



Report on progress in 2019

Our 2019 summer season saw a wider range of activities in the Museum. The funds from the Tesco's Bags of Help project enabled us to run some taster sessions so people could try spinning and weaving; and to support a textile student, Francesca, to come and weave in the Museum. She came twice a week for 10 weeks, where she worked on one of the looms. Lots of our visitors enjoyed talking to her about her work.

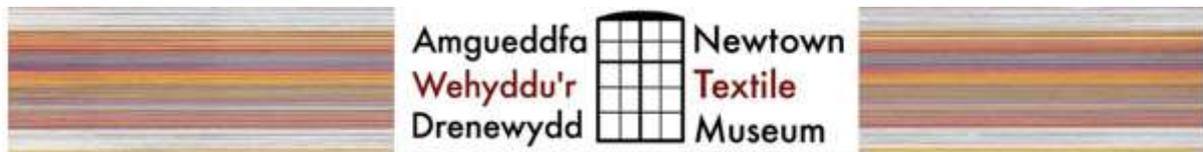
Following the successful lecture held in 2018, a series of four events were organised the Museum over the summer, on a range of topics, together with one lecture was organised by Clwyd Powys Archaeological Trust. The space in the Museum is rather limited but the series was felt to be a success with around 100 attendees in total.

One exhibition ran through the whole summer and was very well received. The Museum's curator, Stephanie Kemp, had designed and manufactured separates and dresses under her label 'Stephanie Jane', for Liberty of London and their stores across the world during the late 1970's and through the 1980's. She displayed some of her garments from that time and the exhibition told the story, which she elaborated on, in one of the lectures. Some of our visitors remembered wearing, or seeing, a variety of her clothes.

The total number of visitors to the Museum was higher than in 2018 but with slightly fewer visitors during standard opening hours (partly because the remembrance poppy display in 2018 attracted a large audience) but more people coming as part of an organised tour or to attend a lecture. The number of school visits last summer was rather disappointing during the summer, despite approaches being made to the primary schools in the area. This might be linked to the point in the year when the curriculum includes a focus on history as one school brought a class of pupils in November. The problem with out of season visits is there is no heating in the Museum and it can get very cold.

In addition to the summer season which is from the beginning of May to the end of September, the Museum held an event as part of Welsh Museums Festival week in October, as in previous years. Focusing on old Work Places in Newtown, people were invited to come to the Museum for a day of memories, to celebrate not just the textile workers of Newtown but also the workers of all the industries that are now long gone. There was a display of photographs which included the Phillips bicycle factory, the Pryce Jones warehouse, the tannery, and the egg packing station. Our visitors shared some of their stories with us on the day and other stories have been collected since. The aim is to continue this thread of oral history to build up a picture of more recent times in the town.

The Museum is starting to become a venue for filming for which we are able to charge a fee. We had two or three enquiries during this last year. One resulted in a German company, making a programme about railways in Wales, filming for a morning in the Museum where they were particularly interested in the story of Pryce



Jones and the mail order business where the railway was essential. The film has recently been shown on German television. It can be viewed at: <https://www.swrfernsehen.de/eisenbahn-romantik/folgen/Folge-982-Wolken-Wolle-Wales-Auf-der-Cambrian-Line-nach-Aberystwyth,folge-982-wales-1-artikel-100.html>

Pleasingly, the income generated in 2019 from all the activities in the Museum is on course to cover revenue costs during the financial year, helped in part by having been able to claim Gift Aid on a number of our donations, including those in the donation boxes. Final figures will be available at the end of the financial year.

During the summer, a photographer, Polly Lovegrove, came to the Museum and took a number of great photos of the interiors of the Museum and of Francesca at the loom. A selection of these are included here. Thanks Polly .



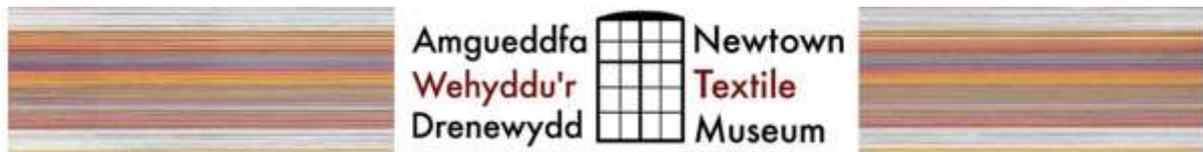
©Polly Lovegrove



Prospects for 2020

An Independent Trust

2020 is likely to see an important milestone for the Textile Museum as we are anticipating becoming an independent Trust. This is unlikely to change the day to day work but will provide an additional level of more strategic management.



The willingness of the Montgomeryshire Community Regeneration Association (MCRA) to take the Museum under its wing enabled the Museum to be transferred by Powys County Council in 2016. The MCRA owns the building at present and the group of volunteers responsible for managing the Museum is formally a Sub Committee of the MCRA with full responsibility for managing it on a day to day basis. But the MCRA has overall responsibility for the Museum's finances. This arrangement has worked very well in the Museum's early years and has allowed it to become established without having to worry about reporting to the Charity Commission or other formal requirements. But it was only envisaged as a short-term arrangement and in order to be accredited, we need to be independent. We aim to apply for accreditation in November 2020.

The process of setting up a CIO (Charitable Incorporated Organisation) has been set in train. Three people have been identified as the initial trustees – Janet Lewis (chair), Norman Davies (finance) and Chris Tomley (legal). Other Trustees will be recruited after the CIO is set up.

Plans for summer 2020

Having reviewed attendance figures over the last few years, the Committee has decided that Saturday opening times should change so that the Museum opens at 12.00 as on other days and that we do not open for Bank Holiday Mondays. This will reduce the pressure on our volunteers as it will mean a reduction of one session. There may still be occasions when we decide to open earlier but it would be for something special which we could actively promote.

Ideas for two exhibitions during the season, more lectures and possible workshops are all being developed. We will also be undertaking additional active marketing of the Museum to encourage more visitors, particularly from neighbouring counties.

Janet Lewis

January 2020