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# THE FRIEND

*The Newsletter  
 of  
 The Friends of  
 Carmarthen  
 County Museum*



**June  
 2008**

**2008: THE CENTENARY YEAR**

It may not be possible to produce the next Friend until late September so please make a note of the date of the talk by Ken Davies which will feature clips from his TV news reports. Also please support the coffee morning on the 25th, which will raise funds for the enhancement of the Clore children's gallery while the Archaeology Day will interest everyone.

I would like some short articles on a museum or gallery that you have visited; I have one already but it would be better as part of a series.

**DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

**Saturday 19th July NATIONAL ARCHAEOLOGY DAY** at the museum  
 10.30 to 4.00: talks and children's activities

**Thursday 11th September 7.00**  
 Illustrated talk by Ken Davies on his work as a BBC reporter

**Thursday 25th September 11.00**  
 Museum coffee morning: £2.00 to raise funds for the children's gallery

**Thursday 9th October 7.00 at the museum**  
 Joint meeting with Carmarthen Civic Society  
 The Revd William Strange: "A Medieval Rumpole"

**Monday 10th November**  
 Fundraiser: The Friends' Curry Evening

**EXHIBITION**  
**5th July to 20th September**  
 Quilts made in Carmarthenshire



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

Editor: Jill Davies, 01558 668564 [jill.davies2@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:jill.davies2@tiscali.co.uk)  
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## THE AGM: 22nd MAY 2008

### CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

It was with some reservation I acceded to the request to become chair of The Friends of Carmarthenshire County Museum but today I am thankful to you for the honour bestowed on me at last year's AGM. I did not think then that I would be looking back on a year that has flown, reminiscing with quiet satisfaction. If we are honest, we were wondering then whether we would survive this year but we have done more than that. More than being thankful we are here, we are already looking forward to next year with a lot of enthusiasm. I am standing here before you today mindful that a great deal of goodwill has been present throughout the year as well as a great deal of hard work. For that I thank you all, especially the committee for your dedication and for your support.

There are still some obvious gaps in the administrating of the Friends. Not being able to fill the post of a secretary meant we had to separate off the various functions of the post. This has made life a little difficult for some of us within the organisation and within the Museum to know who should deal with certain matters and how to deal with others. Unfortunately, as well, Caroline had to resign from the post of minute secretary and no one as yet has been able to commit himself or herself to fulfilling this essential position. We are indebted to Caroline for her work and for all the others who took turns to take minutes. The post of publicity officer is unfilled and we also need someone to take responsibility to update our information rack. I am sure other difficulties will manifest during the course of this coming year. You may think in the over all plan that these difficulties are few and are not that important. However, they are a worry for many of us, an added pressure and detraction. I would urge you all, those who are here tonight and those who will read this in The Friend, to give some thought as to how to meet these challenges. If you yourselves cannot give time do you know of someone who could, whom we could co-opt. Is there, for example, a budding journalist out there, in a sixth form of one of the schools, or in Carmarthenshire College or even in Trinity who - as part of their project - would be willing to give us a bit of time and know how with publicizing our events. Talk, ask around, tell family, friends, acquaintances: to paraphrase John F. Kennedy - do not ask what the Friends can do for you, ask what you can do for the Friends.

What the Friends have done this year is quite a lot. We have had talks from Dr John Walters about Plas Glanrhyd in Pontantwn; from Donald Williams about The Slave Trade; from Ken Griffiths regarding Bilingualism in Finland. Jointly with the Friends of the Civic Society we also had a talk

about our environment from Richard Keen a master of his subject. I must also mention I was prompted to join the Friends following a talk on the pews of St Peter's Church from one of our own and guided by him we had a visit to, as well as a talk about, St Peter's Church itself. Who needs others when we have Arwyn about, eh! Christmas at the Museum proved as popular and enjoyable as ever and is already in the programme for this coming year. The quiz again brought a great deal of hilarity as well as some brainteasers. The year ended with a social evening with Ann Dorsett showing her valuable expertise regarding the paintings exhibited in the Museum. We supported the Museum's Open Day and it was joy to see the reaction of those youngsters discovering the buried artefacts. Though not a specific responsibility of the Friends, but until it has its own committee, we are the umbrella or front for developing the Bishop's Garden, a scheme that is so full of potential for making the Museum a real life experience, a living history, not only for the community of Abergwili and its school, but for everyone within the County.

Now, these events as well as being educational and social, have a serious intent to raise funds. After a quiet few years, this one has been particularly demanding on us and Hazel in a minute will give us the detail. One demand was to help meet the cost of buying the Roman Hoard of coins. Without our contribution this would not have been possible. However, there is a further outlay ahead of us to help meet the cost of conserving, cleaning and to display the Hoard both within the Museum and in other venues. The two events, the two most popular, that we rely on for fund raising are Christmas at the Museum and the Quiz. However, with the expected rising demand for financial support there is a feeling we now need to look for other funding sources. Of the three ideas considered we have adopted two to see how they go. Therefore, in the autumn, there will be an Indian Evening and about the same time, we will offer a raffle that we need only sell, another organisation will see to the administration, which if supported by us will bring in welcome additional revenue. The third idea considered, that of a Hundred Club, at the moment will remain an option as it needs further discussion. I hope that these two events will keep the financial pressure off our other events because the last thing we need is to become just fund raising orientated. Following changes within the Museum which saw us saying our farewell to Chris Delany and the ending of the Thursday morning cataloguing volunteer group, both the Institution and The Friends are now in a period of transition where we need to redevelop our focus. We need as Friends, to be able to relax with one another and just meet and talk. During the coffee morning that was held to thank the Thursday volunteer group it was thought this type of event should be the precursor for other similar mornings just for us to

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

In 1974, ownership of the Museum passed from Carmarthenshire County Council to Dyfed County Council on local government reorganisation. However, nominees of Carmarthenshire Antiquarian Society continued to serve on the County Museum Committee and the Sub-Committee until 1984. 1974 also saw the departure of John Little and the appointment of Ann Dorsett as successor to Richard Avcnt, who had left in February 1973. The museum's first secretary, Marion Male arrived in early 1975. During that summer, the condition of the Quay Street building became dangerous and the museum was closed to the public. As a result, the decision was made to transfer the museum and its collections from Quay Street to the Old Bishop's Palace at Abergwili. The sale of this building to Carmarthenshire Council had been completed on March 31st 1974, for a purchase price of £35,000. The transfer of the entire collection was accomplished by museum staff, including the author, under the supervision of Chris Delanev, who had arrived as Museum Curator in 1975.

Transferring the collection to Abergwili provided an opportunity to fully assess the collection and to re-accession each object. Clearing Quay Street was a dangerous business as objects were stashed in every nook and cranny. Clearing the attics, cellars and outside stores was a most difficult and unpleasant task. Some objects had been irretrievably damaged by poor storage and many objects had lost their original labels or records. It is extraordinary that the fragile Quay Street museum building survived the pressure of the great weight of the Voteporix stone, the Rhydygors gargoyles and other stones, an enormous weight on the old cellars. The Carmarthen Museum at Abergwili opened to the public in March 1978. Extraordinarily, the museum's collections filled their new home. The bigger building provided an opportunity to see many objects previously kept in store, such as the impressive early medieval inscribed stones. Numerous offers of donations of objects to the museum followed the opening of the museum at Abergwili. The collections have more than doubled in size since that date. In 1978, the Society with Major Kemmis Buckley was instrumental in saving for Carmarthenshire the museum's largest exhibit, the frieze from Carmarthen's first monument to General Sir Thomas Picton.

Rescue and research archaeology have substantially added to the collections since the Barry Jones and John Little excavations in Carmarthen and Pumsaint in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Dyfed Archaeological Trust (now Cambria Archaeology) was formed in 1974 to excavate archaeological sites at risk in the county. It has deposited substantial archaeological archives at the museum, such as material from the Roman Carmarthen digs at Priory Street, Church Street, Spilman Street and the medieval sites at Carmarthen Friary and Carmarthen Priory. The Trust was originally based in the Quay Street museum, and it too transferred with the museum to

Abergwili, where it remained until 1994. As the museum I now recognised as an archaeology repository, excavated material has also come from CADW-sponsored excavations at Dryslwyn Castle (led by Dr. Peter Webster and Dr. Chris Cople) and Laugharne Castle (led by Richard Avent). The latest addition is Dr. Barry and Helen Burnham's Dolaucothi-Pumsaint archive, on loan from the National Trust.

Carmarthenshire Museum was re-furnished during 2004, to expand its displays and to show more of its collection, telling the story of Carmarthenshire. The new displays have presented an opportunity to show Roman and medieval material from excavations at Church Street, Carmarthen Priory and Friary, as well as Dryslwyn Castle. The Erw-hên Hoard will go on display once it has been fully documented. Material has also been acquired under the Treasure Act such as medieval gold rings from Llansteffan and Carmarthen, while the Portable Antiquities Scheme has brought various finds of Bronze Age metalwork. The Museum's furniture collection has been augmented by gifts of several Welsh dressers. These dressers, such as the large, late 18th century oak dresser from Cilycwm, have been given with their original plates, jugs and ornaments. They are displayed furnished as they were in their original homes. The Museum's holdings of ceramics, which included Llanelly pottery and Swansea wares were enlarged in 1996 when a bequest of apothecary jars was received from Mr. John King Morgan, chemist of King Street. Collected over the years, these were made at various places in Europe and largely date from the 18th and 19th centuries.

In 1998, three of a group of important family portraits were purchased at the auction of the contents of Derwydd. The group saved includes portraits of Bridget Vaughan (Madam Bevan), her husband Arthur Bevan and her niece Elizabeth Eleanor Lloyd, Lady Stepney Paintings from another Vaughan house, Gelli Aur, had been purchased by the museum in 1979. They include a portrait of Richard Vaughan, 2nd Earl of Carbery attributed to William Dobson. Other works of art of significance have included an allocation from the Welsh Arts Council Collection in 2002. Five paintings by Edward Morland Lewis were among works transferred and joined the Museum's considerable collection of works by the artist, many of which were given by his sister, Kathleen Haimes in 1981. Paintings by artists working in the area such as Paul Fripp and H. Smyth have been acquired by donation and purchase. The museum has managed the County Hall Collection of paintings since 1981. The nucleus of this collection was formed during the 1950s, when works by local artists were bought and part of Evan Walters's bequest to the nation accepted.

Elsa Evans gave an important donation of the almost complete furnishings of Penrhiwbeili farmhouse in 1987. The furniture and tools date from the early 18th century until 1920 and have been brought together in the

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## FRIENDS' EVENTS

### SOCIAL EVENING

Friends met in the Museum for a social evening in April. Members appreciated the chance to meet and chat informally over a glass of wine, taking the opportunity to discuss future plans for the society.

The Museum is celebrating its centenary this year and is putting on a series of exhibitions. The current one displayed Carmarthenshire landscape paintings drawn from the collection. During the course of the evening Ann Dorsett gave a gallery talk on the exhibition, showing how artists as varied as Samuel Buck, Seymour Haden and Robert Hunter viewed our countryside.

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting was held in the old bishop's chapel in the County Museum in May. Chairman Brenig Davies read a short report outlining the events of the past year. The past year, as expected, had resulted in a drain on the Society's funds, with grants amounting to nearly £5,000 being made to the Museum.

The new officers are Chairman: Brenig Davies, Vice-chairman: Arwyn Price, Treasurer: Hazel Martell, Programme Secretary: Glyn Worthington and Correspondence Secretary: Carole Jones. David Grindrod was elected on to committee, Caroline Thomas and Diana Pazienti have resigned. At the next committee meeting Gwyneth Grindrod was co-opted to fill the vacancy; she has agreed to act as minutes secretary.

### BISHOP RICHARD DAVIES AND HIS CIRCLE

The AGM was followed by a scholarly lecture by Dr Geraint Gruffydd, formerly Director of the Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies. He emphasised the resonance of the Museum building, the palace for the bishopric for centuries, and the importance of Carmarthen in Welsh history. From 1564 to 1566 it was by far the most important place in Wales for work which would guarantee the success of the Reformation and the survival of the Welsh language.

Davies, deprived of his livings by Mary, joined the migration of hundreds of clergy to Germany and returned after Elizabeth's accession. As bishop of St. David's, he and William Salesbury, at the centre of a circle of scholars based at Abergwili, translated first the Book of Common Prayer and the Psalms and then the New Testament. They were published in 1567, a remarkable achievement. A copy of the Testament, part of the Antiquarian Society's collection, is on permanent display.

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meet and be together socially. There are plans afoot to hold more of them so 'watch this space'.

Now I have to thank certain people. Trevor. Like John Wayne in She Wore a Yellow Ribbon I know Trevor would like to ride off into the sunset and leave it all behind. But like John Wayne's character he is still being called back and I can foresee that this will be the case this year again, certainly for the first part. So thank you Trevor for all and anticipated help, it is invaluable. I am not going to mention you all, but as a committee it has been a joy to work with you and I am looking forward to this coming year. But I will single out Jill for all her work in particular publishing The Friend. Hazel with her role as Treasurer. Glyn in filling up our programme with speakers of such quality. Arwyn who came back to the committee so that I could have a pair of shoulders to rely on and just having him around has given me the confidence to act as Chair. Gavin, Marion and the staff of this Museum for their patience, knowledge, help and advice. This Museum deserves to be recognised and I feel we have the basis and workings of a good team. What extra we need is for the membership to feel part of that team.

**Brenig Davies 22 May 2008**

### TREASURER'S REPORT

Copies of the audited accounts were distributed showing the balance in both accounts as at 30.04.08 as follows:

**Current Account balance - £2626.14**

**Reserve Account balance - £2642.79**

**Hazel Martell  
22 May 2008**

reconstructed cottage on the museum's first floor. A major participant in the Penrhiwbeili scheme was Gavin Evans, who had replaced Sally Moss as Assistant Curator in 1991. The museum's first Conservation Officer, Anne Wright, had joined the service during the previous year. From 1974, the museum has expanded its holdings of twentieth century material. On display now are many 20th century objects that have been largely gathered by donation; these include a World War II demob suit and an ARP plan of Carmarthen .

**Ann Dorsett 2005**

Thanks to Ann and the Editor of the Carmarthenshire Antiquary for permission to reprint this article to celebrate the museum's centenary. Ed.