

# folk life

## NEWSLETTER

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*Tullie House, Carlisle*

THE SOCIETY FOR FOLK LIFE STUDIES

# ANNUAL CONFERENCE

## 2019

**Carlisle, Cumbria**

**12 -15 September 2019**

This year's conference will meet in Carlisle, and run from the evening of Thursday 12 September until lunchtime on Sunday 15 September. The main

conference venue will be Tullie House Museum (currently celebrating its 125th anniversary), located in the heart of the historic city. In addition to sessions on traditional life in Cumbria, we also plan to explore Carlisle and visit the surrounding area.

The overall themes of this year's conference will be Cumbrian folklife, agriculture and industry. If you would like to contribute a paper, please contact the Conference Secretary, Steph Mastoris ([steph.mastoris@museumwales.ac.uk](mailto:steph.mastoris@museumwales.ac.uk)).

Please see the Society's website for the full programme where you can also find a booking form, copies of which are enclosed with this newsletter.

## **A *free* student place at the 2019 conference**

Once again the Society is offering a free place at its annual conference to a student in full-time education. All fees and the cost of bookable meals will be included, but the person attending will have to pay for his or her own travel. To be considered for this opportunity, a person must not have attended the annual conference before. A short review of the conference will be required from the successful applicant.

Applications for this **free place** should be made to the Conference Secretary, Steph Mastoris ([steph.mastoris@museumwales.ac.uk](mailto:steph.mastoris@museumwales.ac.uk)), by the end of June.

The Society's  
**CONFERENCE 2020**  
will be held  
West of Galway

## **CONFERENCE 2018**

The conference was opened by the President Dafydd Roberts where he welcomed everyone to Wales.

### **Conference Papers**

#### **Dr Beth Thomas, Rethinking St Fagans: from Welsh Folk Museum to National Museum of History**

St Fagans celebrated 70 years in 2018. During that period the museum has grown and developed, reflecting the changes that have taken place in Wales. That change has involved people from the Society of Folklife Studies.

Beth Thomas took us on a lavishly illustrated presentation and talk of the development of the museum and its latest extensive refurbishment, the most radical one to take place in its history. This refurbishment provides for a rebrand, new visitor

facilities including three innovative new galleries, access to collections and out of hours visitor facilities, reinterpreted historical buildings, a gallery and workshop. At the heart and soul of the museum are the ways that it is used and the question how do we become the museum.

The St Fagans of 1948 was the radical vision of Iorwerth Peate. He wanted to see a people's museum for the "ordinary people", a museum for the people of Wales. In it, the past and present were to be a strong foundation for the future: the picture of the past was to be a mirror of the present. It was a place for regeneration and inspiration. For him, "folk life is the life of all society and folk custom is the culture of all the nation". The museum echoed the Scandinavian open air museums. It became the first national open air museum in the UK and one of the first institutions to operate bilingually.

After the museum opened significant changes took place in Wales: industrial communities were under threat and rural communities needed to be seen to serve the nation. By the 1980s museum professionals were aware of gaps in the provision at the museum. They were aware that many people did not see themselves in the view of Wales that was set out in the museum. By the 2000s there were further significant changes taking place as practical, political, social and museological factors were coming into play.

The museum developed a Vision Document that set out the creation of a national history museum. This was for a museum which saw history from below, which was pioneering and innovative, for all of the people of Wales, a place of regeneration, a creative and multi-sensory place, which also promoted the Welsh language, and brought in new audiences. Visitors were to create their own knowledge and to make up their minds for themselves. All of this was to be undertaken within the changed title and consequent scope of the museum from St Fagans National History Museum to St Fagans National Museum of History.

This radical change was not without its challenges. These included managing expectations, making

experiments and taking risks, all of which were undertaken at a time of public sector cuts. Extensive consultation was undertaken with over 120 organisations. Pilots of activities and methods were developed. Work was undertaken with charities that acted as partners. Importantly, they were paid for their time and expertise.

Communities played a key role during the construction work. Tenders included a condition that communities should benefit through the work. This resulted in the creation of apprenticeships, work placements, tools down days where anyone could put on a hard hat and get experience of construction work. A year long programme involving 1000 volunteers was developed and rolled out to work with the archaeology collections. Volunteers were key to the development of Llys Llywelyn, the medieval Court from Anglesea which will among its range of functions, act as a sleepover building. The use of arts was central to the development of the play area. Miles Norman used inspiration from the collections to develop the park. The museum also worked with funders to ensure that the museum was ethically valued.

Today the museum is about inspiring people and changing lives. It is also about everyone having the right to freely participate in the cultural life of the community. It is about bringing light to the people.

Beth's excellent presentation provided a knowledgeable and informed background for the rest of the time that we spent at St Fagans. It let us really explore and understand the new museum and for us to become part of Welsh culture and history.

**Heather Holmes**

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**Nia Williams, '*Nothing about us, without us*': creating spaces for co-production at St Fagans**

Nia Williams introduced us to the exhaustive processes that have ensured the new galleries at St Fagans are truly representative of the voices of

today's Wales. This must have presented the curators with many challenges and perhaps they may even have felt that their own voices, their own urges to shape the interpretations offered, were drowned. Great discipline must have been required to ensure that the new exhibitions are truly representative of the communities of Wales, rather than the exclusive preserve of the curator.

This sounds like a new idea, one that is aligned to current policy for museum presentation. However, Williams framed her paper by reference to Ioworth Peate himself, quoting his statement, 'Folklife is the life of all society'. She reminded us of Raymond Williams' comment, that 'culture is not elitist', emphasising the importance of discovery and of creative effort in museum exposition. She referred to Article Twenty Seven of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which since 1948 has sought to ensure the 'basic right to representation'. She also squarely faced the challenge posed by those who were reluctant to see any change at St Fagans, asking how change might best be accomplished without being destructive.

The aim for the new exhibitions is to ensure that these provide a 'platform' on which a 'journey towards cultural participation' may be begun. She spoke of cultural representation, cultural participation, and cultural agency and democratic control, arguing that the last of these is for a variety of reasons (not least differing models of democracy) the most difficult to achieve. Williams contrasted the past and future framework for museum exhibition, proposing that while in the past this may have been that authority provided the *content*, in the future, authority will provide the *platform* offered to visitors. It might be said that by implication, the role of the curator thus becomes almost 'covert', offering ways through which visitors may make their own discoveries rather than being more passively engaged in the acquisition of knowledge or information.

Williams explained that throughout the process of renovation, St Fagans remained open, allowing people to be directly involved in the practical



processes of change, for example by volunteering to be involved in aspects of construction in the Open Air Museum, thanks to carefully devised programmes prepared by the Buildings Team. Apprenticeship schemes helped to foster knowledge of skills that are disappearing, thus helping to build individual and community capacities. In total, one hundred and twenty different groups, drawn from throughout Wales, were involved in the redevelopment project. With strong financial support from HLF, there was space for experimentation as a wide range of ideas was piloted and tested, with the outcomes being incorporated in the development as appropriate. Williams pointed out that rather than ‘chasing’ funding, which may result in a dilution of the concept to be delivered, funding was offered on an ethical basis and the emphasis throughout was on participation.

Closing her lecture, Williams brought us back again to Peate, showing how the new developments provided a way of reconnecting with his original and vibrant vision for the museum. This was an excellent and stimulating lecture, full of thought-provoking

ideas. It also clearly demonstrated the flexibility required to realise the aspirations for the future of St Fagans. Perhaps the last word might be left not to Williams herself, but to Dr Beth Thomas, who during the question and answer session following the presentation provided an additional insight into the concept of the ‘platform’ on which to set out on a journey of discovery. As she remarked, ‘If it’s participatory, what you start out to do isn’t what you end up with’.

**Linda Ballard**

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### **St Fagans National Museum of History Tour featuring Gweithday, Llys Llywelyn and Bryn Eryr**

Saturday afternoon at St Fagans National Museum of History featured unpredictable weather: high winds, and intermittent snatches of sunshine and rain. It was, in fact, the perfect kind of afternoon to visit the newly reconstructed buildings of Llys Llywelyn, as well as Bryn Eryr, and Gweithday,

which is an entirely new exhibition hall. While delegates of the Society for Folklife Studies conference were split up into two separate groups that rotated through these buildings at intervals, the group I was with enjoyed seeing Gweithday first. This is a beautiful building whose angled construction merges seamlessly with the natural environment. Upon entering Gweithday's main exhibit space, a phrase is written across the wall stating, "Croesoir Man Creu" or "Welcome to the world of Making," which delightfully represents what visitors will experience when viewing a series of interconnected displays. In addition to this area, Gweithday has a stunning workshop which enables potters, weavers, woodworkers, and other crafters the ability to hone their craft and soon, classes will be available to members of the public who may also want to learn such skills.

The exhibition hall is a brightly lit space devoted to the history and production of Welsh craft, from earliest settlement to the present-day population. St Fagans' marvellous collection of material culture is highlighted here, from Welsh lovespoons, quilts, baskets, to vernacular furniture, Gweithday's exhibits are a feast for all the senses. Wide open spaces allow visitors to work their way through various craft displays with exciting and colourful storyboards pronouncing whether plants, textiles, clay, metal, or wood have been utilized to produce the crafts featured. More detailed information can be found along the front panels of display cases; easily manipulated flip books allow all ages access to more images and/or information surrounding specific objects in this collection. Work centers with tables and chairs can be found in this exhibition space where families and museum staff can interact through more intimate demonstrations. As an exhibition hall and craft working center, Gweithday demonstrates the weave of the tangible and intangible. These objects and their stories reflect the past *and* present and thus, reveal the ingenuity of the Welsh people, who created and continue to create, objects of beauty using basic materials.

We next visited the newly reconstructed Llys Llywelyn, a series of buildings depicting the Royal

Court of the Princes of Gwynedd used during the 13th century. Donning high-vis vests for safety as this was, at the time of our tour, still a working construction site, we entered a stunning new Prince's hall (the chamber next door was not available for visitation). According to our guide, these present buildings are the result of the combined vision of academics, craftspeople, and school children working together in consultation. Llys Llywelyn's reconstruction is based, to some degree, on the surviving remains of Llys Rhosyr in the south-western corner of Anglesey, which was excavated by the Gwynedd Archaeological Trust between 1992 and 1996. Llys Llywelyn is the most accurate rendering of a Welsh Royal Llys to date. As our tour guide described to us, this was the administrative centre of princely power in medieval Wales. Archaeological excavations revealed that enclosures similar to the reconstructed Llys Llywelyn, once contained a kitchen, halls, stables, a privy, a barn and kennels.

Exterior white wash applied by volunteers can be seen on both the hall and adjacent chamber. The interior of the hall features delicately painted red and white pillars and columns depicting the rich and lavish courtly halls of the period. Through these reconstructed buildings, visitors will gain an appreciation for life in medieval Wales, but it will be the schoolchildren from across the country who will have the opportunity to immerse themselves completely in a 13<sup>th</sup> century experience by having sleepovers at Llys Llywelyn. Such experiences will undoubtedly convince many children that Welsh medieval history is beyond cool!

Our last stop in the tour was a self-guided visit to Bryn Eryr, a roundhouse reconstruction that is based on an original farmstead which existed 2000 years ago near Llansadwrn in the eastern corner of Anglesey. During both the Bronze and Iron Ages in Britain, a roundhouse was the most common type of home. Bryn Eryr has been reconstructed using information discovered during archaeological excavations of the Gwynedd Archaeological Trust between 1985 and 1987. Two roundhouses form one building; they are sometimes referred to as a figure eight or conjoined roundhouse. What's most

impressive about these buildings is that the walls have been made of “clom,” a mix of clay, stone and straw that is 1.8 meters thick and a first for reconstructed roundhouses. It is no wonder then, as I and other Society members entered Bryn Eryr, that the sounds of the world outside became muffled, except the wind. Inside the roundhouses, the wind whistles eerily through the spaces. A fire pops and crackles on a well-worn hearth and period tools and a bed strewn with heavy furs can be seen in the corner. St Fagans’ staff have crafted the interior and exterior of this conjoined roundhouse to be authentic, down to the last detail.

These incredible reconstructed and newly created buildings add immensely to the visitor experience of Welsh life at this living history museum. It was such a pleasure to experience new and existing features of St Fagans National Museum of History.

**Cynthia Boyd**

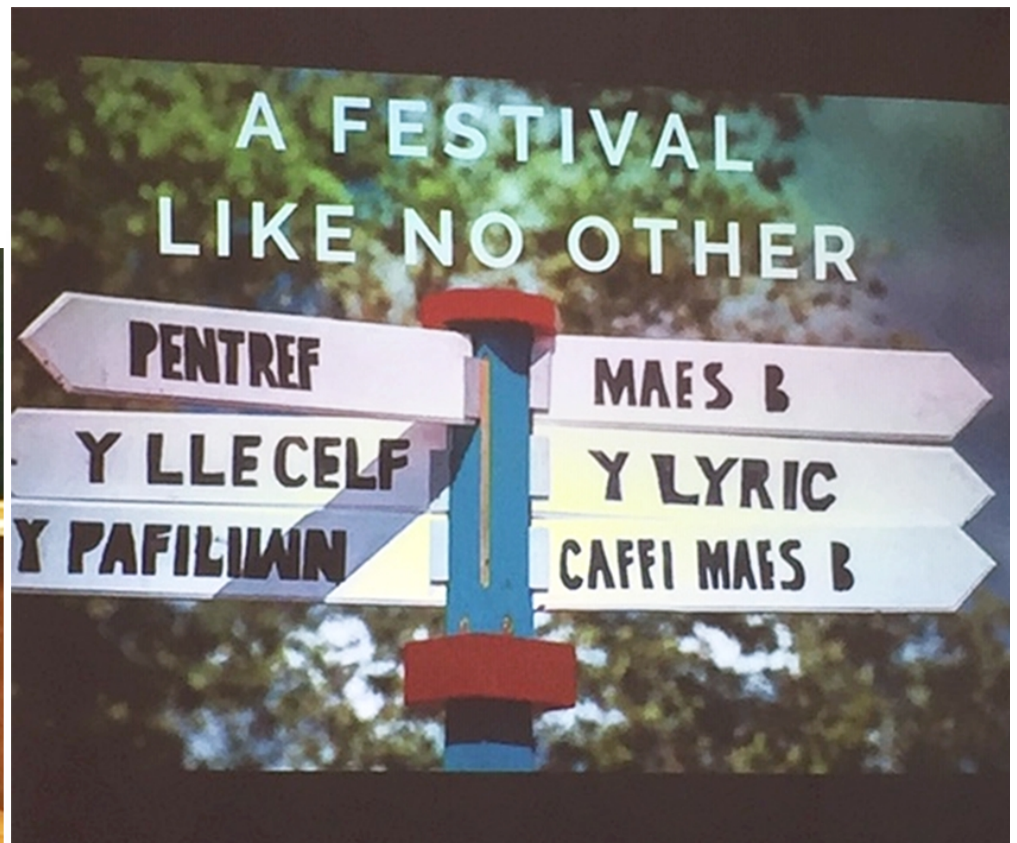
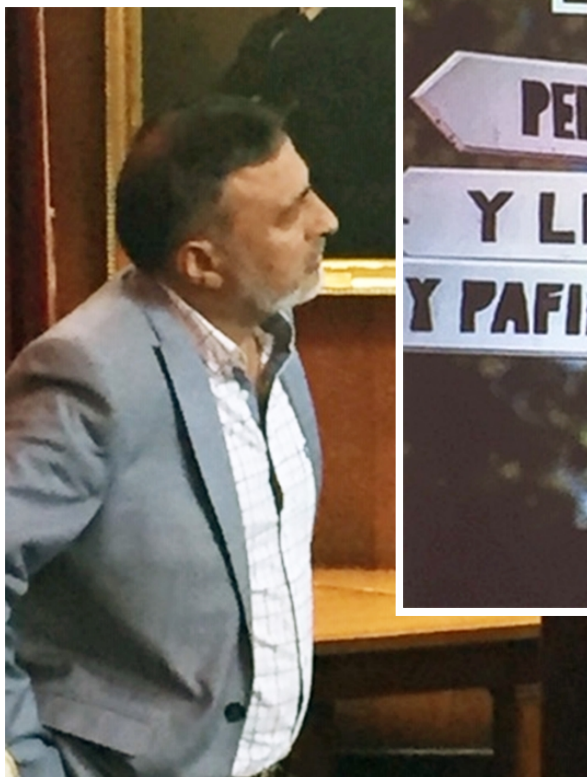
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**Ashok Ahir**

### **The National Eisteddfod, and the first urban Eisteddfod in Cardiff, August 2018**

Ashok Ahir was Chair of the local organising committee of the 2018 National Eisteddfod. Held annually in the first week of August, and alternating between host locations in the north and south of Wales, Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Cymru (the National Eisteddfod of Wales) is a festival of literature, performance and music. It is the largest music and poetry competitive event in Europe, and is held entirely in Welsh.

During a passionate and eloquent presentation (which was made in both Welsh and English), Ashok pointed out that he was the first person from an ethnic minority to Chair a local committee – and probably also the first Welsh learner to have done so. Having married into a family of Welsh speakers from mid Wales, he was very aware that attending the Eisteddfod was part of the family’s tradition –



but, could also see that there might be a variety of reasons why people might not wish to attend, or take part. And, as a Cardiff resident, he was aware that other city dwellers might not be at one with the Eisteddfod and all that it represented. That had been the case when the Eisteddfod last visited Cardiff, in 2008.

Mindful of these challenges, he, his committee members, and the Eisteddfod's small management team, set about the process of facilitating the engagement of – as he put it - “a festival like no other” with the city of Cardiff. The location selected, in Cardiff Bay, in the part of the city that once functioned as the world's busiest coal exporting port, with its associated multi-cultural communities, offered many advantages. Key principles were “experimental”, “pioneering” and “contentious”, with the Wales Millennium Centre taking the place of the Eisteddfod's traditional big tent. All of what would take place, would happen in “the Bay”, and there were concerns that this might not respect tradition. It was essential to have a Maes – the focus of the Eisteddfod's outdoor activities – and this too was provided in the Bay. All visitors to the Bay, and all local residents, would be able to encounter and explore the Maes, without an admission charge. The last piece of a complex jigsaw fell into place when the Senedd – Wales' Parliament building-announced that all parts of the building would be made available , at no charge, to the Eisteddfod.

Within the Wales Millennium Centre, a rich cultural programme was presented over the nine day slot. What was put on stage had to deserve to be seen, with the standard being set at the very outset through “Hwn yw fy Mrawd”(“This is my Brother”), featuring Sir Bryn Terfel, and focussing on the life of Paul Robeson. A black gospel choir from Birmingham trained, and then joined up on stage with a Cardiff choir (Côr Dydd), as well as with primary age children from Ninian Park School in Cardiff. The school draws its pupils from multi-cultural communities in Cardiff Bay's Butetown . As the audience left the Millennium Centre later that evening, they encountered the Butetown Carnival, on its way down to the waterfront to present

“Carnifal y Môr” (“Carnival of the Sea), accompanied by dancing images of the Bay projected into fans of pumped, perpendicular sea water. The city, as Ashok observed, did not expect this!

Summarising, what was achieved was the normalisation of language within culture. People came down to the Bay to enjoy what was going on, with an evening audience of up to 10,000 enjoying all types of Welsh music. New audiences were generated, the Welsh language was celebrated, and Wales was promoted.

**Dafydd Roberts**

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### **Rhys Jones Ble mae Cymru ? / (Where is Wales ? )**

Professor Rhys Jones is a member of the Department of Geography at Aberystwyth University – a department that has, as he noted, taught four former Directors of the former Welsh Folk Museum at St. Fagans, Cardiff. His paper addressed the different ways in which Wales, as a cultural and linguistic entity, has been mapped.

The first half of his paper focussed on historic maps of Welshness and the Welsh language, produced by academics based at Aberystwyth University. He identified three key themes. Firstly, there have been consistent attempts to define an authentic Welsh nation. This, in turn, led to the second theme : namely, questions about who the Welsh are, and where they are. Thirdly, there has been analysis of the nature of Welshness, not solely by any means on the basis of ability to speak Welsh.

Professor H. J. Fleure (1877-1969) was arguably the first to attempt to locate Welshness by means of mapping techniques. He sought to define the Welsh, and the people of Wales, on the basis of physical types. Using techniques and methods that would in due course become controversial, the categorisation was undertaken on the basis of physical appearance,

based on factors such as hair and eye colour, or of developing a cephalic/cranial index. However, it was stressed that Fleure consistently gave prominence to the fact that migration had been important in Wales, as well as emphasising the diversity of the nation.

In due course, Professor E.G. Bowen (1900-1983) would focus on regional diversity within Wales, and developed mapping concepts that identified various internal zones, such as the heartland “Pays de Galles”. Alwyn D. Rees’ work on locating Welshness was perceived as being at its strongest in rural areas. Plaid Cymru, the political party, would in its early years evolve a policy of encouraging the Welsh to return to their rural hinterlands, and Rhys Jones suggested that the formation of the Welsh Folk Museum in 1947 was one of the outcomes of this way of thinking. By the early years of this century, maps produced by the *Cymuned* movement focussed on the colonisation of Wales and were a powerful tool in its publicity material.

The second half of the paper discussed ongoing attempts to map the Welsh language today. Choropleth mapping provides a stark indication of “the lake that is drying out slowly”, in respect of the percentages of Welsh speakers across Wales. On the other hand, mapping the actual numbers of Welsh speakers across Wales highlights the present-day importance of Cardiff, the south Wales valleys and – more surprisingly – the coastal communities of north Wales. The discussion of where Welsh speakers are to be found, during their working days, as opposed to during the evening or at weekends, was equally fascinating. The UK-wide mapping of the source of Welsh language tweets was absorbing : London, the Severn Bridge, and ferries on the Irish Sea, all being highlighted.

Professor Jones concluded by discussing the Welsh Government’s ambition to have one million Welsh speakers by 2050. Where will Welsh-speaking Wales be by then? He suggested that existing heartland areas would be strengthened, and that the south-west of Wales would also rediscover its linguistic confidence

**Dafydd Roberts** Iorwerth Peate, J. Geraint Jenkins, Trefor M Owen, and John Williams-Davies

The two papers after the 11 o’clock break on Saturday morning provided a diverse and fascinating look at Wales and Welshness through the lens of sport, specifically soccer. One was delivered in Welsh, and very ably translated by an onsite interpreter. As someone who understands some Welsh, I listened to both and felt thoroughly empowered by the experience. Despite the focus on *pêl-droed*, football, the approach of each speaker was quite different otherwise, revealing the variety and richness of sport in Wales. **Professor Martin Johnes** explored the career of Eddie Parris as a representative of the black working class experience in Britain between the wars. Official sources tend to erase any mention of colour, having very little in the way of documentation, despite the fact that race remained central to Parris’ life experience. Never regarded as fully Welsh or British because of his racial difference, nevertheless, his career as a soccer player provided Parris with opportunities for upward mobility. Assessed by one press report as a ‘considerable but inconsistent talent,’ he once played for Ireland, although it emerges that this honour fell to him because there were few other players available to take up the place at that moment. **Professor Peredur Lynch** from Bangor University followed with a stimulating history of the soccer craze as a phenomenon in Welsh-speaking Wales from the late nineteenth century. Speaking to the title *Pêl-Droed a Chenedligrwydd* (Football and Nationality) Professor Lynch outlined the initial opposition faced by enthusiasts from the Non-conformist Church Establishment. Native Welsh games had ended with the Reformation. Declaring football to be an ‘evil sport’ their efforts to contain and control it proved futile, since many other church members saw no harm in it. The wave of popularity allowed players and followers alike to form a sense of solidarity and increased their feeling of Welsh identity within a cultural nationalistic framework, similar to that outlined by Douglas Hyde for Ireland, though sport did not feature specifically in Hyde’s vision.

**Lillis Ó Laoire**



## **Folk Life, Bygones and & Old Curios – the origins of Folk Life Collections.**

**David J Eveleigh**

In this lecture David Eveleigh explored the origins of folk life collecting in the second half of the nineteenth century. Focussing chiefly on domestic collections, he looked at the circumstances which were to transform ordinary everyday things into ‘bygones’ and in some countries, into icons of national identity. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, sections of polite society in the home counties began to realise that the seemingly changeless character of rural life was passing through a period of unprecedented disruption. The craftsman-made homes and artefacts created and used locally were being replaced by industrially produced alternatives of a relatively characterless nature. The heavy-handed restoration of churches and houses was now seen a symptom of such destruction, leading to the founding of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) as an influential pressure group in 1877. Artists then began to take up the same cause: Helen Allingham’s watercolours of thatched cottages sporting colourful flowers and occupied by a healthy, contented peasantry presented a suitable sanitised version of rural life for urban aesthetes.

Ralph Neville’s *Old Cottages and Domestic Architecture* of 1889 was possibly the first book to promote this view of the rural past, but many more were to follow. The publication of Gertrude Jekyll’s ‘*Old West Surrey*’ in 1904 with its polemic text and numerous photographs of artefacts she had collected advocating the preservation of bygones, especially as part of the interior decoration of middle-class rural homes. As such collecting now became a popular hobby. But writers such as Jerome K Jerome lampooned the new fad: in his ‘*Three Men in a Boat*’ first published in 1889, he contemplates a future where cheap mantelpiece ornaments such as Staffordshire pot dogs were considered collectable. As the early twentieth century progressed, a more rigorous and academic approach was taken, as

demonstrated by Lowerthe Peate’s ‘*Guide to Welsh Bygones*’ of 1929 and the development of significant collections, some of which continue to be studied and exhibited today.

**Peter Brears**

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**Cynthia Boyd**

### **“From eggshell dinners to Rapunzel salad: Food in fairy tales from England, Wales, Germany and Newfoundland.”**

Cynthia’s paper emphasized the diversity of situations when mentions of food occur in popular tales, Märchen and classics such as the original and subsequently “vaccinated” versions of the Grimm Brothers’ fairy tales. Food may be a prime element in an underdog’s quest for love or fortune, a source of temptation, even figure in strategies of subversion. With the arrival of the wider use of illustrations to enhance the attractiveness of publications, food looms large in visual impact, artists’ anachronisms quite often slewing the verbal images provided in the original collections of tales. Citing William Bascom’s 1954 article on the four functions of folklore (escape from social repression, validating cultural practices, teaching and value-forming, and applying pressure for social control)\*, Cynthia gave us a first glance at various passages in tales where food appears to play a pivotal role. This may be in an English tale such as *Tom Tit Tat* and the disappearing pies crossing over to a marital recommendation of an allegedly fine spinner, *Rumplestiltskin*’s cooking spoons in the Grimm’s 1812 *Children’s and Household Tales*, or the Welsh tale on the “eggshell dinner” belief about using food to appease the fairies or get rid of them. Some food episodes seem to provide proof that women are more capable of multi-functioning, as when a couple switch gender duties, which takes on a catastrophic turn, when the man does the cooking. Again from the Grimms’ *Children’s and Household Tales*, *Rapunzel*, with its long pedigree in textual tradition

and wide spread in geographic testimony, involves harvesting and making a salad of rampion\*\* for an expectant mother craving the plant, whose leaves were used like spinach and its parsnip-like root as is radish today. On top of this, the baby then born is named after the plant and secluded, until she manages to let down her hair. This linked up with Cynthia's expertise in garden history and lent another angle to the examination, before she went on to food events, as the Jack tales are very much alive and well in Newfoundland, for instance, in AT 891 The Faithful Wife, a rocambolesque story of disguising to sleep with her own husband and conceiving a baby, all of this resolved by recognition of a prior gift of a spoon. Hence, often the most everyday practices and objects are swept up into the fabric of tales, where food and foodways, utensils and cooking, have multiple meanings. We also learned a tidbit of Newfoundland vocabulary in "mug-up", the term used in coastal communities for any snack during the day, highly important for fishermen, so now often meaning any gathering for a drink and meal or an evening snack. Cynthia's paper also reminds us of the networking with the Folk Lore Society which is both a pleasant and useful part of our yearly meetings, so we are looking forward to hearing how her "work-in-progress" moves forward.

\* William Bascom. "Four Functions of Folklore," *Journal of American Folklore* (1954)

\*\* *Campanula rapunculus*, once cultivated as a vegetable and mentioned for its former reputation as a pleasant and highly nourishing foodstuff by Alan Davidson. "Rampion" in *The Oxford Companion to Food*, OUP, 1999, p.652

**Cozette Griffin Kremer**

***'And the local was expanded into Welsh':  
From Cardiff Municipal Museum to the  
National Museum of Wales. 1862-1912.  
Prof. Bill Jones, Emeritus Professor in  
modern Welsh history,  
Cardiff University***

It was a pleasure to have another lecture from Bill Jones at a Folk Life conference, after a gap of some years. Bill was formerly a curator at the Welsh Industrial and Maritime Museum in Cardiff Bay prior to moving on to an academic career at Cardiff University. The subject of his lecture was very suitable, as our location on Sunday morning was the old Cardiff Library building, now a new museum, The Cardiff Story, but also formerly the location of the Cardiff Municipal Museum, whose collections were to form the basis of the National Museum of Wales, whose foundation stone was laid by George V in 1912.

Bill raced through the history of the Cardiff Museum from its small beginnings in an upper storey room near the Royal Arcade in St Mary Street in 1862 to its new home in 1882 in the present Old Library Building. He went on to describe the tale of Cardiff's 'municipal munificence' and its bid to acquire the establishment of the planned national museum for Wales in Cardiff.

The great and the good of Cardiff acted quickly, following on the introduction of the National Institutions (Wales) Bill to parliament by the MP Alfred Thomas (Lord Pontypridd) in 1892. In the following year support came from the Hon. Society of Cymmrodorion at the National Eisteddfod, and in the same year the committee of the Cardiff museum established a sub-committee 'to watch over the interests of Cardiff' in respect to the new movement. Other supporters included the Cardiff Naturalists and C.T.Vachell its president, the Cardiff Museum's curator, John Ward, and the artist T.H.Thomas (Arlunydd Penygarn).

The Cardiff museum had grown in size and importance, and acquired important acquisitions,

from its beginnings with mainly natural history collections, after the Cardiff Art Exhibition in 1881. In 1901, the museum's name was changed to 'The Welsh Museum of Natural History, Arts and Antiquities', laying claim to a collection of 'growing national character'. John Ward sketched plans for a new museum in Park Place, but then the Cathays Park site became available from the Marquis of Bute estate and the real push for a national museum on the site began from 1905, as Cardiff was 'the only place in Wales which has a museum worthy of the name'. The impetus for the location of the national museum (and library) was very much tied in with Cardiff's wish for recognition as a city and as 'Capital of Wales'. Cardiff was to lose the National Library to Aberystwyth, but gain the National Museum, the charters being granted in 1907. The anomaly was that in gaining the national institution, Cardiff was deprived of its municipal museum for over a hundred years.

**Christine Stevens**

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## EXCURSIONS

### Visit to Cardiff Bay

With the stimulus of Dai Jenkins' Thursday evening 'Down the docks' introductory talk (aka 'a brief, illustrated romp') to raise expectations, the six-hour visit to Cardiff Bay on Saturday afternoon and evening proved to be a conference highlight. Thanks are doubly due to Dai for taking us round, amusing us throughout and sharing his considerable knowledge (contemporary as well as historical) of this part of the city in particular.

Including tea, a relaxing dinner and a short train ride to and from Queen Street station, a lot was packed into the visit but even so it was possible to grasp only a part of the comprehensive makeover which has taken place since the Cardiff Bay Development Corporation was established in 1987. This is much more than a rebranding exercise, and over thirty years a new buildings landscape has emerged, particularly via the creation of public spaces and 'iconic' buildings in the area immediately overlooking Cardiff Bay.



The tour included most of these key points to advantage, whilst development to its north and nearer to the city to create Atlantic Wharf and the housing in upper Butetown was glimpsed largely during the train trip down to the former Bute Road railway station, now renamed Cardiff Bay. What we saw seemed a very long way from the busy docks environment so strongly transmitted in Dai's talk and images.

I discovered that John Newman's text in the relevant Pevsner volume captures that great sense of change well; published in 1995 it sits uncomfortably between the aspirations of the early planning and some of the consequent realities of such large-scale development.

Major public buildings provided the focal points. The Wales Millennium Centre came first, a short walk from the station. Built on the site of what was intended to be *the* 'iconic' building for the whole project, the Cardiff Bay Opera House (which never happened), WMC is now home to eight Welsh cultural organisations including Welsh National

Opera. It presents a striking façade to its large piazza.

Nearby was the one building we could have a good look at inside as well as out, and which is now arguably the focal point for the whole area. In Richard Roger's design the Senedd, the National Assembly for Wales, is certainly striking, and tour guide Richard Gwyn-Jones gave us excellent value, in explaining how the building works, the sustainability criteria it adheres to and the public accessibility it offers.

So much for the new, not all of which has survived from the Bay project's early days and before. Dai fondly remembered the Welsh Industrial and Maritime Museum building of 1975-77 in nearby Bute Street, and threw in some fascinating gossip about Bay politics which led to its demise; it was closed, sold off and demolished in 1998. However, as several participants reminded us, the National Waterfront Museum in Swansea, which opened in 2005, has continued to develop its role.





Gone too is the Cardiff Bay Visitor Centre, by architect Wil Alsop, designed in the shape of a long, flattened tube, glazed at each end. Opened in 1990 and intended to last for only five years, it was finally dismantled in 2010. Not far away and viewed on our walk, Techniquest is the UK's longest established and first purpose-built science centre, founded in 1986 and designed around the frame of an early industrial building.

What about the old? There is plenty still to see, and Dai crammed in as much as possible. Its focal point must be the Pierhead building just across from the Senedd, making an interesting contrast with each other. A Grade One building, it was completed in 1897 at a cost of £30,000 as offices for the Bute Docks Company and was thus central to the whole docks operation. Its Gothic Revivalist style was popular at the time and the material used, a 'hot red brick and hot red terracotta, exactly matched' (Pevsner). In the main hall, a video sequence followed the theme of change in Cardiff's dockland.

Our walk took in the line of the Glamorganshire Canal coming down into the Bay area, preserved in part as a linear park, and then it was around the corner into West Bute Street and an amazing accumulation of substantial buildings intimately associated with the coal and shipping companies, banks etc, all vying via their signature HQ buildings to send out a message of dynamism and success.



*Inside the chamber at the Senedd*



*The striking interior ground floor of the Senedd*

Their physical scale and number was almost breathtaking, especially as most seemed rundown or even unused. The National Provincial Bank of 1926-7, seven bays wide and five storeys high was a typical (and late) example. And in the middle of it all and completely filling the former Mount Stuart Square stood the Coal and Shipping Exchange of 1884-8 and later, now the Exchange Hotel and our venue for dinner.

Sumptuous and semi-derelict by turn (see the restoration story on its website), it seemed to epitomise the sharp contrasts of our tour: smart contemporary buildings catching the eye and the interest, whereas around the corner the heart of the docks business district seems to remain in a strange limbo, run-down, economically out of time and probably out of scale too. The re-use of the striking Coal Exchange should be a catalyst for revival at the heart of all this – it is badly needed. Watch this space!

Further information:

- o Pevsner: see *Glamorgan: Mid Glamorgan, South Glamorgan & West Glamorgan* by John Newman, Penguin Books, 1995, pp.263-274
- o <https://exchangehotelcardiff.co.uk/the-restoration/>
- o <https://exchangehotelcardiff.co.uk/blog/history-cardiffs-iconic-mount-square/>

**David Viner**



*Some of the members enjoying one of our favourite activities!*

### **Minutes of the Society's Annual General Meeting**

Held on Sunday 14 September 2018 at St. Fagans, National Museum of History.

#### **Present:**

The President (Dafydd Roberts) and 24 members.

#### **Apologies:**

Apologies were received from Matthew Richardson, Sarah Blowen, Dai Jenkins, Mark Kennedy, Felicity McWilliams, Michael Larkin.

#### **Minutes of last AGM:**

These had been printed in the newsletter. They were proposed by Senator Paul Coghlan (seconded by Duncan Dornan) & adopted by the meeting as a correct record.

#### **Matters Arising: None:**

#### **President's Report:**

Dafydd had nothing specific to report. He thanked Linda & others for an excellent study day enjoying Linda's church & the Moravian church.

Two members' wives have died in the past few months, Mary Williams & Ann Sayer. There was a short discussion as to whether Ann Sayer had been a member in her own right. It was agreed the President would write with the sympathies of the society members.

David Eveleigh noted at this point that Roy Brigden's wife had died too.

#### **Action: Dafydd to write**

#### **Treasurer's Report:**

The society is suffering from a drop in paying members which has not been reflected in a reduction in the number of newsletters and journals being despatched. Those not paying or paying too little were contacted in the spring and this has resulted in a few resignations or amendments, however the number of individuals receiving benefits but not paying remains too high. This is resulting in a gradual decline in our bank balance.

The society has sufficient reserves to be in adequate health but further action on membership is required.”

Thanks were given to Duncan, Steph, Elaine & Dylan in helping to check on the current state of membership & subscriptions.

### **Editor’s Report:**

#### *Journal*

I trust all members received their copy of 56:1 in the post. It was, as usual, nicely produced by the team at T&F led by Irene Legaspi, and I would like to thank her for her excellent work. It seemed to me a little on the thin side, so I resolved to try to include more material in 56:2. I was short but managed through various means to find suitable papers. 56:2 includes no less than 5 different papers including an engaging discussion of Dublin’s Welsh Chapel by President Dafydd Roberts, developed from his 2016 Dublin conference paper. The reviews were also more numerous. I’ll be happy to answer questions regarding these articles and how I came by them at the AGM. 56:2 is already available online and will be posted to members in time, I hope, for the October deadline. I have enough material for the coming issue as follows: There is an article which has potential and has been through review though not publishable in the current state. It is overly long, somewhat polemical and needs another thorough editing, to allow the core topic – an analysis of Asian versions of Puss in Boots to shine through. It’s an ongoing project. Fidelma Mullane’s longish article on dirt and sod in building is excellent and will be published as will Felicia Youngblood’s paper on the Tarantismo ritual revival in Sicily. I hope to source a few papers at this year’s conference and the programme suggests that this will not be too difficult to achieve.

I intend to remain as editor through volume 57 both issues and hope to hand over to a successor then. I have been active in soliciting papers from suitable writers and am trying to get a few higher profile scholars to contribute in order to achieve more recognition. I am glad to report that one of the potential candidates Dr. Ailbhe Nic Giolla

Chomhaill, previously the recipient of a student grant to attend the Killarney conference in 2013, is considering the job, perhaps in collaboration with our current reviews’ editor, Felicity McWilliams. Ailbhe has succeeded in securing a full time post which will leave her better placed to consider such a decision favourably.

#### *Newsletter*

Newsletter was despatched late spring. The print run was reduced. Details of costs are provided within the Treasurer’s report.

Any contributions for this year’s newsletter to be with the editor by 15 November 2018 please.

Editor thanked all those that had contributed to 2018’s newsletter and in advance to the contributors for the 2019 publication.

### **Website Officer’s Report:**

Website being kept up-to-date +102 tweets this year from Heather. The society follows 929 others and we have 769 followers (up from 673 last year).

Heather asked for pictures, awards info. etc. for the website/flickr account.

[hectorhighlanders@btinternet.com](mailto:hectorhighlanders@btinternet.com)

### **Secretary’s Report:**

Following the notice placed in the newsletter re GDPR earlier this year, I have so far received 14 hard copy consent forms and 6 by email. This is clearly only a very small percentage of the membership and the question remains as to whether we should place a reminder in the forthcoming newsletter and journal, or (my preferred option) should we place a notice to the effect that if we do not hear to the contrary, we will continue to hold your data for the purposes of Folk Life Admin. Other than this there is nothing further to add, and I am happy to continue to serve as SFLS secretary if the organisation wishes. My apologies for not being able to attend the conference in person.

GDPR unfortunately though not unsurprisingly, few had been returned. Via Steph Mastoris the secretary raised the question:



‘Should we put in a notice in the Newsletter to say if we don’t hear back from you we’ll continue to contact you.’?

As people are paying membership this should be ok. It was agreed by those present that this should be done.

### **Membership Secretary’s Report**

Individual membership 153, 9 fewer than last year.

Dylan thanks SM, DD, DR & EE for the review of current members against monies coming in.

Dylan is cleaning up the database. He’s hoping by next year he’ll be able to break down numbers in to county/country boundaries.

Cynthia asked how a new member gets on to the list for the journal as she’s not receiving hers. DD suggested she speak with Dylan directly.

HH is to provide a piece on access & downloads via the website for the newsletter.

### **Conference Secretary’s Report:**

Firstly, Steph thanks Dafydd Roberts & Dai Jenkins for all their hard work contributing to the conference.

Steph asked everyone please to complete the evaluation form either hard or e-copy. Steph remarked he usually only gets about 10% back so encouraged everyone to complete one.

Forthcoming conference venues, current proposals: 2019 Cumbria, prob. Carlisle based at Tullie House. Ideas for themes, visits around the Lake District etc. are welcome. Steph said he endeavours to keep costs under £400 if possible though this is getting increasingly challenging; 2020 West of Galway, 2021 S.W. England pos. Cornwall.

Paul Coghlan thanked Steph for his hard work & commitment as did Dafydd.

### **Election of Officers:**

All the officers had agreed to continue to serve. All were re-elected en-block.

Suggested names for council members; Gillian Munro & Ciarán Ó Gealbháin

**AOCB** Elaine asked if the student place had been filled this year. She was told that sadly there were no applicants.

Cynthia suggested if the free student place isn’t used then perhaps we could spend that money on helping out long-distance travellers to attend.

The President closed the meeting.

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### **Good to know\***

The SFLS has very effectively networked with and assisted **the AIMA (International Association of Agricultural Museums)** over recent years. The AIMA held its yearly board meeting for 2018 in New Delhi and there is a report on that in our Newsletter N°13.\* Coming next will be the 2019 board meeting in Slovenia at the Slovene Ethnographic Museum (SEM) in Ljubljana with its outstanding agricultural (and international ethnographic) collection. Then, in 2020, the AIMA triennial congress will be hosted by the Museum of English Rural Life (MERL), part of the University of Reading, which we hope will attract many attendees from the British Isles, as well as our international group of members and friends. Read on for more information.

\* Meanwhile, if you would like to be kept directly in the AIMA loop, receive newsletters or make a contribution to them, please contact Cozette Griffin-Kremer at [griffin.kremer@wanadoo.fr](mailto:griffin.kremer@wanadoo.fr).

**PAST AND FUTURE  
AGRICULTURES / 20–23 JULY 2020  
MUSEUM OF ENGLISH RURAL LIFE,  
READING, UK**

**CIMA 19**, the triennial Congress of the International Association of Agricultural Museums (AIMA), will be held in 2020 at the Museum of English Rural Life (The MERL), University of Reading. This conference will draw together leading museum practitioners and researchers to explore how museums can work to engage communities, audiences, specialists, and stakeholders in understanding and addressing the major food and sustainability issues that we face today.

Many of the pressing global challenges of our time connect to the development of food systems and to practices that sustain them in the present. These histories and ways of living are represented in museums, including specialist institutions and those with a wider social history or ethnography focus. The success of present-day food production is often dependent on factors similar to those that shaped farming in the past. Museums can help us to understand these histories and to inform future responses. They are powerful contexts for engaging people in discussions related to food and farming. **CIMA 19** will focus on the role that museums and collections play but also aims to encourage debate of wider issues and partnerships.

The MERL and AIMA invite proposals of papers, panels, posters, and other forms of presentation. Please send a title, abstract (up to 300 words), and description of what format your contribution would take (up to 100 words) to [agriculturemuseums.president@gmail.com](mailto:agriculturemuseums.president@gmail.com). Please include 'CIMA 19 Proposal' in the subject line.

All expressions of interest are welcome at this stage but we are particularly interested in the connection between museums, collections, researchers, and public engagement.

**Closing date for proposals: 28 JUNE 2019**

**Have you, or are you about to change your address?**



If so, please let Dylan, the membership secretary know.

Email address: [dylanstoursofwales@gmail.com](mailto:dylanstoursofwales@gmail.com)

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Take a look at *your* Society's website  
[www.folklifestudies.org.uk](http://www.folklifestudies.org.uk)

The contents of all issues of *Folk Life* are listed as well as core information about the Society, including a membership form along with notices of Society meetings and conferences and the text of the *Newsletter*. The site is also available for members to post relevant information. Please send text as e-mail attachments to the website officer

### **Members' online access to Folk Life**

Society for Folklife Studies members have access to the full online issues of *Folk Life* and *Gwerin*.

When you subscribed you will have provided our Membership Secretary with an email address. You will need this address to create your account to get access to the online issues of *Folk Life* and *Gwerin*.

Go to [www.tandfonline.com](http://www.tandfonline.com) and register with your email address. Once your account has been verified

and you are logged in, you will see the Taylor and Francis Welcome screen. Please click "Your Account" next to your recognised name at the top of the screen.

Online access to the journal is reached via "Account settings" and "view your access". You will then find the journal name in the "Subscription" tab.

[Heather.Holmes@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Heather.Holmes@scotland.gsi.gov.uk)

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And finally, I thought I'd include one of my favourite photos. from the 2018 Conference  
Peter Brears & David Eveleigh – both **\*good to know!**

Contributions/comments should be forwarded to the newsletter editor Elaine Edwards at  
[elaine.m.edwards@virginmedia.com](mailto:elaine.m.edwards@virginmedia.com)

**Please note my change of email address**

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All opinions expressed are those of the contributors and do not represent  
the policies or views of the Society.*