

Glamorgan Archives



DISCOVERING THE PAST

1 March 2015- 29 February 2016



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Introduction

Welcome to Glamorgan Archives' 6th Annual Report describing activities during the period from
1 March 2015 to 29 February 2015.

Regular readers will be aware that a massive increase in business rates in 2015 could only be met by the deletion of 3 posts with the loss of 2 senior archivists. Over the course of the year a further 2 archivists and a preservation assistant left us temporarily on maternity leave while a records assistant started a year's sabbatical in November. The impact is clear in the annual statistics. Opening hours for the searchroom had to be reduced; the monthly Saturday morning opening could not be sustained and morning opening has moved from 9 to 10 am. Volunteer hours (5831) have been affected as work experience placements have been cut from 2 weeks to 1 and volunteers are asked not to attend over Christmas or during the 2 annual closure weeks which are devoted to the Collection. Our reliance on grant funding for major cataloguing and conservation projects is now absolute.



Part-time operational staff have been recruited to partially offset absences, most paid from external sources including Access to Work and various grants. Staff training in well-established and clear processes and procedures has proved its worth and we are especially proud to have achieved Bronze Investors in People accreditation in such a challenging year. The Review report notes:

The whole team is highly committed, loyal and proud to work for Glamorgan Archives...a flagship organisation within the sector...taking account of the challenges of recent months, Glamorgan Archives presents itself as a resilient organisation with a robust approach to delivery of its services...by a highly committed and motivated team.

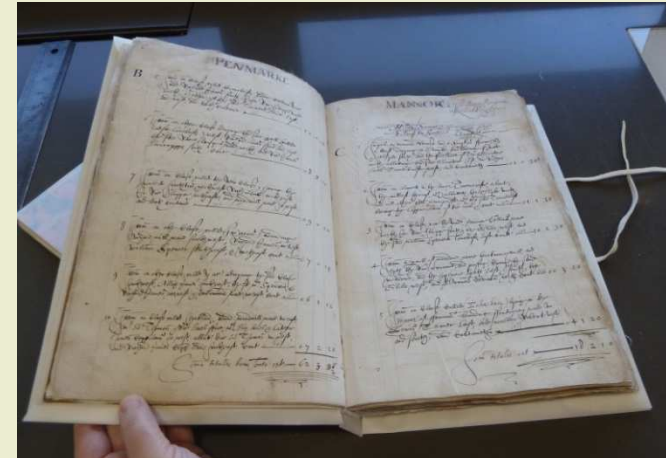
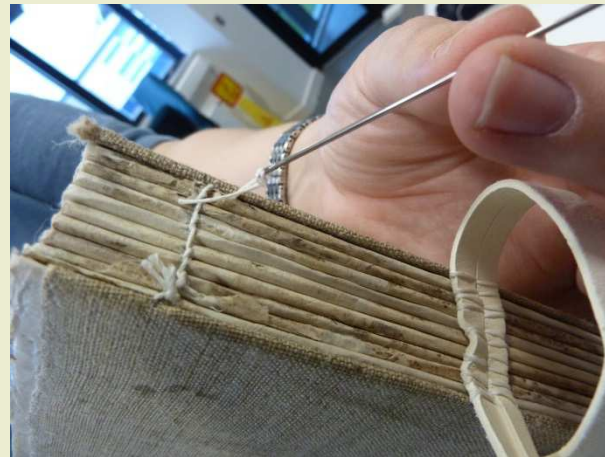
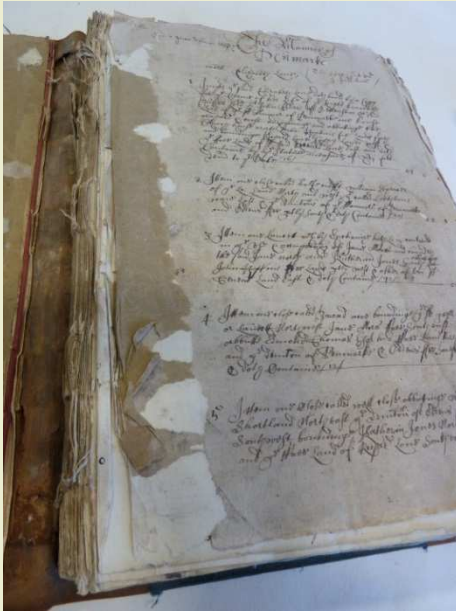
Staying with the positive, we have also successfully achieved income targets to make up the minor budget reductions funding authorities have been forced to impose. So far, this has not impacted on service delivery. We have found a market for underused space in the building, both in the repositories and in the office areas, and conservation services, both bench work and box making, are gradually increasing their external client list.

The Collection

Conservation

The year's big conservation project was the 1622 Fonmon estate survey of Evans Mouse, funded by the National Manuscripts Conservation Trust (NMCT). The maps are among the earliest surviving visual representations of Glamorgan and show the St John estate in Barry, Lancadel, Fonmon and Penmark as part of a wider survey of the family's landholdings. Drawn on parchment at a scale of about 20 inches to 1 mile the liberally coloured maps show buildings, roads, and even boats at sea as well as the all-important boundaries. The accompanying reference book lists tenants, acreages and state of cultivation. The documents' condition has made them difficult to use. The reference book was in a particularly bad state of repair and all the maps were dirty with unsympathetic early repairs causing much of the detail to be obscured. Older pigments often contain toxic heavy metals. Conservation volunteer, Amanda Jones, arranged a collaboration with Cardiff University where PhD researcher Chris Wilkinson, using X-ray Fluorescence spectrometry (XRF), identified the inks and confirmed the absence of arsenic, the biggest concern. The conservation project has been completed and the improvement is dramatic.





The Curtain Up project on Cardiff's Theatre Royal playbills has been completed with the fully searchable catalogue, including images of each playbill, now on our website. The collaborative project on records of the Welsh steel industry, Forging Ahead, has also been completed. Both were funded by NMCT.

The conservation needs of the Collection have been assessed and priority for treatment given to material types rather than individual documents. A programme of digitisation has been set up for glass plate negatives with the help of volunteers. Records of the National Coal Board include a vast quantity of photographic negatives, more than 32,000, which, on inspection, were of a type which degrade over time, resulting in both image loss and the production of toxic gases. An emergency operation was launched to pack and freeze this series which is now being digitised in a controlled environment.



The team also undertook an unusual project for Bridgend Council; the conservation of Maesteg market's printed bye-laws, pasted onto a wooden shutter. The reinstated "Market Charter" was unveiled at the restored building's reopening, with conservation staff in attendance.

Cataloguing

A total of 245 accessions have been received this year. Details are reported to the Glamorgan Archives Joint Committee quarterly and can be found on Cardiff Council's website. There is a link at the foot of the GAJC page on Glamorgan Archives' website.

Glamorgan Federation of Women's Institutes deposited a large collection of records from various branches while a separate deposit was received from Gwaelod-y-Garth Women's Institute, including minute books from its establishment in 1950; all very timely in this centenary year. Another interesting anniversary accession came via the Glamorgan History Society; a book of plans from Park Colliery and records relating to the Cambrian Colliery explosion of 1965, including papers of the subsequent inquiry.

The theme for the year, however, has been entertainment, starting with the donation of Stan Stennett's papers. Born near Bridgend and living most of his life in Cardiff, Stan's career began in the services in the 1940s and continued up to his death in 2013. He worked on stage, radio, television, and film with roles in Crossroads and Coronation Street, and worked on stage alongside many of Britain's greatest variety acts as well as international artistes. He was a talented musician appearing in the Black and White Minstrel Show during the 1960s, and a regular pantomime stalwart.





He was, in addition, a successful business man with a number of leisure interests who ran theatres, cinemas and art centres around Britain, and was a keen pilot, a golfer and, for a time, a director of Cardiff City Football Club. This very complete collection includes scrapbooks, photographs, scripts, theatre programmes, posters and newscuttings representing a slice of British light entertainment from the 1940s to 2013. They have been catalogued, thanks to an Archives and Records Council Wales (ARCW) grant, and are available for researchers.

The South Wales Intercultural Community Arts (SWICA) Carnival, established in 1990, closed in November 2015 when funding ceased. Their records have been deposited, documenting their achievements in developing new forms of celebration for modern Welsh culture. SWICA ran workshops for carnival arts and samba percussion and organised many carnivals including those in Cardiff and Swansea, major parades such as Cardiff's National St David's Day Parade, the Olympic and Paralympic Torch Relays, Carnival No. 6 at the Portmeirion festival, and Christmas Parades in the south Wales valleys. SWICA worked throughout the year on participatory and celebratory projects big and small, in schools and community centres, offering a tailor made range of performances and workshops related to carnival and inspiring and helping local communities to celebrate themselves. Videos and DVDs of events were included in the accession and will be transferred to the Cardiff Story Museum.



To sort and list these large accessions with much reduced staff we have had to close to the public for 2 separate weeks this year but this has meant that collections are listed and presented in a more useable state so much sooner than could otherwise be possible. We are also more reliant on grant funding for listing. A Wellcome Trust grant paid for a conservator and an archivist to survey the National Coal Board collection. Their reports have been used to plan a potential major project to make this important collection more accessible in the coming year. ARCW grants have funded improvements to the on-line catalogue including translation for a full Welsh language interface. This will be shared with other services in Wales using the same system.



Access

User numbers remain high with over 3,000 searchroom visits by individuals for whom more than 10,800 items were produced. More than 7,200 visits were made to the building including for non-archive training events, maintaining our high profile. Tours were laid on for 31 visiting groups while staff attended 24 external heritage events in locations throughout our funding authorities. Llynfi, the group room, hosted 3 exhibitions around which events were successfully organised. The continuing partnership with the Parliamentary Archives brought their travelling exhibition on the Magna Carta including our local panel celebrating the contribution of Merthyr Tydfil's S.O.Davies to workplace compensation legislation. In addition, the National Museum of Wales lent their Strikes and Riots exhibition and Swansea University's project on disability and the coalfield was publicised through *From Pithead to Sickbed*. A dozen talks were given during the year linked to the exhibitions and to events including the Rugby World Cup and Christmas pantomimes.



Workshops were provided for 15 classes from 10 schools and digital resources provided for a further 4. Our partner in this year's Taking Over Day was Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Tonyrefail, quite a test of our developing Welsh language skills! To support our resident Welsh speaker, 4 members of staff are currently attending classes to improve our ability to supply a full Welsh medium service.

Publicity

Events, social media promotion, and proximity to television and radio studios all create a lot of media activity which raises our profile and encourages both increased use and deposits. Media Wales has used blog post and documents of the month in its on-line features while our WW1 contributions continue to appear in connection with centenary commemorations. The contacts help to spread word of our achievements with local press picking up both our Archives Accreditation and our successes in attracting grant funding. The Deputy Minister for Culture Tourism and Sport, Ken Skates, visited for the launch of Explore your Archives.

Staff have appeared on BBC, S4C, and Made in Cardiff television. Features included John Humphreys' BBC programme on the Cardiff Blitz, and fingerprint registers on Crimewatch Roadshow, in both of which Senior Archivist Rhian Diggins appeared. She was also interviewed on Good Morning Wales about juvenile crime after a blog post featured the registers. Made in Cardiff TV filmed a piece on the Cardiff race riots of 1919 in the searchroom and included us in a piece on the Rugby World Cup while Heno featured the Strikes and Riots exhibition.

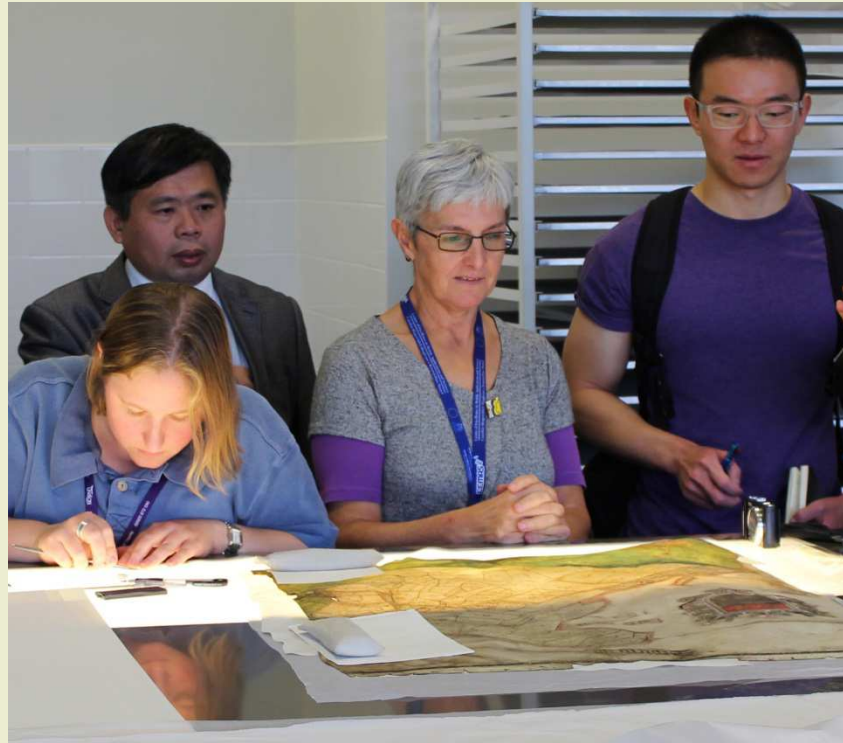




Kids Take Over Day was filmed for the children's news show, *Ffeil*, on S4C, ITV News Wales used archive photographs from the south Wales tornado of 1913 to illustrate a severe weather item and NoFitState Circus filmed in the building as part of their project to record their 30 year history.

We continue to share our experience of delivering both a new building and a quality service in straightened times with colleagues in the UK and beyond. The Glamorgan Archivist was a keynote speaker at the launch of the Expert Review of Local Museum Provision in Wales and, even more surprisingly, at a conference of Flemish heritage professionals in Brussels where the theme was skill sharing. The CLOCH project was explained and compared with the current Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) Skills for the Future programme represented at the conference by the Archivist from Ballet Rambert.

This year's international visitors were professionals of the Archives Administration of Guangxi and the Municipal Archives of Nanning, Liuzhou, Chongzuo and Hechi, all Directors and a Division Chief, who came to learn about our approach to archival storage and preservation. They were particularly interested in conservation, the provision of on-line catalogues, governance and funding. The catalogue produced a number of records relating to Glamorgan's connections with China, a selection of which were produced for them to see. There were entries from a late 19th century travel diary, alien registration cards, a Police photograph register of stowaways, the visit of the Chinese ambassador to the Lord Mayor of Cardiff in 1986 and a letter sent to an address in Canton, Cardiff in the 1930s which had been misdirected to Canton, China, before correct delivery with Chinese postmark. They were, however, most impressed with the older documents displayed as samples of our holdings, especially medieval parchment deeds and wax seals.



In summary

Our resilience has been tested this year in many ways. Losing the knowledge and experience of long-serving staff is never welcome. The usual trade-off in gains through recruiting more recently qualified staff with the potential addition of fresh perspectives and new skills has not been available. The temporary absence of other essential staff has had the side effect of testing the flexibility of our establishment and providing opportunities for us all to put into practice previously little used training and skills. Volunteers continue to help us in the detailed tasks which would otherwise not be completed especially in conservation, data entry from hard copy indexes, and research. Blog posts are now almost entirely the work of volunteers.

The Glamorgan Archives Joint Committee is our governing body and continues to support and to encourage us in the direction we are steering the service. Its membership varies although we have been fortunate in attracting many elected members who have remained on the committee for a long time, bringing continuity and wise judgement to our problems. This year we were sad to lose two such, both of whom originally joined the committee as members of Mid Glamorgan County Council. Cllr. Ray Davies of Caerphilly CBC died on 7 May 2015, closely followed by T. Graham Davies, former Mayor of Merthyr Tydfil, on 24th May. They are greatly missed.



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