An impressionist painting of a coastal scene. In the foreground, a person stands on a rocky shore, looking out at the sea. The water is rendered with vibrant, textured brushstrokes in shades of blue and green. In the distance, a small boat is visible on the horizon. The sky is a mix of light blues and whites, suggesting a bright, slightly hazy day. The overall style is characteristic of Impressionism, with visible brushwork and a focus on light and color.

An Impressionist in Wales

Exploring art, science and Victorian Wales

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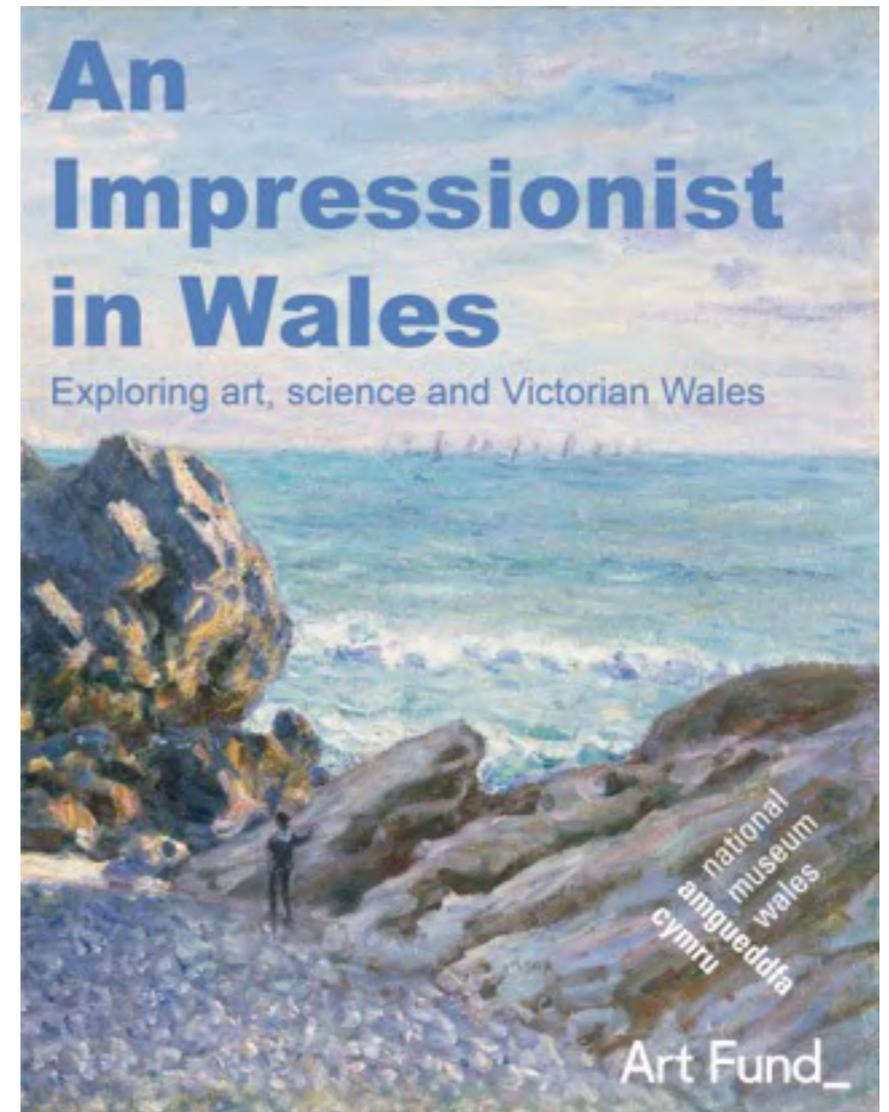
About This Resource

This resource is aimed at children aged 7-11.

It can be used during a trip to the museum, or in the classroom.

In this book you will:

- Learn about a famous group of artists - the Impressionists
- Discover the science of light and colour
- Find out what Cardiff and Wales were like during the late Victorian period
- Explore the collections of National Museum Wales



Who Were the Impressionists?

A group of artists working in France from the 1860s became known as the 'Impressionists'. This name came from a painting by Claude Monet called *Impression, Sunrise*.

The Impressionists were interested in painting real people and places. They often painted outside where they felt they could be closer to nature and natural light. By painting quickly they were aiming to show the changing effect of light and weather.

People who didn't like the work of the Impressionists thought that these artists could not paint properly. They thought by only creating impressions, the paintings were not finished. This is why they used the word 'Impressionist' to insult this style of art.

Today, the Impressionists are among the most popular artists in the history of art.

Waterlilies by Claude Monet

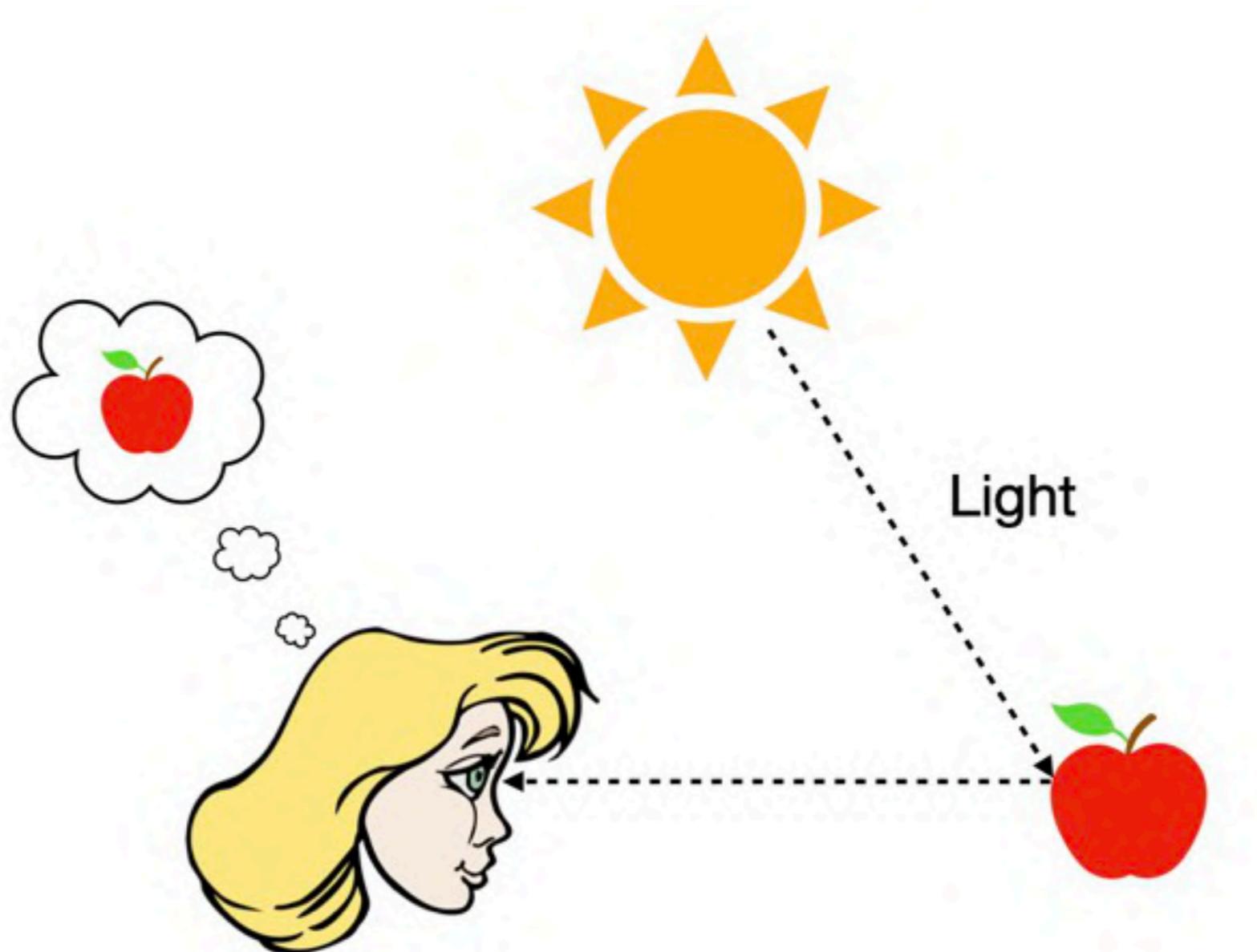


Light

Light is a form of energy. It is very fast and moves in a straight line.

A source is something that makes light. How many light sources can you name?

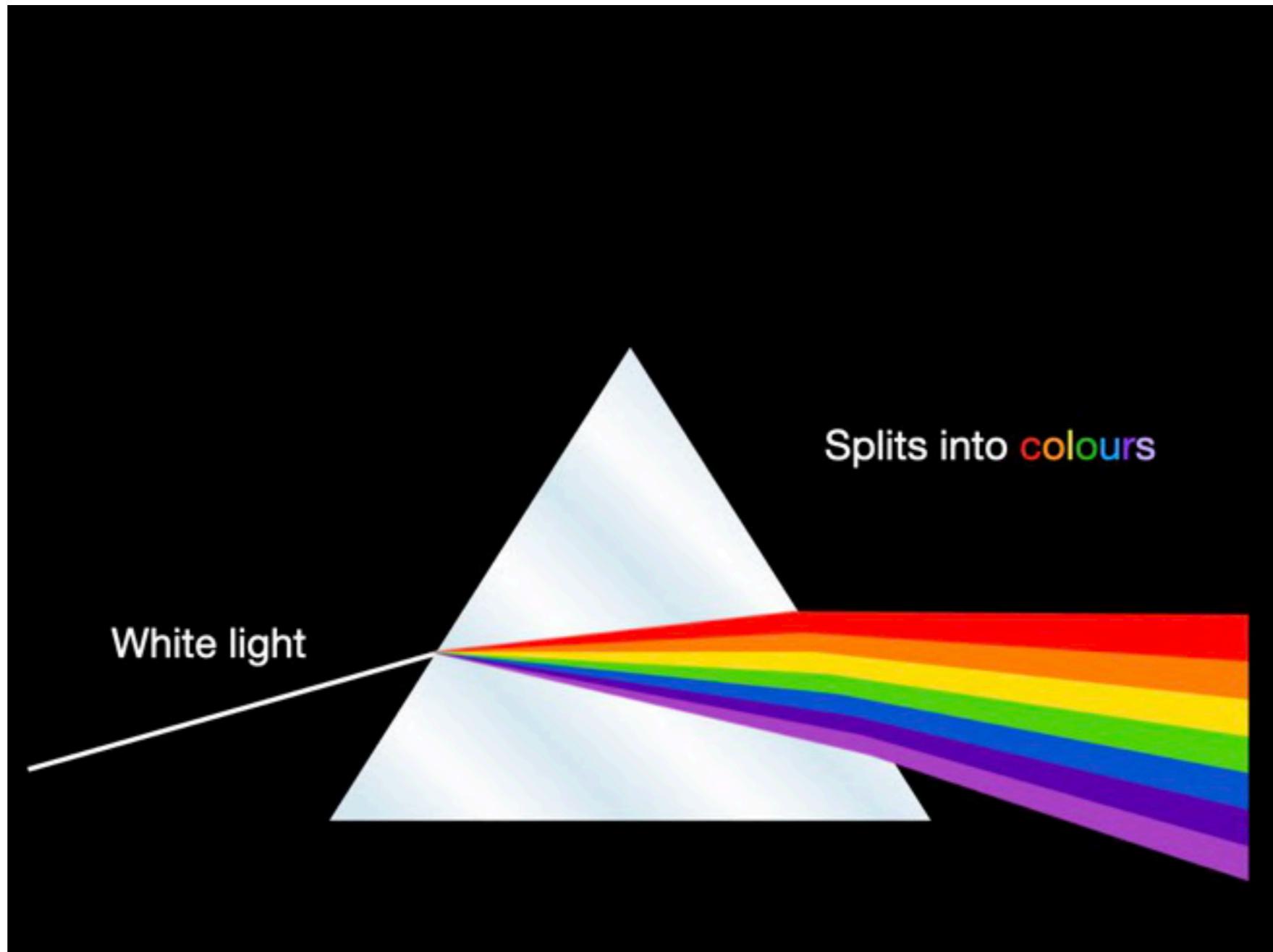
We see an object when light travels from the source, hits the object, and is reflected into our eyes.



Light

Although it looks white, light is actually made up of all the colours in the rainbow.

To show this, we can use a prism to separate the colours.





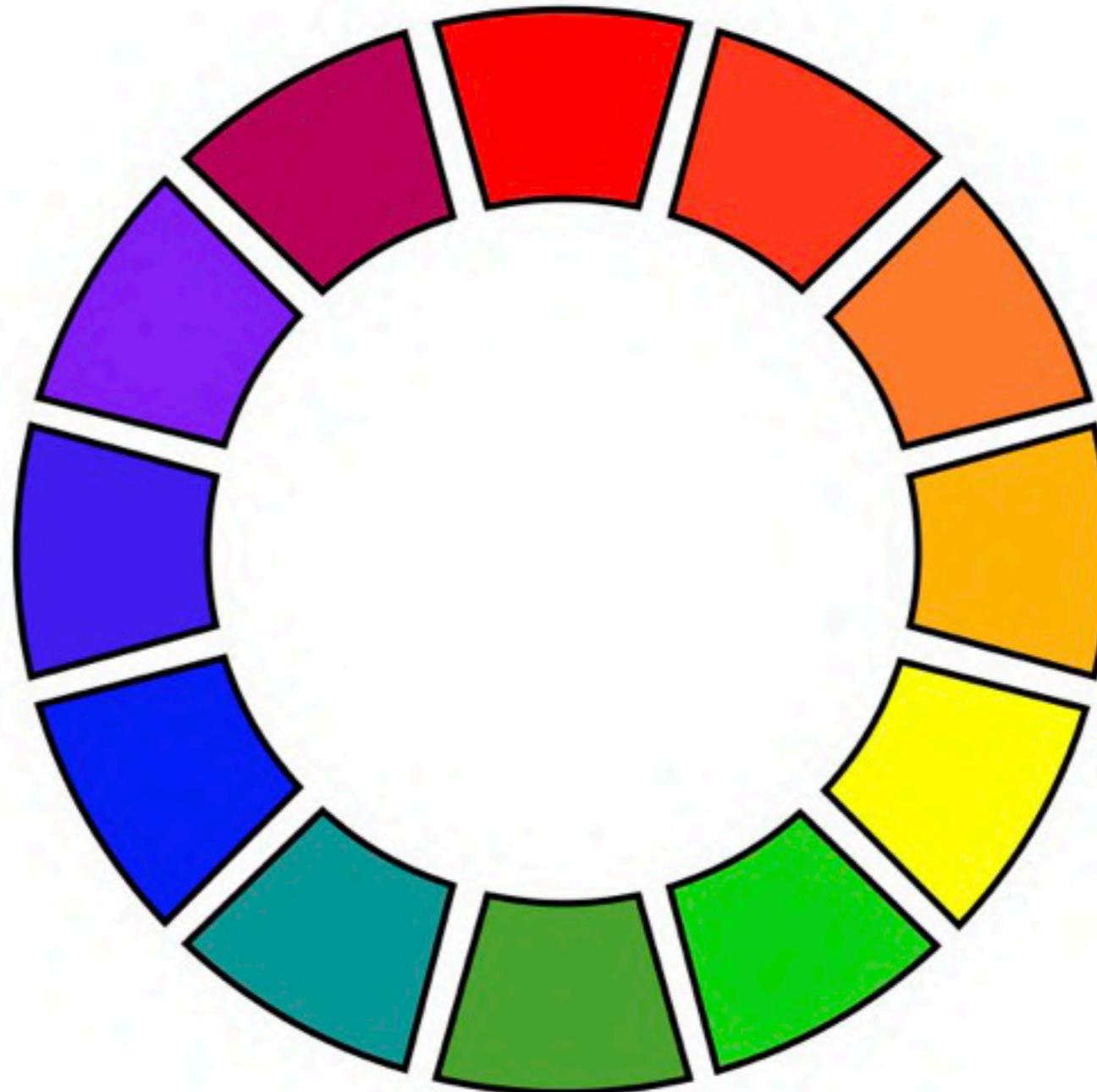
Colour

Artists use colour to capture feelings and emotions in their work.

The Colour Wheel

Some artists use the colour wheel to work out how to use colour.

Complementary colours were important to the Impressionists.



Complementary Colours



Complementary colours are pairs of colours that contrast with each other. When placed side-by-side they make each other look brighter.

The Impressionists were the first to note that shadows are not black but the complementary colour of the light that throws them.

Yellow sunlight throws a violet shadow. This can be seen in Monet's painting of Rouen Cathedral.

Rouen Cathedral: Setting Sun by Claude Monet (1892-94)

National Museum Cardiff Has One of Europe's Best Collections of Impressionist Art.



San Giorgio Maggiore, Twilight by Claude Monet



If you are visiting to see specific paintings, please check with the museum beforehand to make sure they will be on display. Galleries do change; for example, works of art are sometimes removed from display for various reasons.

Most of the Impressionist paintings were given to the Museum by two sisters from mid-Wales called Gwendoline and Margaret Davies.

They collected the artworks using money left to them by their grandfather David Davies who made a fortune in the coal industry in Victorian South Wales.



Gwendoline and Margaret Davies



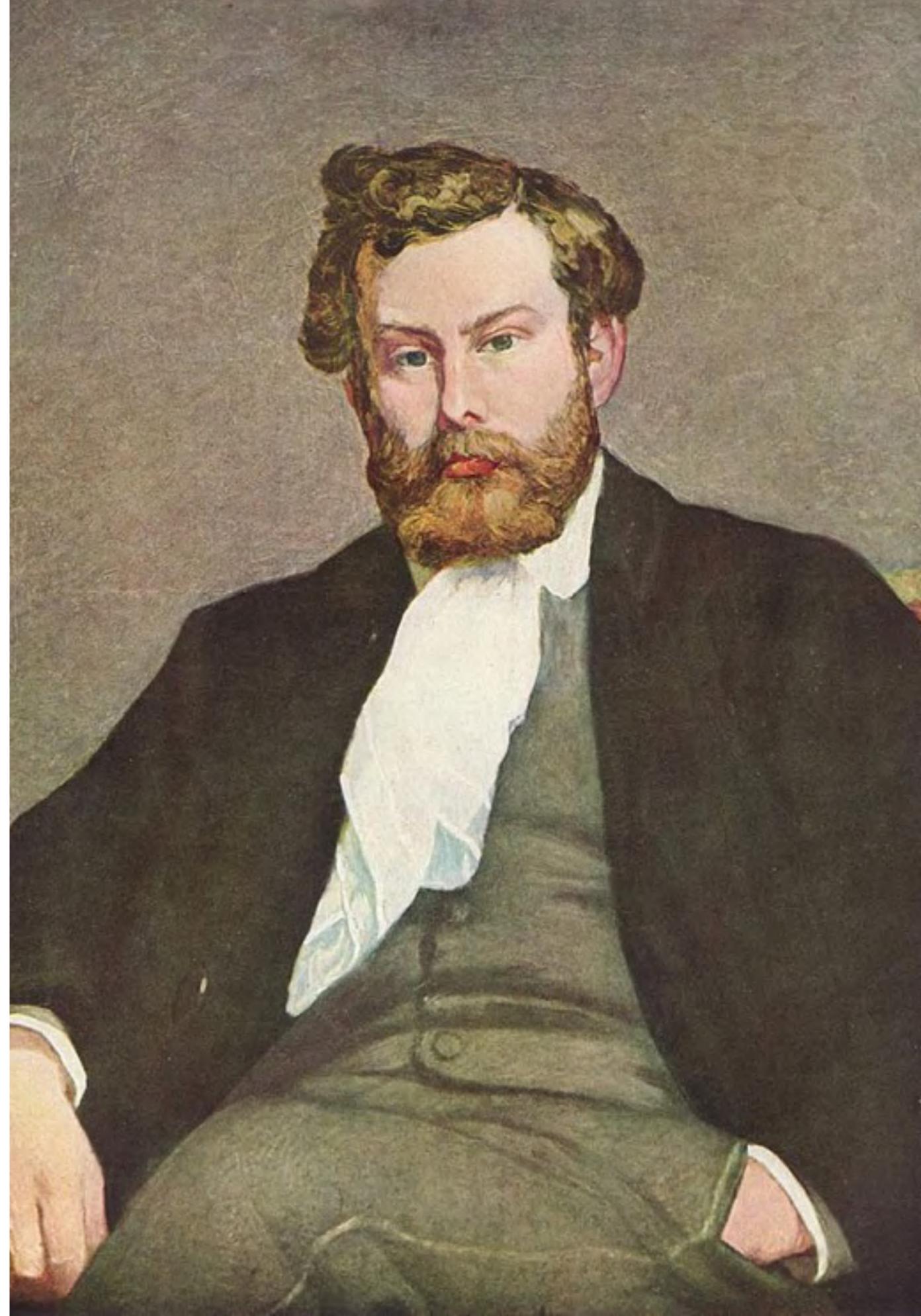
La Parisienne by Pierre-Auguste Renoir

Only One Impressionist Artist Painted in Wales

Alfred Sisley was the only Impressionist artist to paint in Wales. Along with other artists like Claude Monet and Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Sisley wanted to experiment with new painting techniques.

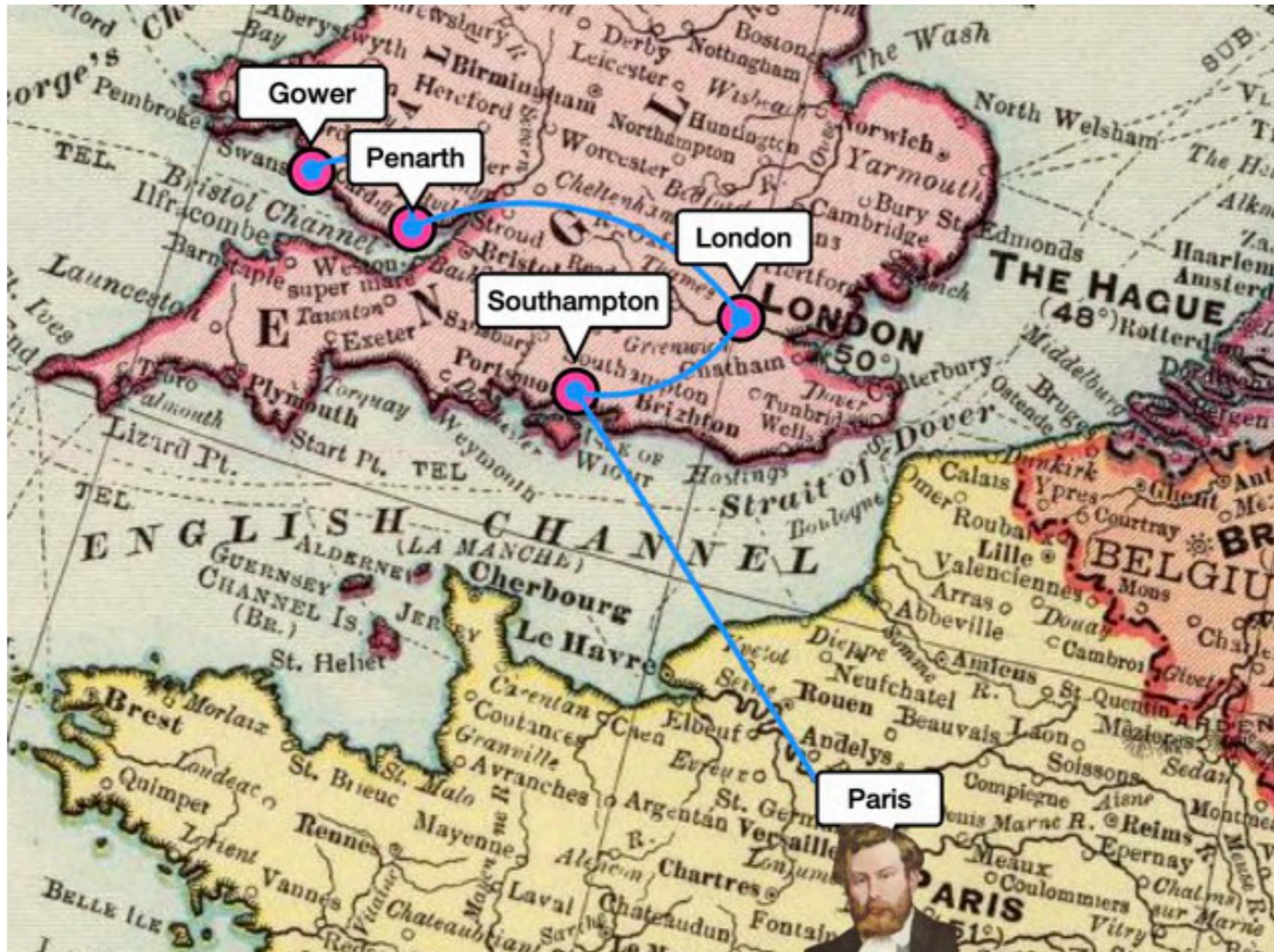
Sisley did not want to paint grand buildings or events. He liked painting the landscape together with pictures of everyday life on an easel outside. He was interested in colour and used complementary colours to show how light can affect a scene.

The artist Alfred Sisley painted by Pierre-Auguste Renoir
(Foundation EG Buhrie Collection)



Only One Impressionist Artist Painted in Wales

Sisley came to Wales in 1897 to get married. He and his wife stayed in Cardiff and Penarth and went on honeymoon to the Gower. The paintings of the sea that he completed in Wales are the only seaside scenes of his that still exist, and are some of the last ones he ever painted.



Sisley's journey from France to Wales

The Cliff at Penarth, Evening, Low Tide

Sisley was very interested in the geological structure of the cliffs at Penarth. This view was painted from the start of the clifftop walk linking Penarth and Lavernock.



Purchased with the assistance of the Art Fund and the Gibbs Charitable Trust, 1993

Storr Rock, Lady's Cove, le soir

Sisley was fascinated by this enormous, isolated outcrop of rock in Llangland Bay near Swansea. It was close to the hotel where he stayed.

He painted it several times. This painting shows the north face of the rock at low tide on a sunny evening.



Purchased with the assistance of the Art Fund, 2004

Marconi's Experiment

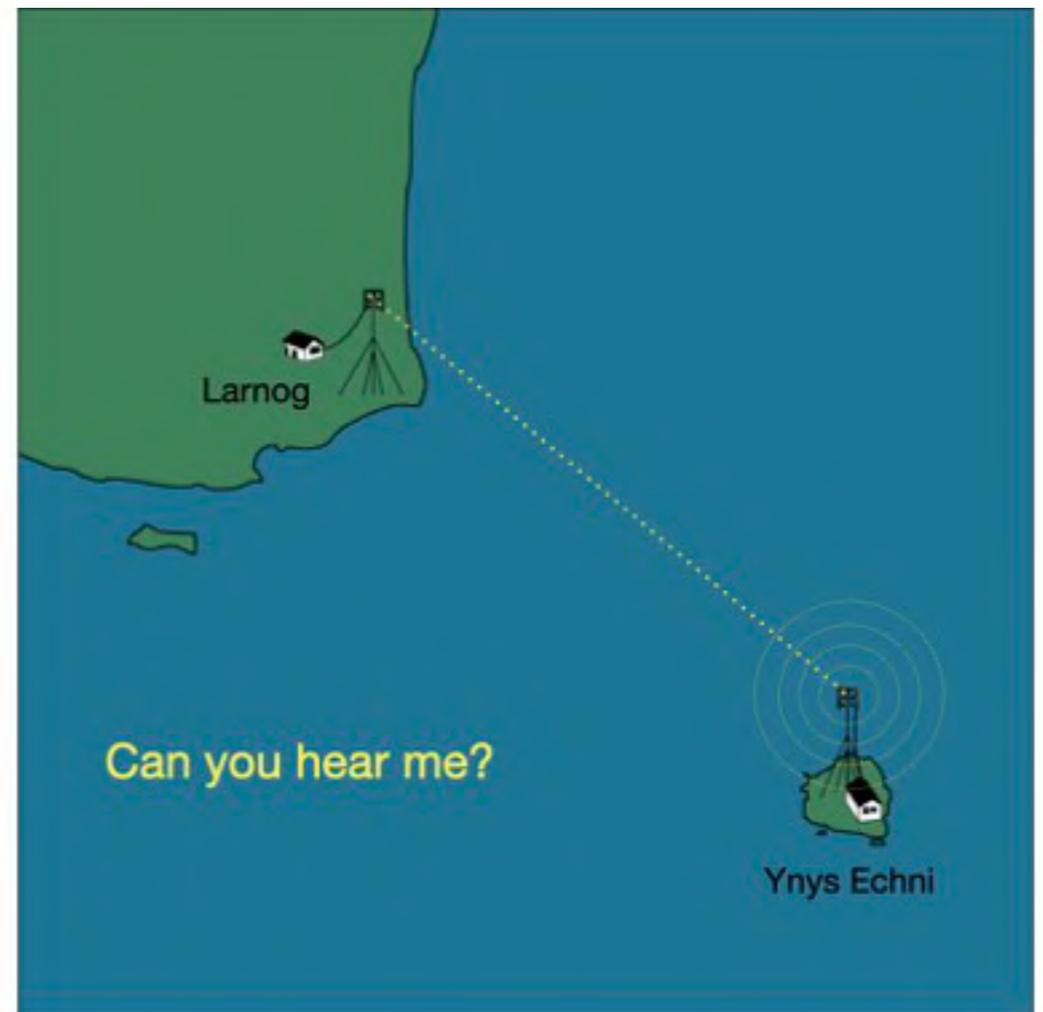
Sisley wasn't the only person doing important work in south Wales at the time.

Guglielmo Marconi was an inventor from Italy. In 1897 he visited the coast near Penarth to do an important experiment.

Marconi wanted to find a way to send messages over long distances. He thought the best way to do this was using radio waves.

Marconi set up his equipment in Lavernock, just along the coast from Penarth. He wanted to test his radio equipment by sending a Morse code message from Lavernock to the island of Flatholm - a distance of 6km (3.7 miles).

The experiment was a success, and an important step in Marconi's work, which earned him the Nobel Prize for Physics in 1909.



Post Office officials inspect Marconi's equipment

“Docks and coal, coal and docks”

- Alfred Sisley's description of Cardiff, 1897

The heavy industries which include steelmaking and coal mining thrived in South Wales particularly in the late Victorian period. Many people were employed in these industries.

Steam locomotives were essential for transporting coal and steel to the docks. Barry, Cardiff and Newport docks were extremely busy with ships arriving to load coal and steel to be taken around the world.



Steel Works, Cardiff at Night - Lionel Walden (1893-97)



Locomotive and coal wagons, Lewis Merthyr Colliery

Victorian Cardiff - The Wealth

Alfred Sisley did not like Cardiff because it was a large industrial city. But some people became very wealthy as a result of the success of these industries.



Portrait of Thomas Powell Junior and his family. The Powells of the Powell Duffryn Coal Company sank deep mines in the Rhondda Valleys during the Victorian period. This was when the demand for coal to power steam trains and ships was at its height.

Victorian Cardiff - The Poverty

The population of Cardiff and the valleys increased as people found work in the coal, steel, rail and shipping industries. Working families led very different lives to those of the coal and shipping owners.



Mary Ann Street Cardiff, 1893

Penarth

Sisley preferred Penarth to Cardiff. He lodged there and found it more attractive. He wrote in a letter, “the country is pretty, and the Roads, with the great boats which go in and out of Cardiff is superb.”



Shingle beach and slipway, Penarth

While staying in Penarth Sisley would have seen both steam and sailing ships.



The steam ship Anne Thomas of Cardiff

Terry Setch

Terry Setch is a contemporary artist who is inspired by Sisley. His work focuses on the natural environment near his home in Penarth.

This work is called *Towards Lavernock Winter / Spring '93/94*. It was made using oil paint, wax and felt pen. Setch also included sand, mud, oil and rubbish from the beach at Penarth.

If you look very closely you will see that each long panel contains a version of Sisley's painting of Penarth. Setch wanted to respond to Sisley's landscape in his own way.

Visit the [Royal Academy website](#) to learn more about Terry Setch.



Booking Information

Colour and Impressionism

A workshop for Key Stage Two pupils, led by museum staff.

- Discover how artists used colour and light to record the world around them during the late 19th Century.
- Compare the subjects and techniques of Realist and Impressionist art.
- Learn about the gift that two Welsh sisters made to the Museum and to Wales.

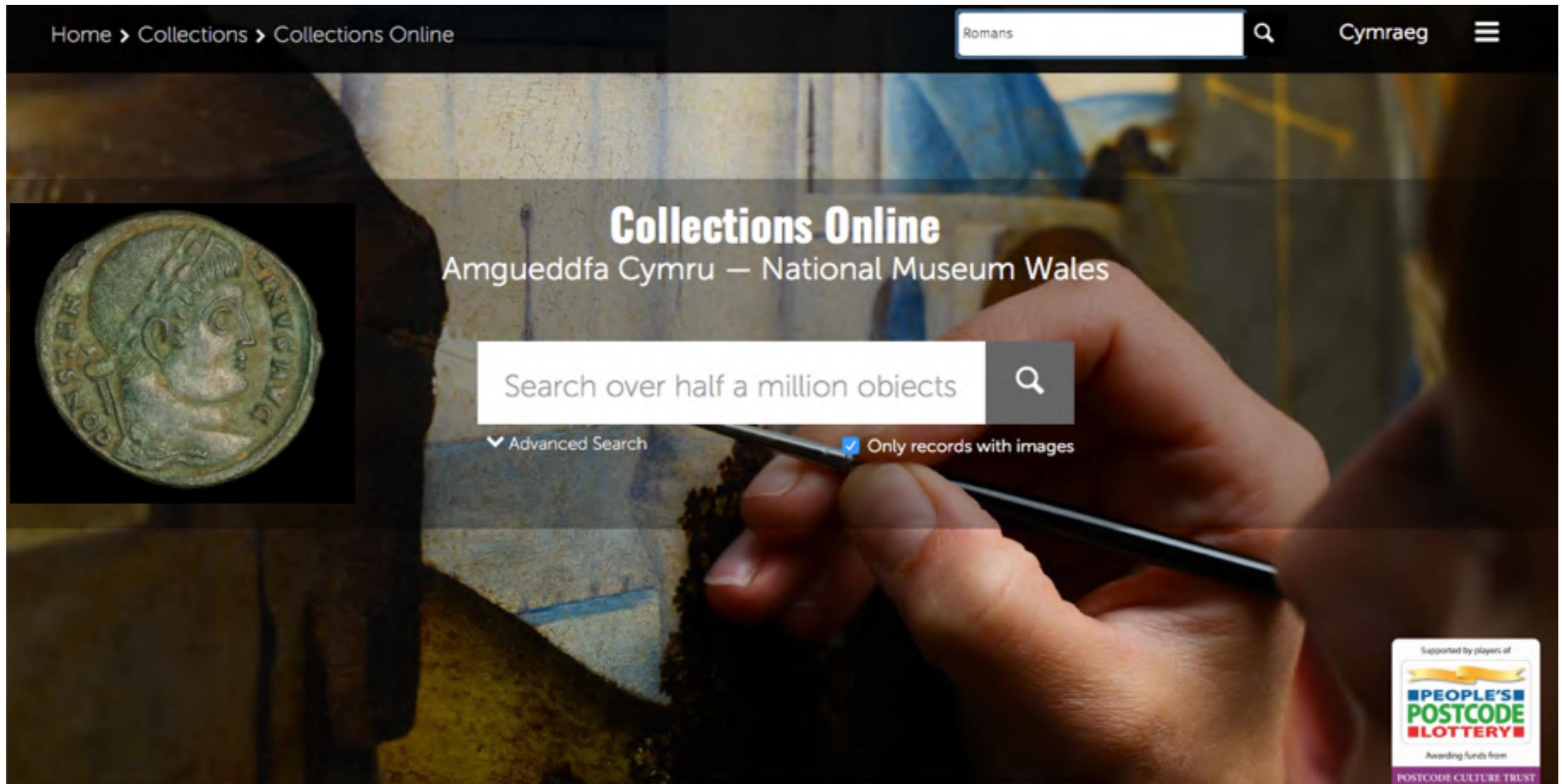


For more information visit our website: <https://museum.wales/cardiff/learning>

All schools and groups must book in advance, even if they are not booking a workshop.

Please call (029) 2057 3240 to book (Mon-Fri 9am-4pm).

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