

Friends' Magazine and Newsletter

October 2019

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A MESSAGE TO FRIENDS

The front cover is a way of marking the achievement of St Fagans National Museum of History in winning the Museum of the Year 2019 award. There is also a piece by the Chair celebrating that success and paying tribute to the hard work of everyone concerned in bringing it about.

I believe this edition has a first for the Newsletter: a fully bilingual article. The subject is an ancient Welsh musical instrument, the pibgorn. The two pieces give different slants on the history of the instrument so it is well worth having an attempt at reading both for anyone with a knowledge of Welsh.

Art is the dominant theme of the articles in this edition. There is a major piece on the artist, Shani Rhys James, looking at her life and artistic career. The back cover image is one of her striking self-portraits and is one of three works of hers in the Museum's collection. The second major art article is one which links art and St Fagans, as it is one of an occasional series in the Newsletter exploring the meaning of the wall paintings that decorate St Teilo's Church at the Museum. This one looks at the religious concepts underpinning the Day of Judgement painting to be found over the west door of the church.

A third article is on a recent acquisition by the Museum and explores the how the satirical portrayal of Welshness during the 18th century came to be adopted, and thereby subverted, by the Welsh in London. Another recent acquisition, this one by pure chance, turned out to be a work of Andrew Vicari and I am pleased to have an article relating how that came about and how it has led to an exhibition at the National Waterfront Museum in Swansea on the life and work of this artist from Port Talbot, who was, for a time, reputed to be the richest artist in the world. Finally, on this art theme: have you heard of fore-edge painting? These are paintings to be found on the front edge of books but which are 'hidden in plain sight'. The article reveals how it was done and reveals the secret pictures of two books that are in the Museum's collection.

The fourth and final major article is a look at the history of Ruperra Castle and relates its chequered history after being once the home of the Morgan Family who owned

Tredegar House near Newport. The Second World War saw it become an abandoned ruin but the article concludes with details of the campaign to save and conserve it. The final article requiring a mention is a delightful tale set in 1954 telling the story of how the author came to acquire an autograph of Richard Burton.

What else? There are a number of items under the heading Museum News, which cover what is happening in the Museum whilst Friends News reports on how this year's Friends' grant will be spent. And just one report on Friends' activities: this one is on the trip to Northumbria at the beginning of May.

I hope everyone finds something to read and enjoy.

Diane Davies



CORRIGENDUM

Firstly, a wrong attribution was given to an image in the article on the Newport medieval ship. The artist's reconstruction of the ship being towed in for refitting on page 15 of the last edition should have been credited to Anne Leaver.

Secondly, I must apologise to Len Metcalfe for somehow garbling a paragraph of his report on the trip to Belfast on page 31 of the last edition. So below is the antepenultimate paragraph as intended:

In the afternoon we had a tour of Stormont Parliament Buildings. A most impressive and seemingly endless uphill driveway led us to the magnificent edifice, set in extensive parkland. The Scottish-baronial style castle was bought by the new Northern Ireland government in the early 1920s and opened as the Parliament Building in 1932. The interior, with lots of ornate carvings, fine furniture, and a wonderful coloured painted ceiling in the main entrance area, is just as impressive. Like our own Houses of Parliament, there is a Lower and Upper house, though because of the Renewable Heat Enquiry, the Upper House was closed and we assembled in the Lower House to admire the building and reflect on the unfortunate circumstances that mean no devolved government currently exists. Our guide, Mickey, gave an unstructured humorous talk on the connections between the Irish, the Scots and the Welsh, with only scant reference to the English!

Next Edition

Contributions for inclusion in the April 2020 edition should be submitted by the beginning of January 2020.

Please send items, either electronically or by post, to the Editor.

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Front Cover: A composite picture to celebrate St Fagans National Museum of History winning the Art Fund Museum of the Year Award for 2019
Courtesy of Art Fund and Amgueddfa Genedlaethol Cymru / National Museum of Wales

Back Cover: Shani Rhys James, *Red Self Portrait* (Oil on gesso panel, 183cm x 122cm, 1992)
© Shani Rhys James and by permission of Amgueddfa Genedlaethol Cymru / National Museum of Wales

A FAR CRY FROM THE PAST

Museums are changing.

Every school holiday when I was a little girl I would visit my relations in Dowlais and Merthyr and every school holiday I would visit Cyfarthfa Castle Museum. The Castle itself had been the home of William Crawshay the iron master who made his fortune from the manufacture of iron at the furnaces he could see from his home on the outskirts of Merthyr Tydfil but on the other side of the valley, away from the noise and pollution that was making him a fortune.

Initially the museum was firmly cast in the Victorian mould with the last room you accessed being full of stuffed animals and birds all in glass cases piled on top of each other. There were however some beautiful and fascinating objects to behold too: Nantgarw and Swansea porcelain; a display of iron sections forged to make the rails which enabled the steam trains of the world to travel to all corners of the globe; a delightful alabaster statue of a little girl holding a bird; and paintings galore, some of which took my fancy and I still remember today.

In the 50's and 60's when I was first introduced to Cyfarthfa Museum it was effectively a repository for artefacts as were most museums. In the 70's it was revamped to show the grandeur that the Crawshays lived in. This time arte-

facts were displayed to better effect – grouped according to function or origin or related in some way to the Crawshays to whom they had belonged. The Museum has implemented further innovations. There were artists in residence, weddings in the gallery and craft workshops for young and old to attend but major renovation could only take place if and when money became available.

When I moved to Merthyr from London as a teacher I would often take a classful of young children to the same museum: to appreciate beauty, to learn observational skills, to develop their own craft skills on return to school, to appreciate their heritage and to widen their knowledge of their own world and that outside it.

Museums today still preserve some of these functions although people no longer want to traipse through room after room with often no or little explanation as to what they are seeing. But all that is changing. The International Council of Museums has carried out a wide-ranging consultation on how a museum might be defined. It makes interesting reading: from Greece, "*Museums are the factory of our dreams*"; from Slovakia, "*A museum is no longer a place for old stuff*"; and Spain "*A museum is made not born and it is reborn as many times as it takes.*"

All those definitions are apparent today when you look at the amazing development at St. Fagans National Museum



The new “Wales is...” Gallery at St Fagans National Museum of History

of History. The houses and buildings that visitors loved seeing are still there. They unite people with their past: how many times have you heard, ‘my granny had one of those’ or ‘do you remember when....?’

Now education is the key and our history is laid out in bite size chunks in the “Wales is” Gallery with which people can identify. No stone is left unturned. Political statements include an almost life-size photograph of Margaret Thatcher (still no glasses or moustache graffitied onto that unmistakable face) with stickers provided for the public to make comments; a poll on Brexit where again people are asked their opinion; the story of the village of Tryweryn where the valley was drowned to supply water to Liverpool and where the resurgent Welsh language and nationalist movement were begun. Should museums reflect the politics of a nation? Yes, if that’s what shaped the land and people they represent. It was good to visit the Belfast National Museum with the Friends in 2018 to see a very truthful, tell-it-all exhibition of ‘The Troubles’ in Northern Ireland.

The “Life is” Gallery displays the life of ordinary people: their work, their dress, their pastimes and their deaths. Y Gweithdy (The Workshop) is a building which tells the story of craftspeople and artisans through time. There is also a children’s playground and a treetop rope walk. In the National Museum Cardiff you can have a sleep over with the dinosaurs or perhaps a ‘Silent Disco’ is more to your taste. Museums are changing to appeal to all ages and people from every walk of life. A far cry from the past. The Museum has succeeded in this because they have consulted with and involved people across Wales to tell them what they want and how things should be. Everyone can now be part of the story and not just look at it from outside.

As Friends we are proud to be part of that and by supporting the Museum with the money we raise by organising,

holidays, day trips and talks we hope we can contribute to those principles that we also believe in.

Then on BBC Breakfast television on the 4th July I heard the announcement that St. Fagans had won the prestigious Art Fund award for the Museum of the Year and £100,000. It is the first Welsh winner of the Museum of the Year prize in its current form.

I have picked out some of the quotes from the press releases which I think sum up the achievement better than I can:

“An open-air heritage attraction praised for living, breathing and embodying the culture of Wales.”

“St Fagans National Museum of History last year completed a £30m redevelopment project and was rewarded on Wednesday for showing exceptional imagination, innovation and achievement.”

Stephen Deuchar, the director of the Art Fund and the chair of judges, said, *“The Museum had been transformed by a redevelopment project that had involved the participation of hundreds of thousands of visitors and volunteers.”*

“This magical place was made by the people of Wales for people everywhere, and stands as one of the most welcoming and engaging museums anywhere in the UK.”

This project has been paid with money from various major external sources but, hopefully, the Friends contribution has played a part in helping it to win. However, nothing would have been achieved without the very hard and persistent work done by David Anderson, the Museum’s Director-General, with the whole of his team working together with the Board of Trustees. It is an amazing feat and we congratulate them wholeheartedly on their achievement.

Gwen Williams

Gwen Williams is Chair, Friends of National Museum Wales

MORE ON THE ST TEILO'S WALL PAINTINGS: THE WEIGHING OF SOULS

Madeleine Gray

When we were planning the new wall paintings for St Teilo's Church at St Fagans we had some guidance from what we knew was there already - but sometimes it was not enough. There were paintings such as the Bound Christ by the south altar and the Mocking Scene over the north window where we had a very clear idea of what had been there. There were others, such as some of the saints and angels in the window splays, where we could just about deduce from faint lines and patches of paint what might have been there. But there were still huge areas of blank wall where we had nothing to guide us. We just had to think, 'well, what might a medieval church have had?' Much of it we used for a very detailed retelling of the Crucifixion story, but there was still room for more. The rather strange painting over the west door is one of those where we had to be a bit creative. It shows the Weighing of Souls. We had seen this in painting and stained glass elsewhere in Wales. It was clearly a popular scene and we thought it was just possible that a church like St Teilo's might have had something like this (see image below).

So what is going on in this painting? The figure in armour is the Archangel Michael. He is holding the scales of judgement, in which we will all be weighed, our good deeds and our bad. On his left (the right of the painting) a little devil is trying to weigh the scales down on the side of damnation. On the other side is the Virgin Mary. She is placing her rosary on the balance beam to weigh it down on the side of salvation.

This is a puzzling and even disturbing image to modern eyes, but our 'ignorant' peasant ancestors would have had a much clearer idea of what is going on here. They might not have known the verses in the Book of Revelation which describe the war in Heaven, in which Michael defeats "that ancient serpent called the Devil" (Revelation 12: 7-9). It is even less likely that they would have known about the Egyptian origins of the weighing of souls. But they would have recognised Michael as the conqueror of Satan and the defender of the church. His place was always where the danger was greatest. Some (though not all) of the churches dedicated to him were on high places: think of St Michael's Mount and the little chapel of St Michael on Ysgyryd Fawr in Monmouthshire, but also of Michaelston-le-Pit! His churches were also on borders, and may have marked areas which had recently been Christianized. Above all, he was the saint with a special care for the dead.

The prospect of your soul being weighed in the balance is a frightening one. The fifteenth-century poet Llywelyn ap Hywel ab Ieuan ap Gronwy of Llantrisant was clearly thinking of a painting like the one at St Teilo's when he wrote:

Llun Mihangel a welwn
A baiys a bwys hwenn
Y gwr du yn hagr a dynn
A llaw winau yn llinyn
A gafael yn y gyfair
Drom iawn gan baderau Mair
Ar enaid yn farw yna
Athro tost am weithred da
El at Fair yfudd eirian
Yntau ai wyr yn y tan
At Fihangel pan elwyf



Weighing of Souls over the west door in St Teilo's Church, St Fagans

Tynny berr Sattan i bwyf
 Ar fenaïd minau erfynwn
 Yn y pwys anap i hwnn
 Yn erbyn rhag ofn oerbair
 A wnel Mihangel a Mair

(I saw the image of Michael and the sinner he weighs: and the ugly Black One, tugging at the thread with his swarthy hand: and the gripping on the other side, loaded down with Mary's rosary; and the soul there, dying, teaching a sharp lesson about good works. May Mary the meek and fair receive him; in the fire she knows him. When I go to Michael, I shall tug Satan's fork, and by my soul I shall wish him ill luck in the scales! May Michael and Mary, for fear of the icy cauldron, be successful against him.)

It is clear from the poem, though, that Llywelyn expects Michael to help him. The wall painting is not there to terrify. It is a warning but also a reassurance. The Mass of St Michael was the votive mass said for the souls of all the dead. It could even help you after death. In the early sixteenth century, a priest in Brecon was paid the princely sum of 26s 8d a year (probably equivalent to about £3,000 in modern money, but still ...) for saying the mass of St Michael every week in the town chancel house.

As well as the Archangel Michael, the Virgin Mary was there to help. In that splendid book *The Stripping of the Altars*, Eamon Duffy said that Mary had “a soft spot for worthless scoundrels” whose only redeeming feature was their occasional devotion to her. Mary was sometimes seen as the real source of salvation, rather than her son. This could sometimes tip over into excessive veneration, what is sometimes called ‘Mariolatry’. When the Glamorgan poet Lewys Morgannwg anticipated the Last Judgement, it was Mary he turned to first:

Ofni dros fenaïd yr wyf;
 Ofni gweled f'un gelyn
 Ym mhen tafl am enaïd dyn;
 Ofn dybryd fyned obry,

Ofn y frawd gan fy Nuw fry ...
 Mair, arched air eirchiaïd oll,
 Mair, am unair i'm enaïd

(For my soul do I fear/I fear to see my enemy/At the head of the balance for the soul of man/I fear greatly to go below/I fear the judgement of my God above/Let Mary, the petitioner for all things, petition for a word/Mary, one word for my soul.)

Gwilym Tew also saw Mary as the petitioner for his soul, and may have been thinking of the picture of her putting her rosary on the balance beam:

Ei phaderaau am y pwysau a impysyd,
 Ysgawnhau baich â'i llaw a'i braich, nid llai ei bryd

(Her rosary for its weight goes to help me/She lightens a burden with her hand and her arm)

and in the Last Judgement sequence in the Welsh play *The Dialogue of the Soul and the Body* Mary places her ‘paderaau’ in the scales on the side of the sinner’s soul.

Mary was certainly omnipresent in medieval art: but she is usually depicted in the context of her son. Wall paintings and stained glass depictions of the Annunciation, statues of the Virgin and Child, figures on rood screens: they all gave the message that she was important, but that her power and importance came from the fact that she was the mother of God.

There was change over time as well. We have another painting of the Last Judgement at St Teilo's, the great Doom over the chancel arch. Mary is in this painting as well, shown in a way that seems to have worried a lot of visitors to the church. She has torn her bodice open and is showing her breasts. She is clearly pleading with her son to show mercy to the people who are rising out of their graves: but why is she doing so in this rather strange way? At its simplest, she is saying to her son, “Look, I got up in the night to feed you, I was merciful to you – now you be merciful to these



Doom (portrayal of the last judgement) over the chancel in St Teilo's Church, St Fagans



Pity on the south wall of the nave in St Teilo's Church, St Fagans showing the *Jesu mercy, Lady help* prayer

people'. There may be something more complicated going on as well. The medieval theory was that breast milk was a modified form of blood. So, in a way, when Mary fed Jesus with her milk, she became part of his sacrifice. As he is showing his wounds in the Doom painting she is showing her breasts. She is on her knees, though: she cannot act herself, she can only beg him to act. Another of the wall paintings at St Teilo's makes this even clearer. On the south wall of the nave, we found a wall painting of the Image of Pity, Christ sitting on his tomb and showing his wounds. Above his head was a fragment of the very popular late medieval prayer, 'Jesu mercy, Lady help'. Jesus has the power to be merciful; Mary can only help.

There is a sense in which the later medieval church was moving away from its focus on stories of the saints (and of the Virgin Mary in particular) and back to concentrating with what now seems disturbing intensity on the physicality of the Crucifixion. You can see these changes very clearly in the wall paintings from St Teilo's. The late medieval paintings, which we tried to reflect in what is in the church now, told the story of the Crucifixion through the artefacts involved, the 'Instruments of the Passion'. But under those paintings was another sequence including at least some paintings of saints. It would have been impossible to uncover the earlier paintings without destroying the later ones. One was uncovered, though, before the archaeologists realised how many layers of wall-painting they had to deal with. That was the famous painting of St Catherine. There may have been others.

There were paintings of saints in the late medieval layer of paint, in earlier issues of this Newsletter we have looked at the paintings of St Roche and St Margaret in the win-

dow splays of the south wall. But these are tiny paintings, almost hidden away and, crucially, as far as we can see, they were accompanied in the window splays by angels holding shields with the Instruments of the Passion. The saints had to be seen in the context of Christ's sacrifice.

The same message can be seen even more clearly in the great Doom painting in the church at Penn in Buckinghamshire. Here an earlier painting including the Weighing of Souls was overpainted with one a little like the one over the chancel arch in St Teilo's. In the Penn Doom, Mary is not on her knees but standing, under her son's rainbow throne, with her hands raised in prayer.

So were we wrong to put both the Weighing of Souls and the Doom with Mary showing her breasts in the same sequence? Maybe, but in a way they are two sides of the same coin and they represent ideas which were held at the same time. The Welsh poets were still writing about the Weighing of Souls in the sixteenth century, and some of the poetry sounds as if they had seen wall paintings showing the scene. This is Tudur Aled, writing in 1525:

Mihangel, pan el i'w naid,
 Bes rhoen i bwyso'r enaid,
 Ni allo dim, o'r naill du,
 Dal pwys pwys, gyda help Iesu;
 Mae ar bwys Mair, a'i basiwn,
 Maddeu holl, gamweddau hwn;
 Mam i thad, mamaeth ydych,
 Mair, saf gyda Morys wych,
 Par â bys pur i bwys,
 Poed, ar bwys paderau, y bo!

(When he comes to his judgement, O Michael, let them give it to weigh the soul! May nothing stop the weights on one side, with Jesu's help, because his Passion and Mary's rosary can forgive all his sins. Mother of her father, you are a nurse, Mary; stand by fair Morys. Have him weighed with a faithful finger, and be it, on a rosary's weight, as may be!)

He is talking about the scales and Mary's rosary, but he also mentions Jesus' help and his Passion. And if we look at the whole of Lewys Morgannwg's poem, he says:

Ofn dybryd fyned obry,
 Ofn y frawd gan fy Nuw fry.
 Mi archaf i'w bum archoll.
 Mair, arched air eirchaid oll...

(I fear greatly to go below/I fear the judgement of my God above./I petition his five wounds./Let Mary, the petitioner for all things, petition for a word.)

Mary is the petitioner; it is Christ's wounds that will save him.

This is all quite complicated to modern eyes. Like so much else that we discovered while studying the church from Llandeilo Talybont, it suggests that late medieval Christianity was much more than simple stories about the saints.

Madeleine Gray is Professor Emerita of Ecclesiastical History at University of South Wales

SHANI RHYS JAMES

Judith Foy

A small child stares lividly out of a black cot: we became familiar with this large oil-on-canvas painting which hung for some time on the wall of National Museum Cardiff (see below). It was a shocking image at first but we grew used to the knowing, resentful gaze of the confined infant. If this were an isolated example of the paintings of Shani Rhys James a question might be raised momentarily as to what could have given rise to such a fierce child. However, this is a recurring motif in her work. The face that stares at the world, at us, is hers. The sinister black cot appears in many different scenarios. In *The Pink Room* the child has escaped from her cot and stands alone and defiant outside its confines. *The Black Cot with Latex Glove*, in possession of Am-



Shani Rhys James, *Black Cot and Latex Glove* (Oil on linen, 360cm x 180cm. 2003

© Shani Rhys James and by permission of Amgueddfa Genedlaethol Cymru / National Museum of Wales

gueddfa Cymru, shows a latex glove beneath the cot. This is certainly a reference to her Welsh surgeon father.

These livid images that stare, glare and dare us to ignore never leave the observer unmoved. A reaction is demanded and achieved. The face is that of Shani Rhys James herself but, in reality, she is very different: pretty, dimply and smiley; certainly not the tortured, glowering visage we find in so many of her paintings. The question is raised as to how she arrived at this means of expression.

Shani Rhys James was born in Australia in 1953 and brought up in what had been a miner's cottage outside Melbourne. Her mother was Australian and an accomplished actor who later turned to painting but the main thrust of her life was on the stage. Her birth father was a Welsh surgeon who had gone to Australia to expand his career prospects as so many did then. It was he who gave her the Welsh 'Rhys' in her name but he left when she was eighteen months old and so played no part in her early life: she was raised by her stepfather. Her father reappeared in her life when she was thirty-seven and was clearly important to her sense of identity. He left her once more when he died in an untimely and unfortunate manner.

Her early years were unconventional in that she was exposed to the artistic, highly cultured society in which her mother and stepfather moved. They had created a small theatre of 150 seats in Prahan, Melbourne where they multitasked in its running. Her mother acted in plays by Chekov, Ibsen and other classic playwrights of the time while her stepfather built scenery, managed and directed as well as sending for more plays from Europe. They all painted scenery. Their social circle included luminaries like Sidney Nolan and the Boyds. Charles Blackman was particularly close. The nature of this theatrical life meant that Shani was often alone waiting for parents to wake-up after the inevitable late nights so that she was used to amusing herself. She remembers spending hours dressing up in her mother's clothes: *High Heels* (1995) shows a little girl resplendent in hat, handbag and high heels alone in an attic.

Shani's mother took her to England in 1962 and she said goodbye to all the relations she had known all her life until she was nine: cousins, aunts and uncles plus her stepfather whom she never saw again as he died of a heart attack. There can be little doubt that this dehiscence must have been deeply wounding for a small child and rendered only acceptable to her by the strength of her relationship to her mother. Nevertheless, she describes her reaction to the rupture as not particularly upsetting but rendering her "numb".

It was cold that winter of 1962. Shani's mother continued her theatrical career which had won her the accolade Best Actress Award before leaving Australia. She was hoping to enlarge upon her success. Shani started at a new school, Parliament Hill Girls, and her mother embarked upon a new metropolitan theatrical life. She had a prestigious role as Gregor's mother in a play after the book *Metamorphosis*



The artist in her studio
© Shani Rhys James

Photo: Jo Mazelis

by Kafka and had work in the Liverpool Playhouse. She was, by all accounts, a very gifted actor. Settling in the London bedsit world was not easy. Shani and her mother clung to each other and got on with life.

Ten years later, in 1972, Shani started a Foundation Course at Loughborough College of Art thence to St. Martin's School of Art where she obtained a BA Hons in painting. This child of the outback, however, found it difficult to conform to 1970s art schools' philosophy. Many art schools, St. Martin's among them, were still

wedded to Abstract Art with its exploration of form and colour: far from 'drawing what you see'. Shani wanted to develop her own brand of figurative painting. She uses an impasto technique so that oil paint is laid on the surface in very thick layers and after drying it appears to be coming out of the canvas.

As already observed, she paints herself time after time and this is not uncommon among artists. After all, one's face is always present, immediately available and cheap! From our local Barry girl, Sally Moore, to Rembrandt, artists have painted themselves repeatedly and it certainly does not represent a vanity. She paints herself often using a mirror and minutely examines herself in every unflattering detail. Her use of mirrors was emphasised in the BBC film, *What do Artists do All Day?* (2014).

In 1984, having taught for seven years after finishing her degree, Shani and her husband, sculptor and artist Stephen West, and their two boys moved to Llangadfen in mid-Wales. It was a natural move as her mother had already relocated there and at last Shani had returned to the Welsh roots conferred on her by her father. She had seen nothing of this father for most of her life yet, despite the strong bond with her first stepfather, who had played such a colourful and enveloping part in her early life, the absence of her 'real' father in her formative years cannot be regarded as irrelevant. Her subsequent reunion with him many years later followed by his sudden death must have been an abiding sadness for Shani. There is something of the forlorn in the frequent appearance in her paintings of the surgical gloves cast about and the white coats: something sent from him to her which she used to offset the potential noxious effects of the chemicals involved in the painting process. A small gesture on his part which meant a great deal to his daughter. Her successful creation of a warm, loving family together with her enormous professional achievements, are testimony to her resilience and strength of character.

Her grandchildren, bearing a resemblance to their grandmother, appear in many paintings of uneasy domesticity such as *Boy with Bowl and Spoon* (2017), *Boy and Bouquet*



Shani Rhys James, *Skinny Rib* (Oil on canvas, 183cm x 334cm, 2011)
© Shani Rhys James
Photo: Gareth Lloyd Hughes



Shani Rhys James, "***She seized the Tablecloth with both Hands...***" (Oil on canvas, 176cm x 195cm, 1992)
 © Shani Rhys James Photo: Gareth Lloyd Hughes

(2017) and ***Yellow Dress and Black Jacket*** (2003). The lingering sadness in earlier family pictures, ***Departures*** (1991) and ***Blood Ties*** (1992), which speak of childhood loss seems to have been dispelled to some extent.

The use of red and black is held to create chromatic dynamism. Red, understandably, is symbolic of blood. The black which Shani uses so much certainly gives the reds added richness. Black is used to great effect by many artists and its use by the Spanish painters particularly, such as Goya and Velasquez, affected Shani powerfully when she visited the Prado in Madrid. The force of the black, white and grey of Picasso's ***Guernica*** in the Museo Reina Sofia made an impression upon her. She certainly has taken on board the drama of the "non-colours" but together with a fearless use of vibrant colours. Her flower paintings are often set riotously against the black background she so often employs as in, for example, ***Shadow on a Red Table*** (2018) and ***Hot Summer*** (2006). Shani's flowers are no gentle blooms; they are mad, bad and dangerous to know!

Speaking of Shani's London show, ***Two Ateliers*** at Connaught Brown (2009), the art critic Michael Glover commented in *The Independent*, "*There's something mad, wild and thuggish about this work, such is its total lack of restraint. It seems to be gulping at colour*". Although so many of her paintings

are red and black, Shani is totally unafraid of the big, strong colour splash and utilises yellows, blues and purples where it suits her purpose.

Influences and comparisons abound when considering any artist. Shani's work is often compared with that of Paula Rego. They can both portray the dark narrative very effectively but while Paula Rego's canvasses have a broad flat effect, Shani's vigorous impasto is very different. They are both portrayers of events real or imagined from the past for consideration and containment. Comparisons with 'kitchen sink' artists like John Bratby are rejected by Shani, although everyday, prosaic clutter often features strongly in her work. She does, however, admit to an affinity with Max Beckmann (1884-1950) although at first it is difficult to perceive the link. Classified as a German Expressionist, although a term rejected by himself, he fell foul of the Nazis who, in 1937, seized his work as an example of 'Degenerate Art'. Perhaps Shani's sense of an affinity with Max Beckmann is based on his own predilection for the self-portrait but it might also arise from a sympathy with his unfortunate life and the vicissitudes heaped upon him. He too was dislocated from his home in Germany and after years in exile in Amsterdam finally managed to get to America. There he found success and his paintings were hung in The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.



Shani Rhys James, *The Bath* (Oil on canvas, 2012)
 © Shani Rhys James Photo: Gareth Lloyd Hughes

Shani Rhys James's work is informed and influenced by her familiarity and sensitivity to other artistic disciplines, particularly the written word. She painted her "Alice" pictures after rereading *Alice in Wonderland* to her child, never having much cared for it as a child herself. *She Seized the Tablecloth in Both Hands* (1992) finds her wearing the yellow dress she loved so much while taking part in a short film as a child but quite calmly committing a transgressive act in order to take control of a situation of which she disapproved.

Her capacity for encompassing the wider cultural world gave rise to a touring exhibition of her paintings in which seven poets were invited to respond to the work. This exhibition, *Florilingua* (2013), later gave rise to the book of the same name which had contributions from Gillian Clarke, Pete Cox, Jasmine Donahaye, Carol Ann Duffy, Menna Elfyn, Patrick Christopher Kavanagh and Amy Wack, each of whom gave a poetic response to Shani's paintings. The pictures in the book are arresting and employ Shani's new interest in the depiction of brightly

coloured patterned wallpaper and chandeliers. Intense colours are used, red and black of course, but also vivid yellows, blue and purple rendering a sense of closeted claustrophobia within the space. She refers to the wallpapers as a reflection of status as in Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* or frustration as experienced by Nora in Ibsen's *A Doll's House*. She is aware that this reflects back to the unsettled time when she and her mother dwelled in a series of bedsits in 1960's London, the squalor of the surroundings accentuated by the prevailing fashion for florid wallpaper.

This probing, explorative aspect of Shani's broad cultural interests led her to bring to fruition the long nurtured idea to create automata. She is a painter through and through so that this 'aberration', like a weevil in the brain, lay quiescent for nearly twelve years until in 2006 she activated the project she called "Cassandra's Rant". An empty red doll's house (sprayed that colour by herself) in which is heard the voice of her actress mother speaking the part of Nora in an excerpt from Ibsen's *A Doll's House* is one of the installations. Her mother selected the piece herself. For Shani, now, the poignancy must be considerable as she observed her formerly vital, vibrant mother enduring a steep decline in her health. A remarkable mother of a remarkable daughter!

The automata include a sinister tapping hand, whiling away unwanted wasted hours, as the headless mannequin stands bound in her corseted crinoline of regulation black. Then there is the equally sinister cot, shaking and rocking, empty of its presumed child. It all harks back to dark, oppressive feelings of a very disagreeable moment. Clearly something Shani needed to examine, consider, detoxify and hopefully, discard.

Wales has realised that this unusual half-daughter, returned to her homeland, has gifted it her talent and unique style and has sought to reward her. In 1989, Shani Rhys James won First Prize in Wales Open, Aberystwyth and has continued to gather up multiple awards, prizes, gold medals and honorary fellowships. In 2003 she was Welsh Woman of the Year and in 2006 she was awarded MBE for services to Welsh art. She continues to exhibit widely and her paintings hang in important collections.

Earlier this year she addressed the Contemporary Art Society for Wales. For an hour, with no notes, she held the audience spellbound and made them laugh as well. It would seem that the hype surrounding her as one of Wales' most distinguished, exciting, as well as being instantly recognisable artists, is no exaggeration.

Her work, unsettling and disturbing, is never commonplace and is the endpoint of the integration into her work of her life narrative, which has not always been an easy one. If the experts are right, if done successfully, this should lead ultimately to greater happiness and, in the case of the life-enhancing Shani Rhys James, this would appear to be so.

Y PIBGORN: UN O'N HEN OFFERYNNAU

Offeryn hynafol yw'r pibgorn, wedi'i seilio ar y sgrech sydd wrth chwythu aer heibio i gorsen tenau. Bu hwn yn ddefnyddiol i'r hen fugeiliaid oedd yn galw eu defaid atynt, ac wrth ychwanegu piben gyd thyllau, gellid canu alaw arno. Cyfeiria'r Beibl a storïau gwerin at y ffordd y byddai'r anifeiliaid yn adnabod cân eu bugail nhw ac y byddant yn ei ddilyn. Offeryn i'w chwarae yn yr awyr agored yn bennaf oedd y pibgorn yn ôl pob tebyg. Yn ôl Robert Griffiths, awdur *Llyfr Cerdd Dannau*, enw arall cyffredin arno oedd pib y bugail, ac mae lle i gredu ei fod yn offeryn poblogaidd ymhlith gweision ffermydd yn arbennig, y gallent ddefnyddio i ganu alawon bywiog i ddawnsio.

Mae'r pibgorn wedi ei gofnodi yng Nghymru ers y 12fed ganrif o leiaf. Yn y 10fed ganrif, ac mewn fersiynau mwy diweddar yn dyddio o'r 12fed a'r 13eg ganrif, roedd Cyfreithiau Hywel Dda yn cynnig gwybodaeth am statws cerddoriaeth yng Nghymru. Mae'r gyfraith yn datgan y dylai'r brenin gydnabod "*statws y meistri o greffnyr a oedd yn ei wasanaethu drwy roi offeryn addas i bob un, sef telyn, crwth neu bibgorn*".

Yn y pibgorn, corn buwch sy'n gorchuddio ac yn gwar-chod y gorsen, gyda chorn buwch ar y gwaelod i fwyhau'r sain. Corsen sengl wedi'i gwneud fel arfer o wial neu ddeunydd synthetig sydd i'r offeryn ac mae nifer o esiamplau, yn dyddio o'r 18fed a'r 19eg ganrif, wedi goroesi. Mae'n debyg taw'r pibgorn yw rhagflaenydd y bibgod, a bod y god wedi'i chysylltu â'r bib i wneud hi'n haws chwarae'r offeryn.

THE PIBGORN: A ONCE POPULAR WELSH INSTRUMENT

You may, in younger years, have placed two hands together, held a blade of grass between your two thumbs and blown through the gap to produce a loud screech: if not, you should try it! This trick was, no doubt, discovered millennia ago by those people whose living depended on herding sheep, goats or cattle, and evolved over time into the family of reed instruments that we know today, formed by adding a tube with holes which can be closed by the fingers to control the pitch of a vibrating reed as the illustration shows.

Biblical references and folk tales, such as the Pied Piper, tell us how herdsmen would use the instrument to play their own tunes which the animals would recognise and follow to new and greener pastures. Across Europe, the music captured the emotions of the human listeners as well as the animals and found its way into our daily lives. The Laws of Hywel Dda (codified 940–50) specify that every master employing a pencerdd (*chief musician*) should give him the necessary harp, crwth and pibgorn. However, the instrument was not described in writing until about 1775. There is some iconographic evidence in church windows and carvings from the 14th and 15th centuries.

The pibgorn (plural: pibgyrn) (*pipe-horn or hornpipe*) continued to be played in Wales until the beginning of the 19th century by which time it had long gone from the rest of Britain. As well as being an instrument in its own right, it constituted the chanter which plays the melody in the pibgod (the Welsh bagpipe), as opposed to the drone. It is based on a single vibrating reed, as are the clarinet and



Casgliad pibgyrn Sain Fagan / St Fagans pibgorn collection



Pibgorn corsen syml / Pibgorn made from a cane

Datblygodd y pibgorn (pibell-corn neu hornpipe), a pharhaodd i gael ei chwarae yng Nghymru tan ddechrau'r 19eg ganrif ac erbyn hynny roedd wedi diflannu o weddill Prydain. Yn ogystal â bod yn offeryn ynddo'i hun, roedd yn cynnwys y santiwr sy'n chwarae'r alaw yn y pibgod (bagiau pibell Cymreig), yn seiliedig ar un corsen ddirgryn-gol, fel y mae'r clarinet a'r teulu sacsoffon. Mae siantwr pibell yr Alban yn defnyddio corsen ddwbl, fel y mae'r obo, cor anglais a basŵn, i gyd yn offerynnau swllyd.

Mae gan Amgueddfa Werin Cymru Sain Ffagan, dan ofal Emyr Davies, y Cadwraethydd Dodrefn, dair enghraifft hyfryd a gwahanol o bibgyrn Cymreig sydd wedi goroesi o'r 18fed ganrif hyd heddiw; cânt eu cadw mewn câs, a welir yn y darlun.

Gwnaed ymdrech newydd ar ddiwedd yr ugeinfed ganrif i roi bywyd newydd i'r pibgorn. Mae gan ddau neu dri gwneuthurwr offer restr aros barhaol ac mae nifer y chwaraewyr yn tyfu. Mae pobl sy'n chwarae'r pibgorn yn dweud bod y byseddu yn eithaf syml i unrhyw un sy'n gyfarwydd â chwiban neu recorder ond mae'n heriol i'w chwarae'n dda, ac mae angen ei 'gynhesu' ymlaen llaw i fod mewn tiwn, yn enwedig os yw i chwarae gydag offerynnau eraill.

Meurig Williams

Gwybodaeth bellach

Cewch ragor o wybodaeth ar y wefannau canlynol:

www.pibgorn.co.uk yw gwefan Gavin Morgan, arbenigydd wrth ganu'r offeryn sy'n eu cynhyrchu gyda thechnegau a deunyddiau modern a'u gwerthu'n fasnachol dros y byd.

www.pibgyrn.com yw gwefan Gerard Kilbride sydd hefyd yn bilydd ond yn fwy adnabyddus fel ffdilwr gwerin Cymreig a gwneuthurwr ffdil. Mae'r wefan yn dangos yn fanwl sut i greu pibgorn, wedi'i seilio ar y tri pibgorn sydd yn Sain Ffagan.

www.clera.org yw gwefan Clera, symdeithas offerynnau tradodiadol sydd yn hyrwyddo chwarae cerddoriaeth draddodiadol Cymru ar holl ystod yr offerynnau gwerin.

www.trac.cymru yw'r corff sy'n hyrwyddo a datblygu'r celfyddydau gwerin yng Nghymru.

saxophone family, unlike the chanter of the Scottish bagpipe which uses a double reed, as do the oboe, cor anglais and bassoon. They are all loud instruments.

In all probability the pibgorn was primarily used in the open air because of its loudness. According to Robert Griffiths, author of *Llyfr Cerdd Dannau*, another common name for it was pib y bugail (*the shepherd's pipe*) and it seems that it was popular amongst farmworkers in particular. Clwydfardd (David Griffith) states that his father had told him "*that playing the Pibgorn was a common thing in those days (the end of the 18th century) in the South and that farmers' servant men were in the habit of carrying them with them when driving cattle to the fairs.*" But it is fair to assume that the pibgorn was used also for dancing since fast tunes can be played on it: its piercing sound is an obvious advantage in the open air.

The Museum of National History at St Fagans has three lovely and different examples of Welsh pibgyrn which have survived from the 18th century to the present day; they are kept in a case, shown in the illustration. These three examples show us the basic components of the pibgyrn:

- a round-ended tapering mouthpiece made from a hollowed-out cow's horn into which the mouth fits to form a seal;



Gafin Morgan yn canu ei bibgorn, / Gafin Morgan playing one of his pibgyrn,



Emyr Davies gyda'r casgliad pibgryn / Emyr Davies with the pibgorn collection

- the reed in its saddle which fits inside the mouthpiece onto the end of the body;
- the main body which consists of a pipe with six holes on the top along the length, covered by the fingers and one at the reed end on the bottom covered by the thumb;
- the hollowed-out cow's horn which fits onto the other end of the body, forming a bell to amplify the sound.

Emyr Davies, Furniture and Horology Conservator at St Fagans, takes a particular interest in the pibgorn, as well as the crwth and the harp, the other traditional Welsh instruments, and delights in showing the collection, sharing the understanding he has gained from researching into these instruments.

It seems that the Welsh gypsies were the last people to play the pibgorn in Wales. In her book *Cwprdd Nansi*, Nansi Richards describes a neithior (a wedding party) in Llanfyllid in the Tanat Valley where the gypsies played pibgryn, around the mid-19th century. They also continued to play the triple harp through to the 20th century to maintain an unbroken folk harp tradition to the present day.

A renewed effort was made at the end of the 20th century to give the pibgorn a new lease of life. Two or three instrument makers have a permanent waiting list and, as a result, the number of players is constantly growing. People who play the pibgorn say that the fingering is fairly

straightforward to anyone who is familiar with a whistle or even a recorder. The instrument is slightly challenging to play well: it is temperamental and needs to be 'warmed up' in advance to be in tune, especially if it is to play with other instruments. Reflecting on the cowhorns used in its construction, players describe it as 'a bit of a cow' to play!

Meurig Williams

Further information

You can find out more about the pibgorn from the following sources:

www.pibgorn.co.uk is the website of Gavin Morgan, an enthusiastic Welsh folk piper who has studied the St Fagans collection and now uses modern methods to manufacture pibgryn using wood and plastics and has orders from across the world.

www.pibgryn.com is the website of Gerard Kilbride, also a piper but better known as a Welsh folk fiddler and violin maker. His site, which has excellent detailed images, provides detailed constructional information for making a pibgorn from elder, passing on the fruit of his studies of the three pibgryn in the St Fagans collection.

www.clera.org is the website of Clera, the Welsh Traditional Instruments Society which promotes the playing of Welsh traditional music. The website carries information on the three traditional instruments: crwth, harp and pibgorn but places more emphasis on the playing of our music on more recent traditional instruments including fiddle, flute, whistle, guitar and others, as well as on the harp and pibgorn.

www.trac.cymru is the development body for the folk arts in Wales.



FORE-EDGE PAINTINGS

Many of the books in the Library collections at the National Museum Wales have attractive decorative techniques applied to the covers or the text block, the combined pages of the book inside the covers. The most popular examples of decorating text blocks include marbling and gilding. But one of the most interesting techniques is the one known as "disappearing fore-edge painting", which was often hidden underneath the other types of decoration. The fore-edge refers to the longest section of the text block, the one opposite the spine, also known as the front-edge or fourth-edge, after the spine, top-edge and bottom-edge.

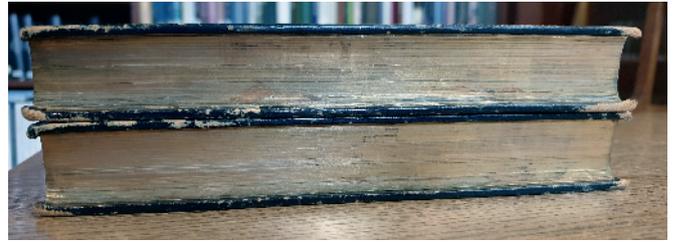
Hundreds of years ago it was more common to shelve books fore-edge facing out, rather than spine out. Owners and booksellers would mark the fore-edge of the book, so that they were able to identify it easily when it was on the shelves. Some of these markings would be very simple, but more decorative versions included insignia or the coat of arms of the owner. The use of fore-edge painting as a purely decorative technique gained popularity from the 16th and 17th centuries.

Two books in our special collections feature examples of what appear to be mid-19th century versions of disappear-

ing fore-edge paintings. They are the two volumes of the second edition of the *Memoirs of Lord Bolingbroke* by George Wingrove Cooke which were published in 1836.

When the book is closed you cannot see the image, only the gilt edges of the text block, but when the leaves are fanned, the hidden picture is revealed. To achieve this effect, the artist would need to fan the pages and then secure them in a vice; this means they are applying the paint not to the edge of the page but to the slight inner edge. Once completed, it is released from the vice and the gilding would be applied to the edges.

Landscape scenes were the most popular for this technique, and the ones on our books show Conwy Castle and Caernarfon Castle. Very often the motivation for a fore-edge painting was a demonstration of artistic skill, so it did not always follow that the images were related to the text contained within the book. These two volumes of *Memoirs* do not have an obvious connection to the scenes painted. Lord Bolingbroke (Henry St John, 1st Viscount Bolingbroke 1678–1751) was an English politician during the reign of Queen Anne and later George I and is probably best known as a supporter of the Jacobite rebellion of 1715 but he does not appear to have any direct association with either Conwy or Caernarfon.



The Memoirs of Lord Bolingbroke showing the fore-edge with the book closed
© Amgueddfa Genedlaethol Cymru / National Museum of Wales

The volumes were acquired for the Library in 2008 from a rare book dealer, but we do not know enough about their history to be able to tell when the fore-edge paintings were added. The first volume contains an inscription that states that the book was a gift to a T. M. Townley from his friend Samuel Thomas Abbot on his leaving Eton in 1843. Unfortunately we do not know anything about either the recipient or the donor, so we cannot tell if one of them was ultimately responsible for painting the books.

Kristine Chapman

Kristine Chapman is Principal Librarian, Amgueddfa Cymru



The two volumes with the pages fanned to show the fore-edge painting with Vol I Caernarfon Castle (above) and Vol II Conwy Castle (below).
© Amgueddfa Genedlaethol Cymru / National Museum of Wales



POOR TAFF: A GIFT TO AMGUEDDFA CYMRU

Melanie Polledri

On St David's Day, 2019, the Honourable Society of the Cymmrodorion presented a unique and culturally significant eighteenth-century painting, *Poor Taff*, to the national collections at Amgueddfa Cymru. This generous offer followed the closure of its former home, the Welsh Girls' School (later St. David's School) which was originally founded in 1716.

The Society has a long history dating back to the eighteenth century. Originally called the Most Honourable and Loyal Society of Antient Britons, it was officially founded in its current form in London in 1751. The society, with its social and benevolent aims, offered assistance to many poverty-stricken Welsh people leaving Wales for a supposedly better life in London. The Society organised the annual St David's Day Dinner (still held today) to raise funds for Welsh families in need of help. Their philan-

thropy has continued over the years and, according to the society's website, includes the purchase of a church, St Etheldreda's in Ely Place in 1843, as well as the above-mentioned school. Initially a charity school, it was based in London at Clerkenwell and then Gray's Inn Lane before eventually relocating to Ashford, Surry, in 1857. The school provided education for impoverished Welsh boys in London, by 1758 it was co-educational before becoming a school for girls in 1882.

The society also offered a centre of support for those at home in Wales: it helped establish the National Eisteddfod in 1861, and, as testimony to its long association with Amgueddfa Cymru, the society played an important role in its founding as well as that of the National Library at Aberystwyth. This resulted in the granting of Royal Charters to both institutions in 1907. It also encouraged and supported literary and historical interests concerning Wales, including the publication of Welsh, or Welsh interest, books.

Poor Taff is one of four similar oil paintings and it is possible they were originally commissioned by Welsh



Anon, *Taff Poor* (Oil on canvas, c.1770-1850)
© Amgueddfa Genedlaethol Cymru / National Museum of Wales
Photo: Robin Maggs

societies. All the paintings tell the tale of the Welsh satirical character, Shon-Ap-Morgan, who was widely known as 'Poor Taff', and his journey to London. Shon was intent on avenging English anti-Welsh activities carried out every St David's Day. Of particular concern were the 'rabble' English who entertained themselves by annually hanging ragged effigies of Welsh people above the streets. Things did not go as planned for Shon. As art historian Peter Lord notes, many versions of the story claim that the 'demon drink' was responsible for the misadventures he encountered on his way.

In the painting, Shon, or Poor Taff, is depicted on the road to London. He sits astride a goat, in his raised right hand he holds his sword while the scabbard at his left side appears to have been replaced with a leek. He also wears another large leek in his hat and strapped to his waist is a sizeable herring. Behind him is a wooded and mountainous background.

Goats have had a long association with Wales, especially the mountain goats of Snowdonia in North Wales. They were frequently adopted as Welsh symbols by individuals such as the eighteenth-century Welsh traveller and antiquarian Thomas Pennant and, since the mid-nineteenth century, they were used as mascots for two Welsh regiments. However, they also carry connotations of unruly behaviour and licentiousness. These associations fed into depictions of Welsh people. In the painting, the goat indicates Shon's poverty-stricken circumstances; he is reduced to riding a goat as he could not afford a horse.

Historically, leeks too were extensively associated with Wales. Their green and white colouring for example, symbolised the colours of ancient Welsh princes. Worn as

emblematic signs, they signalled the wearers' loyalty to their prince. They also provided a very basic uniform through which they could identify and distinguish themselves from the enemy. This practice may have originated from Wales's patron saint, St David, who apparently issued orders that they be worn in battle against the pagan Saxon invaders. Yet, despite these lofty associations, the leeks in the painting further symbolise Shon's poverty. Some versions of the image show Shon with a portion of cheese along with the leeks and fish and, despite appearing a relatively healthy diet by today's standard, they indicated plain and poor fare. Shon sometimes appears with a parchment scroll, this contained Shon's proof of his family lineage of which he was extremely proud. This is probably reflected in his smart dress and hat, through which he self-styled himself as a gentleman.

The iconographic sources of the *Poor Taff* painting stem from a combination of a popular ceramic Meissen figurine and early anti-Welsh prints published by Cluer Dicey during the 1740s. The figurine is a caricature of the tailor to the Meissen factory's director, Count Brühl. As the humorous figurine shows the tailor riding a goat, often with a female companion, we can see the similarity with *Poor Taff*. This is especially so as English factories readily copied this popular design. The figurine became known as "The Welsh Tailor and his Wife" possibly through the associations of Wales with goats.

The prints meanwhile, show various versions of "Shon-ap-Morgan, Shentleman of Wales" on his journey to London. In some he is accompanied by his wife, Unna-fred [Winifred] Shones who also rides a goat and wears a leek in her hat. The stereotype of 'Poor Taff' was gaining currency and becoming prominent in satirical literature and prints, some prints of which carried comic Welsh-English text. Such satire was conveniently adopted by the English to express their anti-Welsh sentiments. Despite general approval for the union of Wales and England, images of Welsh people published in popular English print culture (in particular in London) during this period were often ironically unflattering, offensive, ridiculing or patronising. Some English artists also used this satire on prominent public figures including the Prince of Wales (later George IV). The most famous satirist, James Gillray produced a print, *The Three Wynnes / A Welch Tandem* (in the collection at Amgueddfa Cymru) that depicts three generations of the wealthy landowners, the Williams Wynne family. This print shows three gentlemen of the Wynne family



James Gillray, *The Three Wynnes / A Welch Tandem*, (Hand-coloured print, 26cm x 37cm, c.1792-1810)
© Amgueddfa Cymru / National Museum Wales



British School, *A Celebration of St David's Day* (Oil on canvas, 92cm x 72cm, 18th century)

wearing leeks in their hats and sitting together like 'peas in a pod' in their trap. With whip and reins flying in the air they hurtle along the road pulled by three wild-looking flatulent goats towards their family home, Wynnstay. In the background, a small herd of goats can be seen on the mountain.

An ironic consequence of these popular and widely published prints was a rise in protestations from some readers. One, for example, objected to "that insolence of Men, the Superiority of Opinion, and that almost Disaffection of Soul, which Englishmen generally assume over the rest of their fellow Subjects". This changing opinion aligns with the Napoleonic Wars being fought against France and a desire for a united Britain. Later versions of the prints then began to praise Wales and the Welsh people, condemning the previous English abuse. As a result, the figure of Poor Taff started to emerge as a positive symbol of Welsh national identity.

Subsequently, through these changing opinions, the Welsh in London began to assimilate the Shon-ap-Morgan/Poor Taff stereotype into an affectionate Welsh icon. It is for this reason that these paintings may have been commissioned by London-based Welsh societies. The stereotype that we see in this painting eventually gave way to a more

benevolent Welsh icon created by Augusta Hall, Lady Llanofer, of the Welsh lady, "Blodwen", with her tall black hat and shawl. However, *Poor Taff* still resonates today as a historical reminder of patriotic celebrations of Wales's patron saint, St David.

Poor Taff underwent restoration work in 2016. While the style of the original paintwork suggests the painter may have been an artisan trained in the production of shop or tavern signs and coats of arms, it was discovered that it had been considerably overpainted during the middle of the nineteenth century. Although a significant amount of the original painting of the background and the goat remained, the figure of Poor Taff had not fared so well. It is likely that whoever did the overpainting probably added the newer inscription that changes the identity of the sitter to the mysterious "Jeffery Morgan", of which nothing is as yet known. As it was unclear how much of the original was beneath the overpainting it was decided not to risk losing more of the painting than restoration could redeem. Consequently, the nineteenth-century paint and the inscription remain. This now presents us with a reminder of the painting's past and the various ways paintings were treated in terms of restoring, conserving and re-working.

Poor Taff is important to Amgueddfa Cymru's collection as it presents an English, or London, vision of people from Wales during

the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Furthermore, within the collection, *Poor Taff* is unique for its use of satire in defining Welsh identity and linking Wales with England. It highlights how satire can be manipulated and meanings changed depending on who controls the satirised image. As such, it contributes towards eighteenth- and nineteenth-century portrayals of Welsh people in the collections. We can see this in the example of the works currently displayed alongside *Poor Taff*. These include the eighteenth century painting, *A Celebration of St David's Day* and *Reverend Christmas Evans*, painted by Williams Roos in the nineteenth century. *Poor Taff* is currently on display in Gallery 5 at National Museum Cardiff.

Melanie Polledri is Curator Art Collections Management and Access at Amgueddfa Cymru

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RUPERRA CASTLE : A “POIGNANT MEMORIAL”

Pat Jones-Jenkins

The fire which consumed Ruperra Castle on the night of 9th December 1941 and left it a smouldering ruin resulted from an electrical fault in the roof. The Castle had been requisitioned by the Ministry of Defence for the training of soldiers. The fire is still, even today, blamed on the soldiers and particularly Americans even though it happened on the same night as Pearl Harbor - before they entered the War! The sixty soldiers of the Tyne & Wear Electrical Engineers who were in the Castle that night all escaped. They provided a daily supply of food, fuel and equipment to the searchlight units camping out on sites dotted around the nearby Bristol Channel. After the fire the training continued throughout the War and soldiers slept in the stable block or in tents in the grounds.

In 1938 the Castle was pictured in a Ministry of Defence manual for wartime mobile bakeries, showing that it had been chosen as a training camp that early on. For the first soldiers returning from the British Expeditionary Force's

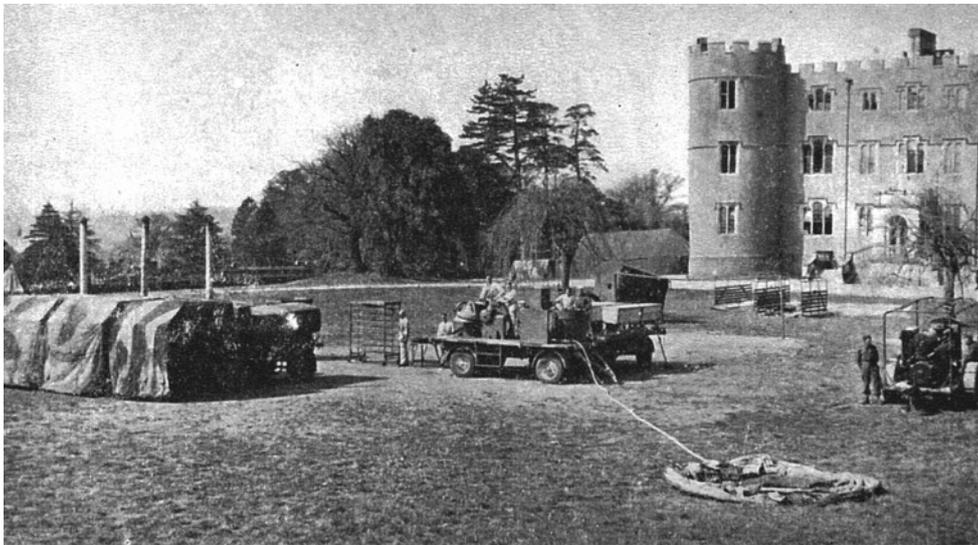
traumatic retreat from Dunkirk, the pleasant surroundings of Ruperra seemed like a holiday in a beautiful Castle with immaculate grounds.

Godfrey Lord Tredegar, his brother Colonel Freddie, and his nephew Viscount Courtney, had always spent time at Ruperra throughout their lives and loved it but the Morgan household had moved from Ruperra to Tredegar House when Charles Morgan Robinson Morgan was created a baron in 1859, fulfilling the Morgan dream of taking their place as equals amongst the English aristocracy. After Freddie's death Ruperra became used more for hunting and shooting parties but local servants declared that Ruperra was always more beautiful than Tredegar House. In the 1930s the great Morgan Tredegar Estate, although weakening, still provided work for some local servants and caretakers. Godfrey had died in 1913 but his gifts of land and property to Newport and Cardiff are legendary. Said to have had an income of £2000 a day when he died, he believed that great wealth carried responsibilities.

When Freddie died in 1909, his son Courtney spent a huge amount of money on extensive building works at Ruperra for the forthcoming marriage of his son Evan. Using money which the Morgan family had taken centuries to amass, he bought Pulitzer's yacht 'Liberty'; fitting it out at his own cost in 1915 as a hospital ship. The advice of the



Ruperra Castle and grounds in 1949
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RCAHMW



The Mobile Bakery at Ruperra Castle from a 1938 training booklet
Courtesy of the Ministry of Defence.

Tredegar Estate trustees to follow his father's frugality fell on deaf ears, so that the 53,000 acre Tredegar Estate was put up for sale in 1935, a year after his death, bringing the third set of death duties. The Ruperra Estate of 3,140 acres was the first property to be offered, but there were no takers and the remnants from an eventual sale of furniture, expensive items and smaller mementoes, were taken to Tredegar House for storage.

The Castle impressed one soldier, who said after the fire, "It was a beautiful castle and I'm sorry for those of you who never saw it as it was", but there was a lack of knowledge and concern about Ruperra's heritage after the War. Evan Morgan died childless in 1948 and his unmarried cousin John Morgan, the last Lord Tredegar, who was to die at Monte Carlo in 1962, invited the principal of the new National Land Trust, James Lees-Milne, to visit Ruperra. In his book *Midway on the Waves*, published much later in 1985, his words seem to sound the death knell for Ruperra:

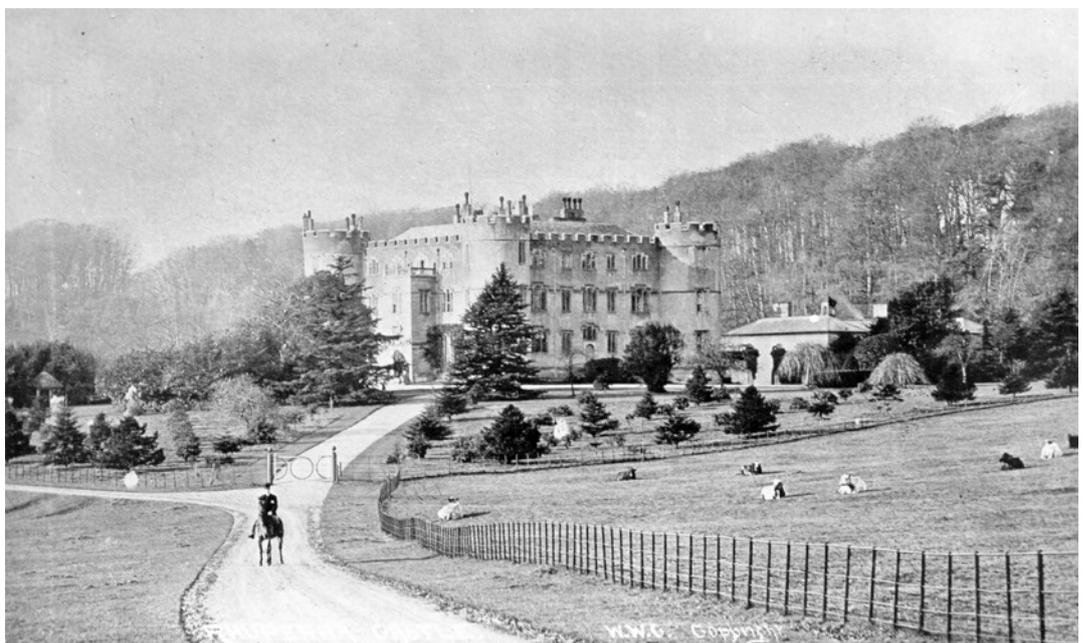
"Thursday 10th November 1948. This fine morning we motored to Ruperra Castle which the Welsh want to buy from John as a memorial to Welshmen killed in the war and vest in the Nat Trust. I could not see any point in it at all ... There remains one Jacobean two-storeyed porch which is alright."

In 1956 Ruperra, as part of the whole Tredegar Estate, was sold to the Eagle Star Insurance Company and then sold on in parts, to owners with little interest in heritage and for whom the ru-

ined castle was a nuisance. Soldiers coming back to show their families where they had spent their War years were turned away. Outbuildings were asset stripped. After 1956 there was no talk of repair. How sad to compare the glory of Ruperra before Godfrey and Freddie died with its subsequent abandonment. Ruperra was not listed until 1964 and not scheduled as an Ancient Monument until 1976.

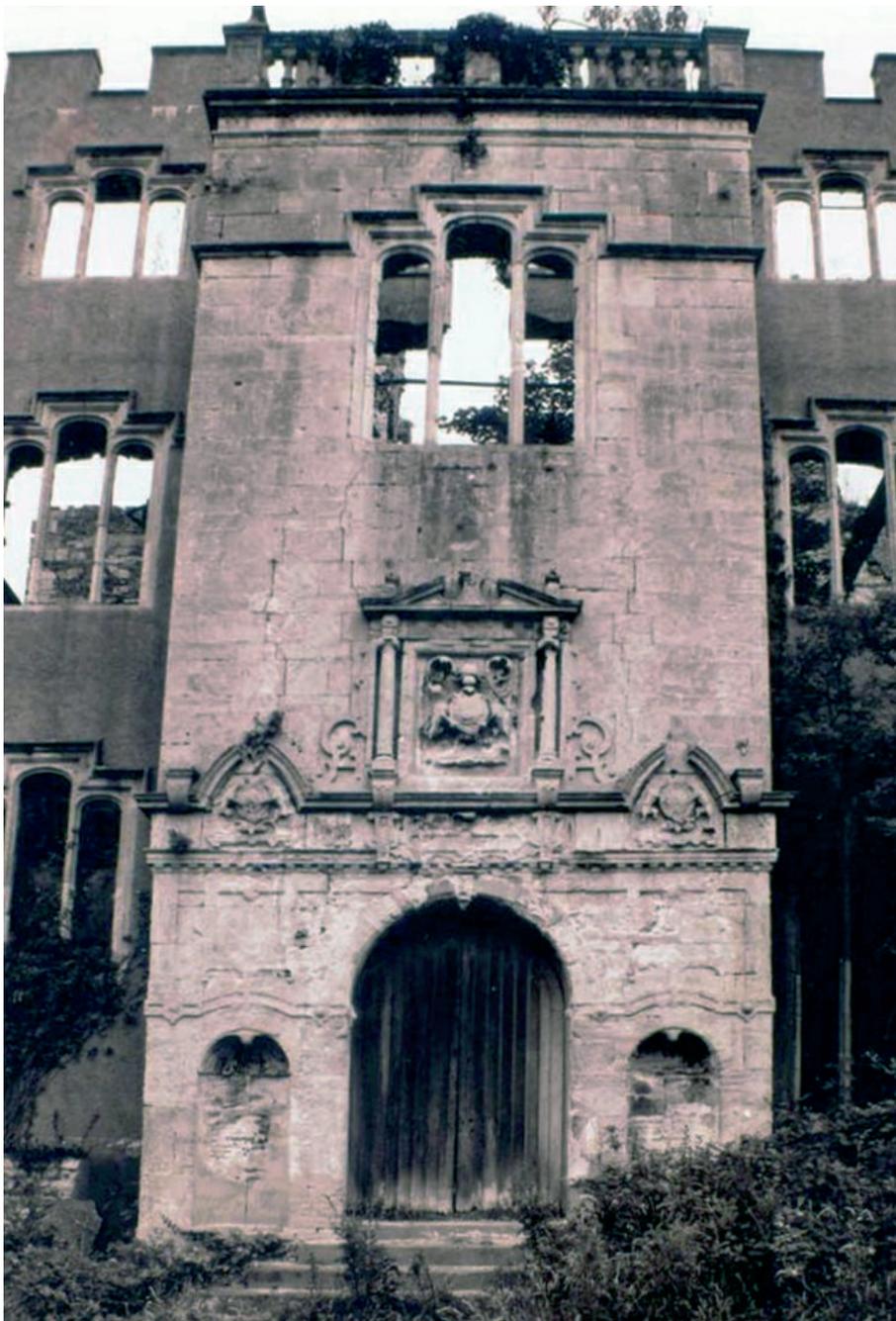
However, in the 1980s, the newly formed Rudry Local History Group gathered together an archive of research, enriched by recorded memories of Ruperra servants and soldiers together with letters, pictures and photographs. Affection for the Estate was overwhelming. In 1996 the Group, now converted into the Ruperra Castle Conservation Trust, obtained a feasibility study for Ruperra from Donald Insall Associates Ltd., funded by Cadw, the Architectural Heritage Fund, the Manifold Trust and the Prince of Wales Trust. Ruperra had become important.

Unfortunately, within the year, the Castle and thirteen surrounding acres were purchased privately from its farmer owner. Caerphilly County Borough Planning Department, faced with proposals for a school, a polo club or hotel, emphasised the need to repair the Castle and protected the site in its Local Development Plan. Its new owner failed to prioritise the need to protect Ruperra. However, its designations, which include Scheduled Ancient Monument, Grade II* listed building, Site of Special Scientific



Ruperra in the late 19th Century

Courtesy of Dr Fred Holley



Statuary on the South Porch.

© Crown Copyright RCAHMW

Interest, Conservation Area, Registered Historic Park and Garden, all within a Special Landscape Area, led to difficulties in obtaining planning permission. Meanwhile inaction led to more bits of the ancient building falling off.

In 2008, the then owner's planning application came before Caerphilly County Borough Council's Planning Committee and after a nail-biting start the democratically-elected Councillors decided that building eighteen new houses in the grounds could not fund the repair of the Castle. Unperturbed, and hoping that a half day Public Inquiry would overturn the decision, the owner persisted but was devastated when the Council's decision was upheld by the Planning Inspector after a five-day inquiry in which the Trust was supported by the *pro bono* evidence of English and Welsh heritage experts. The Inspector confirmed that the development would have destroyed the

'Historic Setting' of the Castle - an important part of Scheduled Monument law.

The statuary on the South Porch, even though now badly eroded, is an excellent place to investigate Ruper's significance. Did Sir Thomas Morgan, the builder of the Castle in 1626, know that the sculpture on the right side would tell future generations, maybe learning only English history, that he was descended from Hywel Dda, mentioned in documents as King of the Britons, and on diplomatic terms with King Athelstan of England? Also that he was descended from Rhys ap Tewdwr, King of Deuheubarth and thus from Rhodri Mawr, giving him equality with Alfred the Great? Sir Thomas's ancestors were not just royal, they were also 'great'. Diligence, hard work and favourable marriages in the Mediaeval period increased their landed estates in Wales, regaining some of the land lost to the Normans. Confident enough to support Owain Glyndŵr in 1400, they were then able to negotiate the return of their lands confiscated after his fall.

On the left of the Porch are the arms of the rich and powerful Welsh Herbert family, created Earls of Pembroke in 1544 by Henry VIII, who gifted Wilton House to them. In 1626 Sir Thomas wanted future generations to know that the Morgans with the Herberts had, for countless generations, supported the fortunes of the Welsh Tudor family, giving military support for Henry Tudor's

landing at Milford Haven in 1485. Another Sir Thomas Morgan, of Machen, held the extremely important position of "Esquire to the Body" of the new king, Henry VII.

Thomas Morgan, his grandson, also held an extremely powerful position, as 'Steward to the Wood' and Controller of the Household, for William, the outstanding third Earl of Pembroke. Thomas probably played a crucial part organising the mediaeval tournament and masque at Wilton House to celebrate William's marriage in 1604. The mediaeval style scenery made for the staging by Inigo Jones, was neither kept nor illustrated after the event but Thomas Morgan, living with William's superb patronage of the Arts, was bound to have absorbed the ideas. Having been knighted by James I in 1623, Sir Thomas came back to Machen in 1626 and built his mock mediaeval castle at Ruperra, which is unique in Wales and remains William



Illustration of a "Pageant Castle" from a sketch of the castle from c.1770
 © Crown Copyright RCAHMW

it his main residence. By 1800 his grand-nephew Sir Thomas Morgan of Ruperra, Judge Advocate General, whose office was at 12 Downing Street, had planted an avenue of oaks at Ruperra and had married his daughter Jane, to Sir Charles Gould, who quickly added Morgan to his name by deed poll to inherit her estate. Famous for setting up the first insurance company, the Equitable Life, he involved the family in the lucrative industrialisation of South Wales. Sir Charles was disappointed at not entering the peerage, but his grandson Charles Morgan Robinson Morgan became Baron Tredegar in 1859 and moved to Tredegar House leaving his second son, Colonel Freddie at Ruperra who, as we saw earlier, died in 1909.

Pembroke's most poignant memorial, says Adam Nicholson in his book *The Earls of Paradise* (2008): "Now burnt and in collapse, Ruperra's toy towers and mock battlements are one of the last remaining vestiges of that honourable and chivalric ideal to which William Pembroke had devoted his life, an image of late-medieval perfection brought into a modern world which would neglect and ruin it."

The central Royal Stuart Arms on the South Porch showed continuing royal friendship for the Morgans. In 1645, not only did Charles I stay for four nights in the only 'building fit for a king' in South Wales but he was so impressed with Ruperra that he sent Inigo Jones, John Webb and Isaac de Caux from the Royal Office of Works, with advice for the formal parterre gardens.

The Morgans, knighted by English kings, held important local and national offices. As high-ranking mercenary soldiers they helped the Dutch Orange family's fight to rid Holland of Catholic Spanish rule. Sir Charles Morgan of Pencarn in Newport, honoured at his death by a monument in Bergen-op-Zoom, had married Elisabeth van Marnix in 1608. Their daughter Anna, subsequently married Lewis Morgan of Ruperra, arranged a visit there in 1654 for the twenty-one year-old son of the Dutch ambassador who wrote: "Around noon we reached the very beautiful Rhinperra House ... the mansion is square with a round tower on each corner which adds a closet to almost every room. A large and lovely hall to the right of the entrance. Behind the house are many stables ... A very fine garden laid out on the slope of a hill, ... and upon reaching the highest step, one would never have guessed how charming the view is towards the Severn across this very beautiful and fertile valley".

Due to lack of Morgan heirs, the Kemys Tyntes of Cefn Mably were the hosts in 1684 when the Lord President of the Council of the Marches stayed at Ruperra with a large retinue inspecting the militia during his 'official progress' through Glamorgan. In 1700 John Morgan the Merchant, on his return home to Machen, bought Ruperra and made

After this historical digression, we return to Ruperra in the present. In 2017, Save Britain's Heritage set out to fund repairs to the South Porch statuary. However, before work started on site in Summer 2018, it was realised that an unsafe chimney block behind the porch had to be demolished first. Then unauthorized activity and a threat to wildlife elsewhere on the site, especially the discovery of a horse-shoe bat hibernaculum (one of only five in Wales), caused Natural Resources Wales to stop all work. The Trust is now working with the owner, Cadw, Welsh Government and Caerphilly County Borough Council with a view to evolving a plan to rescue the Castle.

Pat Jones-Jenkins is Honorary Secretary of the Ruperra Castle Preservation Trust



TEA WITH BURTON: PORT TALBOT, SUMMER 1954

It was a hot sunny afternoon, so hot that the sun was melting the newly-laid surface of the road and the air was filled with the scent of dissolving tarmac. As was my wont, I was sitting on my doorstep, waiting for something interesting to happen. As an only child, I was hoping that one or other of my friends living close by would come out to play in the street and relieve my boredom. In the early fifties there were very few cars parked in our long street of terraced houses, and we rarely had any vehicle travelling down the road, so we could safely play there for hours on end. But nothing happened. The hot sun burned down on my bare arms and legs, and the world was still.

Suddenly a front door slammed shut nearby, and Pauline, from next door, stood in front of me. She was dressed in her best Sunday frock, with smocked bodice and short puffed sleeves, unusual for a weekday afternoon, and on



Marjorie (l) and Pauline (r) in 1954

her feet were her dazzling white Whitsunday shoes and frilly white socks. Something was definitely UP. To play in the street I was wearing shorts and blouse with plimsolls on bare feet; the usual attire for playing outside in the sun. Pauline was in her best outfit. "Richard Burton is home!" she announced, "And I'm going up to see him and get his autograph".

I looked at her in puzzlement. "Who?" I asked. "Who's Richard Burton?"

Pauline drew herself up to her full nine years of importance. "He's famous" she answered. "He's been in films an' all."

I was impressed. At seven years of age I was fascinated by the films in the cinema. I wanted to find out how the actors got "into" the screen, and this was a way to find out. "I'll come too!" I said. "OK," she said. "but be quick."

I turned into the house. "And bring your autograph book" she added. I stopped in horror. What? I was sure we didn't have such a thing. I did not even know what it was! I ran inside to my mother. "Mum? Do we have an autograph book?"

My mother stared in amazement, obviously with no idea of what I meant. Pauline, who had followed me into the house explained the situation. We did not have an autograph book. But on Commercial Road, only a few minutes

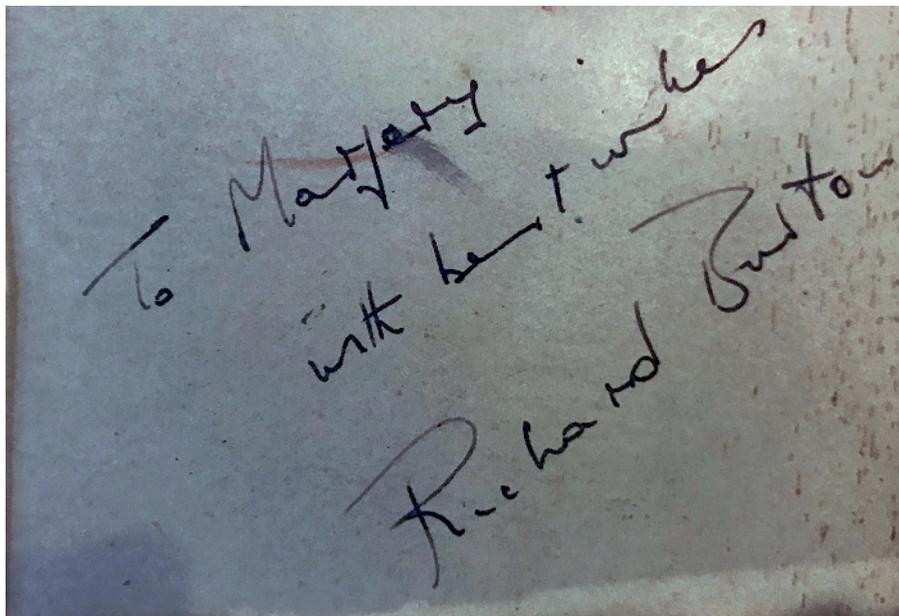
frantic running for a seven-year-old, was a row of shops. They were a strange, eclectic mix. There was a high end 'ladies outfitter', which also sold baby and children's clothes, a post office, a chemist, a butcher's shop, a hairdresser, a barber shop, and a dry cleaners. There was also Hopkins the Baker's. (Mr Hopkins had a son, Anthony who in later years also became very famous.) A few years later a Chinese "Takeaway" restaurant opened, but at this stage of the early fifties we only had the local 'chippy', which completed the line-up of shops. For some strange reason Swifts, the dry cleaners, had extended its range of facilities to include a small gift shop, selling china knick-knacks, lacy handkerchiefs, and a multitude of other colourful and fanciful items that were magical to a small child. And included in this multitude was an autograph book. Small, grey, simulated snakeskin, with pages of thin card of various colours, it was just what I needed. It cost one shilling and sixpence, and I had just enough change clasped in my fingers.

I raced back to my house, waving it triumphantly, and showed it to my mother and Pauline, who was sitting with a glass of orange squash, waiting for me. My mother took me firmly by the hand and marched me away to have my face washed, and my long hair brushed out of its bunches and put into tidy plaits. I envied Pauline her short, dark curls; once she had taken out the rags her mother put in her hair every night. All she had to do was run a

brush through her hair and clip it back with a hair-slide. After each of my plaits was finished off with a tartan ribbon, I was dressed in my Sunday best dress and new red Kiltie sandals, (the ones with a flower cut-out on the toes) with new white socks. I felt as if I was going to chapel, dressed in these clothes, but Pauline and I set off down the street and turned in the opposite direction from the chapel, up Varna Terrace towards Caradoc Street where Richard Burton had lived with his sister Sissie and her husband since his mother had died when he was two years old.

We climbed the hill towards the end of the street and stopped outside one of the houses. Pauline checked the number her mother had written down. Neither of us moved. Neither of us wanted to open the gate and step inside the small front garden and knock on the door. It seemed a tall door, with an oval of coloured glass at the top. There was a door knocker below the glass, but it was too high for me to reach. Pauline would have to knock. We opened the gate and tiptoed in. I have no idea why we were trying to be so quiet. Eventually Pauline bravely picked up the knocker and let it fall against the door. Hardly breathing we waited for the door to open. It swung open and there was a tall man standing there. "Hello", he said. "We've come to see Richard Burton," announced Pauline. "Well, you'd better come in and meet him then, hadn't you?" he said.

We stepped over the doorstep and into the house. The living room seemed full of people. Richard Burton got up



Richard Burton's autograph for Marjorie

from a chair, came over and crouched in front of us, getting down to our eyelevel. He asked us our names and where we were from. We knew this meant which street we lived in. Everyone knew everyone else in Taibach. Many of them were related to one another. His sister asked us about our families, our parents and grandparents and ascertained that they knew most of them. Richard Burton remembered that he had worked with my grandfather at the Cooperative stores when he had been fifteen years old.

Then they sat us down at the table and Mrs Burton poured us sweet, milky tea and gave us bread and butter and jam and cakes. I was too nervous to eat much, but just sat there and looked and listened. Mrs Burton (Sybil) was very beautiful, with silky blonde hair, such as like I had seen in magazines, and wearing a very smart suit that I knew my mother would have loved. Richard was just so handsome I could not take my seven year-old eyes off him. I think this was my first taste of love. I can still visualise him now, when he gave me his autograph, asking me my name again, bending his head and smiling at me, as he wrote in my grey snakeskin autograph book with his elegant fountain pen. It was over all too soon and we were on our way skipping back down the hill clutching our autograph books, and laughing and giggling in excitement.

I still have that autograph, and the little book, though I have taken the Burton autograph out of the book to frame it. When I look at it, I am reminded of two moments of that day. When Richard Burton returned my book to me, I realised he had spelled my name wrongly. He also wrote it with a fountain pen, and I did not want to close the book until the ink was dry in case it smudged. I waited a while and then gently rubbed my finger over his writing. It was not dry and, of course, I smudged it. I was devastated but everyone said it did not matter and they could still read it. And, although my name is spelt wrongly, I still know it was meant for me alone.

Marjorie Sheen

Editor's Note

If you are interested in Richard Burton you might like to know that Amgueddfa Cymru is holding an exhibition about him next year, entitled, **Becoming Burton** which will run from April to August. The aim will be to tell the intimate story of the man behind the myth through objects, stories and memories from family and friends. It will use his personal diaries and papers from The Richard Burton Archives at Swansea University which were donated by his wife.



TAKE THAT OIL PAINTING TOO!

A few years ago, the chemical works BP Baglan Bay called me to say that they were clearing out the offices as the site was closing and would I like to see if the Museum wanted any objects for our Modern Industry collection. I could not wait to go and have a look and, as there was quite a lot to go through, I took our museum van in the hope of a few accessions.

There were lots of photographs, some in frames with some big aerial photos too. There were overalls, hats and jackets with logos on them: just the sort of things that tell a great story when exhibited. There were tools specific to the industry and other bits and pieces, such as signs and gauges. I loaded a few things into the van to take back to the Museum so I could go through them to decide what we would like to keep and what should be returned.

But, as I was about to leave, they called me back and asked if I wanted the paintings? I had not noticed these as they were covered in bubble wrap and stood against a wall. One of the paintings was quite big, about 4ft 6in by 6ft (1.5m x 2.1m) and I could not see the subject for the wrapping. The other was much smaller about 2ft by 2ft 6in (0.6m x 0.76m). I was told the bigger one was an oil painting of Baglan Bay at night and the smaller one a



Andrew Vicari, *Baglan Bay at Night* (Oil on canvas, 150cm x 210cm, early 1960s)
© Amgueddfa Genedlaethol Cymru / National Museum of Wales

watercolour of a power station. I put them in the van, got the paperwork signed and left for our stores in Nantgarw where I could spread things out and examine them properly.

About a week went by and I still had not looked at the paintings as I had been going through all the other objects first. When I did take the bubble wrap off, I was really surprised by the quality of both paintings. The oil painting was really striking and the BP staff had told me that it had hung in the office since the 1960s. I looked for a painter's signature and then the real surprise hit me! In the bottom corner was 'Vicari'.

Bells rang deep in my head: where did I know that name from? A quick internet search answered that: the richest living artist in the world, the official Gulf War artist, artist to the Saudi royal family and born in Port Talbot. This fitted my collecting policy perfectly, being an industrial scene in Wales painted by a Welsh artist. The only snag from my point of view was that it could be quite valuable and BP might want to keep it. I contacted them straight away and told them about the artist and its possible value. One of their directors, David, called me and told me that they were happy it would be going to the National Museum of Wales and he could not think of a better place for

it. This generosity meant that we could save a national treasure for future generations.

So far, we had treated the painting as if it were a genuine 'Vicari', but was it really? I contacted the 'Vicari' website and sent them an image of our painting asking them if they could confirm if Andrew had painted it. I checked my email every day. No replies. How else could we confirm this if they did not get back to us? One sunny morning, about three weeks later, my phone rang. I could tell from the number that it was someone in France calling. This was not unusual as we have many visits from French schools and as my schoolboy French is just about good enough to get by, my number was very often given to schools as a contact.

After answering with who I was, a deep, rich voice said: "Ah, Andrew here, I hear you've found the lost Vicari". I could not believe it! Andrew Vicari calling me from his home in France! To say I was flabbergasted is an understatement! Andrew told me he had painted Baglan in the early 1960s and was really glad of the commission at the time (when he wasn't so well known).

We spoke for about half an hour about all sorts of things and he went on to tell me an incredible story from 1966.



Andrew Vicari painting a mural in the southern dressing room of the Principality Stadium (formerly Millennium Stadium) in 2002
© Wales News Service

Andrew had painted a picture that was to be auctioned for the Aberfan Disaster Appeal and went along to the auction in Cardiff. Before it got underway, two burly men approached Andrew and said someone needed to talk to him in private. He was shown to a room and waiting there were two more men in sharp suits, looking ‘a bit dodgy’ (his words). These two told him they wanted to buy the painting and asked how much did he want for it? He told them that it was not his to sell as he had given it to the appeal and it was out of his hands. They kept on that they wanted it and he needed to get it for them. They were getting more and more insistent. After repeating that he could not a number of times, they finally left to Andrew’s relief. It turned out that they were the Kray twins! He laughed and said, “I’m one of the few people to have said ‘no’ to the Kray twins and lived to tell the tale!”

He told me that he was very happy that his painting was going to be in the National collection and that he would do anything for Wales! We never had the chance to speak again; sadly, Andrew died in Swansea in 2016 aged 84. It is lovely that we have such incredible paintings to remember him by.

This story happened in 2009 and since then the painting has been in our stores in Nantgarw where it has been conserved and a new glazed frame made. We have been waiting for a chance to exhibit it and finally it will happen. You can see the painting as part of an Andrew Vicari exhibition that runs until 3rd November 2019 at the National Waterfront Museum, Swansea.

Ian Smith

Ian Smith is Senior Curator of Modern and Contemporary at Amgueddfa Cymru



MUSEUM NEWS

Dippy the Dinosaur Comes to Cardiff



If you are interested in dinosaurs then make a note in your diary that the Natural History Museum’s iconic *Diplodocus* dinosaur skeleton, known popularly as Dippy, is coming to Cardiff. Dippy is cast from a near complete skeleton discovered in Wyoming, America in 1898. The specimen is made up of 292 bones and is an impressive 21.3 metres long, 4.3 metres wide and 4.25 metres high.

As part of a road trip across the UK, Dippy is venturing out of London for the first time since 1905. He will be at National Museum Cardiff from the 19th October to 26th January 2020. Dippy’s residence in National Museum Cardiff will be used to encourage everyone to explore the natural history collections as well as the biodiversity of Cardiff.

Admission is free to all. Friends will also have a chance to learn more about Dippy at the Friends’ AGM on Saturday

Some of the finds from the 2018 excavations: including a bridle fitting (middle left), a terret ring for guiding the chariot reins (lower left), a horse brooch (lower right) and a further decorative piece (upper right)
 © Amgueddfa
 Genedlaethol Cymru /
 National Museum of Wales



2nd November as our invited speaker for the occasion will be Dr Caroline Buttler, Head of Palaeontology, National Museum Cardiff who will give a talk about Dippy's visit.

Iron Age chariot burial: the first in Wales

Archaeologists from Amgueddfa Cymru have been involved in assessing a major Iron Age find in Pembrokeshire which has turned out to be a chariot burial. Chariot burials in Britain are very rare and up to now have been found only in East Yorkshire.

The discovery was made by Mike Smith in February 2018, while metal-detecting on farm land in Pembrokeshire. It was reported to the Portable Antiquities Scheme in Wales (PAS Cymru) and immediately identified to be a potential treasure find. Further discoveries were made at a later date in 2018, when archaeologists investigated the site with his help.

The finds from 2018 included a large horse-brooch, a large terret (or rein-guide), a strap-union and harness fitting and fragments of a bridle-bit, all made of bronze with red-glass decoration. These would once have been fixings for a chariot and the accompanying leather harness for its highly trained pony-pair. They give a first glimpse of the styles and techniques used to decorate chariots in the tribal area of the *Demetae* or *Octapitae* peoples during the first century AD. Chariots, as war and ceremonial vehicles, were used to display the power and identity of their owners and tribal communities in Late Iron Age Britain, as the fine decoration on these artefacts show. While we still know little about their owner, these chariot pieces probably belonged to someone important within their tribe or community.

These artefacts were made around 2,000 years ago during the Late Iron Age, probably around AD 25-75. A number of the objects are elaborately decorated with late Celtic art designs, also known as late La Tène art. Red glass was made and allowed to cool into shaped recesses in the bronze surfaces, to create distinctive and vibrant flowing designs.

A further archaeological dig was then carried out March and April of this year. Iron tyres from the chariot wheels and an iron sword were unearthed and these findings helped confirm the site as a Celtic chariot burial. This year's excavations were funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Cadw and Amgueddfa Cymru.

It is hoped that the Museum will be able to acquire the finds for the national collection so that they can be displayed at St Fagans National History Museum.

Dr Robin Gwyndaf

Many Friends will know Robin Gwyndaf and will be pleased to learn that recently at a ceremony at Cardiff University he was made a Fellow of the Learned Society of Wales. The Learned Society of Wales is a charity that exists to celebrate, recognise, preserve, protect and encourage excellence in all of the scholarly disciplines, and to serve the Welsh nation. It is Wales's first and only all-embracing national scholarly academy.

Robin Gwyndaf was appointed a member of staff at St Fagans in October 1964. He is a former Curator of Folklore and Head of the Department of Cultural Life. On his retirement in 2006, he was made an Honorary Research

Fellow. In October 2019 he will celebrate fifty-five years of service to the Museum.

New faces on the Museum's Board of Trustees

At the end of April, Roger Lewis was announced as the new President of Amgueddfa Cymru. He is currently Chair of Cardiff Airport and will step down from that role in October of this year. He has been undertaking a tour of the seven Amgueddfa Cymru museums across Wales, as well as visiting the Collections Centre in Nantgarw, to meet with staff and discuss the organization's future ambitions. The President is the chair of Amgueddfa Cymru, with overall responsibility for the Board of Trustees and is personally responsible to Welsh Ministers for the conduct of Amgueddfa Cymru's affairs and its trustees. In addition four new trustees have also been appointed: Maria Battle, Gwyneth Hayward, Robert Humphreys, Madeleine Harvard and Hywel John, who will be Treasurer.

Dinorwig '69: The End of the Line

An exhibition at the National Slate Museum commemorates the 50th anniversary of the closure of Dinorwig slate quarry and will run until 31st December 2019. The quarry closed on 22nd August 1969, ironically only weeks after the investiture of Prince Charles at Caernarfon Castle on a dais of Dinorwig slate. Three hundred and fifty men lost their jobs resulting in a huge impact on a community and a way of life that had existed since the 1780s.

The exhibition reflects on the legacy of the quarry for the village of Llanberis and surrounding communities. A century earlier, closure would have been inconceivable: Dinorwig was one of the two largest slate quarries in the world and, along with its neighbour at Penrhyn, Bethesda, was producing more roofing slates in a year than all other combined slate mines and quarries world-wide. The

strange silence that came to Dinorwig in August 1969 had a profound and long-lasting effect on this area but also led to the founding of the National Slate Museum.

The exhibition features a selection of fifty photographs chosen by former quarry workers in conjunction with the museum's curator, as well as artwork and poetry by local schoolchildren. In addition, there is a range of short films, which were originally produced for the 40th anniversary and which were produced by local people with the assistance of pupils from Ysgol Brynrefail Llanrug, in which people talk about their memories of the closure.

St Fagans in the running for another award

In a momentous year for St Fagans National Museum of History, it has also reached the finals of the 25th National Lottery Awards in the heritage category. St Fagans beat off stiff competition from more than 700 other organisations to reach the public voting stage which took place during July and August.

The project with the most votes in each category will be crowned the winner and receive a £10,000 cash prize, a trophy and attend the awards ceremony which will be broadcast on BBC One in November. So do look out for the programme to see if St Fagans won.

New Events Officer at National Slate Museum

The National Slate Museum has recently appointed an Events Officer. She is Lowri Ifor and she will be responsible for both educational and public events at the Museum. She comes from Caernarfon and has been a visitor to the Museum since childhood. She is hoping to broaden audiences at the site with a host of new activities. In June, she organised a 'Music at the Museum' day in conjunction with PYST, a distribution and label services



Quarrymen at Dinorwig Quarry
© Amgueddfa Genedlaethol
Cymru / National Museum of
Wales

company for Welsh language music. Educational projects have included new science workshops for schools focusing primarily on the Museum's amazing waterwheel, the largest in Britain. In addition she has helped to establish the LleCHI Young Ambassador programme as part of the Wales Slate bid for World Heritage Status.

The Fossil Swamp at National Museum Cardiff

If you are interested in pre-history you may want to visit a second such exhibition at National Museum Cardiff: this one explores a time before dinosaurs ruled the earth. It provides a snapshot in time from 300 million years ago when a vast tropical swamp covered what is now Wales. Beautifully preserved fossils tell the story of these ancient tropical wetlands and you will be able to look at the remains of strange plants which lived millions of years before flowers and fruits ever evolved.

Some of the fossils on display, including the huge 3D-centrepiece *Stigmaria*, come from the world-class heritage site at Brymbo in north east Wales. The Brymbo fossils reveal exactly how some of these giant plants grew. It is rare to find such perfectly preserved remains and at such size because most plant fossils from other sites come from broken pieces of plants that drifted through the swamp's waterways.

The exhibition, *The Fossil Swamp* runs until 17th May 2020 and is a collaboration with the Brymbo Heritage Trust and Wrexham County Borough Museum amongst others.

Diane Davies



FRIENDS NEWS

Supporting the Museum

For the financial year 2018/19 we have pledged £25,000. Not all this money has been allocated at the time of writing this piece but it has been agreed to support three areas of work of Amgueddfa Cymru. £3,500 has been set aside to fund a Horticulture Trainee at St Fagans, £10,000 is earmarked for improving the working of the mammoths in the Evolution of Wales Gallery at National Museum Cardiff and £6,500 is due to help support various public events across all seven sites. In addition, the Friends will continue to support the monthly organ recital at National Museum Cardiff with a grant of £1,210.

Horticulture Trainee at St Fagans

Since September of last year, the Museum has had a trainee from the Work and Retrain as a Gardener (WRAG) scheme who has been working with the Historic Gardens team at St Fagans for two days per week. At the Friends'

Board meeting in July we had a chance to meet the trainee: she is Luciana Skidmore and she talked to us about the importance of the scheme and about the work that she and the other gardeners were doing at St Fagans.

To have a WRAG trainee is a measure of the prestige with which the Museum's historic gardens and gardeners are held since WRAG are extremely selective about where their trainees are placed. For the first year, trainee-funding was helped by match-funding from the National Gardens Scheme. This will end in August 2019 so the grant by the Friends will enable the scheme to continue for a further year. One of the key areas of work that Luciana will be participating in is the restoration of the vineyard.

Mammoths at National Museum Cardiff

The mammoth and baby in the Evolution of Wales Gallery is one of the most popular attractions at National Museum Cardiff and well-loved by visitors of all ages since they were created nearly thirty years ago. They featured in an article in the October 2017 Newsletter.

However due to their age, it is increasingly becoming a struggle to keep the mammoths moving and they are no longer able to perform the robotic action and noise without frequent downtime. For instance, the mammoths were not in operation over the summer in 2018 due to the motor burning out on the compressor. Maintaining the mammoths on an ad-hoc basis will keep them running but occasional downtime will continue, and there will be no improvement in their operation. There is also an increasing risk that the electronics will one day fail. When this happens there will be a slim chance it could be fixed.

Funding is needed to give the mammoths a complete makeover, with new internal parts and electronics, including a new control system. Initial work, which it is hoped will see the mammoths in full working order for the next five years, will cost £10,000. However the Board has requested information about what further work will be needed with the idea of pledging future financial grants to ensure the mammoths remain a well-loved attraction.

Events programme across all the museums

Providing a programme of events is a key part of the Museum's wish to attract a wide range of visitors to its sites and diversify the range of people who use our museums. This year's programme of events will deliver over 180 events and activities. Highlights last year included the extremely popular Food Festival which attracted 10,000 visitors and the Halloween Nights and Christmas Nights which attracted 25,000 each evening at St Fagans National Museum of History. It is also hoped to continue "Museum Lates": sleep-over events at National Museum Cardiff, which offer an intimate and unique discovery into what goes on at the Museum after dark. The Friends' grant will help fund the resources and marketing required to deliver these events to the public.

Diane Davies

FRIENDS ACTIVITIES

Art and History in Northumbria

In May forty-two Friends ignored a dire weather forecast and departed Cardiff by coach for the delights of Northumbria.

The trip north was interrupted by a brief stop in the old cathedral city of Wakefield. Our purpose was to visit the The Hepworth, Wakefield, home to a collection of over five thousand pieces of modern British art, housed in a unique building designed by David Chipperfield, Architects. In addition to works by Barbara Hepworth, who was born in Wakefield, there were works by Henry Moore, who was born in nearby Castleford. It is a remarkable coincidence that two such influential artists should have been born so closely together, close in time and location. Both were primarily sculptors specializing in modern abstract art. However, there was considerable breadth to the works on show which included paintings and photographs as well as sculptures from a wide range of different artists. We also saw some original tools belonging to Barbara Hepworth and her description of their uses accompanied by the full story of her life.

After lunch at the Centre, we continued our trip north arriving at our 'home' for the next few days, Redworth Hall Hotel. A long imposing drive led to a Jacobean manor house, complete with Great Hall, an ornate staircase, lounges, and attractive bedrooms set in magnificent parkland of many acres.

The following morning the weather forecast showed no real improvement. However, undaunted, our first full day in the area was shared with our local guide, Alex Jacobs, whom we met at the foot of The Angel of the North statue. We had an extensive tour by coach of Newcastle city centre. It was fascinating to see the contrast of old and new in the buildings which were shown off remarkably well because of the hilly character of the city. The domi-

nant structure proved to be the football stadium which, because of its height, is visible from just about every viewpoint. We also saw the Millennium Bridge and the Sage Gateshead, a concert venue constructed from glass and steel and with a most unusual shape. Our city tour terminated at the BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art on the Gateshead bank of the River Tyne. Formerly a vast flour mill, it is the largest institution in the UK dedicated to contemporary art presenting within its walls experimental and inspirational works which are changed frequently. We had some time to explore the site independently. Fortunately, the weather was much better than forecast: this was especially noticeable in the afternoon as we progressed beyond the city Centre along the river to Tynemouth and the Tyneside coast including Whitley Bay, the area in which the ITV television series *Vera* is partly filmed.

On our second day, we picked up our guides, Heather and Graeme in Durham for a tour of the Cathedral, the city centre and the castle. The weather forecast was bad and proved entirely correct, unfortunately, there being little respite from the rain. However, we were determined to make the most of the day.

Durham Cathedral, the seat of the Bishop of Durham, was founded in 1093 and is one of the finest examples of Romanesque Norman architecture in Europe. It is home to the shrine of St Cuthbert as well as the resting place for the Venerable St Bede. It was designated a World Heritage Site in 1986, its library containing one of the most complete sets of early printed books in England. St Cuthbert's tomb lies within the Feretory and whilst it was once an elaborate monument of cream, marble and gold, its plainer version today is still a place of pilgrimage. The vast building is truly magnificent and leaves the beholder in awe at the tremendous feat of construction from 1093 to 1133, though additional sections and features were added subsequently, such as the Rose Window. The Cathedral, through its Miners' Memorial established in 1947, has a strong connection with this major industry within the county.



Anthony Gormley, *Angel of the North* (Cor-ten steel, 20m high x 54m wing span, 1997)

A river trip was included; though some of the group preferred to spend more time in the Cathedral itself. The opportunity to take the weight off one's feet, enjoy a coffee, or something stronger, being appreciated by those who boarded the boat to cruise the river, admire the plant life, wildlife, and how close the Cathedral came to the river's edge. A temporary refuge from the rain was also offered as the boat was fortunately covered.

The Castle which is also Norman and forms part of Durham's UNESCO World Heritage Site, has been wholly occupied since 1840 by Durham University College, so access for visitors is by guided tours only. The Castle was founded in 1072 as a simple defensive mound, commissioned by William the Conqueror to defend the peninsula formed by the meander in the River Wear. Over the centuries, it has been the residence of the Bishops of Durham, who added to the buildings and adapted them over time. Nowadays, its fine rooms and spaces, including magnificent banqueting hall, form a very popular venue for large functions such as weddings.

On Thursday we travelled to the Roman Army Museum at Greenhead. The story portrayed by the museum is delivered by means of reconstructions of dialogue, often presented in recorded or filmed form (one film was in 3D) along with artefacts recovered from Hadrian's Wall and Vindolanda. The presentations, including those of artefacts and text, were all first class and 'drew the observer in'. It was made clear that many of the soldiers were originally from other parts of the Roman Empire, including Belgium, Germany, France, and Syria.

We then went on to Vindolanda itself, one of the most important Roman archaeological sites in Europe, only



Durham Cathedral and the Old Fulling Mill (now disused) from the opposite bank of the River Wear

seven miles or so away from the Roman Army Museum and just south of Hadrian's Wall. The site covers several acres, and after a talk from the leading archaeologist we took the opportunity to explore the site for ourselves, understanding fully why in our talk we learned that digging opportunities exist at this site for the next fifty years at least. The archaeologists were keen to talk about their work with visitors and were very happy to answer our questions. It was a wonderful experience to see them working 'at the coal face' so to speak, actually digging and preparing the site as they progressed.

Inevitably, our final day started with strong sunshine streaming into our hotel. After a short drive, we stopped at the Bowes Museum, which proved a real gem. Originally privately owned by John and Josephine Bowes, the building was externally a 'copy' of a French chateau, complete with ornamental garden and imposing driveway. The contents were even more impressive comprising paintings, fashion and textiles, silver and metals, decoration and ornament, paintings (including the largest collection of Spanish paintings outside London). In short, we were treated to paintings by Van Dyck, Canaletto and Goya, delicate porcelain works produced at Sevres and fashion from the 16th to 20th centuries. At 2.00pm daily, a clockwork swan, approximately 100 years old, gives a musical performance which attracts much attention from visitors.

We took lunch here then went on to Nottingham Belfry Hotel one mile from the M1, where we enjoyed a wonderful afternoon tea. After a few hours on the road, the refreshments proved very agreeable, (my diet was due to start the day after). We were fortunate in having the services of Andrew, our driver, who was excellent in every way throughout the whole trip.



Friends admiring the Military Bath House at Vindolanda built for the Fourth Cohort of Gauls in AD213

Len Metcalfe

