
VOLUNTEERING NEWSLETTER



LLYFRGELL GENEDLAETHOL CYMRU
THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF WALES

Gwirfoddoli
Volunteering

Issue 15

August 2020

KEEPING IN TOUCH 3

Thank you for sending us more of your lockdown stories

A Coronavirus poem by Lynne:

After I watched a programme where a lady described how it feels to suffer from Coronavirus ("it was like breathing through broken glass") – thankfully she recovered! As I was sitting on the decking in the sunshine over Easter, images came to me through the ether and I tried to turn them into a poem. It isn't sophisticated, but hopeful, I believe – as long as we learn from this experience.

(The original poem is in Welsh and can be seen in the Welsh edition Newsletter. Below is an English translation by Lynne)

Enemy

An enemy surrounds us
Mute, slinking
Through the open pathways
Of our eyes, our nose, our mouth.
Through the threads of our masks,
Through our touching one another,
Through our closeness.
Until it reaches
Our receptor cells,
Grabbing onto them with unseen hand.
A deadly union,
Parasitic, not symbiotic,
Closing the gateways behind it.
You reveal yourself, Enemy,
When our soft internal pipes
Turn hard, rough,
And we must breathe through broken glass.

Or, in the end, through a metal pipe.
How can we shut your greedy
mouths
Against sucking our air, Enemy?
How can we starve you,
Poison you?
Through working together
While we separate from each other.
A lonely life,
A lonely death,
But in the long run
It is we who are victorious.
The next generation
Will breathe freely –
We hope.

Lynne Blanchfield

Peoples Collection Wales news by Gruffydd Jones

The 2020 lockdown has undoubtedly changed the way we all live, work, interact and communicate, and it's important that our experience of this dramatic change is preserved in some form to help us better understand how this period will affect us. People's experiences of an event or circumstance are greatly valued in historic research, as they provide a level of insight that's often lacking in archival documents and other material alone. One of the ways in which this period differs from other crises of the past is the way in which it can be documented and archived by everybody, through digital literacy and access to equipment, a new phenomenon which is very important to the People's Collection Wales.

Currently, PCW is calling for content that documents the Covid-19 lockdown in Wales, as recorded by the people who've lived through the experience themselves. Photographs of empty shelves, recordings of banging frying pans at 8pm, written accounts of enjoying wildlife in the garden, stories of isolation, of worry or of pleasure. Oral histories can be recorded on a phone or laptop, interviews can be conducted via Skype or Zoom, an array of digital media can be created and added to the PCW archive for posterity.

The collection has started to grow already, and your own contributions can be submitted to:

<https://www.peoplescollection.wales/users/47991>

The dramatic change to work and social life has also provided an opportunity for people to dig around in the attic for the photographs, letters, notebooks and other historic material they've been meaning to organise for years! A number of new collections have been shared with PCW during lockdown, some of which have only been made available through the efforts of NLW volunteers. Recent collections include :

- a fascinating family story of Victorian tourism, time in WW1 trenches, (<https://www.peoplescollection.wales/users/764>) and over a hundred postcards sent to the family home in Carmarthen - digitised, transcribed and translated by NLW volunteers.



Béthune postcard sent to Carmarthen in 1915 by Harry White, 28 December 1915

- an important record of historic retail and buildings in Aberystwyth itself, a must-see for anyone with an interest in the town. We're immensely grateful for Gwenno's ongoing efforts to translate all of this metadata for bilingual searchability on the site.

<https://www.peoplescollection.wales/collections/1395986>

- Family stories of Welsh-Italian heritage

<https://www.peoplescollection.wales/users/45341>

- One man's photographic record of industry, commerce and village life in the Neath Valley

<https://www.peoplescollection.wales/users/39101>

- The Welsh Wildlife Trust is also looking for contributions to help document the history of our interaction with the coastal landscape through their ongoing project, Living Seas Wales. You can send your stories of experiences with marine wildlife to their team for archiving and publication:

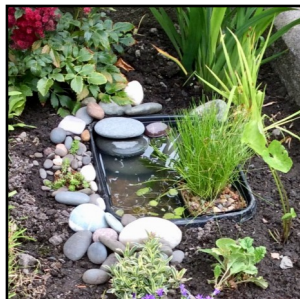


Your stories:

Christine

I live in Aberystwyth and the first few weeks of lockdown were unnerving. I would go out for a walk and never see a soul - even the seagulls had deserted the Prom. At times, it was like a film set and in your head you could hear the music that precedes the appearance of an alien or a zombie. Fortunately, that phase of lockdown life didn't last too long, although I did bump into Eilir on the Prom a while back.

My cooking attempts have had mixed results - I have a freezer full of tasty home-made casseroles and soups but I've also made some inedible cakes. I'm lucky enough to have a small garden and have enjoyed seeing the variety of birds that come to the feeders and watch them splashing around in the bird bath. As the garden waste collection service has been suspended, I'm having to eke out my supply of waste bags so now I only mow a strip around the edges and down the middle of the lawn, the rest has been left to grow wild. Next-door's cat appreciates the long grass as she can pretend that she is a tiger, stalking through the jungle hunting prey - well, trying to catch butterflies and grasshoppers. A fortnight ago I made a mini-pond, using an old washing-up bowl, I check regularly to see what wildlife has arrived. So far I've seen a wasp, sat on a stone having a drink - not quite what I wanted. Here's a photo of my pond (work-in-progress) and the frog/toad shelter - it's not an abandoned flower pot, honest!



I miss coming up to the Library, not just because you can get a slice of lovely cake which puts my efforts to shame; I hope that we can return to some form of normality soon.

More of your stories:

Nonna

I've taken advantage of the lockdown period to organise my family history. I have so many files, but none of them in order:

The Price family - St Charles Abergele, Rhuddlan, Whitford and Mostyn;

The Edwards family - Bryn Goleu - Nannerch, the Tan y Ffordd blacksmith Llanrhaeadr yng Nghynmeirch, the Parlwr Du Cottages and Ffynngroyw;

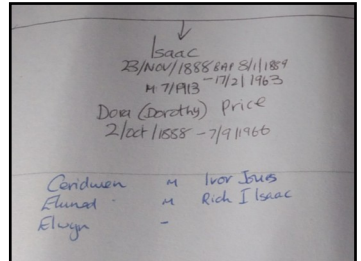
The Isaac family - Taliesin, Aberystwyth & U.S.A.;

The George family - Llanidloes, Corris & Coedpoeth;

The Thomas family - Rhosgoch, Llanilar.

My first task was to record the names, location and occasion on the back of each photo. I scanned the photos and organised them into transparent sleeves. I could then share the photos with relatives who then placed them on a family tree on

'Ancestry'. I've written and printed draft copies ... 16 pages of my memories of my family and holidays in Ffynngroyw. The final step is to review and place the relevant photos in the appropriate boxes.



Marged

At the start of lockdown I was lucky to have my fields to go for walks, the sheep couldn't understand why I was talking so much to them. They're very interesting to watch – do any of you know how many times they chew their cud each time? Watching them following each other in one long line is also interesting; if one escapes through a hole in the hedge the others are sure to follow! Seeing all the wild flowers and the birds is also interesting - a little robin comes to me for his porridge every morning.



I've been really fortunate that a friend of mine took over the care of the bees in my apiary when I decided that I couldn't manage them; so chatting to my bees has also taken up a lot of my time.

I tasted the first honey of 2020 yesterday - it was delicious!!

Sylvia

I arrived home from a holiday in Vietnam on the 23rd of March. We had no idea that the UK had imposed a lockdown until we flew into Manchester airport.

I had to self-isolate at home in Aberystwyth for 14 days, following this I decided to go over to my sister and her family in the village of Upton Bishop outside Ross-on-Wye. Living here are my sister, brother-in-law, nephew, niece (who normally lives and works in London) and my uncle. My sister needed my help to care for our uncle.

Despite everything, with the help of a lovely garden, beautiful scenery, fantastic weather, online food shopping and GIN - we have coped. Watching spring turn to summer has been a great help. Silence from the noise of traffic, hearing the cuckoo, seeing a deer running across the lawn one evening. Nature has helped so much during this challenging time.



Ian Pegler

The library may have been closed during the lockdown but this has not stopped me from doing research, in particular into my own family history. I have a large collection of material left over from my late dad (Roger Pegler) in the form of scrapbooks, photos and letters from his time in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) where he did his military service in the 1940s and subsequently worked as a teacher in a boys college. I have also been researching my great Uncle Ernie who was killed in action in the Great War in 1917. I have been using the Internet to try and find one of his medals which went missing decades ago. Here is a photo I found:

Royal Corps of Signals 1947. Roger Pegler is in front row, arms folded.



If you wish to take part in our volunteering scheme please contact us :

E-mail: volunteering@library.wales



[@NLWVolunteering](https://twitter.com/NLWVolunteering)