulteney Street. To get there from the Abbey meant crossing Pulteney Bridge. It was built in 1774 to span the River Avon and has the distinction of being one of just four surviving bridges in the world that have shops lining both its sides (although when you look inside then they cannot be more than a couple of metres wide).

The highlight of the Holburne, at that moment, was a temporary exhibition of sculptures by Henry Moore, entitled: **Henry Moore in Miniature**. Here his monumental sculptures can be seen in their first form - the maquettes that Moore created in all sorts of materials: various stones, wood, terracotta, lead bronze and even Plasticine. All the familiar themes are to be found in these works: reclining female figures, mother and child, human heads and fallen warriors but here in a size that allows you to see them in a concentrated form that makes you want to grasp and hold them in the palm of your hand. They are extraordinary works of art in their own right and their impact is wonderfully summed up by a quote from Henry Moore introducing the exhibition: *“A carving might be several times over life size and yet be petty and small in feeling – and a small carving only a few inches in height can give the feeling of huge size and monumental grandeur”*.

The permanent collection fills room after room and feels a bit overwhelming in its eclectic mix, so that it is impossible to try to appreciate it all in just a single short visit. However, I particularly enjoyed some amazing life-size portraits by Thomas Gainsborough, who spent a number of years in Bath painting the great and the good (or perhaps the not so good as much of the wealth that created Bath and the surrounding great houses came from slavery and the sugar plantations of the West Indies).

Finally, a word of thanks to Heather Graves and Len Metcalfe for organising such a fascinating day out.

Diane Davies



La Parisienne / by Pierre-August Renoir