News Letter - Cylchlythyr

Haf 2015 Summer

Welcome to the first edition of our newsletter. Since re-opening the museum three years ago public awareness of our presence has slowly increased and at this date (Mid August) visitor numbers are up 28% on last year.

This first newsletter is an introduction to the museum, our aims, ambitions and hopes. Future editions will contain articles by volunteers and others and news items.

Croeso i'r rhifyn cyntaf o'n cylchlythyr. Ers ail-agor yr amgueddfa dair blynedd yn ôl mae ymwybyddiaeth y cyhoedd o'n presenoldeb wedi tyfu'n araf ac ar y dyddiad hwn (Canol Awst) mae 'r nifer yr ymwelwyr wedi cynyddu 28 % ar y llynedd .

Mae'r cylchlythyr cyntaf hwn yn gyflwyniad i'r amgueddfa , ein nodau , uchelgeisiau a gobeithion. Bydd rhifynnau nesaf yn cynnwys erthyglau gan wirfoddolwyr ac eitemau newyddion.

History of the Museum

In the 1970s the West Country ketch "Garlandstone" lay neglected at Barmouth. She was rescued from this sad state by Mr. R.A. Kyffin and Mr. Colin Lansdown of Porthmadog who brought her to that port and began the long, slow process of extensive restoration that she needed after years of neglect. A small museum of the slate trade was established on the quay alongside the Garlandstone's berth

In due course the Gwynedd Maritime Museum was established at the present site and the private museum was absorbed into it. The Garlandstone was purchased by the National Museum of Wales. Eventually, financial and maintenence restraints led to the unavoidable decision to relinquish her and she was placed on charter to the Morwellham and Tamar Valley Trust for forty-two years. She was towed round to Morwellham, in Devon, close to where she was built and where she lies today.

A donation from a member of the public and support from Gwynedd Council enabled the present museum to be established in 1987. Mr Eifion Davies of Borth y Gest manned the desk full time until his untimely illness in 2007. A shortage of volunteers then forced the museum to close.

During the 200th anniversary celebration of the building of the "Cob" in 2011 Dr John Jones-Morris, one of the trustees, was asked if he would put on a display of the maritime history of the town. (He had occasionally been opening the museum for private visits). This was well received and it was decided to make a call for volunteers with the aim of reopening. A well attended meeting held at the Yacht Club in 2012 resulted in a group of volunteers setting to and tidy up the displays.
A very welcome grant from Magnox enabled us to set up new display areas for the re-opening; donations from the Chapman and Rebecca Trusts and income from our small admission fee and book sales has allowed us to be financially independent of local and national governments and the present cuts in funding.

The museum was officially reopened by Lord Dafydd Ellis Thomas on the 25th May 2013.

Building

Extensive renovation and rebuilding took place in the 1980s when the museum was first established at this site. It is in good condition and major repairs are not needed at present. A store room and office area has been set up and a wooden shed erected at the rear. However, storage space is still a problem.

Displays

The original displays were installed by professionals to a high standard. Modern museum interpretation now includes interaction with the public. A start has been made with a children's activity area, recreated ship's galley, items that can be handled and a media centre.
The scope has been widened from only the slate trade and locally built ships to deep sea ships owned locally, the trade on the Dwyryd, the men of the Merchant Navy, War at sea, SS Florence Cooke, Special cargoes brought in, foundries and the synergy with the slate quarries and the narrow gauge railways and tramways.

Accreditation and the Future

The museum is a member of the following organisations: Association of Independent Museums (AIM), the Federation of Art Galleries and Museums in Wales, the Maritime Heritage Trust, the Federation of Gwynedd and Anglesey Maritime Museums. CyMAL has become the Museums Archives and Libraries Division (MALD) of the Welsh Government that provides guidance and advice.

We hope to gain accreditation by the end of the summer. Patricia Layzell-Ward is leading the team that is putting the paperwork (a vast amount) together. She has wide experience of working in libraries, museums and archives and has put many hours in to this project. Nêst Thomas, head of Museums and Art Galleries at Gwynedd Council has generously agreed to be our mentor. A large task scheduled to get underway in the Autumn is to catalogue every object in the Museum and check ownership records. In the next edition of the newsletter Patricia will tell us more about what is required. Gaining accreditation will give us access to grants, training courses and advice from experienced organisations.

The front desk is run by a small hard core of volunteers. "Fresh Blood" is always required to ensure the future of the museum.

A message from Moragh Bradshaw our volunteer coordinator -
Working as a volunteer with the museum can be enjoyable and rewarding. You will meet interesting people when acting as a steward or helping to care for the exhibits. If you think you might be interested please contact us by e-mail at volunteering@porthmadogmaritimemuseum.org.uk or telephone Moragh on 01766-770034

Neges gan Moragh Bradshaw ein cydlynydd gwirfoddolwyr -
Gall gweithio fel gwirfoddolwr gyda'r amgueddfa fod yn bleserus ac yn werth chweil. Byddwch yn cyfarfod â phobl ddiddorol wrth weithredu fel stiward neu helpu i ofalu am yr arddangosion. Os ydych yn credu y gallech fod â diddordeb, cysylltwch â ni drwy e -bost ar gwirfoddoli@porthmadogmaritimemuseum.org.uk neu ffoniwch Moragh ar 01766-770034

Artefacts

Several artefacts have been received since re-opening. In fact we have had to be discerning and only accept items that have local maritime connections. Three original paintings and several old prints of ships have been loaned or donated and copies bought or made of paintings of important vessels. Where necessary originals have been professionally cleaned and re-framed.
The new artefacts and acquisitions are too numerous to list but here are some examples



Edward Arthur

Schooner built Porthmadog in 1877 by Williams. Owner and Master John Williams of Minffordd. This model was made and bequeathed to the museum by Mr Peter Morgan Williams

This piece of timber is from the brig "Fleetwing" built at Borth y Gest. The vessel had lain at Port Stanley since 1911 and was only recently broken up. The item was presented to the museum by Gareth Davies who had recently visited the Falklands.





Cross Stich Sampler
Made by Laura B. Roberts aged 13, Ty Gwyn, in 1888 during a voyage onboard her father's ship the "Ann and Jane Pritchard"

Builder's Model of Sister - Full Rigged Sailing Ships Cambrian Prince and Cambrian Princess. These two vessels were built at Southampton in 1876-7 for Captain Thomas Williams of Parciau, Criccieth. The 7' model was presented to the museum by Ysgol Treferthyr Criccieth School



Our Visitors

Well, they have come in from all corners of the world. We have had school visits and other local groups though we need to develop this especially the schools. It would be nice to see more local folk though many who grew up in the district, and have moved away, have called in. Several of these have made enquiries about their maritime ancestors. Enquiries are also received via the website and the Facebook page. More about this in the research section.

Many of the visitors have interesting stories to tell. Here is an example of one.

19th August 2015
Ymwelodd Capten John Lowe yr amgueddfa heddiw. Harold Lowe, 5ed Swyddog y TITANIC oedd ei Daid –

Captain John Lowe visited the museum today. His Grandfather was Harold Lowe, 5th Officer of the TITANIC.
Harold Lowe was raised in Barmouth and went away to sea at the age of 14 on Aberdovey and Barmouth owned schooners in the Porthmadog slate trade. Here Capt. Lowe stands beneath the model of the TITANIC at the museum.



Dewi Jones has been analysing the visitor's book and we will have a list of where they all come from. This will be in the next edition of the newsletter.

Enquiries and Research

There has been a steady stream of enquiries at the desk and via the internet. These often take the form of "My great Grandfather sailed on Porthmadog ships. Do you have any information?" In Wales there was a short supply of surnames; in fact up to the start of the 19thC folk often still took their father's Christian name as a second name. The Joneses, Davieses, Griffith(s), Pri(t)chards, Owen(s) can be daunting. Main thing is to get a date and place of birth to start homing in. Middle names are a great help.

We have an excellent reference library with many classic books by authors such as the late Aled Eames, Lewis Lloyd and Basil Lubock. These are well worth a read and the answers to many questions lie in these books. They all contain lists of local ships with summaries of their histories and fate. Many of the seafarers are also mentioned. The books should be the first step in any research.

The computer in the office is getting set up and some basic databases have been uploaded. However these will represent perhaps 4-500 locally built or owned ships. At the turn of the last century there were perhaps 10-15,000

British registered ships and Welshmen sailed on all of them. The only way to go is through the internet. We now have broadband and Internet Explorer and Google both have the main websites saved on the Bookmark/Favourite bars. The research booklet has many websites and hints listed.



Robin Anthony Kyffin 1939-2015 . It is with sadness that we announce the death of Robin Kyffin. One of the founders of Porthmadog Maritime Museum. In the 1970s he brought the ketch “Garlandstone” to the port which developed into the museum. He will be greatly missed

Gyda thristwch yr ydym yn cyhoeddi marwolaeth Robin Kyffin. Un o sefydlwyr Amgueddfa’r Môr Porthmadog . Daeth y long “Garlandstone " i'r porthladd a ddatblygodd i'r amgueddfa. Bydd colled fawr iawn ar ei ôl.

Any suggestions, articles (short) and news items for inclusion in future editions would be gratefully received.

Robert Dafydd Cadwalader
Secretary enquiries@porthmadogmaritimemuseum.org.uk

Byddwn yn diolchgar am unrhyw awgrymiadau, erthyglau (byr) ac eitemau newyddion i'w cynnwys mewn rhifynnau yn y dyfodol.
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