

## MORGANNWG 2005

### News from the Glamorgan Record Office

I am pleased to report that the year has seen considerable progress towards a New Glamorgan Record Office. The original scheme has been developed into a series of projects which will take the Record Office forward into the 21<sup>st</sup> century with the aim of:

- Providing a service accessible for the whole population of our contributing authorities
- Delivering services within an environment conducive to learning and research
- Making all the Collection available on demand
- Accommodating the needs of larger user groups
- Storing all the Collection in environmentally sound and future proof accommodation
- Operating modern conservation facilities
- Offering appropriate stewardship facilities
- Achieving optimal efficiency in service delivery

An Outline Business Case exploring the ways in which a new Office can be procured was produced at the end of 2004 and presented to the Glamorgan Archives Joint Committee which agreed to its recommendations in December of that year. Reports were then presented to the six authorities which contribute to the Record Office seeking their agreement to its findings and their support for the financing of the new building. By the end of September 2005 all had agreed to move on to the next step and in October a notice was placed in the Official Journal of the European Union initiating a restricted tender process. Bidders will be issued with tender packs early in the New Year so that construction can start during 2006. After extensive research, including a questionnaire completed by over 900 respondents, it has been decided that the best location for the new facility is Cardiff. All six local authorities to which the Record Office provides a service have agreed.

The procurement will be through a Private Developer Scheme with the purchase of a site and a bespoke building combined. This has been demonstrated as the most effective way of providing the new accommodation. To support this method of procurement a great deal of effort has been expended on producing an output specification which details exactly what the new building must do. The process began in 2001 with the production of a first draft of the design brief. This was tested in a joint project with the Welsh School of Architecture at Cardiff University in which four students produced plans and models from the brief, with Record Office staff acting as live clients.

More recently staff have been working closely with the consultants WS Atkins (in a team which includes the architect of the recently opened Devon Record Office) to produce a detailed Design Criteria Statement. This lays out exactly how the new building should function. Throughout the development of the design stress has been laid most heavily on what the building needs to do rather than what it will look like. This is particularly important as the new building will be the home of the Glamorgan Record Office for many years to come.

The new building, containing around 3300m<sup>2</sup> of space, will include:

- A large public searchroom
- Special facilities for groups and schools
- A modern paper conservation laboratory
- Environmentally controlled storage to help preserve the Collection

Further information including detailed room data sheets is contained in the draft Design Criteria Statement, available on our web site ([www.glamro.gov.uk](http://www.glamro.gov.uk)). Currently a great deal of work is being carried out to improve this document; any comments would be gratefully received

In preparation for the move the repackaging programme has been accelerated with the aid of a new piece of equipment, a 'Kasemake' box machine. Purchased with the help of a grant from CyMAL the machine was assembled by the supplier's technicians in the conservation studio during May 2005. The new project should see 25,000 volumes cleaned and packed into custom made protective boxes before the move begins.

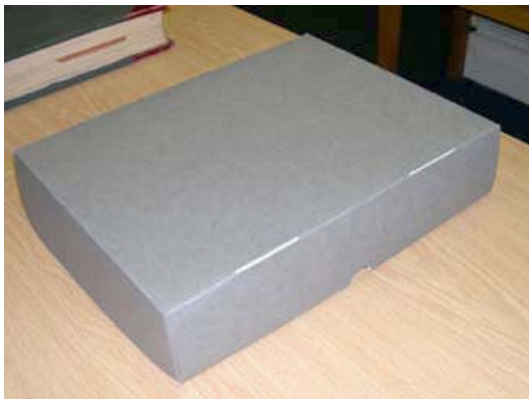
The process starts when an archivist identifies the volumes and ensures that they are marked with the correct reference code. It is essential that all items are clearly identifiable before they are boxed and moved. A member of the conservation team then measures the volumes in the strongroom using a simple but effective measuring device, feeding the information directly onto a laptop computer. The accumulated data is transferred from the laptop to the computer controlling the box making machine in the conservation studio. The Conservator calculates the best fit to make the most of each sheet of archival card and individual boxes can then be cut using the machine. The software enables a variety of boxes to be cut from a single sheet thereby minimising waste. As well as cutting and creasing the card the machine writes the document reference on the cover. The volumes are cleaned and put into the bespoke packaging, returned to the shelf and the locations database is updated.



the volume before



measuring the volume



the volume boxed

Current estimates are that staff can now produce over 300 bespoke covers for volumes every week. This means that not only will these items be properly protected during the move but, when it is completed, will continue to receive the preservation benefits afforded by such packaging. CyMal further assisted the project with a grant for the initial purchase of archival card. External grant aid is being sought from other sources to complete the project.



Before



and after

Cymal also provided a grant for the Office to buy a cleaning machine to speed the packaging programme and safeguard the health and safety of staff. The machine consists of a down flow work station which extracts air from around the work surface. This produces a containment airflow which safely removes dust and mould particles, trapping them with particulate filters inside the machine. Conservation staff can now clean volumes in situ rather than waiting for a clear dry day and taking their tables and brushes into the car park, as used to be the case.

Progress with the new building will be reported regularly in the Office Newsletter and on our website.

On the public front, staff have kept busy promoting our services to prospective users. This year has again seen fresh approaches, although nothing as exciting as last autumn's television advertisement which saw our web hits leap by 500 on one night when it aired during "I'm a Celebrity Get Me Out Of Here!" With a grant from Cymal a single-board promotional display was commissioned. After a tour of the six authorities' Annual General Meetings, giving our councillors an opportunity to find out more about the service in which they were investing, the display has been used at a number of public events, including careers days, and the major family history fair held at Cardiff City Hall, part of the city's centenary celebrations, which drew an informed crowd of over 1,500 in the course of the day. On these occasions its simple message is enhanced with a looping PowerPoint presentation on the services we provide, illustrated with a range of documents. It is also being used to advertise the Office in less traditional locations. McArthur Glenn shopping mall might not be the most obvious place to find out about the Record Office, but staff have taken the display board out and leafleted shoppers on several occasions and with considerable success.

McArthur Glen, Bridgend



Careers Fair, Cardiff University

Cardiff's double celebrations in 2005 provided many opportunities to find new audiences for the Building of a Capital display. The exhibition, originally produced as part of the Heritage Lottery funded project to conserve and open access to the City's building regulation plans, has featured in a Llafur Day School, a UK conference on the Victorian Terraced House, a two-day European conference on decision making for sustainable urban development hosted by Cardiff University's Welsh School of Architecture and for a month at the Burges Exhibition at the Old Library. On the latter occasion, which attracted a total of 3,000 visitors, an archivist was filmed delivering a talk on

house history. The film, further illustrated with her prepared PowerPoint presentation, was then shown at intervals throughout the period of the exhibition. I hope to develop this pilot in the course of next year, particularly for presentations on preservation and conservation, for which there is a high demand off-site but limited staff resources for delivery. Watch out for a “virtual archive professional” at a venue near you in 2006!

**Susan Edwards**  
**November 2005**