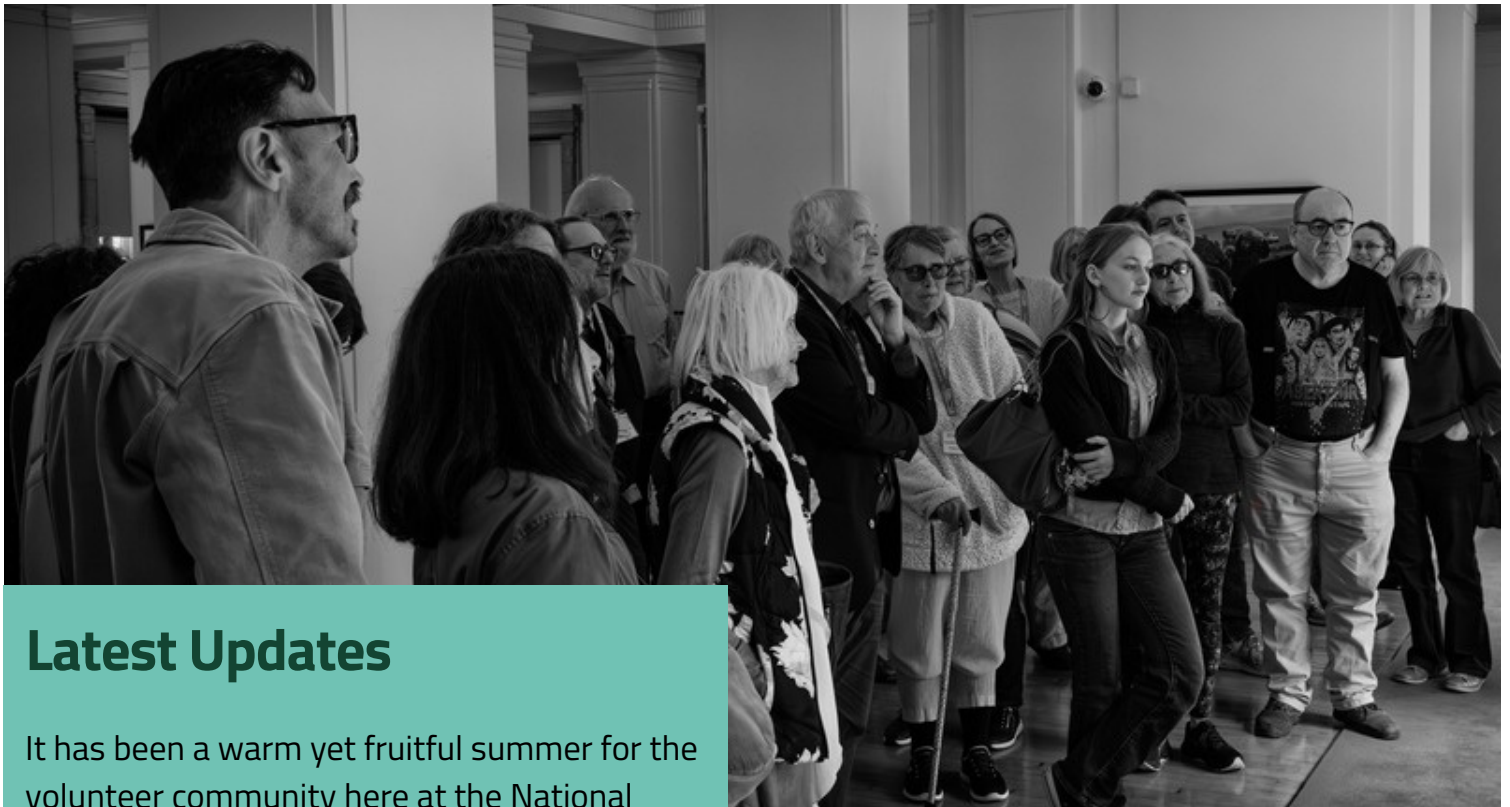


VOLUNTEERS' VOICE



Latest Updates

It has been a warm yet fruitful summer for the volunteer community here at the National Library of Wales. From rotating office fans and sunny excursions to engaging activities and exciting projects, the past few months have been full of memorable moments.

In June, we celebrated Volunteers' Week with an Exhibition Talk and Tour led by recently retired Curator of Photography, Wil Troughton. July saw the opening of the new Mary Lloyd Jones exhibition, with our Gallery Volunteers proudly wearing their MLJ t-shirts and sharing their knowledge with visitors.

August brought the excitement of the National Eisteddfod and a wonderful volunteer excursion to Llanerchaeron, rounding off a busy and rewarding summer.

Featuring:

In this edition of Volunteers' Voice, Rhys shares his journey as a volunteer, reflecting on the variety of projects he has contributed to over the years and the positive impact that being part of the National Library of Wales volunteer community has had on him.

Rhys also had the opportunity to interview Julian, one of the Library's Conservation Officers. In this fascinating conversation, Julian offers an insight into his role, the work of the Conservation Team, and some of the unique items and collections in their care. To read more, head to pages 6 and 7.

News



To Celebrate Volunteers' Week 2026, Wil Troughton gave the volunteers a talk and tour of the exhibition **Curator's Lens: A Career in Collecting**

- * The Poor Law collaboration with The National Archives is fully underway, and we would like to thank all the volunteers who took part in the project workshop, as well as those who are continuing to contribute as an ongoing volunteer task.
- * NLW Bioblitz! Volunteers and staff joined forces to identify various plant species located on the library grounds. This initiative, in collaboration with Museums Wales, aims to gather data and statistics that will enhance our understanding of local biodiversity.



- * Volunteer Colin Laker has written two fascinating blog posts for Archives Wales about his discoveries when volunteering on the Welsh Women's Peace Petition project. While transcribing the petition, Colin noticed a series of unusual addresses in the Ely area of Cardiff, leading him to uncover a remarkable snapshot of families moving into newly built post-war council housing in 1923.

His research revealed how the petition preserves a unique moment in the development of the area and the lives of its earliest residents. Colin has since continued his investigations, sharing further light on the signatories living at these mysterious addresses and uncovering even more stories hidden within the petition.

NAME.	ADDRESS.
Edith Thompson	30 R. 12 Rd. Ely
Emily Thomas	52 R. 12 Rd. Ely
Fanny Thomas	22 R. 12 Rd. Ely
Marcel Wilson	24 R. 12 Rd. Ely
J. Smith	C 58 12 Rd. Ely
M. Bannister	1 R. 12 Rd. Ely
7th. Leach	58 A. 12 Rd. Ely
M. Wilson	29 R. 12 Rd. Ely
M. Blackmore	44 R. 12 Rd. Ely
G. Sinkovic	43 L. 12 Rd. Ely
M. Hawkins	9 R. 9 Rd. Ely

A series of unusual addresses, Ely, Cardiff.
Petition Page - 29/153 1923.

Read **Secrets of the Welsh Womens Peace Petition** and **Further Secrets of the Welsh Women's Peace Petition** on the Archive Wales website.

<https://archives.wales/news/>



✳ Gallery volunteers are proudly wearing the new Mary Lloyd Jones t-shirts (available in the shop) during their invigilation sessions. Here is Mary Parry, one of our volunteers who has completed training with the curatorial team about the exhibition. Our dedicated volunteers are on hand to assist visitors in gaining a deeper understanding of the artworks featured in the Gregynog gallery.



✳ Volunteer Owen Watkin travelled to this year's National Eisteddfod to give a talk on the Gorsedd Project in a session chaired by Mari Grug, President of the Eisteddfod. The project, developed through the National Library's volunteering scheme, has created a database of individuals honoured by the Gorsedd of Wales. During the session, Owen shared the story behind the project and highlighted the valuable contribution of volunteers in making this information more accessible to families and researchers.



<https://gorsedd.llyfrgell.cymru/en/about/>

A day trip to Llanerchaeron, by Jessica Anderson

This August, a group of 18 NLW volunteers took a trip to Llanerchaeron, a National Trust property near Aberaeron. After being chauffeured to the site by Eilir, we were given a 'time-travel' tour of the grounds, where several of the property's former inhabitants came back to life (in the form of impressively costumed volunteer actors) and told us their stories. This was a great way for us to understand the historical context of the place, and to put faces and personalities to the names involved in the building's history.

After lunch, we toured the interior of the mansion itself. Attention was drawn to the design decisions made by the building's architect, John Nash (who we'd met earlier in the previous tour), such as false windows and doors being used to create symmetry and the consistent use of oval shapes in the design of the boudoir. It was interesting to think about how every feature of the house was meticulously planned in ways that I may not otherwise have noticed. There was no shortage of whimsy in the mansion either as there were knitted mice hidden in each room, a much more modern addition that was nonetheless fun to spot, and I also had a go on the piano, where I discovered that 'The Wombles' theme is surprisingly difficult to play.

Finally, there was just enough time left to go wombling free in the parts of the grounds we hadn't covered earlier. The sun was well and truly out by this point, and the lake behind the walled garden looked particularly stunning under its light. I watched the mallards and moorhens diving merrily beneath the surface, before admiring the pig and pony pottering around in the stables. Seeing Cardigan Bay sparkling in the afternoon sun on the drive back to Aberystwyth provided a suitably picturesque epilogue to the day's outing.



Events

Wellbeing in the Gallery | Wednesday 23 September, 10:00am - 12:10pm

We're delighted to welcome Alex Holloway to the Library to lead a new series of free monthly wellbeing sessions for volunteers. Combining elements of **tai chi, poetry, and gentle movement**, these mindful sessions are designed to help participants relax, reflect, and reconnect with their wellbeing in a supportive environment.

Held in the **Gregynol Gallery**, each session offers a peaceful opportunity to pause, unwind, and experience the exhibition in a new and meaningful way. Whether you're looking to reduce stress, boost mindfulness, or simply enjoy a moment of calm, all volunteers are warmly encouraged to take part.

For more information on these events contact the volunteer team at **volunteering@library.wales** or pop into the office for a chat.

Current Stats

Total volunteers:
91 volunteers are registered on our roster!

This quarters volunteer hours:
June: 807 hrs, July: 798 hrs,
August: 731 hrs

Projects and tasks in progress:
Over the past three months there have been 25 tasks and projects on the go. Library staff continue to seek out more exciting opportunities.

We would like to extend a warm welcome to our new volunteers!



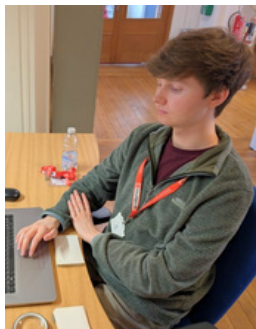
SOPHIE



EIRA



MEGAN



JOSH



MAYOWA



ELIZA



NIA



EZRA



HANNAH



WYN



RHYS'S STORY

I first began volunteering at the National Library early in 2017, during what was a somewhat dark period of my life. It was hoped that volunteer work would have a positive impact on my mental health, and after a warm welcome I was tasked with cataloging recently-donated collections of railway photos and working timetables. This appealed to my passions as a rail enthusiast, and having enjoyed myself, I continued to volunteer across a wide variety of projects, from transcribing the Welsh Women's Peace Petition to documenting the archived materials of artist Paul Peter Peich.

I think I can speak for the entire volunteering body when I say that this is far from the case, especially when working with primary sources such as personal accounts and diaries, where meaning and clarity are often hard to discern.

You have to peel back layers, unravel handwriting, look for contextual clues elsewhere in the document, or turn to outside sources that may provide the key to cracking an obtuse problem. Currently, I am transcribing the work diaries of retired local photographer Arvid Parry Jones, all of which are handwritten and make frequent use of abbreviations and abridgements. Deciphering an illegible name, word or address can lead me down unexpected avenues. I might telephone a business to find out who previously occupied a property, or compare handwritten directions with archive maps and satellite imagery. It's equal parts puzzle and detective work, often extremely frustrating, but the satisfaction felt when all this sleuthing yields results gives a sense of accomplishment that's hard to put into words.

That feeling of contributing to something, of being productive, is part of what keeps me coming back week-after-week. The other half is the people. During the near-decade I've spent volunteering at NLW I've collaborated with a broad spectrum of people, some of whom I'm now lucky to consider friends. The volunteering community is wonderfully diverse, and I've had the privilege of working alongside people from all walks of life, with roots spanning from Illinois to Russia and beyond!

The key figures though are the anchors of the entire volunteering community, the staff. Thea and Cledan are always engaged and willing to lend an ear, while Eilir is the energetic and friendly uncle figure of the team, always ready with a smile and helpful advice. Alas that we no longer can call on Gwyneth (the now-retired departmental auntie) to keep his energy in check at all times! Looking back from almost ten years on, I can say I absolutely made the right choice in volunteering at The National Library of Wales.

MEET A MEMBER OF STAFF!

Recently I had the pleasure of speaking with Julian Evans, a former volunteer who has spent the last twelve years in full-time employment with the Library. The last eight of which have been in Conservation, as the Conservation Officer. Someone responsible for preserving and repairing the priceless and often-fragile books, maps, parchments, seals, papers, documents and other materials that comprise the NLW's collection. With books being Julian's favourite to work with, owing to their complexity, the challenges of working with different bindings, and the varying techniques that go into their manufacture. Our interview was in the Quarantine Room, a space I had previously never known to exist at the library, chatting across a workbench over which was suspended a long-necked ventilator comparable to *Monsters Inc's* "scream extractor." Posters on the wall name the various insects and molds that can dwell in old manuscripts, which the conservator team must screen incoming collections for.



As well as preparing new additions to the library's archives, Julian is often called upon to make repairs to damaged books, such as a trio of bindings whose back covers were recently torn off in a trolley accident. And if part of a page has been torn out, then it's vital that the gap be filled, to prevent the tear from spreading. Julian's explanation of the process puts me in mind of a skin-graft - strong but extremely-thin sheets of tissue are bonded to the damaged pages in front and behind, tissue so fine that only close-up study can identify where their edges overlap with the original manuscript. Julian's work clearly requires in-depth understanding of how old books are constructed, and so his training included eight weeks of practical bookbinding, accredited under the Archives & Records Association. To demonstrate this he bought along five books he bound himself, each book making use of different techniques, and which can only be judged by their covers, for the actual pages are all blank!

The most basic example used no glue in its manufacture, the text block, spine and covers being held together solely by mechanical ties and threads (cords). Julian's other creations progressively become more advanced and ornate, ranging from library-style books, reinforced to protect against wear from rough handling and repeat usage, to showpiece works with elaborately detailed and decorated leather covers. This practical experience helps inform and guide Julian's conservation and repair work, but also illustrate the progressive proliferation of books across society, from individual artisanal works to mass-production print-runs. It also gives insight into some of the work he and the conservation team undertake in preserving the NLW's collection, securing a safe future, both for the texts themselves and in ensuring they remain available for researchers and readers yet to come.

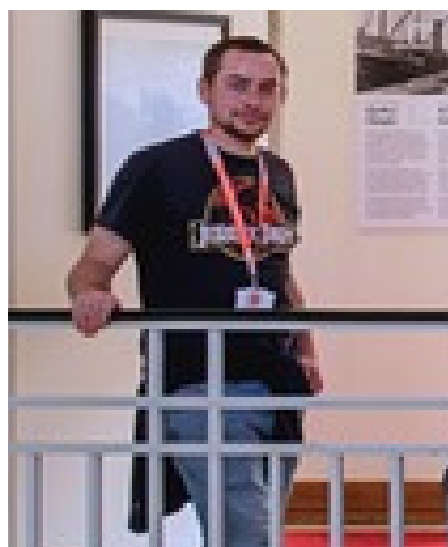
FAREWELL

We would like to thank all the volunteers who have left us this quarter. We are incredibly grateful for your support, and we say a bittersweet farewell to Maia, Mike, Joseph, Sophie, and Lydia. This group of brilliant volunteers have now left us to embark on new adventures. From exploring future career opportunities and completing postgraduate dissertations to returning to their home communities, whether in Suffolk or Buffalo, New York, they leave with our very best wishes.

We would like to give special recognition to Mike, who achieved the remarkable milestone of contributing around 1,200 volunteer hours over the course of three years. Mike has now moved on to a new role at Strata Florida Abbey, and we thank him for his dedication, enthusiasm, and invaluable contribution to the Library.



MAIA



MIKE



JOSEPH



SOPHIE



LYDIA



Interested in joining our volunteer community? Please get in touch:

Email: volunteering@library.wales

Phone: (01970) 632424