



Newsletter *Autumn 2008*

The President Writes

Welcome to a new session of RISW lectures and activities. We trust that you will find the programme attractive and that we can build on last year's very satisfactory attendance.

This *Newsletter* is the first one by our new editor Marian Funnell, assisted by Bernice Cardy, Jack Davies and Raymond Walker. In this posting you will also find a sheet giving some information on what your Society does ***-please read and then pass on to a friend,***

We are fortunate with our volunteers, but currently some help is required by Swansea Museum to mount next year an **exhibition featuring Fellows of the Royal Society with Swansea connections**. The list is quite impressive and we have received a number of offers of help, but we have nobody signed up against ***C Rice Mansel Talbot, Sir William R Grove, John Henry Vivian and Thomas Williams***. Standard biographical details are known, but it is anecdotal comment which adds 'flesh' to these people that is required. We have a template of how this activity may be tackled. Please contact the President with offers of help (e-mail: gwynethday@yahoo.co.uk).

Jenny Sabine, who so ably edits our annual *Swansea History Journal*, requires help with its distribution. This is not a big task, but **Jenny badly needs help**, so please contact her (e-mail: jennifer@sabine5.wanadoo.co.uk).

Please take note in the programme of the performance on 23 October of *The Ghost of Morfa Colliery*, Members who attended a previous production by this educational theatre group will tell you that it is something not to be missed. (See details elsewhere in this *Newsletter*).

I take a quotation from the Director of the Royal Institution in London, ***'feeding the application of science to the common purpose of life'***, to remind you of this year's **President's Invitation Lecture on Thursday, 13 November!**

Gwyneth Davies

Reports

Social Committee News

Our recent Spring into Summer evening was a delight. We had the privilege of enjoying a superb recital by Carrie Thompson and Hywel Evans. Carrie is very young with an amazing quality and maturity of voice, a wide repertoire that ranges from opera to musical theatre, and she sings in several languages. We know she has

great potential for her future career in music and we wish her every success. She was accompanied by Hywel Evans who is in great demand as an accompanist to many choirs and soloists and it was wonderful to hear our piano played to such a high standard with such intricate and complex music. <

The extensive supper too was highly acclaimed and appreciated by all. It is always a good opportunity to chat to friends old and new and in fact we were able to attract several new members. In addition we were able to add £341 to our funds. Our thanks go to all the members of the Social Committee who work so hard on these occasions and also to the Museum Staff who are so helpful and supportive.
Christine Morris; Chair R.I.S.W. Social Committee

Visit to St. Fagans

On June 5th, twenty eight members and friends went to the museum of Welsh life at St. Fagans. The main object of our visit was to see the newly completed re-erection of the church of Llandeilo Tal y bont which used to stand on the marsh near Pontarddulais.

We were very fortunate to have Sara Huws as our guide. She gave an excellent talk on the pre-reformation church (dated circa 1520) as it now is, with special reference to the significance of certain features such as the paintings on the walls and the new rood screen.

There was time after lunch to visit other attractions in the grounds of the museum, and call at the shop, before going home.

Eirwen Davies

Sir Glanmor Williams:

Tuesday, 22 July 2008 saw the launch at Swansea University of a Memorial Volume, published by the University of Wales Press in his memory, edited by Geraint H Jenkins and Gareth Elwyn Jones with title, *Degrees of Influence*. A copy has been purchased for the Museum and a review will appear in the next *Newsletter*. As members will know Glanmor was for many years a Vice-President of the RISW

Miss Betty Nelmes:

Members will be pleased to know that a watercolour view of Culver Hole by James Harris Jnr was purchased recently in her memory. Council felt that this picture combined her love of Gower with her long dedicated service to the RISW and Swansea Museum. In addition, from a legacy left to the RISW by Betty herself, a Cambrian pottery trefoil shaped dish, Imari style, attributed to Thomas Pardoe was successfully obtained at a recent auction. Both items have now been presented to Swansea Museum.

The New Programme, 2008 - 2009

This edition of our Newsletter is accompanied by the new Programme Card which, lists our events for the period from September this year through to May 2009. To open the session in style we are pleased to have Mr G. Nash. Curator of Buildings at the National History Museum, St Fagans, a leading expert on the reconstruction and preservation of ancient (and not so ancient) structures. His talk will focus on the moving and restoration of the 'Church on the Marsh', Llandeilo Tal y bont, Pontarddulais. This is the building which so impressed those who took part in our very successful summer visit to St Fagans, described elsewhere in these pages.

Two years ago Mr Jonathan Gray told us of his latest research into the links between the Cambrian Pottery and America, which has brought a whole new perspective to studies of this major aspect of Swansea history. On 9th October he will be with us again to

describe his pioneering work into the sale and distribution of the Company's products in the London market in the early years of the nineteenth century.

Our President's annual Invitation Lecture, intended to acquaint us with the latest research on the frontiers of science, will be given on 13th November. The speaker will be Professor R. Waters of Cardiff University, who will take us into the rapidly-advancing subject of DNA, with particular reference to its repair, a field which has amazing potential.

Then to round off 2008 our Council member Raymond Walker will offer us a biologist's light-hearted view on what we could be eating for Christmas, leaving time to enjoy the seasonable refreshments, courtesy of our Social Committee, which will conclude the evening.

After that we will move towards the New Year, and some notes on the 2009 events will be included in the January Newsletter.

Bernard Morris

The Swansea History Journal

This year's Swansea History Journal - no. 16 - will be published on the evening of the President's Invitation Lecture on 13 November.

We have some interesting articles this year, including a major study of the local oyster fishing industry, a year in the life of Swansea and its mayor of 1907-08, and, going to the other end of the social scale, a glimpse into the life of the RISW's charwoman. There is a memorial piece to Betty Nelmes, mainstay of the RISW and the Museum for over 30 years, one of Bernard Morris's intriguing topographical detective studies of a vanished Swansea house, and news of new-acquisitions for the Museum.

Members' order forms for the Journal will be included in the autumn mailing -hurry and return it to secure your copy at the special members' reduced price. - Jenny Sabine

BAfM Conference

The annual national conference of the British Association of Friends of Museums of which the RISW is a member, will be held this year in Penlee House in Penzance, from 3 to 5 October. It promises to be a fascinating and informative weekend, with lots of opportunities to see the wonderful local art collections. If you are interested in attending this conference, write to the Hon. Secretary of the BAfM Conference 2008 Sub-Committee at Penlee House Galley and Museum, Morrab Road, Penzance, Cornwall TR18 4HE.

A full report on the conference will be included in the New Year edition of this Newsletter. Jenny Sabine

Museum News

The Curator Reports

Swansea Museum has had a busy start to the year.

The 'Animals and Us' exhibition has led to a host of new partnerships with local individuals and organisations.

Museum staff would like to thank members of the RISW such as Raymond Walker, Michael Isaacs and Ronald Austin for their help and hard work. The "Snake Conservation and Care" talk and demonstration with Geraint the Snakeman' Hopkins attracted large audiences but did cause one or two people to phone to apologise for not attending David Roberts and Alan Jones's book launch of "Swansea Scenes Rarely Seen" which was held on the same day. The 'Mumbles Train Remembered' book launch marked the end of a very successful Heritage Lottery Funded project initiated to mark the 200th Anniversary of the opening of the track. Many interesting memories of the train have been recorded and some interested artefacts added to the Museums collections. National Archaeology Day, run in partnership with Glamorgan Gvvent Archaeological Trust, brought in finds for identification, as well as giving visitors a chance to excavate in the garden, wash sherds

from recent excavations, try their hand at medieval warfare and taste the delights of Roman cuisine. A big thank you to the RISW's Social Committee for the superb catering. The RISW has also kindly purchased items for the Topographical Art Collection and the Ceramics Collection, these are now on display in the Museum and Tramway Centre. Olga, the museum's Bristol Channel Pilot Cutter has just returned having been in dry dock in Gloucester for renovations and replacement of her deck. This work was supported by a Heritage Lottery Fund Grant and other partners have been the Cyrennians and various local schools. Olga will be representing the museum at the tall ships festivals in Cardiff and Barry this summer. She will also be taking part in the Bristol Channel Pilot Cutter Association race meeting in September

Museum activities for children, families and adults over the last year

We think more than 2,500 people have taken part in these activities since Mike Lewis first led a fascinating walk over Kilvey Hill on July 8th 2007.

The artists Jon Powell, Rhian Morgan and Mary Hayman have been involved in all sorts of Mumbles **Train** workshops - it was our theme for the year. Mary ran two of the days (with a model) for adults, and there was even a day for under 5s in November. One result has been the three superb composite pictures which you can see in the Museum Tramcentre. by the marina. Huda Awad ran an excellent two-day stained glass course in August 2007. Jo Steadman has been into the museum to take sessions with her **willow-weaving** in December and May. These are always deservedly popular. Since March we have focussed on animals, because of the "**Animals and us**" exhibition - you can see the results peering at you from the tops of display cases! The "Insect Day" on 28th June was very well attended, with Mark Winder and Raymond Walker (of the R.I.) guiding insect hunters in the morning, and Jon Powell working with an army of insect artists in the afternoon.

Each summer there are two full-week art workshops for 11 to 19 year olds, called **MAST** (Making Art in the Summer Time). These are led by the professional artist, David Marchant, and have built up quite a reputation. For the first time (with RI support), we were able to run a two-day MAST at Easter in 2008, and the summer sessions are well over-subscribed as I write.

David was also involved in very successful clay workshops in May, and it was a delight to have Denise Morgan in the museum again, working with wool with an adult group. Gerald Gabb led two 'Talk and Walk' sessions on Swansea History on 17th May.

On 28th Dr. Michael Isaac of the RI led a fascinating Woodland Field Trip in Parc le Breos. Despite immensely heavy rain, Michael's preparedness, unflappability and knowledge made it an excellent morning.

There will be more insect workshops at the end of August, and in the October half-term, we will be involved in the Big Draw, perhaps in co-operation with the Brangwyn Hall. Ring the museum for details nearer the time (01792/653763).

It has been a superb year, and nearly all these sessions have owed a great deal to the RI, in terms of finance, advice or leadership. Swansea Museum (and quite a lot of children and families) are very grateful.

Theatre production

The Ghost of Morfa Colliery is the working title for the theatr na n'Og play to which RI members are invited in the Autumn, with 23rd October being the RI evening. The evening lasts from 7.00 until 9.00 - there will be a related slidetalk, and refreshments in the museum after the production. The acting is always superb. Should anyone not be able to make it then, there is a Little availability on 2nd October, 20th November and 4th December.

Please book your place by contacting Gerald Gabb at the Museum:

Museum has Top Ranking

Did you spot it in The Times of 19.07.08 in the review of the Top Five Museums of the week? The Animals and Us exhibition headed the list, which included exhibitions in the New Walk Museum and Art Gallery in Leicester, The Bodleian Library, Saltram House in Plymouth and ExpJore-at-Bristol. This is the second time this academic year that the museum has featured in the rankings, the previous occasion being the Travellers Tales exhibition. Congratulations to the staff and ail those who were involved in bringing these exhibitions to Swansea Museum.

Correspondence

Chocolate and Cream

Many years ago I came across an article in the RISW Library Copy of The Gower Society Journal. I have hunted high and low to try and find the reference.

The subject was the origin of 'Chocolate and Cream on the GWR'.

When a prominent member of the Rice family of Penrice joined the board of the GWR, business kept amongst members of the board resulted in virtually tons of brown paint being purchased for use on the railway. This turned out to be bad for public relations (brown paint was used everywhere).

The paint was coloured with brown oxide dye found in a seam in the limestone of the Rice estate, and used in a Swansea paint works.

To get over the embarrassment that this decision to order and use so much of the paint, the foreman of the paint works experimented with various colours and formulation of shades to make a paint that would blend with, and in contrast with the brown. The experiments took place in a garden shed at home.

In time the right contrast turned out. The exercise of using this combination of colours turned out to be the greatest public relations exercise that had a effect on the travellers for generations. The shade of Brunswick Green on the passenger locomotives remained until the Blue of BR days.

In the Gower Society paper, chapter and verse in the form of board-meeting minutes, were noted.

This gives rise to two questions: Are all the editions of the Journal kept in any archive, and,

Is there any relationship between the rusted oxide in the limestone strata and that of the Red-Vein found in the Anthracite seams of the South Wales Coalfield ?

! trust that the subject will prove interesting, and that it might be of use when an appropriate time might present itself.

Yours faithfully,

Roland Bevan(Rev'd)

(All volumes of "Gower" are in the Swansea Reference Library – Webmaster)

Replies to correspondence can be forwarded via the editor- NB. e-mail only please.

Museum Shop

It seems far too early to be thinking of Christmas, but members are reminded that

they can obtain a 10% discount on the many items that are available from the shop, on presentation of their membership card..

Membership

Members are reminded that subscriptions for 2008-9 were due in June. If you have not received your new membership card it could be that this may have slipped your mind. Subscriptions can be "Gift-Aided"⁷ if you are a UK taxpayer. Please contact the membership secretary, Bernice Cardy, for membership renewal.

Material for inclusion in the .New Year edition of the RISW Newsletter must reach the editor by 15th November 2008, preferably via e-mail to; marian.funnell@btinternet.com, or by post to ; Mrs. M.Funnell. 6, Hael Lane, Southgate, Swansea, SA3 2AP