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Gloucester Quays

THE SOCIETY FOR FOLK LIFE STUDIES

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

The 2025 conference will be held in Gloucestershire

Friday 12th – Monday 15th September

St Mary de Crypt

The Forest, the Vale and the High Blue Hill

Gloucestershire is a county of contrasts. The enigmatic Forest of Dean, the busy Severn Vale with the city of Gloucester at its heart, the 'High Blue Hills' of the Cotswolds which have launched a thousand chocolate boxes…

Our 2025 conference will explore the specifics of some of these areas through a focus on food cultures and traditions, as well as seeing how some of the 'old ways' might point to future sustainability.

Our dates are Friday 12th - Monday 15th September. As this falls right in the middle of the wonderful annual Gloucester History Festival, we hope you might extend your stay and see more of what the area has to offer!

A *free* student place at the 2025 conference

The Society is offering a free place at the 2025 conference to a student in full-time education. 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.

If interested, please contact Steph Mastoris stephmastoris@gmail.com by July 31st

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The Society's Annual Conference for 2026 will be held in Ireland

Turlough Park, National Museum of Ireland

Clodagh Doyle and Tiernan Gaffney will be our hosts at the National Museum of Ireland's Museum of Country Life where there is a Folk Life division within the museum, so very appropriate

The theme is still to be confirmed but current thoughts are around the ever-popular topic of food. By 2026 the museum may also have a new gallery on traditional boat building. Additionally, the museum will have been open for 25 years in September 2026 the same month as the conference (our programming isn't just thrown together you know!)

Knock (Ireland West) is the nearest airport and is very accessible from UK airports.

2024 Conference

Following the welcome to the Conference by Steph Mastoris & Dafydd Roberts our first speaker, Roland Evans was introduced by Becca Roberts who pointed out what an impact Gwynedd with its history and heritage has had on the world.

Roland gave a very comprehensive overview, well-illustrated with images and statistics.
Gwynedd is home to Conwy, Caernarfon, Harlech & Beaumaris castles, each one stunning examples of architecture. However interpretation of the castles varies, some see them as a great asset flying the Welsh flag others as symbols of oppression.

The speaker emphasised the delicate fine line that needs to be negotiated in getting the balance between encouraging tourism & protecting the environments, built & natural. An example given was the traditional nightly ringing of the bell to mark curfew of the Welsh needing to get outside the castle walls, should it be restricted?
A fear of 'incomers' influencing and diluting the Welsh culture and language was also mentioned. Additionally, managing motorhomes and second homes is a source of tension.

These and many other challenges still face the Gwynedd Council. However, it is nothing if not tenacious as demonstrated with their successful awarding of World Heritage Status for Caernarfon after a long lead-in.

Elaine Edwards

2024 Conference Papers – reviews

An Introduction to two World Heritage designations: the castles and town walls of King Edward I in Gwynedd, and the slate landscape of Northwest Wales

by Dr Kate Roberts, Head of Archaeology, Cadw

Dr Roberts aimed to explore the background to the inscription of the World Heritage Sites in North Wales, the universal values that they convey and to discuss some of the opportunities and challenges faced by managers of World Heritage Sites.

The background:

- The first World Heritage Site was the Galapagos Islands, designated in 1978.
- There are now 1223 World Heritage Sites in 168 countries.
- There are 35 sites in the UK (and Overseas Territories) of which 4 are in Wales.

For a site to qualify as a location of World Heritage it must be of '*Outstanding Universal Value'*. This means '*cultural and/or natural significance which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity'*
The concept of international recognition for places of 'Outstanding Universal Value' arose from the planning of the Aswan Dam (1950s and 1960s). The original plan for the dam would have meant the flooding (and loss) of many unique sites of Ancient Egyptian built heritage including the Abu Simbel temples. International help was offered and most of the threatened heritage was dismantled and moved to other sites. Partly as a result of this situation and the global action to avert the loss of these heritage sites the 1972 UNESCO World Heritage Convention was born. It defines cultural and natural heritage, and recognises the duty of identifying and conserving this heritage.

As Dr Roberts explained - to be considered for World Heritage Site status, a location must meet one or more of 10 criteria - summarised as follows:

(i) a masterpiece of human creative genius

(ii) an example of important interchange of human values, over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world, on developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts, town-planning or landscape design

(iii) a cultural tradition/civilization living/or disappeared

(iv) a type of building/or landscape which illustrates significant stage(s) in human history

(v) a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use representative of cultures or human interaction with the environment

(vi) associated with living traditions, ideas, or beliefs, artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance

(vii) superlative natural phenomena

(viii) representing major stages of earth's history

(ix) representing significant on-going ecological and biological processes in the evolution of ecosystems and communities of plants and animals

(x) the most significant natural habitats for in-situ conservation of biological diversity

In addition, the site has to meet conditions to demonstrate its authenticity and integrity. It also has to have an adequate protection and management system to ensure its safeguarding which is guaranteed by its government.

Wales's first World Heritage Site – Four Castles (criteria 1, 2 and 4). Inscripted 1984

Legend has it that there are 500 castles in Wales, but these four were Edward I's 'iron ring' of castles at Conwy, Harlech, Beaumaris and Caernarfon. These were 'state of the art' architecture. Each castle could be supplied both by land or sea and the King recruited Master James of St George from Savoy who had gained a reputation for building castles in the Alps.

They were built though to consolidate his victory over the Welsh in the 1280s, not for defence, but very much to aid successful colonisation of the area by the English. Seen through the lens of the 21st century to ignore this political background seems out of step with cultural public thinking, but at the time this was very much a top-down decision, perhaps demonstrating those less politically aware times.

Wales most recent World Heritage Site - The Slate Landscape (criteria 2, 4 and 5) Inscripted 2021

The area designated in 2021 illustrates the transformation that industrial slate quarrying and mining of the Industrial Revolution (defined as 1780 – 1914) brought to the traditional rural environment of the mountains and valleys of Eryri (Snowdonia).

This area was internationally significant not only for the export of slates, but also for the export of technology and skilled workers. It played a leading role in the field and constituted a model for other slate quarries in different parts of the world.

Six components are in the site listing, defining the slate's journey from its source to the world; quarries and mines, sites for industrial processing, historical settlements, historic gardens and grand country houses, ports, harbours and quays, and railway and road systems.

There are complex plans and documents to define the site, and it covers a range of non-contiguous geographical areas. As well as defining the sites as they are at present, plans also had to be put forward to demonstrate the care and preservation these sites would have in the future. This includes ruinous buildings which are currently falling into decay, and proposals to prevent their further deterioration. As Doctor Roberts said 'this is a marathon and not a sprint' but the designation of all these areas as World Heritage Sites gives heritage an active role in their future development.

"In a society where living conditions are changing at an accelerated pace, it is essential for man's equilibrium and development to preserve for him a fitting setting in which to live, where he will remain in contact with nature and the evidences of civilisation bequeathed by past generations, and that, to this end, it is appropriate to give the cultural and natural heritage an active function in community life and to integrate into an overall policy the achievements of our time, the values of the past and the beauty of nature."
1972 General Conference of UNESCO.

Sally Ackroyd

The Psychogeography of Gwynedd
Rhys Mwyn

Rhys Mwyn's contribution on the psychogeography of Gwynedd was a welcome addition to a conference with such a strong focus on landscape and natural heritage.

Mwyn opened the lecture by describing his connection to the county and how he came to discover psychogeography through a combination of punk rock and situationism.

Mwyn explained psychogeography as a predominantly urban discipline that examines how the geographical environment shapes the behaviours and emotions of the people that interact with it through the practices of wandering and observing. As Mwyn summarised, psychogeography is 'where we go off the path and things get interesting'. He spent some time discussing how, since psychogeography emerged as a field of study in the 1950s, it has been seen almost exclusively as an urban concept that does not apply in the countryside. However, much like how Mwyn, in his own words, 'transported the ideas of punk rock into a Welsh garden in the 1980s', he similarly contended that psychogeography as a practice should by no means be limited to use in city contexts. Citing Mike Parker's *Real Powys* as inspiration, throughout the rest of his presentation Mwyn explored how psychogeography can be used to build a better understanding of an area like Gwynedd. Although Mwyn's knowledgeable and warm presentation guided his audience all around Gwynedd, from Roman camps to demolished pavilions, via dusty attics and charity shop record collections, this review regrettably has the space to cover only a few key cases he discussed.

Drawing upon his experience as both an archaeologist and a tour guide working in the area, Mwyn first introduced his audience to the Roman fort Segontium to the west of Caernarfon. In this discussion Mwyn called attention to one of the challenges with archeological records: that objects prove trade with a group of people, but not necessarily that group's residence in an area. He invited speculation, tasking his audience to think beyond the archeological record to consider how landscape may have influenced the Romans' choice to settle in Caernarfon. Was it the mineral wealth of the area? The fact that Caernarfon overlooked Anglesey? That the landscape offered a sheltered place for a dock to be built? Or that the two rivers feeding into the Menai Strait made Caernarfon an ideal place from which to administer North Wales?

Mwyn went on to discuss recent archeological findings in the area near Segontium. In this case, aerial photography had unintentionally revealed strange markings on the fields near a housing estate in Llanbeblig. Mwyn recounted how this area was excavated during the construction of a new school, revealing early medieval graves and small Roman bread ovens. Mwyn highlighted the importance of both these findings in understanding the history of Caernarfon and Llanbeblig. He described how the bread ovens suggested that this may have been the location of a camp where the Romans stayed whilst building Segontium. The discovery of early medieval graves suggest that the area was continuously lived in, beginning to close a gap in the archeological record between the Roman and the Norman periods.

True to Mwyn's roots, another notable and interesting case he presented concerned Gwynedd's musical heritage. The musical and literary polymath Lewis William Lewis (also known as Llew Llwyfo) is buried in Llanbeblig cemetery, not far from the new school. Exploring the importance of following and sustaining curiosity, Mwyn discussed how his interest in the singer and a tip off that there was once a portrait of Llew Llwyfo in the Institute Building, led Mwyn to rediscover this portrait in the building's attic. The community of Caernarfon went on to raise the funds needed to clean and restore this once-forgotten painting.

Mwyn closed his energetic and interesting talk with broader reflections on the relationships between place, connection and conservation. Landscape, he contended, 'is not separate from history or archeology or people'. The more people understand a place the more they enjoy it. To create respect for environments, he

continued, people need to be engaged, to feel that they belong and that they have ownership over a place. Through stories, exploration and curiosity, people can begin to know a place and to find, or forge, where they belong within it.

Mwyn's presentation was engaging and thought provoking. I know I will be taking up his invitation to walk the landscape with my eyes open to see what I can learn through wandering and noticing.

Hannah Murphy

Sheepfolds of Carneddau – and beyond
Nigel Beidas

This virtual talk, amply illustrated by images taken using drones, was for some participants, including this reviewer, a highlight of our conference. Over 3,000 sheepfolds have been recorded across northwest Wales, of these about 100 are large, complex folds, used communally by farmers to sort flocks which had been grazing on the mountains throughout the summer. Nigel explained why and how these stone-built folds were built and showed how they fitted into the landscape. Many of the folds are falling into disrepair and exist as random stone walls half hidden by bracken and hillside vegetation. However, some are still in use, and by means of a video taken by a drone it we were able to see how they are used today. This use continues the pattern and rhythm of gathering sheep grazed on the hills which has continued for over 200 years.

Roy Vickery

Weaving and fabric design

Weaver Anna Pritchard introduced herself as the daughter of one of the oldest farming families still working in the Dyffryn Ogwen Valley in the hills above Bangor. Growing up on a dairy farm, as a child she helped walk cattle to the fields twice a day and would later find inspiration for her weaving designs and colour choices from the farm animals, farming activities and tools, wildlife and geology of the countryside she knows and loves.

Anna's mother was an artist and art teacher and both she and Anna's grandmother were knitters. Together they influenced her developing interest in textile crafts which led her to compete as a weaver at Eisteddfods. On leaving school she trained first in health and social care and then, whilst waiting to apply for a nursing course, undertook a foundation course in art and design. That changed her plans and led her to studying textiles at Manchester Metropolitan University and an eventual weaving scholarship with a Master Weaver in Yorkshire.

Anna explained that her enjoyment of weaving comes from seeing the fabric grow and the pattern develop. She works on both a traditional handloom and a Jacquard loom.

She has been able to continue to live and work in north Wales, designing high end fabrics for the home woven in wool and also scarves woven in silk. She is passionate about maintaining and displaying local traditions within her work. One of her current inspirations has been the traditional ear cuts, or notches, that lambs were marked with in order to distinguish individual flocks. Today, only a handful of farms continue to practise ear notching. Anna showed us an eighteenth-century ear notch 'pattern book' and one of her woollen throws with a pattern consisting of eighteen different ear notches.

Her choice of commercial dye colours is influenced by the colours of the seasonal countryside around her: fresh greens, rusty lichens, purple heather, the greys and blacks of slate pillars. She uses mixed breed wool (Blue-Faced Leicester, Shetland and Romney) in order to obtain sufficiently fine yarns and the woven fabric is then washed to help the wool meld together.

In answer to a member's question on how she markets her products Anna explained that she relies on her website and social media and also on shows and open studio days.
The highlight of her career so far has been the acquisition by St Fagans National Museum of History of one of her woollen throws displaying the traditional sheep ear notch designs.

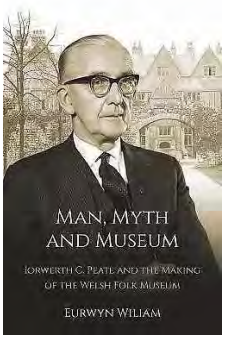
Anna had brought along a few samples of her weaves for the group to see and to purchase, if desired. Many of us were tempted and I don't think she will have taken many home again.

https://www.annapritchard.co.uk/index.html
Anna Pritchard

Dorothy Kidd

Man, Myth and Museum: Iorwerth C Peate and the making of the Welsh Folk Museum

Eurwyn Wiliam



The title of Dr Eurwyn Wiliam's lecture mirrored that of his recent book on this subject, published by the University of Wales Press in 2023. As Keeper Emeritus at Amgueddfa Cymru, it was immediately clear that he was very much the right man for this subject, and a thoroughly enjoyable and informative presentation followed with just the right mixture of light-hearted remarks for his Sunday afternoon audience.

The history and development of the Welsh Folk Museum as the first large open-air folk museum in the British Isles (now St Fagans National Museum of History) has been a central theme of interest throughout our own Society's history, with a close intermingling of individuals, scholars and curators throughout that whole period. Dr Iorwerth C. Peate (1901-1982) was the first President of this Society from 1961.

Eurwyn Wiliam's own pedigree underlines that too: first appointed to St Fagans in 1971, he was able to develop and sustain his academic interest in vernacular architecture, later becoming Keeper of Buildings and Domestic Life. His subsequent career in various corporate roles within the National Museum of Wales included as Director of Collections. Emeritus status (plus the enforced opportunity of lockdowns) has allowed him access to the museum's extensive archives, pursuing an increasing interest in historiography.

Wiliam's 'magisterial biography of one of the most important Welshmen of the 20th century' (as one reviewer has described it) was the result, the first full-length study of Peate as scholar and curator, and making extensive use of his own papers deposited within museum archives and at the National Library of Wales.

Peate's name stands large in the history of St Fagans and thereby in the development of open-air museums across Britain, and in particular as a key name in developing the concept of the 'folk museum' or 'museum of the folk', central to St Fagans' early history. Both the lecture and the book concentrated on the degree to which this was Peate's brainchild as the creation of one man, and whether its founding was truly achieved in the teeth of opposition from the National Museum of Wales as its parent institution (the myth in the title).

This at least was the story according to Peate, and formed the fascinating core of the talk; this key assertion on his part created tensions, especially amongst the upper hierarchy of the National Museum (governors and staff) throughout much of his long period in its service. After some 44 years in post, he retired on his 70th birthday in 1971 having been firstly Keeper-in-Charge and later Curator of the Welsh Folk Museum since 1948.

Those tensions are fully researched (and referenced in detail) in the study and Wiliam's conclusion, firmly expressed, was that Peate's claims and assertions and their widespread acceptance in Wales was at best a much-simplified version of the truth, and therefore myth-making. Certainly Iorwerth C Peate was a controversial character, from a deeply religious and cultural rural background in Montgomeryshire where his father and grandfather were village carpenters 'in the old tradition'.

He had a personality severe in style and difficult to work with, was firm in his views as a strong 'cultural nationalist' for Wales, and a poet and essayist who was committed to the preservation of the Welsh language. He was also a militant pacifist, for which at one stage of his museum career during the Second World War he was suspended from his post for nine months.

It is a more credible but still enthralling story that various individuals, especially Dr Cyril Fox (1882-1967), Director of the National Museum from 1926-1948 and Peate's 'bête noire', were the key enablers; and that museological practice and practical opportunities coalesced over time to form St Fagans, which opened on 01 July 1948 as the UK's first national open-air museum.

A core issue throughout was Peate's understanding and presentation of 'gwerin' or folk culture and how 'his' new creation at what became the St Fagans project would and should be interpreted, Peate having started in the still developing National Museum in Cardiff in 1927 as its 'Curator of Bygones'. He published a Guide to those collections in 1929, a model for what came later. His personal challenge and commitment was a long one over many years.

Peate's career achievements are of course many in pursuit of his ultimate goal, and particularly so his publications. The vernacular buildings of rural Wales were a core interest and *The Welsh House : A Study in Folk Culture* (1940, 1944, etc) reflects that deep and abiding association. The other best-known study is probably *Tradition & Folk Life : A Welsh View* (published in 1972 but long in the making). Wiliam's biography is fully and clearly footnoted (providing a mass of access details for future scholars) and likewise has a six-page bibliography, half of which is devoted to Peate's own considerable output.

Much of this output not un-naturally was published in Welsh, not all of which was later translated, which adds a further factor to the fascinating story of one man's sense of place and the (small p) political battles which never seem to have been far away during his career. Particularly when seen from across Offa's Dyke, this adds extra fascination to an already significant component in the story of museums in Wales and the National Collections in particular.

Sources

Eurwyn Wiliam, *Man, myth and museum : Iorwerth C Peate and the making of the Welsh Folk Museum*, University of Wales Press 2023, 318pp, ISBN 978-1-83772-039-2.

Iorwerth C Peate, 'The Society for Folk Life Studies', *Folk Life*, Vol 1, 1963, pp.3-4.

See the relevant entry (and an excellent summary) on Peate by Trefor Owen in the Dictionary of Welsh Biography, published on-line by the National Library of Wales.

David Viner

"Dyfodiad i'w Oed": Popular festivity, landed estates and community in Wales c. 1770 – 1920

Dr Shaun Evans

Dr Evans, Director of the Institute for the Study of Welsh Estates at the University of Bangor, introduced his intriguing paper exploring the role of the gentry within their community through the examination of one life cycle moment: the 21st birthday 'coming of age' of the heir to the estate. Estates were communities of those that lived and worked on them, or close by. Marking the coming of age of the heir or heiress was a celebration of prospective continuity. Dr Evans came across examples of the material culture associated with coming of age practices when giving public talks on estate history and finding that some of his listeners might have brought along a commemorative mug kept in their family. He was also aware of a tree near his home, planted for the 21st birthday of the future Lord Moreton, in 1877. Commemorative tree planting and other new structures acted as markers in the landscape and remain today for local historians to study.

Other examples of coming-of-age practices include: contemporary newspaper reports, rock cannon sites (i.e.: rocks or boulders bored with holes which could be loaded with gunpowder and ignited to make explosive sounds), night-time bonfires or the firing of rockets.

Dr Evans explained that he approached his study from the point of view of traditional popular festivity. Sources for the study of 18th and 19th century popular culture include: Robert W Malcolmson's Popular Recreations in English Society 1700 – 1850 (1980) Cambridge University Press and Prys Morgan's The Eighteenth Century Renaissance (1981) C Davies Ltd. The latter argues that a period of cultural decline in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries inspired the re-invention of Wales. Nineteenth century Wales has been understood as a series of conflicts between the gentry and the tenantry (gwerin): religious conformist v. non-conformist, conservative v. radical, English v. Welsh-speaking. Landowners were presented as different and distant from their tenants. This narrative, created during the late nineteenth century, has shaped how the period was viewed. Coming of Age celebrations appear to have been re-'invented' in Wales in the late eighteenth century - later than in England, Scotland and Ireland. In Wales they were developed in a particularly Welsh manner; putting land-owning families into face-to-face interaction with their communities through the influence of religious practice, communal eating and drinking, celebrating the event as a local public holiday with festivities lasting up to a week, parades, collections for charity and the performance of song, music and poetry. These last cultural practices were very deliberately moulded into events that the entire community was involved in organizing or performing in.

Dr Evans went on to explain how during the 1830s – 1840s communities came to take a more active role in organizing the celebrations. This enabled the practice to continue, even through periods of profound rural unrest. He also spoke of his interest in the wording of the illuminated address presented to the heir or heiress of the estate. It was usually written in English but delivered in both Welsh and English with the wording illustrating how the authors framed their rural society and its expectations. The address was a very clever way of manipulating local expectations and the landowner needed to respond to it. This response might use or build on the landscape of Wales: for instance, by temporarily welcoming members of the community into certain normally restricted areas or through the construction of commemorative features such as monuments, bridges and water fountains or indeed the planting of trees already mentioned.

In conclusion Dr Evans noted that the response also tended to emphasize the importance of 'ancestry' by claiming descent from legendary figures; and thus, the desirability of continuing the 'contract' between landlord and tenantry. It could act as a powerful social, political and cultural tool.

Following his paper Dr Evans responded to several questions, including whether practices varied between North and South Wales: landowners in the south, whose wealth tended to come from new industrial enterprises, adapted and in fact preserved the Coming-of-Age celebrations as a way of integrating themselves into the world of rural Wales. Another question concerned who would read out the address and response: a representative of the organizing committee would be elected to read the address, this could be the oldest member, the tenant of the largest farm or the local non-conformist minister; while for the young heir, delivering the response might be their first experience of public speaking, in either English or Welsh.

Dorothy Kidd

Studying the History of Disability in Wales through Nineteenth Century Ballads
Dr Steve Thompson

Historian Dr Steve Thompson is on Aberystwyth University interdisciplinary team of researchers working on a project that aims to gain a better understanding of "the experience of disabled people and the wider understanding of disability in Wales during the nineteenth century".

His review of earlier research found that previous studies of the history of disability in Wales are based on medical case-studies, official reports, scholarly publications and newspapers, while ignoring the experiences of disabled people. In his quest for the 'voice of disabled people' Dr Thompson has examined the ballads composed by, or sung by disabled people, as they speak (or sing) from personal experience, usually an accident in a coal-mine or slate-quarry resulting in crippling injuries, loss of limbs or permanent loss of sight. In contrast to official reports of industrial accidents, which are concise, impersonal, written in English and filed with company or government records, the ballads are in Welsh, the mother tongue of the miners and quarry-men who composed them. They are the voices of accident victims who can no longer work to earn a living or support their families. Many of the ballads were printed as broadsheets or appeared in songsters and some bear the name of the disabled composer who sings in the street in hope of earning a pittance.

Steve Thomson selected a range of examples, (with English translations), six telling of blindness, and two of loss of limbs, and all telling (or singing) of lives that have been blighted by disability.
William Bowen names himself in his ballad that tells how he lost his sight, and has to depend on singing in the street (c. 1873–87) and selling ballads to earn a few coppers to feed his family:

A wife and children depend on me
Unfailingly for their bread,
And they look for sustenance
From the efforts of a blind singer,
Going to every fair and market,
Surely touring the whole land,
This is William Bowen's fate,
O! Pity the man.

Another blind man sings his 'Complaint of the blind' not just to draw attention to the fact that he will never be able to work, but to remind listeners that losing your sight means you will never again see anything you hold dear:

I will never again see the snug cottage
Where I took my first step
Nor the multi-coloured flowers
Planted by my mother;
Mother is lying silently today
In a dark, black grave
And feeble me - weak of sight
Or see - blind am I

The singer who sings his Complaint of the Lame appeals to listeners to recognise that he has lost his livelihood, and sympathy alone won't buy food:

Sympathise, sympathise with the state of the lame,
seeing you listen to me is something fine;
I'd have more pleasure seeing you come along,
and with a sympathetic heart give me a penny.

Given the dangers facing miners and quarrymen all over the country, a fellow street-singer cautions that accidents may happen anywhere at any moment, leaving the injured with no other way of earning a living:

Gather round all in seriousness
Everyone throughout Wales
Pay attention to my situation
I am a crippled man;
I lost the use of my lower limbs
It is a warning now to you
I cannot walk
Very serious is my condition.

The ballads reflect the impact of injury and disability not only on the accident victim but on the entire family, who will go hungry without help. There is an emotional appeal to listeners to have compassion on those who have been blinded or maimed by industrial accidents, and to consider their plight.

Without compensation or welfare, they had little choice but to beg or earn a meagre living as a street singer.

Steve Thomson's research and well-illustrated presentation opens up potential to include the experience of disabled industrial workers elsewhere, such as the Scottish miner Robert MacLeod (1876–1958), injured in two accidents before becoming a ballad-maker and street-singer. As MacLeod was injured in 1911, long before the NHS began (1948) we might ask who made artificial limbs and aids for the disabled in his day? MacLeod answers the question in verse 9 of his ballad Takkin a Rest.

I oft thocht I could tak a rest,
But I'm getting ane at last:
It's four weeks noo since I come in here, [hospital]
And I wish this rest was past.
I dinnae get a wink at nicht,
For folks crying through their sleep:
They yell for pans and bottles,
But I cry oot for meat... [food]
v. 9. I'm expectin tae get oot then,
But my feet they will be tender,
So ye'll hae tae gaun tae the Smith [blacksmith]
And order a little fender. [iron brace]
Tender? MacLeod sustained a broken hip, thigh, knee and ankle, and
lost a heel and five toes.

Steve Thomson concluded [via translation] that there is 'a lot more work to do on this, but hopefully it has been worth the effort,' To which we may add, it certainly has been.

We can follow the project which investigates industrial injuries and diseases in three British coalfields between 1780 and 1948 via the website for Disability and Industrial Society https://www.dis-indsoc.org.uk/en/index.htm>

In case anyone is interested in the Robert MacLeod anthology. MacLeod, Robert, et al. Robert MacLeod, Cowdenbeath Miner Poet : An Anthology. Ochtertyre: Grace Note Publications, 2015.

https://www.gracenotepublications.com/

Margaret Bennett

"Llen gwerin Bangor a'r Cyffiniau / The folk culture of Bangor and its hinterland"

Howard Huws

Presented in Welsh & translated Gwynfor Owen

Howard Huws concentrated on unwritten traditional culture, including pre-industrial testimony on architecture, arts, crafts and oral tradition, emphasising the contributions from earlier researchers on mainly pre-railroad culture. The Bangor community has been strong enough to enable folk life practices to persist right into the present day and even to flower. This includes many different groups in the city, recalling that today's in-migration was reflected in the eighteenth century with newcomers from Ireland and beyond, as well as important rural to urban movement. Today, the city is multi-ethnic with much cultural cross-fertilisation. Traditions may reflect memories of the 1960s Sputnik or hark back to belief attested far earlier, such as

not bringing white flowers like the hawthorn into the house or it would foretell a death. Among the lore and still lively legends is that of an underground passage beneath Bangor cathedral – totally impossible, but people still enjoy believing it. In fact, the cathedral is a hotbed of inspiration, with many tales around Saint Deiniol or
belief in the curative powers of his well on a nearby farm.

One aspect of Bangor lore that especially interests Huw is the diversity of nicknames, some of which were deemed undesirable enough that children were not supposed to use them. Of course, nicknames could serve to identify people with similar family names such as Jones or Williams, but they could also be used to disparage the neighbours, be spiteful or humorous. Here are just a few of the examples Huw cited: Cockroach, Black Pudding, Half-a-Sausage, George the Pig, Harry-Hot-Potato, Nelly-the-Snail, Sion Frying Pan and so on. Bangor itself had many a humorous or mocking nickname.

Fear of medical treatment and of doctors is well attested, so there was much seeking out of traditional remedies for rickets, whooping cough and a firm belief that some people could cure shingles or that poor eyesight could be cured by piercing the earlobe. Life cycle events such as marriage, birth and death were passages assured by prophylactic practices, for example, never bring a pram into the house before the baby was born or be especially wary of any signs of an impending death, all implying the existence of parallel worlds with a passage between them. Some stories, as of the cathedral's underground secrets, are still linked to existing buildings in the town. Huw enlivened his examples with his own talent for storytelling, including many old favourites, so to speak, about ghosts, but also “new tradition”, such as the warnings against going to Morrisons car park late at night...

Huw especially emphasised his collecting strategy – learn to listen and then follow the path. This is as true with Bangor-born tradition-bearers as with the most recent arrivals in the Iranian community, as just one example. It is clear that people from around the world have brought their traditions to a new home in Bangor.

Cozette Griffin-Kremer

"Brìgh is Barail: A Community-based Ethnographic Fieldwork Project"

Tiber Falzett

Though Tiber Falzett's paper came on the last day of the conference, it was a lively and engaging presentation about a fieldwork project he co-led, exploring Gaelic culture in Nova Scotia. Although Gaelic declined sharply in the second half of the twentieth-century in Nova Scotia and especially in Cape Breton Island, the language has become the focus of a concerted programme of salvage folklore collection and maintenance as a vernacular spoken medium. The rich archives amassed by dedicated field workers from the last generation of mother-tongue speakers provide a platform for regeneration and repossession, that has recently shown a modest increase in the number of fluent Gaelic speakers in the region.

Tiber Falzett co-led a project titled Brìgh is Barail aiming to document the language's continuing importance among first-language and secondary bilingual speakers alike. Using workers trained in participatory field work methods to elicit information from the subjects, this evidence provides the basis for new initiatives in community development with linguistic and cultural renewal at its heart. Tiber related the experiences of both informants and field workers, highlighting the emotional intensity of the intersectional approach used for many participants. Some 44% of the number were either first language speakers or fluent

learners, with learners at various stages accounting for another 47% and a 9% cohort who had no knowledge of Gaelic.

Human oriented approaches emerged as important for the core group, with emphasis on listening skills involved with visiting elders and supporting a cèilidh ethic. Current work practices among other factors in present day society make that kind of engagement difficult to sustain, leading to conflict between personal values and the need to earn a living. Low self-esteem and other issues of self-confidence and self-evaluation correlated with the decline of Gaelic in the community. The report emphasises the need to support initiatives that foster links between community members, reflecting more humanly based values in developing support for the maintenance and continuation of Gaelic. Participants mentioned they would miss the field workers visits when the programme ended. Tiber's passion for this project and for his own involvement in supporting Gaelic came through, making this rigorous, but very accessible, paper a pleasure to listen to.

Lillis Ó Laoire

Welsh folk art: from moorlands and quarries to urban apartments

Richard Bebb

From love spoons to Welsh dressers, from figure heads for ships to butter prints, folk art is a wide-ranging subject which seems to give us modern sophisticates access to traditional pleasures in design and craft skills, which somehow grew out of the soil or the community or the hands of our ancestors (or somebody else's ancestors). We value the simplicity which so brings to us a sense of plainness and continuity, which we value in the visual chaos of drop-down menus and pop-up shops. Folk art was made from local materials using knowledge passed down the years, or generations, or centuries.

Richard Bebb, though best-known as an authority on Welsh furniture, has spent his working life dealing in all kinds of folk objects, and has seen a huge amount. His contribution was a fascinating overview of what he has seen.

In many areas folk art reached its most elaborate forms when industry in the second half of the 19th century supplied brighter materials like cotton fabric coloured with chemical dyes and gave the craftsmen factory-produced saws and planes, and many other implements.

Folk art is very various, with material culture subgroups centred on activities like quarrying and fishing. Often the most moving pieces are ones which involve things or materials that gave people their livelihood, like a slate fireplace made at Bethesda (1836), or metal pit ponies made for the coal-burning fireplace. The health of the different industries was often reflected in their appearance in folk art: the production of slate decoration rose and fell with the slate industry, followed by its recent rise with the slate-tourism industry. There is also a pleasure in making objects from unlikely materials, like slate fans.

Though most folk art is domestic, some of it such as signwriting for shops appears in public, and may be done by professional craftsman because the client wants the best. The same is true of banners for friendly societies and local political groups.

Part of the point of folk art was to show the makers' skill, and skill was valued not only in the community as a whole but by the handcraftsmen themselves. As Scots example makes the point. In D.M. Moir's Novel *Mansie Waugh* (1828) a tailor and a cook spend an evening absorbed in discussing their trade knowledge and techniques, evidently based on research by the author, who was a physician outside Edinburgh, relishing the men's knowledge.

The Arts and Crafts movement was a reworking of folk art for the middle classes, making a virtue of the hand made. Thus Llanelli pottery – in the folk tradition, but also commercial manufacture.

Folk art is the part of art that historians of fine art, fixed on the elite and the metropolitan, do not want.

But is folk art part of art, or one of the essentials of folk culture? If the latter it is a crucial part of identity, the unnecessary which is more meaningful than the essential, the decoration which reveals what matters.

These things are easily said but as Richard emphasised, we have almost no knowledge of what the makers of folk art were trying to do, and how self-aware they were, and this mystery is part of its appeal

John Burnett

"To relieve his cow that is bad from all witchcraft": The dyn hysbys, written charms and animal husbandry in Mid Wales, 1900-1920

Judith Tulfer

The dyn hysbys was the Welsh version of a figure found in many folk cultures and often known by the term cunning-man. He was a wise man, well-known in his community, with implications of wizardry. In early accounts of Welsh folklore, he was often referred to as a conjurer (consuriwr) or charmer (swynwr) and was consulted on a range of subjects and thought to possess extraordinary inherited powers.

Consulting the dyn hysbys was not merely the survival of a supernatural pagan belief or even necessarily always a sign of desperation, but one of a series of options in a society where he was a respected figure who had had a distinct role for generations; it could be seen as a rational decision in certain circumstances.

One of the most important tasks of the dyn hysbys in a rural community with few veterinary practitioners was healing animals through advice, charms and incantations.

In addition to oral tales, knowledge of their practices fortuitously survives in the form of tightly written notes, and both types of evidence were combined in this fascinating illustrated conference paper. The speaker's primary example was Evan Griffiths of Llangurig, Montgomeryshire, in the geographical centre of Wales, whose family had been practitioners for generations. He was a tenant farmer and a prominent member of his community and practiced as a dyn hysbys from the 1890s through to his death in the 1930s, being consulted by clients from a wide area of mid-Wales and the Marches, including counties on the English side of the border.

Consultations with such men followed a pattern, with the dyn hysbys consulting his books before presenting a diagnosis of the problem; if it involved a curse that needed to be countered, he would provide a written charm in an envelope or sealed bottle, with instructions that it was not to be opened. The cost was around five shillings, which was a day's pay for a farm labourer. On occasion, Evan Griffiths apparently used his own experience as a farmer to offer other remedies, such as improving the animal's feed or administering medicines. This must have increased his reputation as the person to approach with a problem and if his answer was that someone was bewitching his client, then one of his charms, secreted on the farm, was accepted as the appropriate remedy.

Judith Tulfer recounted tales that showed that farmers often had alternative remedies, including traditional practices as well as consulting vets and books on animal husbandry, which were available in the Welsh language. For them, consulting the dyn hysbys seemed to have been a last resort.

She then examined two of Evan Griffiths' charms, which were later discovered in his clients' homes. The first was for a lead miner who also ran a smallholding and whose mare was diagnosed as suffering from "witchcraft and all evil diseases". The client was in a precarious occupation and his family were in poor health, so the protection of one of his most valuable assets was essential. The second charm was for a novice farmer whose milking cows and dairying activities, Griffiths believed, were being cursed, leading to a loss of the family's already meagre income. These examples showed clients turning to the dyn hysbys because of the precarious position in which they found themselves.

Finally, Judith Tulfer surmised that the appeal and activities of the dyn hysbys at such a late date needs to be assessed in the context of the social and economic conditions of

the time, particularly as they affected rural mid-Wales, with their written charms satisfying a universal need for explanations and solutions.

Richard Bebb

Researching the Witches of Upper Clydesdale: trial records as resources on folkloric practices

Hannah Murphy

Scotland, like Germany, has an unpleasantly lively history of witchcraft, recorded in detail by the various lay and church courts which delt with the investigation of those accused. These unfortunate innocents were often treated from the start as though they were guilty: the role of the professional witch finder was to prove it. It is profoundly uncomfortable to think that among these quiet country parishes our ancestors, energised by religious zeal, imposed great cruelties on their neighbours. Those who confessed were encouraged to name other witches. Often, they did.

Gender was an issue: eighty-five percent of the accused were women, and the witch finders and ministers who pursued them were male.

Witchcraft became a widespread concern in Scotland when the King James VI believed that attempts had been made to use it to kill him and instigated trials, most notably of supposed witches who met at North Berwick, on the East Lothian coast. As Christina Larner put it, the mass witch-hunt was 'a public act of ridding the land of witches and is associated with coronations, new regimes and ceremonial occasions.' James had landed there at the end of a voyage to collect his bride and queen, Ann of Denmark.

The trials became widely known through a pamphlet written by a local minister but printed in London, *Newes from Scotland* (1591), and followed by a book by 'the wisest fool in Christendom', the King himself, his *Daemonologie* (1597).

This far Scottish witchcraft studies have largely been the property of historians, but Hannah Murphy brought a different approach from her first degree in social anthropology, one which is more aware of ritual, pointing the way towards a role for supernatural beings such as fairies. She is not concerned so much about the ideas of which witchcraft was made, as the rituals and practices which the witches were supposed to use, and which investigators deployed to trap their targets.

Hannah gave us a clear view of how the pursuit of witches was carried out on the ground, based on records which enabled her to name, five hundred years later, the guilty – and the innocent.

John Burnett

Members paper

John Holland's Crook, 1868
Bridget Yates

Many items in social history museums would benefit from detailed research that their overburdened curators would love to give them, if freed from operational pressures. It is only in retirement that we can actually get down to doings these things that initially drew us into the museum profession. This explains why Bridget has now been able to study a shepherd's crook donated to her Gressenhall Farm and Workhouse Museum over forty years ago.

Although the wrought iron head is of a conventional and practical design, the shaft is a length of smooth MALOCCA (CHECK) cane of the kind usually reserved for fashionable walking sticks. This indicates 'best' rather than general use as confirmed by forty-three motifs and the inscriptions. 'John Holland, Thuxton, 1868' neatly added in black ink. Recently developed information technology enabled him to be identified as being born in Thuxton, fourteen miles west of Norwich in 1828-9, as the

eldest of ten children. He married Elizabeth Tilney in 1849, was living four miles away in Welborne in 1854, but then returned to his native village, dying in January 1899.

As a rare and well-documented example of England folk art its imagery is of great interest since it records those things that interested a literate & skilled livestock worker living a relatively secluded and constrained life in a remote Norfolk hamlet. Their neat execution shows that John was competent with the use of a pen and ink. His depictions of a shepherd with his sheep dog and folding knife confirm his profession, while a donkey, Billy goat, sheaf and corn stack probably refer to features of the local farms. Similarly, a post mill may represent one near his village. Images of a lion and an Aunt Sally probably came from visits to a touring fair and menagerie, while others of a dove, arrows and fish could originate from those of friendly society pole-heads. Only a Prince of Wales' feathers represent a national rather than local subject.

Considering the anonymity of most folk art, this is a really interesting and well-provenanced example, its significance greatly increased as a result of Bridget's research.

Peter Brears

Perthshire's power-loom shuttle-makers and the invention of the side-tipped shuttle

Margaret Bennett

The Tay River and its tributaries were once home to hundreds of grist-mills, sawmills and textile mills. A few miles downstream from the renowned Stanley Mills, John Menzies founded The Ordie Shuttle-Mill on the Ordie Burn in 1844 to produce wooden shuttles from seasoned hardwood for the jute and linen mills in Scotland and abroad. Menzies was acutely aware of the terrible danger represented by shuttles under tension that regularly flew off, causing horrible injuries to the mainly women workers. He had the bullet-headed shuttles replaced by ones with a side-hook on the point that would catch and stop them from flying off.

Margaret put the spice into her talk with quotes from historical sources to explore the context these early mills operated in, as with Rev. Moncrieff's colourful description of Loncarty around 1795 with its impressive bleachfields devoted to linen and, newly at the time, to muslin, to illustrate that "the hand of industry has wrought wonders". By 1845, Loncarty was considered to have the largest of these fields in all of Scotland, powered by a dam-dike from the Tay, with some two million yards of linen cloth being processed by 120 to 130 workers, most of whom were born and raised on the company's lands. The quantities of water needed for this were equally impressive and cleaning out the lade to keep up a steady flow was among the crucial tasks involved. John Menzies had set up his shuttle-making operation by the mid-1840s and was rewarded in 1878 for the deeply positive impact of his side-tipped shuttle invention, "which has made power loom weaving a safe calling to those employed therein".

Although the last of the great looms closed in 1999, Margaret has been able to interview people with memories of the work, as the two ladies whose grandparents were employed in the mills, and who speak glowingly of the vibrant community life among the mill workers, with their choirs, the orchestras and a myriad of other activities. Workers were taken on as early as the age of twelve, as was William Patton, trained by Menzies himself, and his granddaughter Betty could attest to the family's pride in his 70 years of service at the shuttle-making works.

Cozette Griffin-Kremer

'The Siller Gun of Dumfries 1777'

John Burnett

John Main was born in Dumfries and became a compositor, working on the *Dumfries Weekly Journal*. He began to write poetry including 'The Siller [silver] Gun', an account of a traditional shooting match in the burgh in 1777, though no copy survives. It was reprinted in a

literary magazine three years later, and in a longer version (1783) when he was working in Glasgow. He probably set the text himself.

Main, who had now become Mayne, moved to London where he edited a newspaper, *The Star*, in which he printed a surprising amount of Dumfries news including a description of the funeral of Robert Burns. He continued to work on the poem which by 1808 had expanded to 3 cantos and after another twenty-eight years a final version of 1644 lines appeared, in five cantos, seemingly a few days after the author's death. The whole thing was in Scots.

John Mayne was not a great poet. His generalities are conventional, his insights are limited - but his detail is convincing. He was a wonderful observer who sometimes found splendid, vivid language.

The poem follows the events of one day, the king's birthday. It begins with the men of the seven incorporated trades gathering on open ground beside the burgh. First thing in the morning they start to drink gin and brandy, with predictable results. The men walk south out of the burgh to the shooting ground at the Maiden Craigs.

Although not one of the seven trades, the Gardeners were in the procession, always included because they carried floral displays including images:

Among the flowery forms they weave,
There's Adam, tae the life, an' Eve,
She, with the apple in her nieve, [fist]
Enticin' Adam,
While Satan's laughin' in his sleeve,
At him an' madam.'

This is a good example of Main's ability to record what he sees in lively language.

The Siller [Silver] Gun had been given to the Incorporated Trades of Dumfries by its Provost [Mayor] in 1587, as a shooting trophy. It was a silver tube about 15 cm long, now held by Dumfries Museum. Each member of the Trades was allowed one shot at the target, and the first to hit the bull's eye was winner – those who were still to shoot dropped out of the competition. The winner was given the honour of carrying the Siller Gun back to the burgh, and his Trade held it until the next shooting, typically seven years distant.

The poem continues with amorous pursuit and fighting between the tradesmen, now thoroughly drunk. Main describes, in one of his best verses, how:

Rushing like droves o' madden'd nowt, [cattle]
Rob's party caus'd a gen'ral rout:
Foul play or fair; kick, cuff, and clout;
Right side, or wrang,
Friends fighting friends, rampag'd about,
A drucken thrang!

Though some of the men are asleep among the bushes and along the roadside, the celebration continues. Everyone walks back to the town and they spend the evening consuming more alcohol and from time to time, fighting. The poem ends with verses in praise of King George.

There are two watercolours of the day of the Siller Gun by Thomas Stothard (1755-1834), now in the British Museum. One shows the trades gathering at the beginning of the morning, the other the shooting in progress. Both are helpfully detailed.

'The Siller Gun' must be one of the earliest detailed descriptions, in prose or verse, of a festivity. There are a few others, particularly in Scotland where the 'German peasant-brawl' was a minor literary form. In England, by comparison, folk festivity was not much written about before the nineteenth century, apart from 'The Tournament of Tottenham' (c.1420). The speaker ended by asking the members of the audience whether they would like to find any poems (or prose) dating from before 1800 which describes folk festivity or celebration in detail, and which are not from Scotland.

PP Frank Lewis

Back to the lily-of-the-valley fetes in France – stability, innovation, motivation

Cozette Griffin-Kremer

A welcome return of both Cozette as a presenter and the topic of the lily-of-the-valley in France was enjoyed by the delegates.

Cozette began by explaining the difference between cultivated and natural lily-of-the-valley.

Stability: Documentation shows that the giving of lily-of-the-valley (known as muguet in French) on May Day dates back to the 19th century.

The actress Grace Kelly had lily-of-the-valley in her wedding bouquet in the 1950s (and a little note from the reviewer: Elizabeth Bowes Lyon, later the Queen Mother also included it in hers). The President of France is traditionally presented with lily-of-the-valley, a tradition that continues today.

Innovation: The giving of lily-of-the-valley can take many forms, from a tiny sprig to incredibly elaborate bouquets, whatever the size or form they represent good luck. Members of the gypsy-traveller community often sell them. This beautiful bell-like flower is also used to raise funds for such causes as The Red Cross & French Communist Party.

Motivation: As processions take place on or around May Day motivation for embracing the continued tradition of the giving of the flower can be seen in the flower sellers & cafes especially those along the routes of any procession. However, shop keepers don't tend to like it as people aren't buying items other than food and drink.

A new aspect too was introduced to the Paris procession in 2022 & 2023 when waiters raced with trays of filled glasses. Though this seems to have been short lived as it didn't feature in 2024.

The standard of presentation of the floats in the procession vary greatly. Nine floats took part in 2024. It was good to hear of cross generational co-operation as older experienced participants shared their skills with school groups.

At the end of the procession all participants get off the floats to await the judgement & results. First prize was awarded to the Scouts Group float. However, it wasn't without controversy as it turned out this float was done by teams of parents rather than Scouts themselves! Cozette told us the winner had actually used a 3D printer rather more traditional and skilled methods used by others such as building metal frames and covering with cardboard, plastic etc. On the other hand, one could argue they were embracing change and being innovative. One wonders what other innovations we'll see in the future. I just hope this tiny flower continues to flourish and be given as a symbol of good luck.

Elaine Edwards

EXCURSIONS

National Slate Museum/ Amgueddfa Lechi Cymru at Llanberis

Copyright David Viner

The choice of the National Slate Museum as the venue for the conference's traditional afternoon visit was obvious given the relevance of its themes to the story which this museum has been presenting to its visitors for just over half a century.

Equally timely was its forthcoming closure only a few weeks after the visit for up to two years for a major enhancement, representing the most significant on-going development project within the National Museums Wales group (Amgueddfa Cymru), of which it is a part and its only venue in North Wales.

The museum professionals amongst us were especially alert to the museum's cycle of life, opening in 1972 as the North Wales Quarrying Museum, only three years after the closure of the Dinorwic Quarry and following a last-minute rescue bid locally for buildings and equipment to ensure they were not lost. It is housed in a magnificent range of courtyard buildings, the former workshops at Gilfach Ddu just outside Llanberis and dating from 1870.

There have been several Lottery-funded projects to improve and add to site interpretation and facilities since then, most notably in 1998 from which it re-emerged as the National Slate Museum. Previously a paid-for attraction with c. 90,000 visitor pa, numbers blossomed to c.150,000 pa once charges were lifted in 2021. Now the opportunity of a major redevelopment within a resetting of priorities is being firmly taken for the next stage of its role as a key component in the Wales Slate Landscape/Unesco World Heritage Site status since 2021.

Four hours were allocated and were needed, as not everybody managed to see all that was on offer. A 'quarryman's lunch' awaited our arrival, simple fare of broth, cheese and bread, in the quarryman's 'caban' which nicely sets the scene for many visitors and school groups. Following a warm welcome from Elen Roberts, Head of the Museum, and an introductory 'To Steal a Mountain' multi-media presentation in the lecture theatre, the CEO of Amgueddfa Cymru Jane Henderson introduced the overall vision for the museum and its role as a hub within the World Heritage Site offering across the region.
Demonstrations have long been a key part of the visitor offer, with the splitting of slate high on the agenda, and illuminating to see in practice. Thereafter, armed with the museum's useful site map, freedom to wander through the suggested 26 locations of the self-guided tour. That's a lot to see in and around the Workshops courtyard, even before venturing out to the wider site attractions.

The buildings once housed the industrial engineering workshops of the Quarry, which at its height employed over 3,000 men, and catered for all repair and maintenance work. As an industrial archaeology monument, it has high status with interiors and exhibits to match. Here on a grand scale are saw sheds, a foundry, a power hall, an intriguing pattern loft display/store, various forges and machine shops.

Therein lies one of the project's challenges, to retain and protect this significant heritage whilst moving forward with a wider social history, cultural heritage and community interpretation (within a wider community role) as part of an enhanced visitor experience. Plus inevitably a new round of building conservation challenges and an upgrading of the overall commercial site operation.

In terms of past growth, the museum has been here before; its late 1990s HLF-supported project included the rescue and removal of a row

of four cottages no longer fit for purpose at nos 1-4 Fron Haul in Tanygrisiau near Blaenau Ffestiniog and their reconstruction close to the workshops – all achieved thanks to the skills and time-honoured traditions of such work over many decades at St Fagans National Museum of History.

Similarly, the substantial access project to enhance visitor experience (via stairway or lift) around the largest working water wheel in the UK, which powered all workshop activities. Built locally in Caernarvon in 1870, it is over 15 metres in diameter and works continuously.

The museum forms part of the Padarn Country Park, an 800-acre site which includes other slate or slate-related attractions. So it is possible to gain some sense of the sheer scale of slate extraction even if the dramatic landscape of the quarry working itself remains at a distance. The museum has throughout been a focal point and its latest redesignation and forthcoming enhancement will develop that role still further.

The National Lottery Heritage Fund awarded a development grant of £412,565, being among eight industrial heritage projects awarded a total of £14.8m in spring 2024. This will enable the National Slate Museum to apply for a full grant of c.£9.5m from the Heritage Fund in due course. The museum is expected to be closed until 2026.

Many thanks to Dafydd Roberts, previously the Museum's long-time Head and now Hon Research Fellow at Amgueddfa Cymru, for his informative and much appreciated landscape commentary to and from the site, and a source of endless wisdom around the museum itself.

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David Viner

Walking Tour of Caernarfon

Our walking tour around the historic and beautiful town of Caernarfon was a 'game of two halves', both of which were very wet!

Quay, the start of our walking tour

Our guide was the very knowledgeable Rhys Mwyn, who presented the second lecture of the conference. The starting point for our tour, just a few steps from our hotel was Victoria Dock. Rhys took us through the history of the site; its great importance and that of the railways not least in its dual role (docks and railways) in the distribution of slate as it 'roofed the world'.

Our stops included some architecturally divisive structures, such as the one housing important archives and a toilet block that had been dedicated to Ellen Edwards, complete with a blue plague explaining her role as the 'teacher of sailors', We also took in the Black Boy pub – though only from the outside (the pub has now been renamed the Black Buoy) and what remains of the Bell Tower, previously mentioned in the introduction to the conference, as it housed the bell that signalled the nightly curfew for the

Welsh to remove themselves outside of the city walls.

We had a short visit to part of the castle where we sheltered a little from the rain. Halfway round the tour a reward was provided in the form of tea & massive cakes!

A shorter walk was led by Kate Robert. Kate was an excellent guide. Bringing all her expertise to the tour she led us towards the walls and views of the Menai Strait where she explained the changing uses of parts of the gates and walls. An example she used was that of the yacht club having adapted one 'gate' for their use. This was possible as only part of gate is listed as World Heritage status, the rest of it is listed but it had not been given World Heritage status.

Rain didn't quite 'stop play' though our group had shrunk somewhat by the end of the tour!

Elaine Edwards

Society for Folk Life Studies

Minutes of the Society's Annual General Meeting

Held via Zoom on Tuesday 24 September 2024 at 1800hrs.

Present:
The President (Steph Mastoris) and 22 members.

Apologies:
Apologies were received from Claudia Kinmonth, Lillis O Laoire, Roy Vickery, Enid Roberts, Dylan Jones, David Jenkins, Yvonne Cresswell, Judith Tulfer and Felicity McWilliams.

Minutes of last AGM:
The minutes of the 2023 AGM had been circulated. They were proposed by Steph & adopted by the meeting as a correct record.

Matters Arising: There were no matters arising.

President's Report:
Steph reported that he had now completed his three year term of office. It had concluded with a fantastic conference in Caernarvon which had seen the highest number of delegates attend for a number of years – figures were in the low 30s which was fantastic. In the last year he had helped to organise at least one if not two 'Show and Tells' with Sarah Blowen. Immediately after the Isle of Man conference we had set up the SFLS Whatsapp group which has proved very popular. It has even managed to attract members of the Folklore Society. If members are interested in joining, please send phone number to Steph. This group is doing what Steph wanted which was to be another means of communication. We could also develop some smaller online meetings. It was unfortunate that we had not managed to convene an online Council meeting this year. The role of the Council seems somewhat vague but its most important role is to be the 'eyes and ears' of the Society. They can report back on matters of interest and work that could be presented at a conference or provide content for for the Journal. Steph hoped we can revisit this with the new President.

Treasurer's Report:
Duncan had sent a written report. He shared the balance sheet which shows that the overall financial position has scarcely changed. We have had a small amount of income from editorial fees. We are covering the cost of the Journal. Subscriptions have gone up slightly which is unusual. Baring massive losses on a future conference we are in a stable position. Steph commented that our role is not to make a profit but to promote the study of Folk Life within the bounds of financial liquidity. The main takeaway from the report was that we are covering our costs – we have robust sources of income, and we have enough in reserve should we suffer a disastrous conference. The question was raised as to whether we should increase subscriptions but there was felt to be no justification for this at the present time. The President thanked Duncan.

Editor's Report:
Journal
Lillis was reported to be on his way to the US and Tiber presented the report, a written copy of which had already been circulated by Lillis. The

most recent issues had been with the name 'Kosova' which had been objected to by Taylor and Francis and which had caused a delay to issue 62.2. Tiber gave a rundown of upcoming papers in the Journal, also book reviews. The non-receipt of hard copies of the Journal had largely been resolved but we still need to be vigilant. If you suspect you have not received a copy please let Tiber know. There had also been recent issues with consistency in editing, and we need to perhaps discuss these with Emma Lockwood at the next Officers' Meeting. We need to publish an obituary for Paul Coghlan. Newspapers in Ireland had published some but we need something which has more on his involvement with the Society.

Action: Steph to discuss this with MR

Tiber concluded that every paper at Caernarvon would make a good article for the Journal and he was hopeful of good material coming in as a result.
The president thanked Lillis, Tiber and Felicity.

Newsletter
Elaine reported that the last newsletter went out slightly late, but she was very pleased with the imagery from the conference on the Isle of Man. Pictures were very good. Margaret Bennett has a new book out which had not yet been mentioned but which could be covered next time. Elaine asked for any such information to please be passed to her. The main issue with the Newsletter was that costs had gone up a lot – this was not printing but postage, especially international. Lots of people like the hard copy, but is it efficient to go on with it? Postage had gone up around £200 just since last year. In the discussion that followed it was mentioned that some organisations exist only online. Others give you an option to choose hard copy or digital. SHCG has two scales of subscription, based on whether you want hard copy or not. From this point forward should we add a tick box on membership form asking whether members just want digital format? Also it was suggested that using a lighter grade paper might be an option. The consensus was that we should try to move towards digital. There are 50 or 60 people for whom we have no email, we should put a slip in with their copy of the Journal asking for an email address.

ACTION: Elaine to liaise with Dafydd/Enid to find exactly how many recipients do not have email.

ACTION: Elaine to supply PDF to Heather to include on website

ACTION: MR to add this to Officers' agenda for further discussion

There was a reminder that any outstanding conference paper reviews should please be sent to Elaine as soon as possible. The president thanked Elaine.

Website Officer's Report:
Heather had submitted a written report. We refreshed the website in 2022. It is now stable and has settled down. If members have anything relevant to share, please let Heather know and it will be put up quickly. Statistics and monthly figures showed a lot of variation over the year. It peaked in the run up to the annual conference. We had 1632 views and 700 visitors in past year. These were felt to be more accurate than previous statistics that we had received from Google. The number of views had increased month on month. The Home Page is the most visited, followed by conference. Third is the Journal. Most traffic is coming in via Google or other search engines. On Twitter (X) the number of our followers has not fallen off as other groups have experienced, in fact it has increased. If followers look credible Heather will follow them in exchange. Heather had accidentally been suspended from Twitter over a mix up with age – maybe we need a back up account? In short, Social Media was growing, and was important for our global reach. It was suggested that we might also want an Instagram account as it would be good for showing photos of objects.

ACTION: Steph & Sarah Blowen to investigate Instagram

The president thanked Heather.

Secretary's Report:

Matthew reported that there was little to note this year. His efforts in the main had been directed towards the Minutes and Agendas for meetings. The president thanked him.

Membership Secretary's Report :
Dafydd had sent out a brief report. We now have a Privacy Policy and are also working to ensure the accuracy of the details that we hold for people. We have 68 paid up members and have introduced a separate category of Supporters, who still get information but no Journal, it's a slightly lesser level of service which we hope will tempt them to fully rejoin. We have 5 new members which is very positive. Dafydd thanked Elaine & Duncan for their support.

The president thanked Dafydd and Enid, in particular for circulating notification of the AGM.

Conference Secretary's Report:
Steph reported that Dafydd & Enid did a magnificent job at this year's conference in Caernarvon. They had sought out really apt and thought provoking papers. Everyone came away with much more of an idea of what an amazing place NW Wales is. Please pass any remaining feedback forms to Steph as we do analyse these.

Future conferences:
2025- Gloucestershire. Sarah Blowen and David Viner are the local secretaries for this. Gloucester will be the venue and the theme will be 'The Forest, the Vale and the High Blue Hills' in the words of a famous local folk song. It will focus on food and culture, covering cider, cheese etc. Gloucester is accessible from airports at London, Bristol or Birmingham. The organisers may even be able to provide airport transfers on request. Sarah asked for feedback on how the new Friday to Monday format had worked at Caernarvon. Dafydd reported that it had worked well in that it avoided travel on a Sunday which is a difficult day for some. It was possibly also less expensive for the same reason. Starting on Friday instead of Thursday was also good for academics as Friday was often a research day so more likely to be free. Gloucester is very historic in its own right but the conference will also take place in the midst of a history festival. We may be able to double badge some events so that we get more people involved. More details will follow, but we aim to get basic details out by Feb to catch the newsletter.

2026 – Clodagh and Tiernan will be the hosts at the National Museum of Ireland's Museum of Country Life. There is a Folk Life division within the museum so very appropriate. Knock (Ireland West) is the nearest airport and is very accessible from UK airports. There is not a confirmed theme as yet but the organisers are interested in the theme of food. Clodagh circulated a link to a new book published by the Royal Irish Academy. Chapters are free to download. By 2026 the museum may also have a new gallery on traditional boat building. Tiber advised that he had a contact in the USA who is looking to publish research in Folk Life and may be a good contact for a paper at the conference.

2027 – Probably we should go back to Scotland, possibly Margaret Bennett's area?

Election of Officers:
The nomination of Lillis O Laoire (now Professor Emeritus) as President was proposed by Linda Ballard and Seconded by Tiber Falzett.

The nomination of Elaine Edwards as Vice President was proposed by Steph Mastoris and seconded by Dafydd and Enid Roberts.

Both appointments were approved by the meeting, *nem con***.** All other serving officers were willing to stand again and were endorsed by the meeting.

The 2023/24 Council comprised:

Linda Ballard (2021)
Margaret Bennett (2021)
Sarah Blowen (2021)
Yvonne Cresswell (2021)
Claudia Kinmonth (2021)
Dorothy Kidd (2022)
Frank Lewis (2022)
Felicity McWilliams (2023)

Cozette Griffin-Kremer (Honorary)
Catherine Wilson (Honorary)
Peter Brears (Honorary)

Therefore, five members leave this year, and nominations had been sought for these places. The following had been nominated by Dorothy Kidd and seconded by John Burnett:

Roy Vickery
Clodagh Doyle
Tiernan Gafney
Hannah Murphy

These nominees were accepted by the meeting, *nem con*. Before closing this part of the meeting Steph stressed the hope that we can involve the Council more in our activities and improve our connectivity.

AOB
Simon Bronner drew attention to an upcoming conference in Oxford entitled 'Knowing your Vernacular.' The conference was mainly architectural but Simon wished to meet up with anyone else from the Society who may be attending.
Oxford Brookes University has a vernacular architecture programme.

Tiber reported that he was travelling to Bergen shortly to attend the launch of the Somner [?] archive.

It was asked if another Show and Tell could be set up before Xmas. Please send suggestions to Sarah Blowen.

The meeting was unanimous in expressing its thanks to Steph for his leadership over the past three years, and for all the work that he has done for the Society in that time.

END

OBITUARIES

Sadly, it here that I must report the loss of several very well-known and long-standing members of the Society. Senator Paul Coghlan, Gavin & Maureen Sprott and Ross Noble. Tributes to them will be paid in the forthcoming SFLS Journal.

I also take this opportunity to apologise for the delayed appearance of this newsletter, this too was due to a bereavement, the death of the editor's mother.

GOOD TO KNOW

'Gillian's Wood' a permanent memory of Society member Gillian Bulmer

Credit: Courtesy of the Woodland Trust

The generosity of spirit of long-standing SFLS member Gillian Bulmer (1935-2021) was well reflected in Steph Mastoris' obituary and appreciation in *Folk Life*, vol 61 no 2 October 2023, pp 201-2. Although something of a modest presence at our conferences since the late 1970s, even the briefest of conversations with Gillian would reveal a deep well of knowledge from her many interests and society memberships, including our own, and her abiding commitment to her native county of Herefordshire.

A member of the Bulmer cider-making family, she had deep roots in the county which was reflected in due course of time in the substantial family legacy which has enabled the Gillian's Wood project to come to fruition in a much-admired landscape west of the city and close to the River Wye.

Gillian's Wood is made up of two combined woodlands: Moccas Hill Wood (managed by Natural England) and Woodbury Hill Wood

(managed by the Woodland Trust). Gillian was a great supporter of woods and trees across the UK, particularly via the Woodland Trust. Moccas Hill Wood was part of the Moccas Deer Park until the 1950s, when it was sold to the Forestry Commission.

That site has since been purchased by the Woodland Trust and leased to Natural England to restore the land to wood pasture. This restoration process will take many years but already there has been an increase in wildlife, with bluebells carpeting the site in spring and tree pipits and linnets nesting in the developing scrub.

Woodbury Hill Wood was purchased by the Woodland Trust in 2023, with a £1m gift from the Bulmer family and its trust. In recognition, it has been renamed as Gillian's Wood, and enables the bringing together of just under 140 acres (at SO 35192 41394), with a plan to restore the ancient woodland including the removal of conifers and the encouragement of the native broadleaved areas to re-establish. The site occupies steep north-east facing slopes, rising from 90m to 290m at its highest point along the ridgeline and commands some extensive views.

As one of five sites selected nationally to mark the coronation in 2023, the King last year appointed this woodland and the neighbouring site a National Nature Reserve, known as Moccas Park and Gillian's Wood National Nature Reserve, creating a lasting public legacy for people and nature. All this is located within the Hereford Hills major ancient woodland concentration, and one leading characteristic is a range of ancient and veteran trees (AVT's in the jargon), along with the associated invertebrate fauna, for which the Moccas medieval deer park is of national importance.

These include oak standards, large-leaved lime pollards and ash coppice, including the 'Old Man of Moccas', an ancient oak believed to be more than 850 years old. Ancient woods are defined as those where there has been continuous woodland cover since at least 1600 AD.

The majority of the site is now open to the public. Gillian's Wood and Moccas Hill Wood will be accessible to visitors, while Moccas Park will be open for guided walks and open days throughout the year, and for those holding a visitor's permit.

Gillian's brother John Bulmer summed up the family's view that 'being able to support the Woodland Trust to buy and restore this ancient woodland in Gillian's memory feels very fitting. She was a strong advocate for woods and trees throughout her life and the designation of the National Nature Reserve in the county which she loved feels very poignant'

The Gillian Bulmer Charitable Trust (aka The Pippin Trust) was set up in 1992 and has also continued its legacy by transferring its funds in March 2020 to the Hereford Cider Museum Trust which was set up in 1973 to develop and promote what is now The Museum of Cider housed in former Bulmer's premises in the city. The museum remains a focal point for interpretation as 'a repository for the national story' of cider-making.

David Viner

Sources
Obituary by Steph Mastoris, see:
https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/04308778.2023.2195233

For access details, see:
https://www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/visiting-woods/gillians-wood/

The Museum of Cider, see:
https://www.cidermuseum.co.uk/visiting/

Communities to be Invited to Nominate UK Traditions for National Inventory

The Department for Culture, Media, and Sport (DCMS) is inviting the public to nominate traditions and practices for inclusion in the UK's first intangible cultural heritage inventory. The scheme aims to celebrate Intangible Cultural Heritage, from crafts to customs to regional festivals, as part of the UK's new commitment under the UNESCO Convention for the

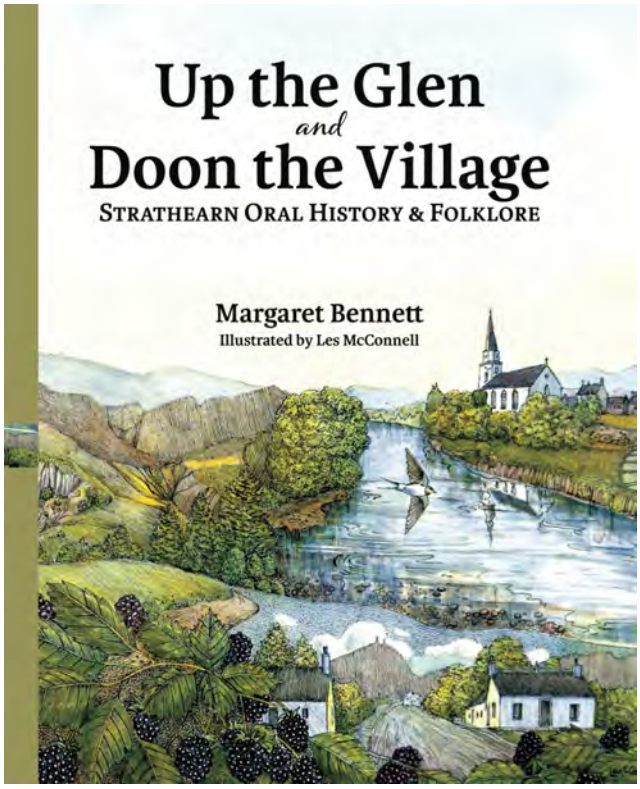
Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage. Nominations for the inventory are expected to open later this year.

See:
https://www.gov.uk/government/news/communities-to-nominate-uk-traditions-for-new-inventory?_bhlid=d902ff7228f3b6d9fdf0a8b7592083738f00a3d2

Recent publications

Up the Glen & Doon the Village: Strathearn Oral History & Folklore.

Margaret Bennett with illustrations by Lee McConnell.



Paperback, 274 pages, photos & maps. £15.99
Available at
https://www.gracenotepublications.com

Due to Lockdown rules in 2020 the rural communities of Highland Perthshire found their regular fireside chats could no longer take place. This book records a 'pandemic project' devised so that folk in the glens & villages of Strathearn could still enjoy sharing stories without breaking lockdown rules. Through these ordinary conversations we meet some extraordinary people, discover part of Scotland's history, learn about traditions that sustained a way of life & listen to stories that might otherwise have been forgotten.

Call for Reviewers!

The society's journal, *Folk Life*, carries reviews of recent publications which may be of interest to readers. These cover subjects such as traditional life, folk art, language, music, architecture, customs, beliefs, crafts, costumes, agriculture, cultural heritage and tourism, and the history and development of the study of ethnology in Great Britain and Ireland as well as further afield.

As the Reviews Editor, I would love to hear from anybody who:

a) Can recommend a book they think should be reviewed in the journal
b) Has found a book that they would like to review for the journal
c) Would like to be added to the list of potential reviewers for a particular subject area

Reviews of publications in Welsh/Gaelic/Irish and other indigenous languages of the British Isles are also very much welcomed.

All ideas and suggestions will be very gratefully received, and please do get in touch if you have any questions.

Felicity McWilliams
felicity.mcwilliams@gmail.com
Reviews Editor
Folk Life Journal of Ethnological Studies

General Data Protection Regulation

Please note: The SFLS holds information under GDPR for the purposes of communicating with Society members. If you have any queries about this please contact the membership secretary. See below*.

Membership Details

Please remember to tell our *Membership Secretaries, Dafydd and Enid Roberts, of any changes in your contact details.

You simply need to email

enid798@gmail.com with any new details.

It would be very useful if you can provide an up-to-date email address. This would enable us to avoid expensive postage costs when we need to contact Members. Our publisher, Taylor and Francis, now offers online access to Folk Life journal, and this is only available for Members where we have a valid email address.

For those of you interested in participating in our 'Folk Life folk' WhatsApp group, please provide your mobile phone number.

Your contact details will only be used to communicate with you about the Society for Folk Life Studies matters. A copy of our new privacy policy will be available on our website soon.

NB – Are you paying the correct amount of subs? The annual subscription is £25. For this you receive your peer-reviewed journals, not just one a year but two, this newsletter, access to our website, the option to join the WhatsApp group and of course the chance to attend the conference!

Take a look at ***your*** Society's website **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 may 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 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

Contributions/comments should be forwarded to the newsletter editor Elaine Edwards at melaineedwards@gmail.com *Printed & published by the Society for Folk Life Studies 2025. All opinions expressed are those of the contributors and do not represent the policies or views of the Society.*