



Newsletter for the Friends

July 2020

Dear Friends

As Arkwright might have said at the end of *Open All Hours*, "It's been a funny old year."

We locked-down on the 14th March, the same day that Sian McGill's lovely exhibition *Into The Blue* was to be officially opened, and have remained closed since. While some things naturally had to be put on hold, we have not been idle in these times and have lots to report on projects and progress, which we thought you might be interested to hear about. I apologise that this newsletter is not the all-singing-all-dancing publication that you would normally get from the Friends' committee.



Pembrokeshire Coast

So where to start?

When lockdown first hit there was a palpable sense of the uncertain and obvious concern of loss of trade. Mark managed to acquire supportive grants via Pembrokeshire County Council (funded through the Welsh Government) and project grants via the Welsh Federation of Museums (including remote CCTV for building security and the Curator's wage for July to September), and Kathy obtained a Heritage Lottery Fund grant (which allowed us to take our Museum Assistant Eloise off furlough in July as well as acquire data loggers for collections care). Between the two of us we have been applying to numerous eligible funding streams for additional project support and will continue to do this as time goes on. At present we are awaiting the outcomes of applications to the HEF and the Julian and Hans Rauling Trust. Of our paid staff, Mark was the only one not furloughed but this scheme has been very useful to assist us retain our staff and have 80% of their wages covered.

Lockdown projects

Mark, whilst working from home, has been active in promoting the museum in a variety of ways. The social media programme began with a series of quizzes and then moved towards a project – Museum of Memories – that has been recognised by the Museums Association and the Welsh Federation of Museums as a way of responsibly collecting during the pandemic. This project invited the public to record their time and experiences through art,

words, diaries, newspaper articles and photographs and will form the background of a display when the museum can reopen. We have had some wonderful works submitted including a journal and two amazing papier mâché sculptures from a Cardiff-based artist as well as art works promised and we will run this display in conjunction with Artisan Avenue, a Tenby-based creative group run by artists Anna Waters and Tom Sloan.

Poetry

Mark also submitted a poem to the Love the Words Annual Poetry Competition, which was judged by Dylan Thomas' granddaughter Hannah Ellis and poet Mab Jones. The theme was on hope and Mark's work was selected in the published top 30 works from over 200 entries. A link to the free publication can be found here:

<https://www.discoverdylanthomas.com/love-the-words-2020-competition-results-and-judges-comments>

Hope

Each night I hope
It had seemed hidden for some time
Behind curtains and banners
And headlines.
But
It moved
In dances and applause.
In cards and telephone calls.
It breathed between neighbours
And friends and mothers.
It spoke in the laughter of children.
It held the hand of those alone

And sang the songs
Of those who had no voice.
It came in sunlight and in flowers.
It worked the wards and corridors.
It turned a smile upon us
When we held our heads down.
It raised the roof
In shooting stars and magic moons.
It smiled behind masks.
It waited, patient, still.
Be patient, it said, wait.
I am here. I am waiting.
I am ready.

Local artist Tom Sloan has also created three wonderful works of art based on the poem, which we are hoping will go into the post-lockdown display along with the poem.

Museum From Home

Since then Mark has been running, on the museum Facebook page, a project entitled #MuseumFromHome, which posts daily objects from the museum collection and on 14 July this celebrated its 100th post! It is on-going so do have a look if you get the chance. This project featured in an article written that was published in the online national Museums Journal – link here:

https://www.museumsassociation.org/museums-journal/comment/if-you-cant-come-to-us-w-e-w-i-l-l-c-o-m-e-t-o-y-o-u?utm_campaign=1769451_01072020%20MA%20newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_source=Museums%20Association&dm_i=2VBX,11XBF,5YE9MF,40W5S,1



The 100th post, a video: *Tenby – The Growth of Tourism*

This project has proved hugely popular and has not only kept the museum in the public consciousness but has also increased our followers on Facebook and been a useful fundraiser, raising over £600 so far through donations.

Things to listen to

Mark has also been working on a series of podcasts. The first podcast was an interview with John Ewart of PLANED, which talked about the museum during lockdown (link here should you care to listen: <https://planed.libsyn.com/tenby-museum-during-the-covid-19-restrictions>)



Drawing by Alec Lewis

The second podcast recorded (but not yet broadcast) was on the artist Augustus John and is the first of two that Mark has recorded for PLANED as part of their Innovative Heritage project. The second podcast as part of this project will examine the growth of Tenby as a seaside resort. A podcast recorded specifically for Tenby Museum was *For As Long As Forever Is*, a podcast written by Mark on the life of Dylan Thomas which Dylan Thomas 100 (the official Twitter feed for the family and estate of Dylan stated that it was ‘an excellent podcast’.) You can hear that podcast here should you so desire:

<http://www.tenbymuseum.org.uk/dylan-thomas-podcast/>

More podcasts are being worked on for the future and these are excellent ways of looking at objects and local heritage in a remotely accessible way.

Kathy was also interviewed on Radio 4's *Front Row* programme to talk about the Heritage Lottery Fund so the museum has had some excellent coverage to show that we can remain active and relevant in these most awkward of times.

Kathy, Eloise and Mark have also attended various on-line conferences via Zoom and webinars, and subjects covered have included post-lockdown, the new normal, collections

care, Crowdfunding, Black Lives Matter issues and pre-booked ticket schemes among others. The new normal indeed – it has been odd but lockdown has opened up these wonderful opportunities to attend conferences that normally are price or geographically restricted. The sector has adjusted excellently to providing resources and networking opportunities and from these Mark contacted two museums in Scotland and England to get advice on on-line surveys and pre-booked ticket schemes. We are, it seems, all in this together and the Welsh Federation of Museums has been a brilliant advocate for museums in Wales during this pandemic.

Two new Trustees

We have also recruited two new trustees.

Phil Okwedy is well known in the local community as a storyteller. Formerly a teacher, Phil has excellent links with the local schools and over the next couple of months it is hoped that he will be working with the museum curator on creating home schooling projects through various media.



The second is Dr Graham Oliver, an Honorary Research Fellow (Natural Sciences) at the National Museum of Wales where his expertise is focused on the taxonomy and systematics of molluscs, primarily bivalves. He has been working with the museum over the past couple of years on the Lyons shell project, researching deeper into this 19th-century conchological collection.

As part of the Black Lives Matter movement, museums have been called to action to identify areas of their collections or working procedures where they could improve. Mark is working with Span Arts in Narberth on a series of online projects due to commence in October on this issue and is hoping to involve both Phil Okwedy and poet Eric Charles Ngalle in this. It is very much a work in progress. We have also identified areas of the collection and Tenby's history that benefitted from slavery. It is an important issue and one we cannot ignore.

Art shows in the gallery

The Art Shows for 2020 have all been postponed until 2021 and a new schedule will be posted shortly on the website. Sian's exhibition is available on Youtube and the museum website from a film put together by Mark at home (link here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wMef3FQiq7g&t=43s>)

A major exhibition for 2022 is being planned on the natural history collection which will involve natural history specimens, books and works of art from our collection and those of other museums, and work has commenced on sourcing potential loan material from further institutions. There will also be a series of talks associated with this extended project so watch this space!

What else is going on?

Other work continues: Eloise continues to undertake cataloguing of the collections on MODES as well as undertaking collections care within the museum. Mark continues to be active in several areas including mentoring other museums and also working on rewriting the *Story of Tenby Gallery* for a renewal, as well as podcasts, Facebook posts, grant applications (and Kathy remains busy with these also) and other associated projects. Kathy continues to work on the forthcoming Options Appraisal. Neil, John, Kathy, Eloise and Mark make regular trips into the museum to ensure that all is safe. Indeed we are busier than ever to keep the museum that we all love so much alive and kicking.

When can the museum reopen?

With regards to reopening – this is such a tricky situation. We have been looking at ways we can safely reopen whilst making the visitor experience welcoming and enjoyable. Risk assessments have been carried out and legislation adhered to. And the decision has been made to remain closed for the foreseeable future, probably until early 2021 (date to be confirmed). We are also awaiting the replacement of the roof through Pembrokeshire County Council so reopening before that is completed and a deep clean can be organised is not a viable prospect; the roof replacement is scheduled at present for September once the school holidays and pedestrianisation scheme have come to an end.

And so we work towards the day when we can welcome you all back. In the meantime your continual support is, as always, fundamental to the work that we do. And we thank you for it. Stay safe and well, and we truly hope to welcome you all back in the not-too-distant future.



Mark Lewis
Curator