



Progress report April 1 2018 – March 31 2019

Background and Introduction

Steady progress was made in the Museum during the year. The summer of 2018 saw an increase in the number of visitors compared to 2017 and the Museum's first organised visits from school parties. The major reorganisation of the displays on the top floor that had been made in the autumn and winter of 2017/18 were very well received and a number of other activities were introduced. Further improvements were made to the displays and the care and management of the collection during the same period when the Museum was closed.

Governance arrangements

The governance arrangements continued unchanged. The Museum remains the responsibility of a Committee of the Montgomeryshire Community Regeneration Association, the charity that owns the building. The Committee's responsibilities include raising all the necessary funds and managing the Museum on a day to day basis. However, the Museum's finances are managed through the MCRA (but with a separate bank account) and the MCRA's accounts incorporate the Museum finances.

The need for the Museum to be managed as an independent organisation with an appropriate governance structure is recognised by the MCRA and Committee members. But a number of issues relating to the initial transfer to the MCRA have to be resolved before a new body can be created. The MCRA sought legal advice in the summer of 2018. This confirmed some irregularities with the transfer which were taken up with Powys County Council in March 2019 but are not yet resolved.

The Museum is run entirely by volunteers, with some invaluable support from the MCRA's staff member. The number of Committee members varied through the year with some members leaving and others joining. The specific roles of Chair, Secretary, Curator, Finance officer, and Administration officer did not change. The Conservation Officer resigned during the year and another Committee member took on the role. He attended two training days, funded by the Federation of Welsh Museums, to supplement his knowledge and experience. In addition to the Committee members, around 35 people volunteer to help the Museum as hosts and in a number of other ways.

Achievements in the year

The five main strands to the Committee's work during this period covered:

- attracting visitors and providing them with an interesting and enjoyable experience;
- improving the displays

- maintaining the building in good repair and meeting all statutory requirements.
- conserving, caring for and managing the collection of artefacts.
- raising the necessary funds.

Attracting visitors and providing them with an interesting and enjoyable experience

Providing an interesting and enjoyable experience

The Museum's 'unique selling point' is its building and that it is the last remaining one in a near original state of the 82 or so hand loom 'factories' that existed in Newtown by the 1840s. It provides a structure for what is shown in the Museum. The three key themes continue to be: the story of wool - from fleece to flannel; the social and industrial history of Newtown in the 19th century; and the experience of living and working in the building that now houses the Museum. These themes are picked up in a variety of ways in the displays on the four floors, including a number of digital displays and videos. Changes and improvements are being made to these permanent displays every year.

The permanent displays are augmented by special exhibitions. Throughout the summer there was a small exhibition focused on Welsh costumes with some clothes on models and display boards lent by an expert on the subject, Michael Freeman. A second special exhibition was put following an offer from Wonderwool Wales to show some poppies that had been made to mark the end of World War 1. Without realising the scale of the endeavour, we accepted the poppies for display in September. In the event we were only able to put up about a third of the 79,000 that had been made. They were strung on strands of up to 4 metres and we were luckily able to hang them in the stairwell where they looked wonderful and attracted visitors who hadn't come before.

Other activities to attract visitors included demonstrations of spinning and/or weaving which were held at least once a month. There was also a visit for a day from the clog maker from St Fagans National Museum of History, one of a limited number of clog makers left in Wales, who demonstrated his skills in the back yard. The feasibility of the Museum organising lectures was explored and resulted in Michael Freeman giving a fascinating lecture about Welsh costumes in the Museum in September.

Feedback from visitors suggests that their visit is enhanced by the welcome they receive and the helpfulness of the Museum's hosts. There are always two volunteer hosts in the Museum when it is open to the public, one in reception and the other elsewhere in the building.

The feedback in relation to the changed displays and the Museum generally was overwhelmingly positive. The comments received included:

"A great improvement and the museum is clearly being very well cared for. We wish you every success.

We loved our visit. Enjoyed being able to see how it was and being able to touch the different flannels and speaking to very knowledgeable people.

Great museum with a lovely feel and comprehensive story of the industry in Newtown.

Thank you! An object lesson in the creation and presentation of a small-town museum. Superb.

Very Inspirational. Loved the top floor reflecting how shopkeepers were.

Great volunteers, lots of knowledge!.

What a wonderful hidden gem right in the heart of Newtown. Superb artefacts and history!

What a fantastic museum - and all run by volunteers, amazing and really interesting. Great to visit a 'proper' museum (unlike cold clinical museums often these days). Wonderful - thank you

A lovely experience - very informative - and the tour guide was great.

Although the Museum formally closed at the end of September as in the previous year a grant from the Federation of Museums and Art Galleries in Wales enabled an event to be held during Welsh Museums Festival week in October. Visit Wales designated 2018 as the Year of the Sea, but we interpreted this as including waterways. An exhibition - *Newtown's Waterways, past and present* was held on October 27 and 28, the past being covered in the Museum itself and the present in a 'pop up' shop in town, The Museum worked in partnership with four organisations involved with Newtown's waterways at the present time: the River Severn Custodians, Open Newtown, Newtown Paddlers and Walking Newtown, and three organisations involved with the restoration of the Montgomery Canal along the whole of its length: the Shropshire Union Canal Society; Montgomery Waterway Restoration Trust and the Town Council's Canal Restoration project. The Museum drew on its own collection to focus on fulling mills, with a display of fulling in the back yard; the Newtown floods; and information about the canal. Walking Newtown also organised a guided Heritage Walk around the Canal area on each of the two days.

Attracting visitors

The Museum's website www.newtowntextilemuseum.co.uk was updated regularly and new activities were promoted there and on the Facebook page. Entries on other relevant free websites were kept up to date and offers from one or two commercial sites were taken up. The Museum also had an entry in Mid-Wales Tourism's annual brochure. The bi-lingual leaflet was distributed around as many other attractions and different kinds of accommodation in the area as volunteers can manage. There were favourable reviews on Trip Advisor and Google. But 'word of mouth' continued to be an important way of people getting to know about the Museum.

The Museum formally opened for the summer on 1 May 2018 and closed at the end of September. The opening hours were the same as the previous year so that it was open for 4 days a week: 12 – 4pm on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Fridays and 10.30 – 4 on Saturdays and Bank Holidays. Two groups of people came for a tour just before we

opened, one group from Les Herbiers in France who visiting Newtown as part of the Town Twinning scheme, and the other were members of Newtown's Rotary Club. This got us off to a good start.

There were fluctuations in the numbers of visitors in any one week or month which are difficult to explain although, not surprisingly, the hot weather in June and July appeared to depress visitor numbers. September saw the largest number of visitors of any month that summer, attracted possibly by the exhibition of poppies. For the summer as a whole there were 1,115 visitors (822 in 2017) including 107 children (98 in 2017) when the Museum was open to the general public. An analysis of the places from which people came, which are recorded in the visitor's book, showed that 30% came from Newtown, 20% from Mid Wales, 8% from abroad and the rest from other parts of the UK. Interestingly, 8% came from Shropshire and 9% from the Midland with only 7% coming from North and South Wales combined. This echoes the main directions of roads and rail which run west/east rather than north/south.

Out of hours tours continued with 8 tours involving a total of 69 people and a further 49 people attended the lecture. Teachers from the local primary school in Penygloddfa approached the Museum to see if they could bring some of their pupils for a visit. This was warmly welcomed and nearly ninety children came in all, in groups of up to 15 for an hour each. They were accompanied by two teachers and two Museum hosts were also involved. The feedback received was extremely positive with one child saying 'it was the best thing I have done this year'. The Museum made no charge but the children decided to make the Museum the recipient of its charitable fundraising and we were given a remarkable £120.

When it came to the Waterways event in October, 88 visitors were recorded at the Museum over the two days, which was a good attendance for us. It was not possible to formally count the visitors to the shop in town but it was assessed as around the same sort of number. Everyone was encouraged to visit both places but not everyone did. Probably 100 -120 people took part in the two days. Donations in the Museum and the pop-up exhibition, plus sales from a small stall in the Museum totalled nearly £300. The feedback from visitors was very positive from both previous visitors and newcomers. The other very positive outcome was the networking that went on between the seven organisations involved which everyone said was extremely useful. This has helped to cement relationships between the Museum and these other organisations and has reaffirmed the positive role that the Museum can play in the development of the town.

With a few people visiting during the winter months by arrangement, the visitor numbers for the year as a whole was therefore around 1,450 (1,100 in 2017).

Improving the displays

The major changes to the displays made over the winter of 2017/2018 were ready just in time for the for the summer opening. The top floor had been the completely reorganised and displayed in more imaginative ways with the addition of the exhibition

of Welsh costumes. Improved lighting was also installed on the top floor, with funds received from various sources. Less radical changes had also made to the displays on the ground floor and in other parts of the building during that winter. A few further changes were made to the displays over the summer months.

The exhibition for the Festival week event was put together almost entirely from material available within the Museum.

The “closed” season from October 2018 to the beginning of May 2019 was again used to make improvements to the displays. One of our Committee members, John Evans, researched the text and photos for new display boards covering the industrial changes in Newtown between 1800 and the 1880s, and information about the Clayton family who were known to have lived in Commercial Street in the 1830s. Smart new boards were printed with funds from the Oakdale Trust and put up in two rooms on the first floor. On the top floor, the Tannery exhibit was moved to a different location, freeing up space that will become our regular ‘summer exhibition’ area. The summer 2019 exhibition “Designed for Liberty” was set up in this space.

An audio tape was commissioned in 2018 to include the sound of looms working, and a description of the experiences of a child in the Clayton family. Unfortunately this was not able to be installed until spring 2019.

Maintaining the building in good repair and meeting statutory and museum standards

A major building project to replace the outside steps which were wooden and decaying had been conceived in 2017 and it was agreed that, if possible, they should be constructed to be similar to the original brick and stone steps. These had formed the only way for the weavers to access the looms on the two top floors. Other building work was also needed to install insulation, carry out miscellaneous repairs and repair some of the cobbles.

We were extremely fortunate to obtain a grant of £7,000 from an anonymous trust towards the building work and this enabled us to get £10,000 matched funding from the final round of Powys County Council’s Community Regeneration Development Fund. These two grants were agreed at the end of 2017 and early 2018, the £7,000 in advance and the PCC grant paid in arrears. But by the time the funds had been found, there was insufficient time for the work to be completed before the May 2018 opening. The work was therefore carried out in the winter months of 2019. This also allowed time for a top-up grant to be agreed by the Powys Welsh Church Act fund of the Community Foundation in Wales, in April 2018.

The work proceeded well but unfortunately, the quarry making the stone slabs for the steps had problems in March 2019 so the work was not completely finished by the end of the financial year.

Although not building work as such, the other improvement that was made in 2018-19 was the commissioning of a new sign for the Museum, funded by the Newtown Rotary Club. We now have a more robust sign with Newtown Textile Museum in Welsh and English, and our logo, on both sides of the board. We hope this is going to help make our presence better known.

Conserving, caring for and managing the collection of artefacts

Good practice in the care our artefacts is being pursued. The conservator who carried out the Collection Care Audit, Cath Haslem, confirmed that it was virtually impossible to maintain appropriate temperatures and humidity levels in this 1830s building as a whole but these levels are maintained in the store room. Light levels were identified as a problem in the Audit in 2017 particularly in one room where a watercolour was hanging. A black blind was installed and kept permanently down, with new, appropriate light level LED bulbs fitted, funded by Nidec Control Techniques Ltd. In other parts of the building where light is a problem the black blinds are also being kept down.

Conservation work on an etching was carried out during the year, funded by the AIM Collections Care grant obtained in 2017.

Funds had been obtained from the Welsh Museums Federation and Welsh Government in the autumn of 2017 for a Collection Management Audit which was carried out in early 2018. The report was received in February 2018 and its implementation was set in train in March with the purchase of the recommended accessions register and a variety of Guides, cards and forms, plus a filing cabinet which helps to keep essential documents secure. Building on the recommendation of the audit report, all the major Spectrum policies were developed over the summer of 2018 and signed off by the Committee in the spring of 2019.

Work on the collection information held on Modes has continued. Descriptions have been enhanced, and additional photographs of objects in the collection were added. One area, identified in the Spectrum policy reviews as being a matter of some urgency, has been the location information held for each object. A more detailed list of locations will be drawn up, and the more precise location added to the database as time, and volunteer availability, permits.

Raising the necessary funds

The Museum has three main sources of funds shown below: The aim is to cover the Museum's revenue costs from what the Museum itself "earns" and general donations while all additional activities have to be covered by grant and external funding of some kind.

The total of the donations received in the Museum itself over the summer and the October Festival event was £2,098 and income from tours, talks, sales and events totalled £1,635. The total amount "earned" directly by the Museum in 2018/19 was

therefore around £3,600 (£2,000 in 2017). Generous donations from individuals some of whom have joined the Museum's Friends scheme are a further source of income. A welcome £1,634 was raised in this way over the financial year as a whole although it was a smaller sum than 2017/18 (£2,714) when there were a number of significant one-off donations. The combined total from these various sources totalled nearly £5,300 which was virtually identical to the sum from the same activities in 2017-18. These figures would have been larger if the Gift Aid for the year had been claimed during the financial year. Although the Textile Museum, through the MCRA was registered for Gift Aid during 2018/19 there was a delay in claiming the first payment. The expectation is that in future Gift Aid will be claimed against the sums raised in the donation boxes, as well as for individual donations where the donor has agreed, and will be claimed in the relevant financial year.

Grants

2017/18 had been a very successful year in terms of grants agreed. But at least half of the funds received was spent during the following year. Sometimes the work was completed in 2017/18 but the bills were not paid until the following year. Some of the funds raised for the building were still unspent at the end of March 2019, helping to boost the bank balance. The figures included in the attached income and expenditure account for 2018/19 and therefore the actual amounts coming into and going out of the accounts rather than when work was carried out.

Appendix 1 lists the grants received in 2018-19 totalling £5,313 almost all of which was spent in the financial year. Most was spent on activities identified earlier, but the grant from the Skinners Company Lady Neville Charity was spent on buying a printer, to enable us to print our own posters etc; and a freezer to be able to freeze wool to prevent moth damage. A vacuum cleaner was also purchased from the grant but not until the following financial year.

Comment on the accounts

The expenditure shown in the attached accounts shows that it was £1,157 higher than the income generated. But there has been a review of the utility charges which has resulted in a repayment of some of the total, which will be recorded in the 2019/20 accounts. But even if this overpayment is taken into account a gap still remains so the target of meeting revenue costs with the funds raised in the Museum was not quite achieved. A call has therefore been made on the remaining funds in the grant received from the Gwendoline and Margaret Davies Trust in the spring of 2017, which was given for general revenue funding, some of which had been carried forward. The hope is that the break-even target will be met in 2019/20 in part with the help of Gift Aid payments.

Final comment

None of achievements outlined in this report would be possible without the huge dedication of the Museum's Committee members, the support of the many individuals who act as hosts in the Museum and the help of others who volunteer in a range of capacities. The Museum's curator, Stephanie Kemp, worked many long – and

sometimes cold – hours in the Museum over the winters, often with invaluable help from others in the team, transforming the top floor into the attractive space it has become. Other Committee members have also contributed many hours and various important ways to the activities of the Museum. They, and the other volunteers who have acted as hosts, are the people who bring the Museum and its contents to life. The Museum is lucky to have them.

Janet Lewis, Chair, MCRA Newtown Textile Museum Committee. August 31 2019

Appendix 1

NEWTOWN TEXTILE MUSEUM

List of grants and major donations received in financial year 2018-19

	£
CfW Powys Church Act; building work	3,500.00
Federation of Museums and Art Galleries of Wales; Museums Festival week	250.00
Oakdale Trust; upgrading display panels	1,000.00
Skinner's Company Lady Neville Charity; equipment	455.00
Rotary Club; new sign	108.00
TOTAL	5,313.00

Appendix 2

Draft INCOME AND EXPENDITURE – NEWTOWN TEXTILE MUSEUM APRIL 2018 TO MARCH 2019

Expenditure	£	£	
Utilities	Electricity	760.03	
	Water	105.46	
	Telephone/Broadband	1,189.68	
			2,055.17
Building	Cleaning	34.57	
	Alarms	454.95	
	Insurance	491.84	
	General Maintenance	1,514.62	
			2,495.98
Marketing	Subscriptions	279.00	
	General Marketing	938.94	
			1,217.94
Collection	Collection Care	17.30	
	Computing	245.08	
			262.38
Cost of Sales	Cost of Sales	174.67	
			174.67
Miscellaneous	Stationery	11.99	
	Training/Conferences	237.30	
			249.29
TOTAL OPERATING EXPENDITURE 2018-19			£6,455.43
Income			
Donation Boxes		2,097.78	
General Donations		607.44	
Friends		1,026.50	
Tours and Talks		533.80	
Events		585.60	
Sales		313.34	
Training Contribution		133.65	
TOTAL OPERATING INCOME 2018-19			£5,298.11
Shortfall of income cf expenditure 2018-19			(£1,157.32)
<i>(note: some payments on training/conference 2018-2019 expenses will be made in 2019-20)</i>			

GRANT INCOME AND EXPENDITURE FOR 2018-19 YEAR

Purpose of Grant (No. of Grants)	B/F unspent from 2017-18 £	Received 2018-19 £	Spent 2018-19 £	C/F unspent to 2019-20 £
Building Work (4)	9,360.27	13,499.40	10,009.67	12,850.00
Signage (1)	0	108.00	108.00	0
Conservation (1)	(277.78)	1,862.00	1,626.75	0
Collection Docs (1)	1,680.00	0	1,708.26	0
Displays (2)	6,116.00	1,000.00	6,375.18	740.82
Equipment (2)	98.54	455.00	474.74	78.80
Museum Festivals (1)	0	250.00	340.00	0
Training/Conferences (2)	0	133.65	156.20	
(Overspends absorbed in year				£183.34)
TOTALS	£16,977.03	£17,308.05	£20,798.80	£13,669.62

B/f free reserve from 2017-2018 year **£ 3,654.32**

Less excess income over expenditure 2018-2019 year **(£ 1,157.32)**

Free reserve carried forward to 2019-2020 year **£ 2,497.00**

July 2019