



Newsletter

New Year 2012

THE PRESIDENT WRITES

The lecture season started with a “first” which was the” **first” joint lecture**” with The Friends of Glynn Vivian Art Gallery. The lecture was given by Oliver Fairclough, Keeper of Art at the National Museum Wales. Members will be aware that there have been in recent times meetings between the Chair and Treasurer of the Friends of Glynn Vivian and the RI Secretary and myself to explore ways of mutual help and support to enhance the profile of Swansea Museums and to support each other’s special events. Other initiatives are being explored

For the second year running **The President’s Invitation Lecture** has been held at Swansea University as it was felt that the Museum’s Education Room would not be suitable venue for a speaker of international reputation. Professor John Harries, Chief Scientific Advisor for Wales, who was recently honoured by being presented with a prestigious award by NASA in recognition of his outstanding work agreed to give the lecture and his theme was “A forward View of Welsh Science. The 30th November it was the day for Industrial Action which had an effect on the attendance which was unfortunate as it was an excellent lecture raising many issues and challenges for Wales in the future. Professor Harries is due to submit his report to the Welsh Cabinet during December and it is bound to have wide press coverage and should appear on the web. An account of the lecture appears elsewhere in this Newsletter.

An important aspect as “**Friends of Swansea Museum**” is to assist in acquiring items of interest to enhance the museum’s collection. This very much depends on identifying appropriate items with the agreement of the Curator, and then endeavouring to purchase the item at a realistic price which is rarely straightforward. Currently the RI has agreed to purchase pottery linked with both Swansea and Wedgwood, to give assistance with the renovation of the legs of the extinct New Zealand Moa Bird, and to renovate bound volumes of rare and unique books containing historical information.

Within this Newsletter there are reports on the Swansea History Journal, BAfM Annual Conference, lectures, Outreach, social committee and other events which provide a flavour of the extent of the RI’s work. There is ongoing work on updating the history of the RISW and anyone who could spend some time assisting with this project would be welcome. Please contact me if you would like to be involved or require further information.

I would wish to remind all members that the **Annual Meeting** is on Thursday 26th January at 7 p.m. and in February there is a series of lunch talks and other events to mark the **Scott Antarctic**

Expedition Centenary. Full details are to be found in this Newsletter.

The **Email mailing list** continues to grow and it is an excellent way of passing on information of new events and information or unexpected changes to the publicised events. If you have not already advised me of your email then please do.

I trust that Christmas provided you with the opportunity to relax and enjoy the festive season and on behalf of the RISW I wish you a happy and peaceful New Year and to your continuing support in 2012.

Lyndon Morris

EVENING LECTURE REVIEWS

Thursday, 8th September 2011

PERSONALITIES AND DEVELOPMENTS IN THE STUDY AND COLLECTING OF
WELSH CERAMICS OVER THE LAST 25 YEARS

By Mr Oliver Fairclough, Keeper of Art at the National Museum Wales.

Our speaker treated us to a well-illustrated and thorough account of the pottery and porcelain produced in Swansea following 1760, with a comprehensive review of how the study of this subject had developed since the late 1800s. By the end of the century the first serious study of the subject had been published by William Turner, and although many of his conclusions were later modified by subsequent researchers this proved a valuable foundation for their work. It also began the discussions into who painted which items, a debate which to some extent continues today. It was in 1942 (surprisingly, in the dark days of the second World War) that E. Morton Nance published *The Pottery & Porcelain of Swansea & Nantgarw* in which he brought together his knowledge of the products of the potteries but also sought out surviving archive material, extensively referenced, showing a way forward which has proved so productive in later work. Mr Fairclough also spoke of some of the other individuals who had made significant contributions to the development of this particular study, such as Kildare Meager, W.D. John, Rowland Williams, Sidney Heath and Sir Leslie Joseph. Prominent amongst these notable collectors and researchers was Wallace Grant Davidson, the characterful Scot who was Honorary Curator of Ceramics at the RISW from the 1950s until his death in 1999. He specialised in the pottery produced in Swansea which, before his time, had been rather neglected in favour of the porcelain. He had prepared a substantial book reflecting his mastery of his subject, but it had remained unpublished at his death. His executor, Maria Stanley, in due course was able to arrange for its publication, with the necessary preparation of text, illustrations and editing being undertaken by Mr Oliver Fairclough, our speaker. He explained that it was decided to produce it very much as it would have been in Grant's time, with no amendment to reflect subsequent research and opinions, though a list of later relevant published work was added. Illustration formats and other aspects were revised to fit modern publishing needs, and the end result was that this major work was at last published as a fitting tribute and memorial to a notable researcher and

collector. The researches of other such enthusiasts and pioneers continue as strongly as ever, with Jonathan Gray's work on George Haynes and the Swansea - Philadelphia connection, and Helen Hallesy's publications on Haynes' Glamorgan Pottery and other Swansea pottery.

B.M.

Thursday, 13th October 2011

LAUNCH EVENING FOR VOLUME 19 OF *THE SWANSEA HISTORY JOURNAL*
Introduced by Mr Gerald Gabb, the RISW's Editor.

With characteristic modesty the editor of the RI's annual research and general local history journal announced at the outset of this launch of the latest volume that his introduction would be in the nature of "a chat not a lecture". Whichever it was, the capacity audience in the Museum's Education Room had no cause to complain, for we were treated to a lively summary of the contents of volume 19. This had been produced by the editor and his editorial group, with, of course, the essential element of the varied contributions submitted by the individual authors. It is perhaps something for Swansea to be proud of that it sustains two annual history-based publications, both produced by voluntary societies. They foster interest in such local studies and also encourage the writing of even more research and personal reminiscences. At the launch evening the preaching was to the already converted, for everyone there was bearing his or her brand-new copy of *The Swansea History Journal* (*Minerva* that was) and the well-organised sales tables were busy supplying extras as presents for friends and relations. The subjects of the articles this year ranged widely - the editor suggested they covered everything from Hitler to cannibalism to cats (!), though he had to admit that there were in fact no cats (though there were ceramics). Hitler comes into an article about the distinguished cellist David Ffrangcon Thomas, born in Plasmarl, whose varied career in peace and war included performing before Hitler in Berlin in 1936. Dark suggestions of cannibalism in extreme conditions followed the wreck of a Swansea vessel, the 'Queen', on the barren Gull Island off Newfoundland. The year was 1867 and it was winter. There were no survivors. Ceramics receive several mentions, the principal one being an analysis of aspects of the make-up of Dillwyn's Etruscan ware, in an article by a leading ceramic conservator. Another article deals with the artistic work of Paul Padley and his nephew, John Weir Padley. The work and career of the latter, formerly a rather shadowy figure, is here made much clearer, and the author has tracked down a substantial body of his work. Other excellent articles deal with themes including: the Penllergare observatory; Gun batteries at Mumbles; Morryston workhouse; Swansea's barrage balloons; the design of County Hall/Civic Centre; and more boyhood memories of a local lad.

B.M.

Wednesday, 30th November 2011

The President's Invitation Lecture:

A FORWARD VIEW OF WELSH SCIENCE

By Professor John Harries, Chief Scientific Adviser for Wales

This lecture was held in the Wallace Lecture Theatre at Swansea University, and we are grateful to the Vice Chancellor, Professor Richard Davies, for making this venue available. Our speaker, Professor John Harries had been educated at Bridgend Grammar School and had been Professor of Computer Science at Swansea University. He is now Professor of Earth Observation at Imperial College, London, currently on secondment to the Welsh Assembly Government. He has recently been awarded the prestigious Distinguished Public Service Medal by NASA. As Chief Scientific Adviser for Wales he has wide-ranging responsibilities, including the production for the approval of the Assembly Government of an updated Strategic Agenda document, to be published shortly under the title *Science in Wales*. His brief covers Science, Technology and Engineering - assessing what problems may exist and how they might be solved. In particular he has to consider how research, much of it good already, can be improved in accordance with the Assembly Government's aim to use science to enhance the economy and welfare of the people of Wales. To this end a co-ordinated structure linking groups and bodies actively engaged in science has been prepared, and detailed assessments of ways of improving research are in hand. Aspects within his overall remit include bovine TB; GM crops; solar cells; climate change; and tidal power. Computer science and social sciences are also within his responsibilities. In the eighteen months since his appointment, Professor Harries has established close contact with other Chief Scientific Advisers in Britain and has visited many University scientific research projects. He has found much in Wales that is already excellent. However, he stressed the importance of increasing Wales' share of funding for research. We lagged behind in this at present, and he pointed out that for every pound that was raised competitively for funding scientific research in England, Wales raised just 60p, and yet Scotland was able to gather £2. This disparity had to be addressed, and we also needed to raise our profile in attracting new science-based activities here. He quoted as an example the move of the Meteorological Office from Bracknell to Exeter, bringing many scientific and support jobs to the West Country, but apparently Wales did not figure as a possible location, despite some potentially strong possibilities. Professor Harris stressed that Wales needed to recognise its existing excellence in scientific research, to build upon that, and to be able to seek and develop new areas for expansion. Above all the aim should be the creation of more opportunities of quality work for its people.

B.M.



President's Invitation Lecture 2011

From the left; Prof.Richard Davies (Liverpool University); Lyndon Morris (President RISW); Mrs Iris Richards (Lady Mayoress); Professor John Harries (Chief Scientific Officer for Wales); Councillor Ioan Richards(Lord Mayor0

THE PROGRAMME IN THE NEW YEAR

We could say that the 2012 part of the current programme starts on 12th January with a bang - for our first speaker will deal with the activities of volcanoes and earthquakes, illustrating the theme of 'The Restless Planet'. The subject of his lecture by Dr Geraint Owen of Swansea University Geography Department is (sadly) topical, bearing in mind this year's events in Japan, Turkey and elsewhere.

On the 26th January we have our AGM, starting at 7.00 p.m, when there will be an opportunity to catch up on the varied activities of the RISW in its support of the Swansea Museum.

On 9th February there will be a description of a fascinating account, compiled in the eighteenth century, of the earliest years of the Swansea copper industry. This has lately been published by the South Wales Record Society, having been edited by Dr Louise Miskell of the History Department, Swansea University, who will be speaking about this document and her work on it.

The 2nd March sees us celebrate St David's Day (always a slightly moveable feast in the RI) with a coffee morning and other good things, all arranged by our Social Committee. Proceedings start at 10.30.

Then on 8th March comes this year's St David's Lecture, which will be given by the Secretary of the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historic Monuments in Wales, Dr Peter Wakelin. Now based at Aberystwyth, Dr Wakelin is a Swansea 'ex-pat'. and he will be describing some of the large collection of images of Wales held at Aberystwyth by the National Monuments Record.

Dr Michael Isaac is well-known to RI members as our Hon. Curator of Zoology and for his lectures on a wide range of natural history subjects. On the 22nd March we can look forward to hearing him on the subject of 'The Wildlife of Sand Dunes'.

Then on 12th April Bernard Morris, one of our Past Presidents will speak of the activities of the Romans in south Wales, when we may expect him to pay particular attention to the area around Swansea.

And then to round everything off, our Social Committee will be organising the 'Spring into Summer Party' for 24th May (at 7.00 p.m.), always a very enjoyable event.

B.M.

The Arandora Star Story

For some years Theatr na n'Og have put on plays at the Dylan Thomas Theatre especially for children with performances for adults on some evenings.

Members of the RISW and other organisations attend the theatre and the company re-enacted the events which happened during World War 2 in which Italians, who had settled in this country and running successful café's and businesses, were caught up in a difficult situation when Italy declared war on Britain. The authorities re-acted by interning the Italian male population in camps and displacing their families.



The play related the events overtaking a representative family in Swansea, through the eyes of the daughter, Linn, when her father, Guido Falgoni, was taken away. The business collapsed and their friends became enemies and they became very poor. The story takes a tragic turn, when unknown to Linn and her mother, the father and other internees were to be taken to Canada in the ship, the Arandora Star. The ship was once a luxury cruise liner but was painted grey and converted into a transport ship at the beginning of the war. Unfortunately the ship had not been painted with red crosses to identify as a non-combatant ship. When outward bound from Liverpool the ship was torpedoed by a German submarine, the U47, on the 2nd July 1940, off Ireland and sank in 35 minutes. 805 people lost their lives including 470 Italians.

The play shows how the father, unknown to his family, survived and landed in Britain only to be re-transported to Australia, the fate of quite a number of Italians.

The play ends happily with the father returning to Swansea and taking up his life as a café proprietor again, as did quite a number of Italians who live in South Wales. There are only four actors, two men and two women and they dramatically illustrate this tragic tale in a most spectacular and professional manner.

Following the performance we were provided with light refreshments at Swansea Museum and a talk by Jane Sherrard-Smith who told us that about 4,000 children would see the play and would have the opportunity to discuss and comment on it. There would also be performances in Welsh. She emphasised how important it is for children to see live theatre and away from television/computer screens.

Barry Hughes, Education Officer, is to be thanked for giving us the opportunity of seeing this play, as also are the ladies who served the refreshments.

At the Waterfront Museum there is an exhibition to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the sinking of the Arandora Star

RW

SOCIAL COMMITTEE NEWS

The Social Committee were busy in the second part of the year providing refreshments for several events at the museum. National Archaeology Day in July attracted a large number of people and we were able to raise £120. In October the Book Fair was crowded with many authors and sellers of local books and we were able to add £138 to our funds thanks to a very small but dedicated team. As I write we are planning for the Craft Fair weekend and also our December Social evening when there will be a talk by Raymond Walker followed by mulled wine and mince pies. Looking ahead to the spring, which is a lovely thought, we will be preparing for our St. David's Day Coffee Morning on Friday March 2nd; we never have enough cakes so PLEASE bake one or even two if you possibly

can as well as searching out your bric-a-brac and books. In anticipation we thank you very much.

Christine Morris

Chair Social Committee



**Tuesday Lunch Time Talks at
Swansea Museum**

From 1 o'clock until 2 o'clock

Scott Centenary Celebrations 2012

**7th February – ‘*Scott and Cardiff and his
1910 - 1913 expedition*’
Julian Salisbury : *Past Chairman Capt. Scott Society, Cardiff***

**14th February – ‘*Worms Head to the South Pole –
the Welshman with Captain Scott*’
Gary Gregor**

21st February – ‘*Dr Edward Wilson and the Antarctic.*’ **Martin Price**

**28th February – ‘*Coping with illness and disease
during an Expedition*’
Dr. Peter Jones .*Chairman Capt. Scott Society Cardiff***

Saturday 18th February at 11.00 a.m.

Book Launch – Swansea Museum

Dr. Isobel Williams's book

Captain Scott's Invaluable Assistant – Edgar Evans



Swansea Museum –opening 17th January

*An exhibition to commemorate the expedition
reaching the South Pole*



St. Mary's Parish Church

Friday 17th February 2012 at Mid day

Civic Service to Commemorate the anniversary of Edgar Evans Death



Saturday 11th February 2012 at 2.00 p.m.

Join the Gower Society four mile circular 'Edgar Evans walk' starting from outside Rhossili Church to go around the cliffs and up onto Rhossili Down

Led by Gary Gregor

For further information contact Lyndon Morris 01792 232282

BRITISH ASSOCIATION OF FRIENDS OF MUSEUMS

Annual Conference & AGM 23 – 25 September 2011.

RISW Representative's Report.

This year's conference was hosted by the London Transport Museum (LTB), and the theme was 'Working Together'. The President, Lloyd Grossman, conducted the AGM with his usual pizzazz, completing it well within the allotted 20 minutes! This was followed by presentation of the Newsletter Competition prizes (sadly, the RISW Newsletter did not win

this year – better luck next time!) and the Open Forum, when delegates have the chance to put questions to BAFM officials.

It was suggested that Friends groups could appoint a volunteer co-ordinator, a member who liaises with the museum regarding necessary projects, and organises volunteers to undertake the work. Other points made included:

- Membership of a Friends group should include some enticing attractions which give people a sense of ownership and involvement.
- Consider the contributions which people with disabilities can make, and ensure that appropriate access facilities are available.

Keynote Address 1: A national charity and its volunteers by Stefan Wathan, National Community Investment Manager of the National Trust.

Stefan spoke of his work with local communities to promote support and fundraising for the National Trust (NT). He described how NT is developing a policy of working with the local people at its properties. The idea is to give local people a sense of ownership and encourage them to get involved with the property, to build closer relationships between staff, visitors and volunteers. NT has 62,000 volunteers, 37,000 of whom give time regularly. The benefits derived from volunteers include:

- Connecting with the local community
- Reaching new audiences
- Accessing new skills
- Volunteers will do things the staff have no time to do.

However, the staff should be prepared to give time and management to their volunteers:

- Train and induct new volunteers
- Recruit people with specialist skills or knowledge which match the museum's work and collections
- Recruit different categories of volunteers – young people, locals, etc.
- Challenge their public to 'have a go'
- Attract the corporate sector, encouraging them to share their skills.

Staff should work *with* volunteers, NOT *use* them:

- Involve them with management and planning
- Be on friendly terms, use personal names
- Provide a support structure for volunteers.

Keynote address 2: The role of the Board, executive team and Friends in a charitable trust museum by Sam Mullins, Director of London Transport Museum.

The London Transport Museum (LTM) re-opened in 2007 after major refurbishment and reorganisation. It ceased to be governed by Transport for London (TfL) and became a Charitable Trust and a company limited by share, retaining a formal relationship with TfL. A number of other local authority museums have devolved to trust status in recent years, however negotiating this change in the current climate of economic cuts presents difficulties.

Benefits for LTM:

- Clear and focussed oversight by a single-focus board rather than a complex organisation
- Engaging of board members in fundraising and partnership skills
- Leverage with sponsors/ fundraisers due to being a charity
- Independence from TfL to source systems and services
- Still close to TfL for access to supply chain and expertise
- Freedom from corporate restrictions
- It is a scheme of governance with continuity of funding, staff terms and conditions and access to pension fund.

Benefits for TfL (former governing body):

- Still has access to museum's knowledge and board of trustees
- Reduction in capital and revenue expenditure
- Enhanced public value created in heritage, education and community service.

For the museum, it is the best of both worlds.

Status of the Friends:

- They are a separate, independent charity
- The museum director is an ex-officio trustee
- Regular dialogue with museum
- Integrated resources for operations
- Work to fund restoration and acquisitions.

Visits and social events

Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning were devoted to visits to a wide choice of London museums. My visits were to the Geffrye Museum in Shoreditch and the Museum of London in the City. It was interesting to see such good examples of a special subject museum (the Geffrye displays the history of house interiors from 1600 to almost the present) and a world-class museum which concentrates on a single locality (albeit London).

The Friday evening reception was held in the London Transport Museum's galleries and provided a chance to view the collection as well as for networking. The conference dinner on Saturday was held on board HMS Belfast – a very novel venue.

Next year's Conference.

The 2012 Conference and AGM will be in Eastbourne. The theme 'Where there's a will.....' is designed to encourage debate about the important contribution of the voluntary sector in ensuring that museums and galleries can continue to thrive in what are exceptionally difficult times.

The provisional programme returns to BAFM's traditional pattern and includes plenty of opportunities for group and informal discussions as well as two keynote talks and the usual items and social events. As always, any member of the RISW is eligible to attend, and I can provide information about booking, etc.

Jenny Sabine.

SCHOOL VISITS TO SWANSEA MUSEUM.

Autumn term has been very busy for school visits with over 2,100 pupils visiting between September and December. The autumn project with Theatr na Nog this year finishes in late November. The play this year focused on the Arandora Star. When Italy entered World War Two in 1940, Italian men living in the UK - including those whose families living in the South Wales valleys - were viewed by the authorities as enemy aliens.

The play follows the story of Lina, who witnesses her father being arrested, and dragged from their cafe in Neath. He was taken along with his brother away to Cardiff to the Isle of Man and eventually on to Liverpool and on board *The Arandora Star*.

On 1 July 1940, the Arandora Star left Liverpool with 800 Italian internees aboard, bound for Canada. During the first night, she was torpedoed by a U-boat off Ireland, and sunk with 446 Italian men lost.

The play, based on a true story, will look at the life of immigrants living in Wales during the Second World War, and follows Lina's search for the truth.

As ever it has been extremely popular with all available spaces booked. By the end of the run over 3,255 children from English medium schools and 980 from Welsh medium schools will have watched the play and taken part in the complimentary activities at Swansea Museum.

It has not just been for primary schools. Local comprehensives have watched the play and adults from local community groups have taken part. By the end of November 13 local groups have visited bringing with them approximately 300 adults from across the local area. Hopefully next year we'll have more RI members attending.

We finish the term with a mix of topics such as Mrs Mahony (the original museum caretaker's wife), Ancient Egypt, Toys, and Electricity and for the final week of booked sessions the ever popular 'Christmas Stories and Customs'.

Barry Hughes. Schools Officer

Why Not Visit

Swansea Museum

Collection Centre Landore

Access through the Park & Ride Landore

Top left hand corner – free parking within the Centre

A number of RI Members have spent a

fascinating 2 hours guided tour around

this Aladdin's Cave

*The Centre is open to the General Public
on Wednesdays between 10 and 4 p.m.
If you would like to join a RI Group visit
then pass your name to Lyndon Morris
232282 or email – lyndonchris@btinternet.com*

Would You Be Interested In Visiting

Newport's Medieval Ship and Transporter Bridge

A number of members have expressed an interest in
Revisiting the Medieval Ship and Transporter Bridge
A private visit can be arranged for a group in excess of 12.

The Annual RI Outing will be a separate event.

The journey to Newport could be by 4/5 cars

Let Lyndon know on 232282 or email – lyndonchris@btinternet.com

William Robert Grove 1811-1896

Wales's Most Famous Scientist?

Professor Sir John Meurig Thomas, Honorary Professor at the Department of Materials Science and Metallurgy, Cambridge, gave the Learned Society of Wales lecture at Swansea University on the 2nd December. He was brought up in Tumble and his interest in science was aroused when as a teenager he heard his physics teacher, Miss Price, at Gwendraeth Grammar School talk about the life and work of Michael Faraday. He graduated from Swansea University and since has been awarded many doctorates and prizes. The lecture was chaired by Sir John Cadogan.

Professor Sir John Meurig Thomas began by making reference to many eminent Welsh Scientists including David Edward Hughes (first man to transmit and receive radio waves); Professor Brian Josephson (Wales' only Nobel laureate: "He discovered as a 22-year-old graduate student what has since become known as 'the Josephson effect' - the phenomenon of current flow across two superconductors separated by a very thin insulating barrier); Evan James Williams who was awarded his MSc at Swansea University in 1924: and during the Second World War served in the Air Ministry and Admiralty where he was primarily known for the discovery of pi-meson decay which enabled a more effective method of attacking German submarines during the Second World War; Dr. Edward 'Taffy' George Bowen was born in Cockett and graduated from Swansea University with a First-Class Honours degree in 1930, who made a major contribution to the development of radar, and so helped win both the Battle of Britain and the Battle of the Atlantic. He was also an early radio astronomer.

In Professor Sir John Meurig Thomas's view William Grove was Wales's Most Famous Scientist. William Grove was born at "The Laurels", Mount Pleasant and was educated at Swansea Grammar School, and at Brasenose College, Oxford from where he graduated in 1832. In 1835, he became a barrister at Lincoln's Inn and also became a member of the Royal Institution of Great Britain (RI) in the same year. As well as his vocation in law, he was interested in science and researched electrochemistry. He developed the 'Grove gas voltaic battery' in 1839, and also developed the 'Grove cell' using platinum for increased voltage. He was elected Fellow of the Royal Society in 1840, and gained their Royal medal in 1847. In 1841 he became

Professor of experimental Philosophy at the London Institution. In 1846 he published *On the Correlation of Physical Forces*, which established the theory of the mutual convertibility of forces. He was a member of the Chemical Society; a Member of the Council of the Royal Society from 1846 to 1847 and became Secretary of the Royal Society from 1848 to 1849. He retired from the bar in 1853 due to ill health, but he became part of Queen's Counsel in the same year. He then became a member of the Royal Commission on the Law of Patents in 1864, and a Judge in the Court of Common Pleas in 1871. In 1871 he was knighted. He became a Judge of the Queen's Bench in 1880 and Privy Councillor in 1887. He died in London in 1896.

When sitting as a Judge on Patent Cases he was inclined to suggest improvements and modifications. He invented the first fuel cell known as "The Grove Fuel Cell" a gas voltaic battery; he won fame for his other scientific researches - he was the first to offer proof of the thermal dissociation of atoms within a molecule, and he also showed that steam in contact with a strongly-heated platinum wire is decomposed into hydrogen and oxygen. In 1845 he used his platinum-zinc batteries to produce a type of electric bulb for lighting. William Grove was a Founder member of the RISW and carried out his first experiments in electricity in the Swansea Museum basement of the Royal Institution of South Wales. Because of his fame he brought the first visit of the British Association for the Advancement of Science to Wales at Swansea in 1848.

A clear message has come from this lecture as well as the one by Professor John Meurig Harries (RISW President's Invitation Lecture) earlier in the week - that Wales has over many years produced a significant number of distinguished scientists, not forgetting Dr Lyn Evans, Director CERN and Project Leader of the Hadron Collider who gave last year's RI President's Invitation lecture. The message is that it was a teacher/lecturer who lit the spark of interest for an enquiring and focused mind followed by commitment and enthusiasm by the individual. Therein lies the challenge for the RISW to develop OUTREACH for the younger generation.

L.M.

Thursday, 8th December 2011

A TASTE OF CHRISTMAS:

'SNIPPETS FROM THE MUSEUM'

By Mr Raymond Walker, RI Council Member and active volunteer at the Swansea Museum

This evening began with what our speaker described at the outset as a chat rather than a lecture, but he is known for his modesty and his 'chat' was as full of interesting and varied information and stories as many a formal lecture. He opened proceeding by flourishing a very large leg bone, one of a pair in the Museum's collections. These were not, as might appear from a substantial mammal, but from a very large bird, averaging eleven feet in height. This was one of the Moa from New Zealand, which, not surprisingly, were flightless, and, equally unsurprisingly, became extinct through human activity. Moving on, he mentioned how the RI had begun as The Swansea Philosophical and Literary Society in 1835, which by 1841 had completed the classical front of the present Museum, having in the meantime become the Royal Institution of South Wales. Over the years the RI had served as the umbrella organisation for many other Swansea groups with overlapping interests, such as the Arts Society, Philatelic Society, Camera Club, and Esperanto Society to name a few. The Swansea Scientific Society, later combined with the Field Naturalists, was active from 1877 well into the next century, arranging twenty or more excursions a year. At least one of the January ones ended at a tea-shop in Parkmill, a very civilised arrangement.

Amongst our speaker's interests is conchology, and he told us how in one group of South Pacific islands there had been groups of snails, of one basic species and form, but varying in development from island to island. Unfortunately, the human inhabitants, wishing to protect their crops from the snails introduced carnivorous snails from America, which ate the native snails - despite their interest. Next, a photograph of Matthew Moggeridge, son in law of Lewis Weston Dillwyn, and an active RI member in the nineteenth century, introduced the excavation he supervised at the ruined medieval church on Penmaen Burrows in 1861 during which a substantially intact 14th century thurible (incense burner) was discovered, now in the Museum's archaeology gallery. Mr Walker stressed how rare such a find was, illustrating his comments with illustrations of the few known from other areas. He ended his remarks with a brief comment on the famous, but long gone, Museum elephant, and a doubtless apocryphal mention of Dylan Thomas' unexpected encounter with it before the war. A very pleasant evening was completed with seasonable refreshment provided by our Social Committee led by their Chairman, Mrs Christine Morris.

B.M.

Stop Press:

There has been a delay in the publication of the memoirs of Sir Henry DelaBeche alas. This is both due to the death of a contact's father and also that same contact has to go to Antarctica. We hope to meet up in December sometime. Apologies to anyone who might have been looking forward to this first ever publication of Wales's eminent geologist.

Richard Morris

**Please send contributions for inclusion in the Spring Edition of the RISW Newsletter
to the editor**

marian.funnell@btinternet.com

by Friday March 23rd 2012