

MORGANNWG 2010

News from Glamorgan Archives

The launch year

Staff began the year in the new building, at first with a single working telephone and little furniture. Tours for depositors and regular users had been arranged in 2009 with invitations included in Christmas cards sent to 3,000 individuals. Despite the severe weather, 220 people took up our offer. Feedback was enthusiastic and we also received many requests for visits later in the year when the weather improved; these have since been accommodated. Once the searchroom furniture arrived the building was opened up to individual users from mid February, with the first week by invitation to allow for systems testing. Individual use is increasing slowly but visits by groups rapidly became a regular feature in the new building, encouraged by the launch year offer of a free first visit. Groups welcomed have included several family history courses, history societies from throughout our funding authorities, special interest societies and educational institutions and support agencies. National and regional organisations have made use of the improved facilities for their meetings. Professional colleagues planning new buildings have come to tour the building and discuss the project from all over the UK. One local MP, one Australian MP, and two Assembly ministers were among the VIPs received over the year.

Launch events focussed on different parts of the service. In March a tour of the building with emphasis on conservation facilities was the opening event for the Cardiff conference of the Institute of Conservation (ICON). Sixty international conservators attended. In April the Open University chose the venue to launch its new local history MA. The evening event was attended by 35 academics, including the Head of the Open University in Wales. The public space on the ground floor accommodated a lecture by Professor Chris Williams of Swansea University, a display of documents and a splendid buffet, all carefully zoned. More academics followed with a meeting of History Research Wales attended by 32 academics from universities all over Wales. The theme of the day was how to enhance the profile and maximise the impact of historical research. Regular educational events have continued in the new premises with Digital Storytelling led by the National Museum of Wales, teacher familiarisation days co-ordinated with Careers Wales and EBP, monthly meetings of post-graduate users and school visits from Hengoed Primary and Cardinal Newman Comprehensive.

In a new venture, Colin Thomas, documentary film-maker, gave an evening lecture on 'Whatever Happened to Hughesovka?' at Glamorgan Archives in November. The audience included several descendants of those whose families went out to work in Hughesovka, students of Russian history and the Lithuanian consul. Colin Thomas has been involved in the Hughesovka story for many years and showed extracts from his television series and radio plays

on the subject. This is likely to be the start of a regular lecture series which will be developed next year.

Professional bodies choosing the new building for an event or meeting have included the National Council on Archives, Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments Wales, CyMAL Advisory Council (in this case the first time the body had met outside CyMAL offices in Aberystwyth since its inception), and the Life Long Learning UK Library Archives and Information Services Panel. The Advisory Council met on a day South Wales Police were practicing riot control at the football stadium and adjacent approach road; the minister was most impressed with the extra security! The Society of Archivists held its Wales digital records roadshow here and the Wales and South West regions of the society held a joint meeting on site. Tours of the building were a feature of the events, and have proved so popular that they are now a regular monthly feature, bookable in advance.

The launch year has been highly successful with 2,000 people attending meetings and events. Bookings have already been taken for 2011 with staff ready to apply lessons learned to improving this developing aspect of the service.

Access

To meet the higher standard set by the accommodation finding aids are being brought into the twenty-first century. Hand list binders have been banished from the searchroom as public access computers make them available electronically. The catalogue has been converted to CALM, an archival software which allows key-word searches. This is currently available only in the building and needs additional editorial work; watch this space next year for developments which should include full internet access. Users have entered the computer age with minimum difficulty. Staff guidance and some revisions to the search interface have resolved teething problems, and many people have managed to locate items that they would not previously have known existed. The new system is an excellent tool for staff who have ready access to the whole of the catalogue in answering enquiries. The secure wireless access means that they can work anywhere in the building (except, for the moment, the repository block) with the same access to information.

Parish registers are also available electronically in the building. The resource combines a database of the parish register indexes compiled by the Glamorgan Family History Society with digital images of the registers for parishes in the diocese of Llandaff filmed by the Genealogical Society of Utah. The resource can be searched in a variety of ways and the digital images are of a particularly high quality, allowing searchers to zoom in to individual entries; the electronic equivalent of a magnifying glass.

A trial period of out of hours opening comes to an end in December. In response to requests previously received opening hours were extended by one Saturday morning each month, from 9 to 12, and until 8pm on the following Monday. The service was exactly the same as during regular hours, with no need for advance notice and documents produced on demand. All

who visited during the extended hours were asked to complete a survey to establish whether current hours met their needs. The survey results will be analysed but it is already clear that over half of the users who have taken advantage of the extended hours could not visit at any other time, almost all being in full-time work or education.

Links with media and film have continued into the new building with news and documentary programmes being filmed on site. To commemorate the centenary of Scott's exhibition letters from Wilfred Bruce, his brother-in-law, who sailed with the *Terra Nova* from Cardiff (ref. DSS) were filmed for the ITV news. Although we have yet to organise a celebrity launch for the new building the year has seen staff interacting with a variety of the species both on and off site. BBC Wales' genealogical programme, *Coming Home*, used documents from the Collection in the programmes on Michael Sheen and Michael Ball while Sarah Green was filmed in the searchroom. Local television company Green Bay TV filmed Eddie Butler, former Welsh rugby international and television commentator, consulting documents and photographs relating to the Tonypandy Riots for a documentary marking their centenary.

The acceptance of the Bruce and Lyndhurst papers by the Government in lieu of inheritance tax (of which more below) attracted widespread publicity. The articles included images taken from the collection, including one of Edward Lear's amusing pen sketches. Susan Edwards, Glamorgan Archivist, was interviewed for the BBC Radio Wales Drive Time programme and Richard Morgan, Archivist, appeared on S4C's *Newyddion* which ran an extensive piece on the collection, largely filmed in the Archives.

The Collection

The original deposit, consisting of the papers of Lord Lyndhurst was received from Lord Aberdare in the 1960s. Over the years more material was added by Lord Aberdare relating to the Duffryn Estate and his family from Cefnpennar House in Mountain Ash, his house in London and his agent's offices in Mountain Ash.

The papers are the records of the Bruce family, Barons Aberdare and they shed light not only on the history of south Wales through the family estate papers, but also on some of the foremost politicians, artists and authors of the mid-nineteenth century through the correspondence of Henry Austin Bruce (1815-1895). He was created first Baron Aberdare in 1873 and served as Liberal MP for Merthyr Tydfil, as well as holding a number of political offices including Home Secretary. Among his correspondents are such prominent figures as Robert Browning, Thomas Carlyle, Benjamin Disraeli, William Gladstone, Edward Lear, William Holman Hunt, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Anthony Trollope and Queen Victoria. The topics range from Gladstone's anxiety over troubles in Ireland, Queen Victoria's concern for Bruce's sick child to light-hearted banter from poet and artist Edward Lear. Other members of the Bruce household were also in correspondence with other celebrities of the day, including J.M. Barrie, and Elizabeth Bowes-Lyon. Lord Lyndhurst, John Singleton Copley (1772-1863), son of the famous painter of the same

name, was linked to the Bruce family and his papers will also be available at the Glamorgan Archives. John Singleton Copley junior was born in Boston, Massachusetts and later moved to England where he became a barrister, rising through the ranks to become Lord Chancellor. He also moved in interesting circles and corresponded with leading politicians, artists and authors of his day.

Accessions have been coming in at an increased rate since the move, all the more when potential depositors are able to see the massively improved facilities the service is now offering. Several major transport collections are being received including the M4 Motorway Archive and the Chris Taylor Collection. Details of accessions are recorded in the quarterly reports to the Glamorgan Archives Joint Committee, available on Cardiff County Council's website at www.cardiff.gov.uk ,

Grants

A grant of over £6,500 for a project entitled 'Turning Back Time' has been received from CyMAL (Museums, Archives and Libraries, Wales). Glamorgan Archives holds tithe plans for about 50 parishes in the diocese of Llandaff, roughly half the ancient parishes in the diocese. The project has funded restorative conservation on four tithe plans identified through a conservation assessment as being particularly fragile. The series has always been heavily used and many plans were repaired in the 1950s and 60s at the Public Record Office and in-house using treatments and materials which it is now necessary to reverse. The project thus has an interest for the history of conservation in the UK. As the maps are physically large the wallboard in the conservation studio has been in regular use for the first time. Various linked projects using volunteers are planned including partnerships with local history societies to index the tithe apportionments for these parishes by both personal and place/field name. The index would link into the plans and make them much easier to use and to understand. It is intended that aspects of this project will inform the methodology of a proposed Archives and Records Council Wales project to digitise all of Wales' tithe maps, for which a grant application has been submitted to the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The grant funded the employment of an external conservator to assist the in-house conservator. The team has worked so well that 5 plans have so far been conserved, Elwysilan, Wenvoe, Cowbridge, Pendoylan and Llantrythid, with Aberdare outstanding for the second phase which will also see the development of the community engagement proposals.

The Archives is the lead partner in a £250,000 Heritage Lottery project under the Skills for the Future strand in partnership with a consortium of libraries and museums from across south Wales. The project will train a cohort of unemployed youth in basic conservation, digitisation and community engagement, giving them skills identified as scarce in the sector at a non-professional level and improving their chance of employment. The project is called Conserving Local Communities Heritage, CLOCH for short. A training plan has been accepted and the project will move into the initial phase with the employment of staff from January.

The key to the success of the building is its flexibility both in terms of room use and in the furnishing. Foldable tables with castors can be easily moved between spaces and reconfigured for use by groups, researchers or staff. Even the chairs are flexible; one batch converts into individual desks, a feature which never fails to impress. The aspirations for the service in its new accommodation are already being met and will be further developed in coming years, a credit to all the staff who worked on the preparation and planning for the eventual move. Comment from users has been largely favourable and professional colleagues are complimentary. Dr. Christopher Kitching, an authority on archive buildings, visited in the course of updating his book on British archive facilities. He said: *I'm sure it is one of the biggest (and best) local authority archives in the UK, and I was most impressed by the degree of flexibility you have been able to build into the spaces, with careful planning.*

I look forward to welcoming readers to Glamorgan Archives in the hope that you will enjoy it as much as we do.

Susan Edwards
Glamorgan Archivist