

## ‘WORLD-CLASS’ MUSEUM ENVISAGED



On a fine, breezy Sunday afternoon in July townspeople and visitors converged on the bandstand on Castle Hill to mark the 140th birthday of the museum. Now the museum is looking ahead to the next big date – its 150th anniversary – as its target for an ambitious project to become a ‘world-class cultural heritage attraction’. It is called Project 150.

After initial research among local residents and local bodies concerned with Tenby – partly funded by money raised by the Friends – the museum received a grant of £8,000 from the European Agricultural Fund for Regional Development (through ‘Leader’ funding administered by PLANED, the Pembrokeshire Local Action Group for Enterprise and Development) in Narberth.

This was to engage consultants to do further studies and commission local architect and painter David Morgan, who is also a trustee of the museum, to draw up preliminary proposals. Though it is too early to

### FAMILIAR FACE



Artist/auctioneer  
Guy Manning (p 3)

### NEW FACE



Events & Community  
Co-ordinator  
Chloë Ashton-Milton (p 6)

estimate precisely the eventual cost, the trustees now plan to seek about £30,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund for a full options appraisal and feasibility study.

“What we want to create is a place which is contemporary in character and outlook, self-sustaining, inclusive and engaging, and relevant to its Welsh heritage, its surrounding communities and the area’s many visitors,” says trustee and former Honorary Curator Kathy Talbot. “Our aim is not only to contribute to the future of Tenby and the county but also to establish a world-class cultural heritage attraction in the town.

“The building will continue to reflect Tenby’s maritime legacy, the contribution of benefactors such as William Paxton and the antiquarians who founded the museum and whose donations form the core of its collections, the art of Charles Norris and Augustus and Gwen John, and so on, but will also provide space, with bilingual interpretation facilities, for contemporary collections, touring displays, community events and anniversaries. The museum’s long-term survival depends on increasing footfall and therefore income, and the trustees see its future as a hub both for local residents and for visitors, in a building that has been modernised without prejudice to its listed status.”



The plans include improving access by providing an additional path from Castle Hill, placing all displays, along with the gallery, on one level and expanding the internal space to allow for larger office accommodation, rooms for meetings and research, a library and a café/bar. How the building may look is shown in this sketch.

“This is a very large project and there is a lot more work to be done by the trustees to establish the options, but we will proceed with small steps,” says Kathy. “And of course the Friends, who have already given valuable support, will be a vital part of it, and the museum would very much like to have their views on the future of the museum, which can be emailed to [tenbymuseum@gmail.com](mailto:tenbymuseum@gmail.com).”

Finally, a reminder in the depths of winter of that July afternoon, when prosecco and strawberries were on offer and musical entertainment was provided by a band of players assembled by local musician Alan Argent, who has strong links with the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama.

The Friends are grateful to the Tenby branch of Tesco for generously donating both prosecco and strawberries for the event. Thanks to this support, and to the generosity of those attending, the day ended with a surplus of £500, which has gone into the Friends’ funds.



*(L to R: the bandstand; Friends’ chairman Martin White collecting donations; the band in action.)*

## ART AUCTION RAISES NEARLY £7,500

Nearly £7,500 after costs was raised at the Art Auction held in November by the Friends. There were 61 pieces on offer and among the notable artists represented were Meirion Jones, Graham Clarke, Brian Froud, Naomi Tydeman, David Bellamy, David Petersen and Wendy Yeo. Works by the late Gwilym Prichard and Peter Prendergast were also donated by private sellers.

For the first time a fully-illustrated colour catalogue, created by Carole and Martin White – respectively the Friends’ secretary and chairman – was made available on the museum’s website. The event was organised by Alec Lewis, and the proceeds will go to the conservation of paintings and historic artefacts, building maintenance, and the updating of IT equipment at the museum.

Local artist Guy Manning (*see feature below*), who has had his own exhibition at the museum, not only donated two works but found himself doing the job of auctioneer. Guy, a strong supporter of the Friends (he has donated painted postcards for sale and he was the speaker at this year’s AGM) described himself as ‘a complete novice’ in this role, though the outcome shows he clearly has talent in this field. Afterwards he said, “The most important factor about the auction – beside the fact that a lot of money was raised – was that the museum generates a kindness and a ‘can-do’ culture among its supporters. I think the artists were very generous in that the quality of the art was excellent and that most of them asked for little or no commission.”

## A ‘creative haven’ for art

*Early this year Tenby artist Guy Manning, who conducted the very successful art auction (report above) for the Friends, opened his Art Room in Upper Frog Street as a place where he can both paint and teach others how to. Museum Curator Mark Lewis went to see him at work.*



There is something comforting about walking into Guy Manning’s Art Room in Upper Frog Street. Perhaps it is the welcoming greeting from the artist, or the smell of paint fresh in the air or the myriad books piled on shelves that range from Welsh poetry to Paddington Bear, Picasso to Pissarro. Perhaps it is the continental feel about the premises – the forecourt is cobbled, there are wild roving plants in the eaves and there is a definite feel of *être détendu* – a true calming artistic oasis in a world obsessed with commerciality and rushing immediacy. Guy describes the Art Room as being about ‘a creative haven that celebrates painting and the arts’.

Guy trained at Carmarthenshire College of Art and Derbyshire College HE. He taught and lectured for 20 years. He had always wanted to open an Art Room – his long-term dream is to create an atelier – and he felt that it would be an excellent career and life choice to be able to paint, teach and sell art from one properly-run space. The confidence to chase this dream came about from the success and continued momentum of his daily postcard project (painting a 6 x 4 inch picture every day for one year!) – and Guy now only has 40 of these left out of the 365 he created.

So when, at the end of last January, a place in Upper Frog Street became available, Guy recognised it immediately as a beautiful space with potential – in fact he remembered buying art cards from a previous owner when he was a teenager working as a fruit and veg delivery boy in Tenby – so the synchronicity was perfect. He got the keys in February and opened the premises in early March, just as the weather turned unseasonably cold! Despite what could be perceived as bleak auguries, the decision to open the rooms was a wise one. The weather from there on in was calm and sunny.

At first Guy felt that art classes would be the financial backbone of the rooms, allowing him to paint. However, as time went on he was pleased to discover that the art and commissions gave him the necessary financial stability and he now runs the classes on Mondays and Tuesdays. (Anyone interested in attending should give Guy a ring. Details are at the bottom of this article.)

People love the Art Room. One patron described it perfectly as it having ‘an effortlessly authentic feel’. It is an honest working space where people can call in to see Guy preparing his own ground pigments from local soils – his landscape paintings are created from the landscape itself – and canvases are hand-stretched and prepared, or watch him creating his latest works. Or you can just call in to chat, to soak up the ambience, to be inspired. The Art Room is open to everyone and is in no way elitist. Guy is proud of the Art Room and rightly so. Tenby is lucky to have it.



(Contact details: 07903 782 515; website: [www.guymanning.co.uk](http://www.guymanning.co.uk) )

## CRAFTS AND POSERS

*Locally hand-loomed scarves and cushions, natural soaps, original cards and prints, vintage linens from Sweden, environment-friendly plastic-free items, hand-made jewellery, bottle lamp bases, handmade dolls, cards and decorations...*

*These were some of the goods on sale at 18 stalls at the **Craft and Vintage Fayre** organised by the Friends at the De Valence in November, raising more than £240. “A superb variety of quality products,” was the opinion of Friends’ treasurer, Janet Lewis. In the previous month the Friends’ annual general knowledge **Quiz Night**, held at Tenby Bowling Club (which generously made its premises free of charge), raised over £200. The questions were drawn up by Ian Nicholls, one of the Friends, and the results were compiled by his wife Joan. Nearly a dozen teams, mostly of four people each, took part, and the winning one generously returned its prize to the Friends.*

*“There are too many to name, but a big ‘thank you’ to all who helped and took part,” says Janet.*

## Musician's art show a sell-out



Known to his pop music fans as Nicky Wire, Nicholas Jones has long had a less well-known side talent as an artist. This was brought into the open in the autumn with an exhibition at the museum, his début solo art show. And it was a sell-out – the first in the gallery's history – with visitors coming from as far afield as Switzerland, Austria and even Japan.

Nicky, who is the lyricist and bass player of Wales's renowned band the Manic Street Preachers, has a flat in Tenby and is a frequent visitor to the museum, and the exhibition, titled *Paintings and Polaroids*, came about at the invitation of Curator Mark Lewis, who knew about Nicky's interest in art and Polaroid photographs. At the official opening night, where Manic's lead singer and guitarist James Dean Bradfield performed two of the band's tracks, over half of the works on show were sold and by the end of the week all 34 had gone. Nicky also donated a piece to the museum, where it is on display.

Nicky described the works as 'mini tributes to people and places that have given me comfort and inspiration over the years'. They were of mixed media, involving the use variously of foil, superglue, tape (gaffa, masking and Sellotape), nail varnish, glitter and even old-fashioned paint. They also made wide use of Polaroid photos. "I grew up obsessed by Polaroids – their beauty and simplicity, the way they catch the accidental moment, their initial vivid colour and eventual sad fade," he said.

Mark, who admits to being 'a huge Manics fan', says, "The Manics are arguably the most successful Welsh band ever and they have a wide following. I feel the exhibition helped to remove the 'elitist' stigma attached to art galleries and brought a new audience to the museum.

"Nicky is such a nice guy – modest and self-effacing while also hugely influential – and the publicity brought Tenby Museum into a wider world. Every fan wanted a piece of the art – I myself bought one – and he generously kept the prices down. I hope to get Nicky to show his work here again in a couple of years."

*The photo shows (L to R) Nicky Wire, Mark Lewis and James Dean Bradfield at the opening.*

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*Having started the year with just over £7,800 in the bank, the Friends ended 2018 with over £16,000. About £2,800 came from subscriptions and the 100 Club, the rest from energetic fund-raising – including the Art Auction, the Craft and Vintage Fayre and the Quiz Night, already mentioned. The Friends wish to record their deep gratitude to all who volunteered help during the year, and particularly to: Guy Manning, who in addition to contributing his own work to the art auction proved to be a very effective auctioneer; Ian and Joan Nicholls, who once again organised the quiz; all who participated in and helped run the Craft Fayre; and the Tenby ‘Soupermen’ who supported the museum.*

*During the year the Friends answered a request from the museum for £2,000 to re-catalogue and conserve the Lyons shell collection (matching funding from a Jonathan Ruffer Curatorial grant), and contributed to the cost of the 140th anniversary celebrations. The museum’s ‘wish list’ to the Friends for 2019 includes support for a display to mark the 75th anniversary of D-Day, the development of a ‘creative corner’ in the Victorian shed next to the museum where artists will be able to work, and improved lighting on the approach to the museum.*

## **WITH A SONG IN HER HEART**

Singer and former cruise ship entertainments manager Chloë Ashton-Milton has joined the museum for a year as its Events and Community Co-ordinator. The post has been funded by the county council’s Enhancing Pembrokeshire Fund.

Originally from Portsmouth, Chloë spent four years in Cyprus while growing up and began her musical career singing in hotels and wedding venues on the island. She subsequently became part of a production in Mallorca of the musical *Mamma Mia*, then performed impersonation tributes to the pop star Taylor Swift, who has a big following among children, for Thompson family resorts in Portugal, before moving to cruise ships as an entertainments manager.

“During my travels I met my fiancé Jamie Williams, who is from Tenby – his family run ‘Welsh Sweets and Treats’ in St Georges Street,” says Chloë. “I had never been to Wales but he kept telling me what a beautiful place it was and once I set foot here I fell in love with it. After a period touring Britain with a band called Casual Affair, as well as solo gigs, a chance arose to provide maternity cover at Bluestone as an entertainments and events manager.

“I ended up staying there for a year and a half, and then I continued to perform in my band, as well as presenting my own day-time show on the local radio station, Herald Radio.”

Chloë says she was very excited when the museum post came up because she is passionate about working with community organisations. She is already having an impact, with a Christmas creative workshop aimed at families and community organisations that she intends to be the first of many; a 2019 calendar of events; community plans; and preparations for a newsletter for volunteers.

# DIARY 2019

8 February

## Murder Mystery evening

at The Giltar. Tickets £25, including two-course meal

## Art Exhibitions

6 – 26 January

### Unlimited Possibilities

A Pembrokeshire Junior School and Community Group Exhibition

2 February – 2 March

### Pamela Burns and David Field

9 March – 7 April

### Paintings of Tenby from the collection of Janet Regemortel

12 April – 19 May

### Olivia Argent

24 May – 30 June

### Anna Warchus (ceramics)

5 July – 18 Aug

### Pamela Scott Wilkie

23 Aug – 6 October

*(to be confirmed)*

11 October – 16 November

### John Uzzell Edwards retrospective

25 November – 20 December

### U-Boats Around Wales during WWI

an exhibition in conjunction with the Royal Commission, Bangor University and the Nautical Archaeology Society

Other exhibitions and displays to include:

### D-Day: A 75th Anniversary Exhibition

### Wonders of the Natural World

a display of some of the more 'interesting' objects from the museum's natural history collections

### Year of Discovery

a series of panels exploring smaller aspects and stories of Tenby's history

## FRIENDS!

Comments and suggestions are always welcome, whether about the museum, the Friends themselves, or this newsletter. Please email them to [friendsoftenby@btinternet.com](mailto:friendsoftenby@btinternet.com). And keep up-to-date by visiting the museum's website, [www.tenbymuseum.org.uk](http://www.tenbymuseum.org.uk), or our Facebook page.

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