

National Museum Wales Volunteer Newsletter

# takepart

Winter 2018

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museum  
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# Introduction

## Croeso! Welcome!

We would like to kick off 2018 with a big thank you to all our volunteers for their hard work over the last year. This edition of our Take Part newsletter reflects on some of the great volunteering that has been taking place across Amgueddfa Cymru.

Our feature is on **Who Decides**, a brilliant new exhibition in National Museum Cardiff which has been curated in partnership with The Wallich and volunteer curators who have experienced homelessness. If you have a chance, it's definitely worth paying a visit! This edition also travels around Wales to bring you exciting stories from the National Wool Museum and the National Slate Museum.

We hope you enjoy reading and have a great start to 2018!

## New Baby!

**WELCOME BACK** to Ffion Davies!

We are excited to say a massive congratulations to Ffion and Ryland on the birth of Llewelyn Ifor Stenner. Ffion has been on maternity leave since June 2017 and has just returned to the Volunteering Department as Senior Volunteer Coordinator. Whilst Ffion has been away, Althea Cooley and Haf Neale have been in place as Volunteer Coordinators.



As you can see from the photo, Llewelyn has already been busy visiting our sites and exhibitions!

If you have any queries please contact the Volunteering Department on [volunteering@musuemwales.ac.uk](mailto:volunteering@musuemwales.ac.uk)

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## Contributions by:

Grace Todd, Senior Learning Officer  
NMC 

Dafydd Wiliam, Principal Curator of  
Historic Buildings SP 

Marjorie Sheen, St Fagans Craft Club  
Volunteer 

Elen Roberts, Learning Manager, NSM 

Kate Evans, Administrative Officer,  
National Wool Museum 

Mared Maggs, Events Manager 

Edited by Althea Cooley, Volunteer  
Co-ordinator





## Feature Story

# Who Decides? Making Connections with Contemporary Art

By Grace Todd, Senior Learning Officer

Museum collections belong to everyone but only a small number of people are empowered to make decisions about what is collected and how it is displayed. Is this fair? To help address this, we invited a group from The Wallich, a charity supporting homeless people in Wales, to select and interpret their own exhibition of modern and contemporary art.

Volunteer curators have taken part in every aspect of putting on the large scale exhibition Who Decides, from selecting the works, to painting the walls, to developing marketing material, to planning events and activities.

At the start of the project most of the 10 volunteer curators hadn't visited the art galleries at National Museum Cardiff but over 6 months they have become a part of it and helped to develop the whole exhibition, volunteering around 1000 hours in workshops and activities:

- Selecting from 600 paintings, drawings, sculptures, films, prints, and installations that the Museum and the Derek Williams Trust have acquired over the last 10 years
- Writing 6581 words of gallery text and interpretation
- Drinking over 100 cups of tea!





*This exhibition celebrates 10 years of contemporary collecting and the 25 year partnership between Amgueddfa Cymru and the Derek Williams Trust.*

This is what the curators from the Wallich had to say about their experience:

"Hi I'm Mareth, I have been so happy to be involved in the 'Who Decides' Exhibition! It has been great to work as a team and find art works which mean so much to us. Art is for everyone. We have all decided on the works of art that mean something (lots) to us but we are inviting you to make decisions too." **Mareth, Wallich Volunteer**

"I wouldn't have come in to the museum before but now I'm here and I've loved it all. I'm not afraid to come here by myself, I'm not daunted anymore" **Mike, Wallich Volunteer**

"Going behind the scenes and seeing how an exhibition is made has been really exciting. We've grown it from some pictures on a screen to an exhibition, all the art we've chosen is up" **Colin, Wallich Volunteer**

"I've loved learning some of the stories behind the art but also adding my stories to the labels" **Michelle, Wallich Volunteer**

The idea that everyone's opinion matters is integral to the exhibition. The Wallich Curators have invited visitors to share their own opinion by creating a means for them to vote for new works to be displayed in the exhibition, and postcards with questions for visitors to answer.



## Behind the Scenes

# Llys Llywelyn

By Dafydd Wiliam, Principal Curator of Historic Buildings

Llys Llywelyn is St Fagans' latest development and is a recreation of a medieval Royal court - one of several owned by Llywelyn the Great during the 13th century. It is based on the remains of his court at Rhosyr in Anglesey, which was identified through archaeological investigation. As the remains of the original stand no more than 1m in height, the appearance of our Llys has also been informed by analysis of other surviving same-period buildings, as well as documentary research by academics from several Welsh institutions.

The roof of the main hall is supported by a fine timber-frame which will be decorated with vibrant patterns and colours reminiscent of those seen at the 13th century Penmon priory in Anglesey. Primary school children in Anglesey have designed wall hangings for the building depicting historic stories, and these have been collated by the artist Cefyn Burgess, and crafted by the Embroiderers' Guild of Môn and Arfon.

The main buildings have been thatched with straw, but one small building will be roofed with shingles. These are similar to roofing slates but are made from oak logs using iron tools. Volunteers have been involved in making Shingles at St Fagans over the last few months, including community groups, event volunteers and staff volunteers!



## Behind the Scenes

# Making costumes for Llys Llywelyn

By Marjorie Sheen, Craft Club Volunteer

Craft club was formed about two years ago, initially to make rag rugs for some of the houses. We loved learning this new skill, and enjoyed the search for authentic materials to cut up and use in the procedure. When we had made enough rugs to furnish all the cottages that needed them, we moved on to making costumes for the re-enactment activities planned for Llys Llywelyn.

We wanted to ensure authenticity, and began by hand sewing everything. However, we needed to launder the completed tunics, aprons and headwear to see how much they would shrink in the wash, as they were all made of natural wool, linen or cotton.

When we washed the first tunic we realised that medieval sewing techniques didn't get along with modern washing machines, and the hand stitching we'd been so careful to use had come apart at the seams and hems. As a result we now use a sewing machine for these, but still hand-sew the edgings and facings.

We meet on the same day of every month, and really enjoy getting together. It is a calm oasis of peace in our hectic world, where we can sit and chat and sew and let the world pass us by. We have made new friends, learned new skills, and re-learned old ones, and all this while doing something productive that will hopefully be useful for years to come.





## Meet the Staff: **Haf Neale** Volunteer Coordinator

### **Why did you want to be a Volunteer Coordinator for Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales?**

I studied Fine Art in University and graduated in 2008. After I graduated, I struggled to figure out what to do next and I bounced from job to job. I found after a while I really wanted to do something I enjoyed!

I applied to do work experience at the Glamorgan Archives, I spent 1 day a week in each department. I absolutely loved the day I spent in the conservation department. When the work experience came to an end I was really lucky to continue as a conservation volunteer. I cleaned documents, repaired tears in documents and I was even allowed to re-bind an old ledger.

I loved volunteering and it helped me find a path into work I enjoy. When the opportunity came up to work with Volunteers here at the National Museum of Wales, I jumped at the chance to help people into volunteering.

### **What have you learnt in your role as Volunteer Coordinator?**

I've always been aware that people volunteer for all different kinds of reasons and since starting in this post I've seen people from all walks of life give their time willingly for reasons I have been truly inspired by. It's wonderful to see volunteers getting as much out of volunteering as we do from working with them.

In 2017, Volunteers gave Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales 24,834 hours of their time. The museum would look very different without the time investment that volunteers give.

### **What is your favourite thing about working in Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum of Wales?**

I've really enjoyed meeting lots of volunteers and going behind the scenes to see all the wonderful things that we have in the collection.





## Meet the Volunteers:

# Owen

### Skills Development Placement, National Slate Museum

By Elen Roberts, Learning Manager

Owen is a young person with Autism who started volunteering at the National Slate Museum in April 2017. Through his volunteering, he has grown in confidence in many ways. He has become familiar with the staff and systems, developed a practical knowledge of Health and Safety in the workplace, and most importantly enjoyed his experience!

'I like to see the difference after cleaning Una's brasses – seeing them going from dirty to gleaming. I've enjoyed learning how to use the polish properly.'

Owen has been involved in all kinds of activities at the Museum – preparing Una the steam engine for the public, painting, degreasing and oiling machinery from the collection. In addition to the value the work Owen has undertaken adds to the Museum, staff have grown to understand Owen and grown in confidence through working with him, gaining more awareness of aspects of Autism.



## Meet the Volunteers:

# Christmas Volunteering at National Wool Museum, Drefach

By Kate Evans, Administrative Officer, National Wool Museum

The National Wool Museum Volunteer Christmas Get Together took place on the 6th of December. Everyone enjoyed the fantastic festive talk on The Origins of The Christmas Card by Steph Mastoris followed by a beautiful afternoon tea made by the Café. Thanks to all the volunteers, Steph Mastoris and Café.

"Thank you for the interesting Christmas card talk and party food. Please say 'diolch arbennig' to the caterers. Everyone at the museum is always so friendly and welcoming to us" **Margaret, Volunteer**

"Very interesting talk, lovely refreshments, thank you. Merry Christmas to all!" **Chris, Volunteer**

The National Wool Museum Youth Forum (partnered by Ysgol Emlyn and Menter Gorllewin Sir Gar) welcomed 65 Key Stage 2 pupils from two primary schools recently as part of the Kids in Museums Take Over Day. Eight members of the Youth Forum led the fun day of activities which included creating glittery pinecone garlands; a giant paper Christmas Tree; Christmas cards and pinecone Christmas characters. The day was not complete without some festive music to get everyone in the mood for Christmas! All the Christmas cards were entered into the Christmas Decoration Competition, and the Youth Forum announced the winners at the Christmas Carol Concert where all decorations were displayed.

Thanks to the Youth Forum for leading the workshops and to all Museum volunteers for a fantastic year.

# Volunteers in Action



## Event Volunteering at St Fagans

By Mared Maggs, Events Manager

St Fagans' 2017 major events programme included the annual Food Festival in September and saw the return of the Halloween and Christmas Nights events after a five year hiatus.

These events are important fixtures in the Museum's calendar with important outcomes including attracting a new audience, generating income and interpreting our collections in new and innovative ways. These events have a significant impact on the site and its resources so the assistance of our Volunteers is absolutely vital to ensuring a smooth and high quality delivery.

This year our Volunteers helped us with tasks such as decorating the site ahead of each event, greeting and assisting our visitors with wayfinding, gathering evaluation, crowd control, assisting with craft activities and of course blasting out a carol or two at our final event of the year!

It has been a pleasure working with Volunteers for each of the events and in particular getting to know individuals as they return each time. We hope that those that come along get as much out of their experience as we have enjoyment of working with them.



# News and updates

- Since our last edition of Take Part, the new redeveloped buildings at St Fagans have opened! It's brilliant to see the buildings in use – come and take a look if you haven't already! The new galleries will open in October 2018. We would love to share our excitement with you at the grand opening.
- We will be looking for Explore Volunteers at St Fagans for the new galleries to help improve visitor experience and bring the collections to life! Keep an eye on our website for more information!
- Keep an eye out for exciting training opportunities that we are developing for volunteers this year including public engagement training and a new training programme for events!
- We are moving! Tŷ Gwyrdd at St Fagans will be the new Volunteer hub and Volunteering Department offices. This will provide volunteering opportunities for a new community garden as well as a designated space for volunteers onsite at St Fagans – we can't wait!



If you have an interest in volunteering with Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales have a look on our website or contact our Volunteer Co-ordinator to find out about availability and new opportunities. We openly advertise all volunteering roles to make it as fair as possible.

If you have any questions about anything featured in this newsletter please contact the Volunteer Co-ordinator on **[volunteering@museumwales.ac.uk](mailto:volunteering@museumwales.ac.uk)** or **(029) 2057 3419**

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