

As we welcome the opening of Gwynedd's new museum in Bangor - along with its five 'satellites' in other parts of the county - its Curator & Project Manager, **ESTHER ELIN ROBERTS**, takes us on a behind the scenes tour of the new facilities



STORIEL - at the heart of Bangor is open.

With its new name, STORIEL, Gwynedd's Museum & Art Gallery has moved across Ffordd Gwynedd to its new premises. Formerly the old 'Town' Hall, the Bishop's Palace has been renovated over the last eighteen months, as part of a £2.6 million project supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, as well as other funders.

There are four main strands to the project;

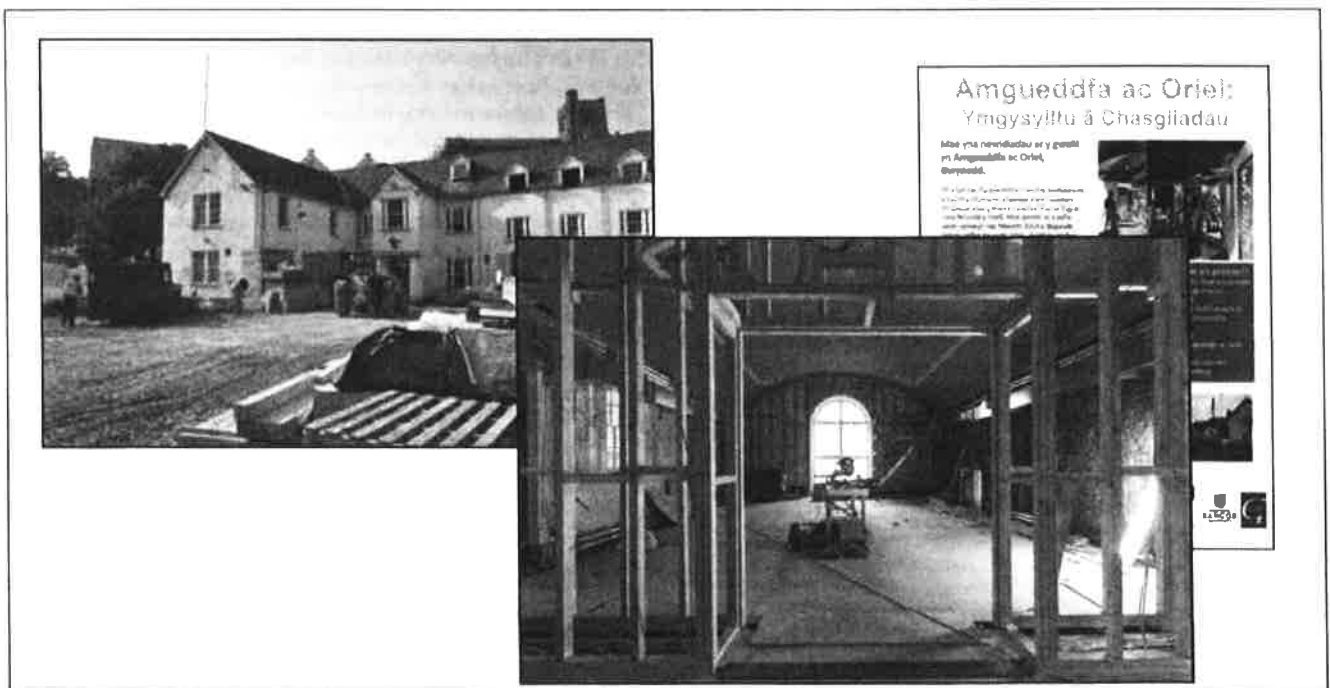
1. Renovating and interpreting the Bishop's Palace and to make it an accessible and welcoming new venue for the museum and gallery
2. Reinterpreting the museum collections
3. Improving management and access of 'hidden' collections within Bangor University
4. Engaging communities across Gwynedd with our collections through county wide exhibitions and activities

There are three art gallery spaces - some of them with Government Indemnity Standards (GIS), three museum spaces, gift shop and café as well as a large learning space for school visits and lectures or can be divided into three meeting spaces. We have opened our doors but the work is not yet complete - we will be adding computers into each of the galleries so that we can provide additional context to a group of objects displayed as well as additional information about some of the objects. This will include additional photography, video (archival footage as well as newly commis-

sioned film work). We are also working on photographing our collection so that these can be searched easily online. There will be a new website for STORIEL, coming soon. Outside, we are working on a planting scheme for the Bishop's Palace. Working with Treborth Botanical Gardens and the Tidy Towns Scheme, the brief is to reflect the historic nature of the building - planting shrubs and herbs such as rosemary, thyme and lavender that might be in a Bishop's kitchen garden.

During the renovation works, archaeologists were called in several times to record features of architectural interest - both inside and outside. As the oldest building in Bangor, after the Cathedral, this was to be expected. In 2009, a dendrochronology project, Dating Old Welsh Houses, dated the beams in the south east wing of the building to 1546. This would have been during Arthur Bulkeley's time as Bishop. We are hopeful that beams discovered during renovation works in the area that is now the reception and shop area may date even earlier - perhaps to around 1500 when Bishop Henry Deane embarked on reconstruction works of the Cathedral and the Bishop's Palace.

Outside, an extensive cobbled surface was found, with a path leading from the main entrance of the Palace to the Cathedral. We changed the landscaping designs to reflect this physical link between Palace and Cathedral. A foot underneath the cobbles, an extensive crazy paving slate surface was found. We are hoping to be able to date these once post excavation works at Gwynedd Archaeology Trust are complete.



The three main museum galleries are titled; 'Introducing the Collections', 'Life and Work' and 'Connections'. The introductory galleries give an overview of the strengths of the collections - costume and furniture from the 17th to 20th century, archaeology and social history highlights. The gallery outlines Bangor University's role in collecting, from the very inception of the University in 1884.

The second gallery, 'Life and Work' introduces a more thematic approach to the collections. Themes include religion, education, life rituals, traditions and culture, leisure and the home. Items such as the King of Bardsey's Crown (on loan from Liverpool Maritime Museum), The Four Alls Tavern Sign painted by D.J. Williams in 1848, personalia belonging to Rev. John Elias and traditional objects such as egg clappers or the mysterious cursing pots are on display.

been improved – we have secured specialist art racking for the safe storage of the University's impressive art collections. Regular monthly guided tours are offered to the public of the art and ceramic collections – in Welsh and English and a promotional booklet, '100 Treasures' will be published by the summer.

At five locations across the county –

- Llanbedrog,
- Blaenau Ffestiniog,
- Llanberis,
- Tywyn and
- Dolgellau,

there will be a small exhibition with a secure case, panel and further information with items from our collection on loan, or items collected locally, or a combination of both. In addition to these exhibitions, various projects and activities



The third gallery, 'Connections', explores connections of Gwynedd with the wider world – through colonisation, war, politics, the maritime and extraction industries. The Connections Gallery also includes a section titled 'Inspirational Characters' which is likely to be of interest to members of the Gwynedd Family History Society.

We are inviting visitors to nominate names of people to be included in this section. Literary figures such as R.Williams Parry, T.H.Parry Williams, Brenda Chamberlain, Caradog Pritchard feature heavily here - alongside politicians such as David Lloyd George and Tom Ellis. We have some artefacts relating to scientists, such as Sir William Preece and W.Charles Evans. As a bio-chemist, W.Charles Evans' Kipp's apparatus was used to work with small volumes of gases. His great achievement was to explain how microbes can degrade complex aromatic molecules, a process of great environmental significance e.g. in detoxifying oil spills and pesticides. Women achievers are under-represented in our collections. Your suggestions of inspirational characters to be included would be welcomed – especially if there are relevant artefacts and or images associated with them.

At Bangor University, we have been busy improving the management of the University collections. They include Zoology, Geology, a Herbarium, Ceramics, Art, Musical Instruments belonging to Peter Crossley Holland and a Damaged Wood Collection. All the items are now recorded on a museum database which will be available to search online by the end of the project. Storage of the collections have

are ongoing. Examples include taking part in the R.Williams Parry day in Nantlle, recording oral history of agriculture implements with Meirionnydd Young Farmers, making a film about the rock cannons in Llanberis with the local youth group. We also have been training local community groups to use oral history and scanning equipment, organising school visits to STORIEL as well as visits to schools and community groups.

The main funders are; Heritage Lottery Fund, Mon Menai through Welsh Government, Arts Council of Wales, Bangor University, Gwynedd Council, The Wolfson Foundation, Garfield Weston Foundation, The Ashley Family Foundation, CADW, Welsh Slate.

Our opening hours are now increased to Tuesday to Saturday, 11-5. Admission is free. Group visits can be arranged out of hours.

By the time that GFHS members receive and read this article we will already have hosted a visit by the Bangor Branch of the Society.

The Museum provides so much information that gives substance and context to the lives of our forebears here in Gwynedd. Our new facilities at Storiell mean that our on-site team of Collections and Heritage Officers and front of house staff are now far better placed to illustrate and interpret those times for you. ■