

Highlights 2022

Achievements

1. We were open 'as normal' for 4 hours a day for 4 days a week from the beginning of May to the end of September.
2. We have been helped by a stalwart group of around 20 volunteer hosts. Most had hosted for us in the past but we were joined by two new hosts who are more than welcome. As we are run entirely by volunteers they are the Museum's bedrock. Without them it would close.
3. We had 886 visitors during opening hours and round 1,000 in total when including people on the 5 tours and schoolchildren from Treowen and Penygloddfa schools.
4. The feedback we get continues to be very positive. The comment I particularly liked was "Unlike my wife I am not a lover of museums but, without a doubt this is the best I have ever seen". Friendliness and helpfulness of hosts were also frequently mentioned, and I am sure this helps us to get our 5-star Trip Advisor rating.
5. The shop has done well this year and brings us some income while also helping local craftspeople. Christine has been brilliant at searching out and finding lovely things to sell.
6. John took our "knocker-upper" to the Antiques Road Show that was filmed at Powis Castle on a very hot day in the summer. The 'knocker-upper' will be featured on the show to be screened sometime this autumn.
7. We got funding for an oral history project to explore and collect people's memories of Newtown and particularly Penygloddfa. Lisa Heledd Jones has carried out interviews and run some discussion groups over the summer and will be writing it up over the next few months. At the last minute we had a presence at the Food Festival with two gazebos. One gave people a chance to try doing some simple weaving and Lisa met and talked to people in the other one.
8. Financially we are still drawing some funds from the Welsh Government grant we were given to support us through Covid. This summer we did well compared to many other small museums both in the number of visitors and the donations given. We also benefit from generous donations given by some of the Friends of the Museum. But we are being hit by the cost of electricity, with the estimate for next year's usage being quite high despite the business cap. Our insurance is higher this year too as we are meeting the cost of being a listed building, having been underinsured before.

Behind the scenes

8. The Trustees have met three times this year (normally 4 but there was a hiatus in the early months). They are supporting the Museum's strategic vision while providing wise counsel and help on day-to-day matters.

9. There have been significant changes to the Committee in the last year. John and Norman continue in their roles as curator and treasurer but at a distance as both moved out of Newtown this year. We have been lucky enough to recruit new Committee members with particularly useful skills

a. Victoria Haire is a weaver who has started the process of developing a programme of activities around craft skills. A series of Tapestry Tuesdays, aimed at children in particular, were organised for the summer holidays and were very successful on days when it was not too hot. A number of fee-paying workshops were planned rather late in the day for the summer but sadly did not prove successful and were cancelled. This is probably because more notice was needed and the random nature of attendance at such events. Victoria is working on next year's programme at the moment. She is also developing a greater understanding about wool generally and what was involved in producing flannel in Newtown.

b. Another new Committee member, Jo Eaton, brings knowledge and experience of conservation and of design, which she is putting into practice in the Museum, to very good effect. She initiated our participation in the Newtown Food Festival which was very successful.

9. With the help of one of our Trustees, we were successful in getting a grant from the Federation of Welsh Museums and the Welsh Government to enable us to get a consultant, Nick Winterbotham, to help us develop a strategy for the future and a set of objectives and plans. Following individual discussions, he led a group of the Trustees, Committee members, and one or two external people through a day of discussion and exercises, to produce the plan. The Museum now has a set of broad 10-year objectives, with a number of aims within these which form the 5-year plan. In turn these are classified as requiring actions in years 1 and 2, or 3 and 4. The document will now form the basis for the programme of work in the following year and will be continually rolled forward. Year 1 starts in April 2023 and we will be finalising the actions to be taken next year and preparing to implement them over the winter.

The 10-year objectives are:

- Acknowledged as the best destination in Mid Wales for interesting, learning and enjoyable experiences for all ages;
- Building and telling a strong and coherent visitor narrative of the social and industrial history of Newtown;
- A securely funded going concern;
- Recognised as the key organisation for collecting, cataloguing, conserving and providing access to the artefacts and evidence of Newtown's textile history.

These aims present a considerable challenge which I hope all concerned can help to meet.

10. Following the successful return of ownership of the Museum from the MCRA to the Trustees, objects that were given to the Museum between 1990 and 2015 are now back in the ownership of the Museum. Details of some of these artefacts have been obtained from PCC and information from some others are still being sought.

11. Now that the Museum is closed for the winter, we are embarking on a complete revamp of the reception area to make it more user and host friendly, and to create more useful space for the shop.

Ideas we are pursuing for next year include:

12. Programme of well-advertised demonstrations and workshops.

13. Consolidating our collection care policy and practice.

14. Getting advice about improving ventilation in the Museum and how best to contain the damp.

15. Exploring ways in which displays could beneficially be changed and interpretation improved.

16. Developing a programme for schools to link with the new curriculum.

17. Organising summer activities for children, probably in partnership with Oriel Davies. The possibility of having dressing-up for children in the summer holidays is being debated.

18. Putting on an exhibition around our Amelia Ray collection in 2023.

Challenges for next year

19. We need:

- to apply to get Full Accreditation in April 2023.
- to find ways of marketing and promoting the Museum better both locally and across the UK. Our attempt this year to use a distribution company for our leaflets has proved disappointing.
- try to increase our income;
- to seek to recruit more volunteers, particularly hosts.
- develop a succession plan for key positions, such as chair, curator etc, ideally by finding deputies for each one, who could potentially take over the position if necessary.