

NEWTOWN TEXTILE MUSEUM

Museum Highlights and Achievements of 2020

- The Newtown Textile Museum Trust was registered as an independent CIO (number 1188651) on 19 March 2020.
- The first meeting of the Trust, with the three original Trustees, Janet Lewis, Norman Davies and Chris Tomley, took place on 12 August 2020 via Google meet.
- The start of the Covid lockdown at the end of March 2020 put all plans on hold and there was a decision to develop the use of social media and to expand the website. New sections were added including “Come Inside” giving details about individual artefacts, and jigsaws of items in the Museum.
- From March 2020 the Management Committee met on a regular basis via Google Meet.
- All the Key Stage 2 pupils from Penyglodda visited over two days in February, prior to lockdown.
- A group of students studying Built Heritage visited the Museum as part of their course in February prior to lockdown.
- QR codes were developed and installed next to some artefacts, to give the visitors more details about the objects. It is unclear how much they were used as the current system does not monitor usage.
- The Museum received a grant of £25,000 from the Welsh Government to compensate for Covid losses. The sum was related to the ratable value of the building. This has more than compensated for the losses in the year and the remainder will be carefully husbanded for deficits in later years and future projects.
- The Michelangelo Foundation invited the Museum to be one of 100 Europe-wide museums to contribute to their website on craft matters. We were included in the Foundation’s new online platform the “HOMO FABER GUIDE” dedicated to the promotion of the metiers d’art, craftsmanship, design and creativity. Our entry can be viewed at <https://www.homofaber.com/en/visit/visit-newtown-textile-museum>
- The Museum put all the Covid-safe requirements in place to be able to open when it was allowed – risk assessment, sanitising, restriction of numbers through a booking system, one way system etc. ‘Good to Go’ status was achieved by mid summer.
- The Museum was open for two days a week (Tuesday and Friday) 12 – 4 from 11 August until the end of September.

- No demonstrations were possible during this limited summer season but an Exhibition was planned and presented. “*The Warehouse 11: the team that went to war*” told the stories of the team of drapers in the Royal Welsh Warehouse (Pryce Jones) team who won the Montgomeryshire Challenge Trophy in 1914 and what happened to them during and after the war. This was of considerable interest to local people with a number of visitors being relatives of members of the team.
- There were 205 visitors during the short summer season who gave donations of £484. Income was also received through the NTM Friends scheme.
- Our first curator Stephanie Kemp resigned in the autumn of 2020. Among a host of achievements, she improved many of the displays in imaginative ways including creating the rooms on the top floor. Her knowledge of weaving, looms and textiles were invaluable.
- Another Committee member, John Evans was willing and able to take on the curating role after Stephanie’s departure. His expertise lies on the historical side which provided an excellent balance. John set up a small curator’s group to support the various tasks that needed to be completed.
- The Committee held a Strategy meeting in October. Carrie Canham the curator of Ceredigion Museum was invited to attend. Terms of Reference for the Trust and the Committee were agreed and a number of areas for further work identified including: the importance of an Audience development plan; greater focus on environmental monitoring; the need for a Conservation Plan; and developing contacts with Textile people.
- As in earlier years, the Museum participated in the Welsh Museum’s Festival week over the autumn half term, but because of Covid our contribution was all online. Seven different objects from the Museum’s collection were used to highlight the increasing interest in organized sport during the latter quarter of the 1800s and early 1900s. Many of the objects related to the Pryce Jones teams and their organized events.
- John made great progress on conservation of our artefacts including freezing relevant items (especially wool, to prevent a moth incursion) and checking the locations of the artefacts. The rather special watercolour of Newtown by R.G.Salter was scanned digitally.

- Further work was undertaken on the documentation required for Accreditation which was due in November 2020. The components of the Spectrum Plan were all signed off by the new Trust in anticipation of Accreditation (which was subsequently postponed until at least 2022).
- S4C filmed in the Museum at the beginning of the year. The result, *Walia'n Siarad*, was broadcast on S4C on 8 February 2020.
- Pryce Jones (and the Museum) was discussed on BBC radio news on Christmas Day and featured on their website with a number of images of objects from our museum– 550,000 plus people heard it.
- The NTM was party to a complaint from the MCRA to the ombudsman about the legal basis of the original transfer from Powys County Council having been done incorrectly and that the Council had not responded substantively to any of the letters sent and complaints made.

JL December 2021