

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Thursday 10th April 7.00

Social Evening

Thursday 17th April 10.30

Coffee morning for the former volunteer group and their friends and neighbours.

Thursday 22nd May 7.00

AGM in the Museum Chapel followed by refreshments and a talk by **Dr Geraint Gruffydd: Bishop Richard Davies and his circle**



**Saturday 19th April: Halliwell Centre, Trinity College.
The Museum's First Annual George Arbour Stephens
Public Lecture. 2.00 pm. Tea afterwards.**

Contact Chris Delaney on 01994 427019.

★ Stars! Look out for each month's star exhibit. The museum will show-case a different star from its collection each month



8th March to 6th May

'Carmarthenshire's Landscape through Artists' Eyes'

10th May to 28th June

Drawings by Josef Herman

5th July to 20th September

Quilts made in Carmarthenshire

27th September to 22nd November

Posters from World War I

15th November to 31st January 2009

'Unseen B. A. Lewis', with a talk on November 19th

ANTIQUARIAN SOCIETY MEETINGS

Saturday **26th April** Llanybydder Community Hall

AGM and talk by Edward Perkins: An auctioneer's tale

Annual General Meeting on May 22

Our chairman, treasurer, programme secretary and newsletter editor are willing to stand for re-election but we will need a minutes secretary. If you might be interested have a word with Gavin (228696) or Brenig (01269 861317) to discuss what is involved. In addition to these officers' posts there are several ways in which you might like to help, such as writing press reports or helping to organise refreshments, but these matters will be dealt with at the first committee meeting at the end of May.

THE FRIEND

*The Newsletter
of
The Friends of
Carmarthen
County Museum*



*April
2008*

2008: THE CENTENARY YEAR

As a contribution to the centenary celebrations *The Friend* will reprint from *The Carmarthenshire Antiquary* Ann Dorsett's article on the history of what we think of as "our" museum. 2005 saw the centenary of the founding of the Antiquarian Society and Ann's article, together with that of Edna Dale-Jones's contribution on the early days of the museum, were published in the *Antiquary* for that year. We thank Ann and the editor of the *Antiquary* for giving their permission.

There will be a series of exhibitions during the year. The first, landscapes by the Welsh Primitive, has already finished. None will be on view for very long, so it is essential that Friends check on what is on and make frequent visits if they want to take advantage of this opportunity to see a varied programme of exhibits. Each exhibition involves a lot of work for the staff and hopefully will increase visitor numbers significantly. There will also be two touring exhibitions, on Brunel in March and April and the centenary exhibition of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales in July and August. In addition there will be "star exhibits"; a different special object from the collection will be showcased each month.



**Saturday 19th April: Halliwell Centre
The Museum's First Annual
Arbour Stephens Public Lecture 2.00 pm.**

**Please contact Chris Delaney on
cdelaneyheritage@btinternet.com or 01994 427019.**

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MUSEUM MATTERS

Money doesn't grow on trees.....

In 2005, Mr. Daryl Gittins was able to recover thirteen bronze coins clustered around the roots of a tree. Although slightly dispersed, the coins' close grouping led to the conclusion that this was either a disturbed hoard, or the spilled contents of a purse. The coins span the period AD 323 – 378, with most belonging to the House of Constantine.

Although the find was declared Treasure, both the landowner and the finder generously agreed to waive any financial reward and to donate the coins to the County Museum instead.

Gavin Evans
Museum Curator



The coins were found not far from Dryslwyn. Gavin has published a fuller account with images of another of the coins in the 2007 Carmarthenshire Antiquary. Ed.

There are vacancies for volunteer town guides over the tourist season. If you are interested contact the Town Clerk. The work will be undertaken under the auspices of the Town Council, not the Museum or the Friends.



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**Towy
Antiques
Fairs**

Antiques Fair
Saturday 12th & Sunday 13th April

**Caravan, Motorhome and Outdoor
Leisure Show**

Friday 18th, Saturday 19th & Sunday 20th April

United Counties Showground

10.00 a.m. – 5.00 p.m.

After The Society's Museum: Carmarthenshire County Museum from 1939

George Eyre Evans' obituary pays tribute to his zeal in bringing together the nucleus of the County Museum's collections through his 'graciousness of manner and effectiveness in speech'. During his tenure as secretary of the Society 'the great need was to receive'. Even in his obituary there is a veiled hint that the collecting process was haphazard and displays possibly less than coherent. However, George Eyre Evans was a communicator who created public interest, through his weekly newspaper columns and by encouraging visits from school children and giving short lectures and demonstrations.

Records of donations, bequests and loans to the Society's Museum were recorded in the accessions register. Many gifts were also published in the society's Transactions, which acted as a sort of annual report for the museum. However, all entries require close reading to determine whether an object had been given or merely lent. This is not always clear. The term 'In the Society's Museum' seems occasionally to infer - in the museum on loan but we hope this will become a gift! George Eyre Evans had a rigorous approach to marking objects with their accession numbers. Some, such as turned wooden plates and Palaeolithic hand tools, were boldly defaced with large numbers. By the time of George Eyre Evan's death, the Quay Street Museum had already become full, and the Society had brought together a diverse collection. It had required considerable foresight to recognise the significance of many objects such as love spoons and bidding letters. The Society had also amassed by donation and purchase large holdings of samplers, which were regarded as ephemeral at the time. The archaeological collections already contained many of its key items by this date, including the Dolaucothi collection and a large number of important early medieval inscribed stones and in particular the Vortiporix stone. Unfortunately, record keeping had become a little more haphazard by the late 1930s and displays were becoming shabby. Members of the Society were also constantly in and out, to use the Society's Library, or even borrowing books to study at home!

In 1939, with the death of the museum's driving force and the outbreak of war, the future of the Society's Museum became uncertain. In February 1940 an AGM of the Society passed a proposal that Carmarthenshire County Council should assume responsibility for the museum. On 11th November 1940, the museum's buildings 4 and 5 Quay Street and 9 Bridge Street and their contents were transferred to the ownership of Carmarthenshire County Council, with the Society repre-

sented on the newly-created Museum Sub Committee. The post of Curator was held by the County Librarian, T. Gwyn Jones. The museum remained open throughout the war, except for six months January – June 1942, and was visited by a 'good proportion of Americans'. George Eyre Evans protégé, Cefni Barnett who had been appointed as 'Custos' or assistant, had been called up in 1939 and was succeeded by several Assistant Curators. Among them Mr. S. W. Stephens who became the first Assistant Curator. Curator's reports throughout the 1940s refer to the somewhat poor condition of the museum building and its exhibitions. However, even during wartime, new displays were made, such as that arranged by Assistant Curator George Roblings of rocks and minerals.

There were significantly fewer acquisitions during the period 1941 – 1974. However, in 1947, a significant bequest of watercolour was received from Benjamin Archibald Lewis. A magnificent curved settle from Ferry-side had arrived in 1943, the gift of Society member Mrs. Robert Lewis. Interestingly, furniture now on display as exhibits had often arrived at the Society's Museum for everyday use. One such example is the gift by Alan Stepney Gulston in 1908 of a gate legged table made between 1640 and 1660. In January 1944, a revolver was stolen from display by a soldier but was subsequently recovered after George Roblings travelled to Haverfordwest to identify it.

Cefni Barnett returned as Assistant Curator in March 1946, following his demobilization. His 1946 report described a museum in 'rather a disorderly state', where 'many exhibits of importance to the history of Carmarthenshire had been relegated to the exceptionally damp basement' and where 'the exhibits were arranged without regard to system or labelling'. He began the task of producing new labels to provide coherent displays. J. F. Jones, who was an active member of the Society, succeeded Cefni Barnett in 1949 and remained in post until 1970. The role of curator at that time was a lone activity and this brought about some difficulties in managing the museum. The museum collection had already largely outgrown its premises, which were cramped and difficult to manage. Some important Roman objects arrived at this time, including material from the enigmatic site at Llys Brychan, investigated by Dr. Mike Jarrett in 1961, part of the 3rd century coin hoard from Erw-hên and the late-1st century silver gilt trumpet brooch, found in Carmarthen's Priory Street in 1968. Also, J. F. Jones' successor, John Little, had excavated Carmarthen's Amphitheatre with Professor Barry Jones, an event that sparked renewed interest in the town's archaeology and led to discussion of the condition of the County Museum. The Museum's manuscripts and documents were transferred to the County Record Office between 1964 and 1973.

FRIENDS' EVENTS

THE FUN QUIZ

The Friends always look forward to the February meeting at the Museum. For the last ten years this has been the occasion of the Fun Quiz, a hilarious evening of controlled chaos much enjoyed by a hard core of regulars. Quizmaster Trevor Lloyd kept a reasonable level of order and his questions, as always, were a wonderfully eclectic mix. His hard work in preparing the quiz was much appreciated, although some were heard to mutter that the celebrity mugshots this time were unfair, as they were in the form of cartoons!

The teams of four competed fiercely for the honour of having the winning team's name engraved on the shield. This year, for the first time, two teams emerged with the same score. They were 'Celtic Blow-ins' and 'Clueless'.

The money raised is very important to the Friends and to the Museum. Every penny is used to support the Museum, either by purchasing objects which its funding will not cover or by paying for half-term activities for children. The February events included another visit by Sir Henry Vaughan's Troop, who in between drilling in the grounds, guard the entrance to the Museum. Friends expect a drain on their finances in the coming year as a large hoard of Roman coins found locally will become available for purchase.

ST. PETER'S CHURCH

Friends met in St. Peter's Church for their March event. Vice-chairman Arwyn Price led them on a tour of this outstanding historic building, the oldest and most important in Carmarthen, demonstrating not only his knowledge of its history but also his deep love for the place where he has been communicant and chorister for over half a century.

Arwyn showed how the church, which probably predates the building of the Norman castle a few hundred yards away, has been altered and added to over the centuries. An asymmetrical arch showed where a wall once stood; a piscina the site of a former altar. The stories behind some of the monuments to famous men were fascinating. Nott has a plaque in the chancel, Steele in the consistory court, where Bishop Ferrar was tried before being burned at the stake in Nott Square, while Wotton's is in the vestry. Sir Rhys ap Thomas's medieval tomb is the largest and most important but many more vaults were uncovered when the relaying of the floor in 2000 allowed excavation to a depth of four feet. As Arwyn pointed out, there is a story behind all the other monuments and tombs

Continued from page 6

In a report of 27th April 1971 newly appointed Curator, John Little recommended the building of a new, purpose-built museum, as 4 & 5 Quay Street was in such poor condition. Other staff were appointed for the first time. In October 1971, Richard Avent became Assistant Curator and the museum's first attendant, Garn Protheroe, was also appointed. Grants from the Council of Museums in Wales and support from the Director of Education allowed the new team to create new displays with new cases. This was much needed, as the museum's exhibitions had remained largely unchanged since the 1940s. The team did their best to re-organise the museum's collections in store, a difficult task in the cramped Quay Street buildings. During 1969-70 Mike Evans, Secretary of the Society, attempted to rescue a large portion of the Society's Library, which had been inadequately stored in Pontyberem. By 1972 many of the books were still dispersed, and Little and Avent with the Society were involved in attempting to rescue this dispersed collection of printed material. Shortage of space had led to the collection being divided between Carmarthen Library, the store in Pontyberem, the museum collection and some it thought to have gone to Trinity College library.

To be continued in the June edition

Ann Dorsett

but time marched inexorably on. Arwyn was warmly thanked by Hugh Jones on behalf of the very appreciative audience.

The next event will be a social evening in the Museum on April 10th at 7.00 p.m. There will be an opportunity for a private view of the current exhibition, *Carmarthenshire Landscapes through Artists' Eyes*, which draws on the museum's collection and a short talk by its curator Ann Dorsett. The exhibition is part of the year-long programme to mark the centenary of the museum's founding by the Carmarthenshire Antiquarian Society in its rooms in King Street. The evening will be an ideal opportunity for anyone considering whether to join the Friends to meet members in a friendly and informal setting. On the 17th there will be a coffee morning for the former volunteer group and friends.

Following on in May (the 22nd) will be the AGM in the old bishop's chapel, followed after refreshments by a lecture on *Bishop Richard Davies and his Circle*. The distinguished speaker will be Dr. Geraint Gruffydd; what better setting can there be for a memorable evening than the palace where Davies and Salesbury laboured to such good effect to produce the New Testament in Welsh, a copy of which is on display in the 17th century gallery.