

## Carmarthenshire Museum Interpretive Strategy

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Introduction to the report

This is a pivotal moment in the history of Carmarthenshire Museums Service as it begins a journey to transform the museums. The development of an Interpretive Strategy for Carmarthenshire Museum at Abergwili will build on work already undertaken at the new Museum of Speed, the Tywi Gateway project and Parc Howard Museum. As is the case for many museums, interpretation has been ad hoc and lacks a coherent story or narrative and does not have a consistent approach in terms of language and principles. A strategic approach will enable future developments to take place within the framework ensuring that they can happen as funding becomes available, providing a consistent approach.

An Interpretive Strategy will demonstrate the need for new interpretation, identify gaps in the current provision in terms of stories and collections and identify audience needs. The work has been split into two parts, the first part will help establish the need and set out the story of Carmarthenshire.

Housed within the Old Bishop's Palace at Abergwili, the county museum is at the centre of the Bishop's Park and its collection is displayed throughout this large historic building. The museum opened in 1978. The Old Bishop's Palace building, and elements of the gardens, are Grade II listed. The Bishop's Pond, a seasonal oxbow lake, is designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest. The parkland and gardens are listed under the Cadw/ICOMOS Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in Wales.

The museum closed for a year at the end of 2019 for major works to the roof and fabric. A separate project led by the Tywi Gateway Trust who are working in partnership with the museum, will restore some of the outbuildings to create a new entrance to both the museum and park with visitor facilities and new interpretation. The new visitor welcome building will help to orientate all visitors and introduce the story of the wider site, and its significance.

This report has been put together by the team at Headland Design to help support the development of interpretive planning at Carmarthenshire Museums. It sets out a vision and outcomes for developing new interpretation, reviews the current visitor experience and how the story is told. The story of the county of Carmarthenshire is summarised, which enables us to identify gaps in the collections. The wider heritage of the county is appraised in order to understand how and where else people discover the history of the county. The project team have developed a series of six themes which encompass the museum collections and stories and establish a new approach to telling the story of Carmarthenshire. This provides a sound starting point to develop an interpretive strategy for the Carmarthenshire Museum.





## 1.2 Carmarthenshire Museums Service

Carmarthenshire Museum is part of the Carmarthenshire Museum Service (CMS) which is responsible for four museums:

- Carmarthenshire County Museum at Abergwili (Carmarthenshire Museum)
- Parc Howard Museum in Llanelli (Parc Howard)
- The Museum of Speed in Pendine (currently closed for refurbishment)
- Kidwelly Industrial Museum (currently closed)

The museum service collections are based on the original collections of the Carmarthenshire Antiquarian Society. Formed in 1905 the society collections were displayed in the society rooms until 1920, by which time they had run out of space. By 1929 the society were being criticised for continuing to collect objects without adequate resources to care for them. The county council took over the collection in 1940 and the museum moved into the Old Bishop's Palace at Abergwili in 1978. Parc Howard Museum was gifted to Llanelli in 1911 and has been managed by the relevant local authority since then. There were no professional staff at Parc Howard until the museum was absorbed into the museum service in 1996.

The current museum collections spread across four museums and tell the story of the county, each has a different focus and although the collections are managed centrally the displays in each museum draw on specific parts of the collection. The current displays reflect a traditional approach to museum collections, and displays are based on subject disciplines such as archaeology and social history rather than themes. Collection management and interpretation are described by type rather than stories.

The museum service is embarking on a radical new approach that will achieve transformational change for the museums. Carmarthenshire Museums Strategic Plan 2017-2020 sets out the vision and ambitions for the museums, the services it provides to the community and how it will develop to support the Council's priorities and the role it plays in the economy.

***Our vision is to develop exceptional places that preserve and create community memories and inspire wonder, exploration and connectivity with Carmarthenshire's rich heritage and culture.***

***Our mission is to preserve collections and provide accessible, inclusive, exciting, sustainable services, which promote and facilitate learning, culture, heritage, tourism, regeneration, information, well-being and leisure. (Carmarthenshire Museums Strategic Plan 2017-22).***



## 2. A new vision for interpretation at Carmarthenshire Museum

### 2.1 Aims and outcomes

The development work began with a stakeholder workshop. Museum staff, volunteers and staff, trustees and volunteers from the Tywi Gateway Trust took part (18 people). This was combined with work for the Tywi Gateway Trust, to help inform their interpretive approach for the Bishop's Park in which the museum is located. It was important to have an opportunity to review interpretation for both projects as there is an overlap between the stories and the site offers a combined visitor experience. Participants at the workshop began by discussing which aspects of the interpretation they would not want to see change as the museum and park develop. Everyone recorded their thoughts, and these have been grouped below:

- Keep a strong focus on collections
- The museum is like a cabinet of curiosity and discovery
- Retain integrity of the building and historic spaces and the recreated interiors – cottage, kitchen and school room
- The library (currently used for meetings)
- Outside features – greenhouse, Bishop's Pond, Ha Ha, trees
- A feeling of magic and discovery
- Sense of chronology
- Stories that are told – Rebecca Riots & Picton memorial
- Objects that are particularly significant - Welsh dressers (with ceramic collections), the Salesbury New Testament, Ogham Stones, dairy, mining, ceramics and folklore, archaeology collections, conch shell and samplers
- The connection between the place and the artefacts
- The importance of the link to the Bible and the Welsh language

The group followed this with a SWOT analysis to help understand the current visitor experience for visitors to the museum and the Tywi Gateway (this is in Appendix A). This has been used to develop a series of challenges and opportunities that need to be addressed.

#### Significant collections that are underused

The museum service has a diverse collection of objects that includes valuable items and those that illustrate everyday life. The collection covers the natural and human history of the county over hundreds of years. There are few objects or contemporary art from the last 50 years and there is an opportunity to gather objects that illustrate contemporary life. If this does not happen there is a risk that heritage and knowledge will be lost. The museum displays change irregularly but could be developed to allow a greater range of objects to be on display.

#### A beautiful building in stunning setting

The museum is within the Old Bishop's Palace set within a park. There are views from inside of the park and visitors to the park could be encouraged to visit the museum. There is currently a disconnect and the two aspects are not seen as one visit. Recent work as part of the Tywi Gateway project has been improving the park, and the Council is funding current work on the museum's roof but the rest of the building looks (and has been) severely neglected.

#### People don't know about the treasures within

Local people and tourists are unaware of the museum and what is on offer. Admission is free but the visitor numbers are lower than for other comparable sites. There is a lack of repeat visitors and within the Council there is an under appreciation and this is in part a legacy of a lack of vision for a revitalised museum service.

#### Creating a better visitor experience

A lack of investment by the museum service means the premises problems are a continual service preoccupation. With the focus drawn away from the core purposes of the museum service, one outcome is displays that do not meet the expectations of modern museum visitors. There are few opportunities to change the way that the displays look, and the current interpretation is dated relying on written information. There are few hands on or interactive exhibits. More appealing displays would include an element of discovery, a range of interpretive media. The interpretation needs to be underpinned with a big idea and a coherent narrative. Opportunities for a hanging visitor experience would encourage repeat visitors.

#### A museum within a palace

The Old Bishop's palace is a significant historic building with a story of its own to tell. It provides an inspiring historic space but many of the rooms are on a domestic scale which can be challenging when creating museum displays with large showcases or objects. The story of the building needs to be told alongside that of the collections and the story of Carmarthenshire.

#### Stories that are not told

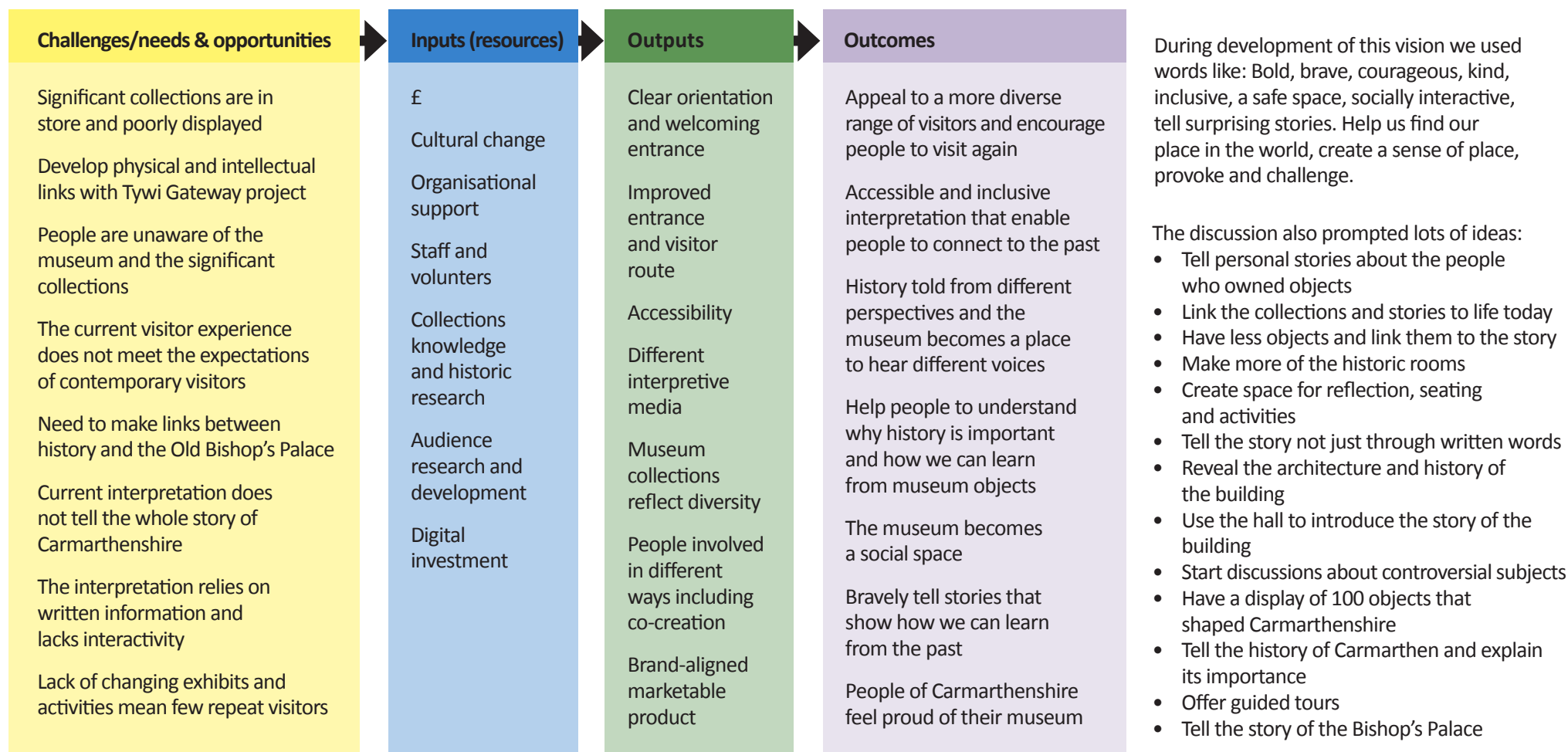
The story of Carmarthenshire provides a microcosm for the story of Wales. The collections help to tell this long history but there are gaps within the current displays and within the collections. There are important stories that are not being told.

## 2.2 Theory of Change and Outcomes

The group discussed outcomes for new interpretation these have been added to the Theory of Change model below.

### Project Vision

**Our museum will be a place for conversations, to tell stories and discover objects from the past that help us all connect to and understand our history.**





### 3. The visitor experience

#### 3.1 The visitor route

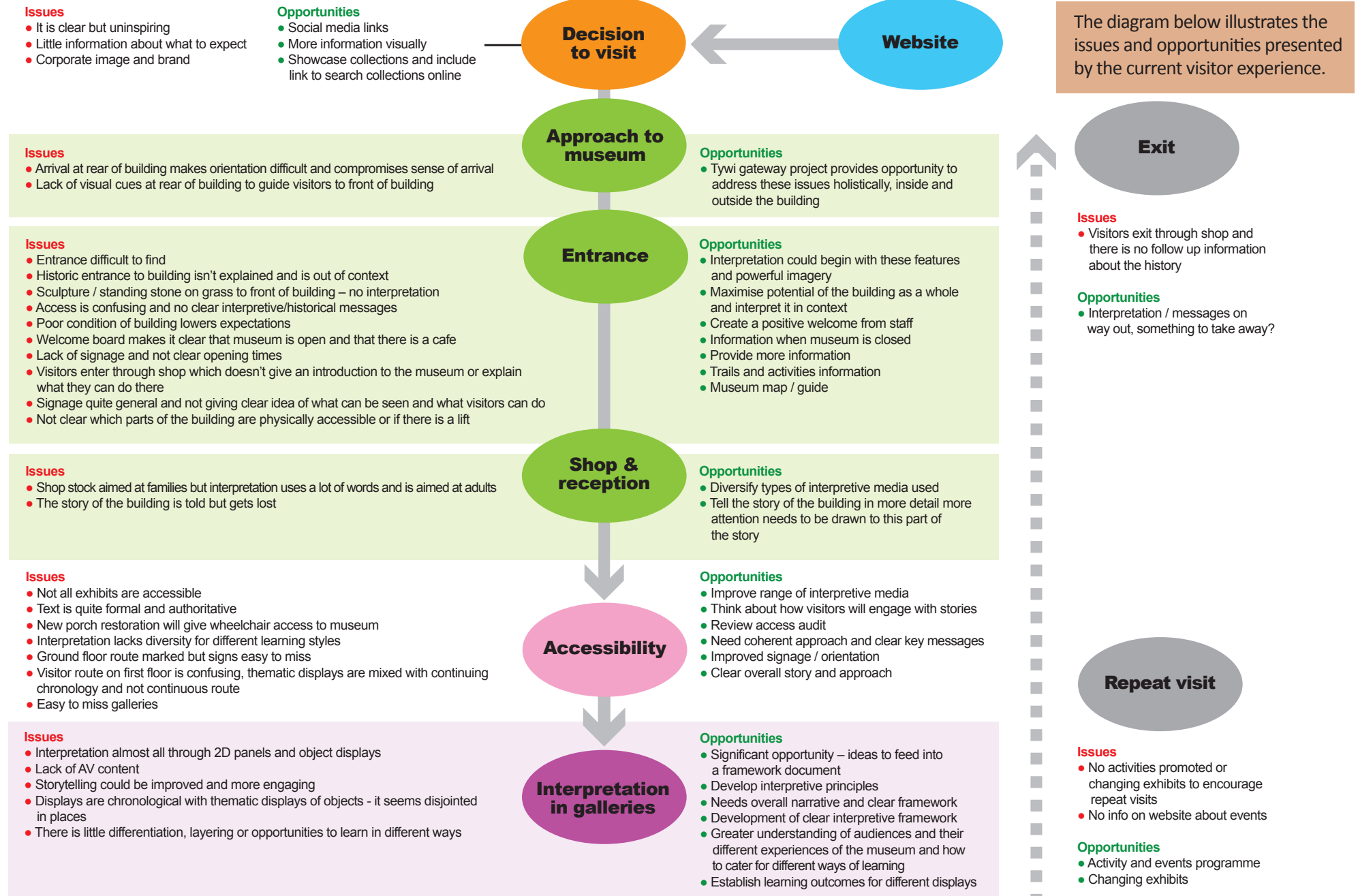
The museum is set within the park, which was once the gardens of the Bishop's palace and visitors arrive at the rear of the building. There is limited signage to point visitors to the entrance.

Once on the west side of the building the entrance is clear. Visitors enter through an ornate porch. The museum shop is located within the building's entrance hall with the reception desk. Beyond the entrance hall visitors are guided into the main hall at the centre of the building. The hall showcases a display of large pieces of furniture including a piano, paintings, dressers (with ceramics) and the Picton Monument. There is also an introduction to the Old Bishop's Palace highlighting different rooms that reflect the function of the spaces when this was the home of the Bishop.

The visitor route is signposted around the building and takes visitors on a partially chronological journey, starting with geology and natural history. This leads into the prehistoric galleries and Romans and archaeology. Galleries on the 17th and 18th century follow. Following this there are thematic displays showcasing the social history collections in the folk gallery, the coal mining display (in the corridor) and the agriculture gallery. Although outside of the chronology the galleries here focus on life in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The old kitchen contains objects from the collections displayed in the house's original kitchen. From here visitors go back into coal mining corridor and up the stairs. The narrow corridor at the top of the stairs continues the thematic approach with displays of objects from the ethnographic collection, crime and punishment and traditional medicine. The chapel retains its original furniture and is a quiet space which illustrates the building's history. The 20th century gallery leads into the space with the reconstructed Elsa's cottage and the Victorian schoolroom.

Visitors leave through the shop.







### 3.2 VAQAS and Visitor feedback

In 2016 and 2018 the museum failed to achieve the required standard for VAQAS Accreditation. Although the feedback on the displays and the museum overall was positive there were several key areas where the required standards was not deemed to have been maintained. These areas were pre arrival – the amount and nature of information in the website for visitors to effectively plan their visit; arrival – the first impressions of the building were poor due to the appearance of the building, grounds and the current state of decoration externally and in some spaces inside. Maintenance was also raised as an issue due to the condition of the toilets. Overall, the museum scored 62% but failed because as a county museum there is an expectation that the museum exceeds the minimum.

Although the comments of visitors reflect some of the concerns described above feedback is generally positive. It has an overall rating of 4.5/5 on Trip Advisor, with over half (56%) of people who left a review describing it as excellent and 37% as very good. The museum is rated as 6th most popular of 19 attractions in Carmarthen. Comments include:

#### Interesting museum with great artefacts but needs TLC

*The exhibits are excellent and there was so much to see in this small museum that we hadn't seen elsewhere. I would highly recommend a visit. The only disappointment was that with a little care this museum could be so much better...and it would really improve the visitor experience.* July 2019

#### A hidden gem

*I only heard about this place after desperately search for somewhere new and free to go to. Don't be put off by the run down look of the exterior and driveway as once you get inside, it is a treasure trove of historical items. The chapel is beautiful, the school room insightful...* May 2018

#### Please support this museum

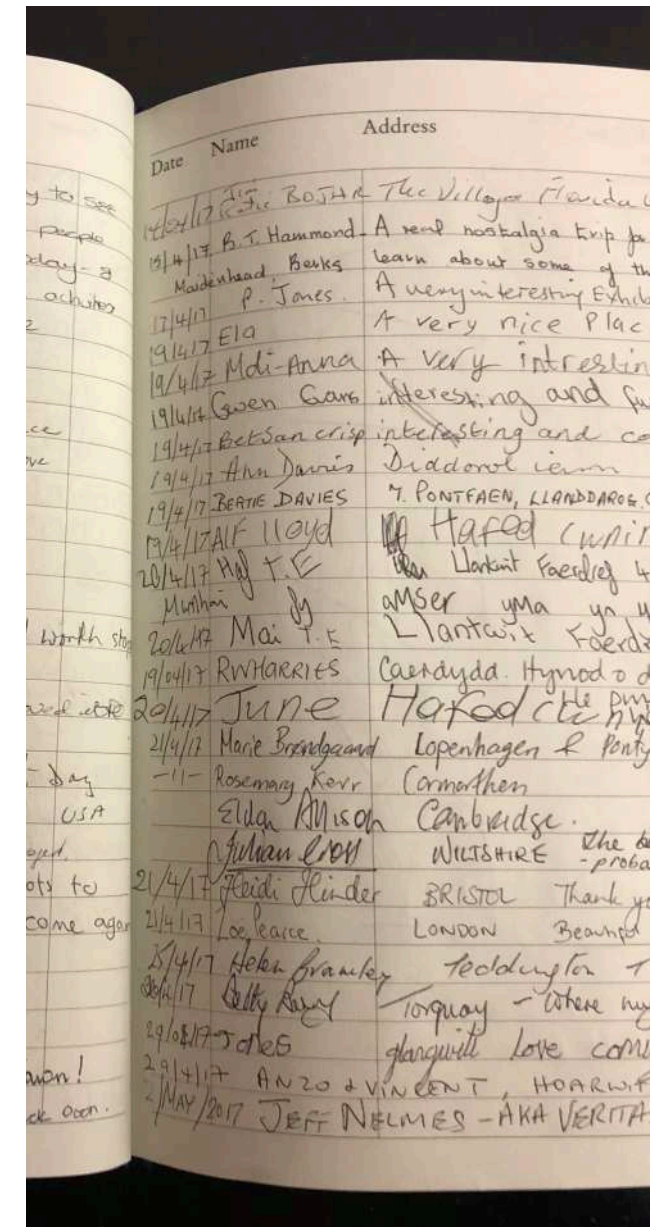
*We visited here as part of a group and we were all made to feel extremely welcome by the Staff. This old Bishops Palace needs a little TLC both inside and out, but it is certainly worth a visit and even better it is free!* October 2015

Comments from the museum's Visitors' Book include:

*We spent two hours here and still didn't see it all. Excellent.* October 2019

*A real nostalgia trip for me, and interesting to learn about some of the old Welsh customs.* April 2017

*Was great, the whole family liked it! And it was free, that's a bonus. Thanks!* August 2011



## 4. How the story is currently told

### 4.1 A chronological approach

The museum displays are based around a chronological structure with thematic galleries, room sets and the story of the Bishop's Palace running through it. The visitor route follows the chronology and overall gives the complete story of Carmarthenshire. However, one of the galleries – the 19th century has since been closed and the temporary exhibition space is currently closed, with the intention to reopen in 2021.

The interpretive approach has been shaped by the objects within the museum collection, creating object rich displays. But like many museums the core of the collections reflects the interest of the curators and people who have donated objects, which means that there are stories that are not told and gaps in how the museum reflects the people of Carmarthenshire.

Previous curators have had a subject specialist background rather than one in learning or interpretation which has also influenced the collecting policies and approach to interpretation.

The structure makes it difficult to create new interpretive experiences as it leaves an obvious gap if any of the galleries are removed or changed.

### 4.2 Interpretive media

An analysis of the 15 galleries within the museum helps to demonstrate how different types of interpretive media have been used in each space. In order to engage with a range of audiences it is important to have a wide range of interpretive media that don't rely too much on reading either through graphic panels or object labels. Throughout all the spaces graphic panels and object labels provide information about the history or the objects on display. There are only two spaces that have no graphic panels, the ground floor corridor and the stairs. There is a mix of objects on display in showcases and some on open display. There are no objects in drawers that would add an element of discovery and choice for the visitor. There are simple hands on activities in three of the spaces, all on the ground floor at the beginning of the visitor experience. There are no digital or paper based activities. There is an AV film in two galleries, the Romans and Coal Mining, a further one in the Clogmaker's workshop wasn't working. There are six spaces that contain reconstructed rooms: a Roman kitchen comprises replica items; the Clogmaker's workshop showcases original objects; the chapel contains the original fittings from when this was the Bishop's Palace; the Victorian schoolroom uses original items from across the county; Penrhiwbeili Cottage is a reconstruction of Elsa's with original objects and furnishings; a kitchen in the 20th century gallery shows 1940s objects in context.

A full summary of the interpretive media is at Appendix B.





### 4.3 Review of current interpretation

An initial workshop involved a range of volunteers and staff who carried out a review of five of the gallery spaces, considering what is the story told, how it's told, could this be done differently and are there any significant stories that could be told?



#### Main hall and Picton Frieze

There are multiple stories in this space linked to the objects displayed here. The objects seem to be large items which wouldn't fit anywhere else. The story is told through text panels and object labels, but there is no overall key story. The architecture of this space, which was once the courtyard for the Episcopal College (or Bishop's palace?), is hidden by the exhibits. There is a photograph showing the room when it was part of the palace, but this is hard to see. This would be a good place to start telling the story of the Bishop's Palace and link to the Arts & Crafts era with furniture and design that reflects this. Less objects on display would give more space to see what's here. The Picton Monument could be used to start conversations about controversial aspects of our history. Personal stories about the bishops who lived here would link them to the space. The room is panelled with America Oak – this could be used to talk about the environment and sustainability and link to the park.



#### Carved stones

This area doesn't have a clear story. Interpretation is through a flipbook, boards (graphic panels) and labels. The sequence of the stones is unclear, and they could be grouped differently to help explain this. A map showing the locations of where they were found would be helpful and the text needs to explain the stones' significance. More could be made of the Irish connection, immigration and the link to the Romans. Further explanation of Ogham script would be useful.



### Old kitchen

Set in the original kitchen of the palace the setting is meant to be the 1930s but there are some random items. Poor lighting makes it a dark and gloomy space. There is very little interpretation, only one board and limited labels. This would be a great space for living history, extra items such as pretend food, glowing fire and clothes on the drying rack would add interest. The interpretation could include stories about the staff who worked here along with personal items.

### Penrhiwbeili Cottage

The cottage has been recreated behind a glass screen (but is difficult to see) and includes objects from Elsa's home in an original context. The display is a remarkable time capsule of rural life but there is not much information about Elsa who was well known locally. The photograph showing the outside of the cottage is disconnected from the display so it's not clear that this was an actual home not just a collection of items. More information about the objects would encourage visitors to take a closer look, some of the objects are unfamiliar and information explaining how they were used would help to understand the difference between Elsa's life and life today. The display could make use of audio and include an interview with Elsa's niece.



### 20th century gallery

This gallery tells the story of everyday life from WWI to the 1980s. Interpretation is through panels, objects and labels. Further depth of interpretation could be added through oral history, videos, photographs linking the objects to people, questions that prompt visitors to engage with the objects. Personal stories will help to connect visitors to the history. There are too many objects on display, the display could focus on different aspects of the century, with a display about food, or fashion, or technology. This would be a good area for changing exhibitions, or events such as storytelling or fashion shows. The WWII display could be linked to the school curriculum.



## 5. The stories of Carmarthenshire

### 5.1 Overall chronology and narrative

It is helpful to set out the story of the county of Carmarthenshire. This is based on historic research, historic sites and the museums' collections. It should be noted that these have been informed and limited by the interest of people doing research, the discoveries made by antiquarians, farmers and archaeologists of sites and objects. The museum collections have been gathered through donations of objects and the interests of curators' past and present. By setting out the story of the county we can identify gaps in the museum collections and the current interpretation.

We have used the tripartite divisions to describe the periods and sites of prehistory, which are based on technological developments of the archaeological material.

**Prehistory:** the earliest evidence comes from Coygan Cave which was used by Neanderthal humans about 50,000 years ago (ya). This was during the last ice age and the area was covered with ice sheets. As the ice reduced (10,000 – 4,000 BC) sea levels rose and the English Channel formed, creating Carmarthen Bay. From 4,000 – 2,000 BC was a period of pastoralism and crops, a more settled existence for human hunter gathering groups. Evidence includes stone axes and ritual or funerary monuments. There is debris from axe manufacture from Glandy Cross on edge of Preseli.



**The Bronze Age** (2,200 – 650BC) is characterised by new technology and burial and ritual monuments. A recent discovery at Llanddowror included cremation burials. There is evidence of people living on higher land and the emergence of large hillforts. The climate may have created poorer quality soils on the lower land, which caused conflict over the higher ground. Finds of metalwork are thought to be linked to ritual activities.

**The Iron Age** (650 BC – 1st AD) is a period of settlement in hillforts in the north and east (of the county) and small defended enclosures to the south and west. This suggests that the area was divided into different tribal affiliations with different economies. The Iron Age is linked to the Celts and the emergence of the Welsh language.

#### Romans

Carmarthenshire is the location of one of only two official **Roman** towns in what is now Wales, and the only known gold mine. There was a huge influx of material culture into the whole of Britain and the finds from Carmarthenshire resonate with this. Written records provide information about the local Silures tribe, who were subdued by AD 78. Large temporary camps at Arosfa Garreg (near Llanddeusant) and Y Pigwn (near Myddfai) were used during the campaign and a series of permanent forts along the road network were used to control the area. Evidence from the forts shows that they were garrisoned by auxiliary troops of the 2nd Augustan Legion (Legio II Augusta). The route along the Tywi Valley provided access from the coast inland. Another fort at Pumsaint guarded the gold mines at Dolaucothi. This area was home to the Demetae tribe and had less forts which might suggest they submitted more quickly to Roman rule. The town at Carmarthen was an important and strategic crossing upriver from the coast. Known as Moridunum the town was laid out with an amphitheatre and temple and defences. Places mentioned in Ptolemy's Geographica mention the Demetae tribes, the main rivers and the forts and settlements. Gold from Dolaucothi was under imperial ownership until the 2nd century AD and was sent to Imperial mints at Trier and Lyons via the port at Carmarthen. The rural areas have evidence of Roman villas and native settlements including dwellings that suggest a well off native society along the coast.

The **Early Christian period** is linked to the collection of inscribed stones from Carmarthenshire which include examples of Irish ogham, Latin inscriptions and Christian symbols. This is one of the most significant collection of stones in Wales. There are few records for this period, and many are based on collective memory rather than being written at the time. It is a time of saints and kings, legends and an emerging identity. Demed, or Dyfed (after the Demetae) covered western Carmarthenshire & Pembrokeshire and became one of the leading kingdoms in Wales. It was ruled by a dynasty of Irish kings. There were strong links to other coastal communities and Brittany, bringing Christianity and trade. Early Christian monuments are often found at or near churches. The Brythonic language evolved into early Welsh and Moridunum (sea fort) became Merdin and then Caerfyrddin (Myrddin's fort) linking the area to the wizard Merlin. Written records record a monastery and writings about Llandeilo in the Lichfield Gospels are some of the earliest examples of written Welsh.



The kingdom of Dyfed was combined with Seisyllwg to become Deheubarth, ruled by Hywel one of Wales' most famous kings.

The **medieval period** (1066 / 1087 – 1485) began with a dynamic period with shifting alliances and everybody fighting each other. This was followed by stable marcher and English royal governance. Carmarthen was split between Welsh Wales ruled by native leaders and Marcher Wales with its mixed population ruled by the Normans. The Welsh chroniclers' comment on the savagery and terror wrought by the Normans. They ruled through castles and towns and control of the church and trade. Carmarthenshire has the most castles of any county in Wales. The native dynasty recovered lands and Deheubarth was one of the leading Welsh kingdoms again. Carmarthen was the most significant town in Wales. Established by the English crown it was two towns (old and new) until the 1500s. a map of 1250 shows Carmarthen as the only town in Wales, by 1353 it was the only staple port. This meant it could export the staple goods – wool, hides and woollfells. Reorganisation of the church created the diocese of St David's and the Deheubarth Princes created a monastery at Whitland, which became the most influential in Wales. In 1287 Thomas Bek Bishop of St David's moved the religious college to Abergwili.

In 1135 Geoffrey of Monmouth produced his Prophecies of Merlin, which with his best-selling History of the Kings of Britain and the Life of Merlin firmly connected Merlin with Carmarthen, propelling both into European literature. The county was managed by local dynasties including the Dwnns (or Donne family). John Donne's portrait on a triptych (1470s) is the first lifelike representation of a Welsh person. Gruffudd ap Nicolas of Dinefwr, a Lancastrian, holds a famous eisteddfod in Carmarthen Castle in 1451.

The **Tudor period** is traditionally seen as the end of the middle ages, but the reign of Henry VII saw less change to everyday life than that of his son, Henry VIII. Many of the wealthy families moved to be near the English court making the most of the Tudor's Welsh connections. The acts of union of 1535 and 1542 swept away the mini-kingdoms of the Marcher lordships and brought English laws. The new county of Carmarthenshire included the medieval shire together with the neighbouring marcher lordships. Carmarthenshire was represented in Parliament for the first time with two members, one for the county town and one for the county. The language of parliament was English but crucially, "The people of Wales... do daily use a speech nothing like the natural mother tongue used in England". Like many Welsh noblemen, the great landowner Sir Rhys ap Thomas of Dinefwr/Newton supported the future Henry VII at the Battle of Bosworth. Other great noblemen included the Devereux and Vaughan families. Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries destroyed Carmarthen priory and Friary, Kidwelly, Whitland and Talley Abbeys. The importance of Carmarthen is illustrated by Bishop Barlow moving his Bishop's Palace to Abergwili in 1541. This replaced the college although the cathedral remained at St David's. This was a turbulent period in religious life, in 1555 the Bishop of St David's Robert Ferrar was tried and burnt at the stake in Carmarthen for his Protestant convictions.

The Bishop's Palace at Abergwili was a powerhouse of the Renaissance in the Welsh language. In 1567 Bishop Richard Davies and William Salesbury translated, for the first time, the Book of Common Prayer and The New Testament into Welsh at Abergwili. The town of Carmarthen received a new charter in 1546 making the two towns one. The town was an important trading port. The town's first minute books (1569-1606) is one of the earliest records of urban Welsh life.



**The Stuart Age** is defined by civil war and religious dissent. Carmarthen continued as an important port and was described as the largest town in South Wales. Richard Vaughan was given command of the king's forces in South Wales. During the civil war (1643 – 1646) control of west Wales eddied back and forth, with military activity focussed on towns such as Carmarthen, Tenby, Haverfordwest, Newcastle Emlyn, Aberystwyth. In 1644 Parliament captured Laugharne Castle in November 1644. Excavations recovered artefacts from the week-long siege including a metal backplate pierced by a musket ball. In 1660 the monarchy was restored and Carmarthen's famous (Merlin's oak) may have been planted to celebrate this occasion. Following the Restoration, Richard Vaughan became President of the Council of Wales and the Marches. He was accused of brutality towards his tenants. The Dissenters were Protestant Christians who disagreed with the mainstream Anglicans and worshiped in independent or Baptist churches. By 1715 there were about a dozen Independent and Baptist churches in Carmarthenshire.

The 18th century was a period of rebellion and dissent. There are hidden and untold stories of slavery – John Vaughan the 3rd Earl of Carbery was the Governor of Jamaica; and emigration by Carmarthenshire Baptists to escape persecution. Carmarthen was linked to Bristol and the triangular slave trade, which would have benefited many of the wealthy families. Carmarthen was an important centre for printing. Before the 1700s most printing of Welsh publications was undertaken in London or Shrewsbury. The first published works in Carmarthen were religious including the first Welsh Bible printed in Wales – the Peter Williams Bible.

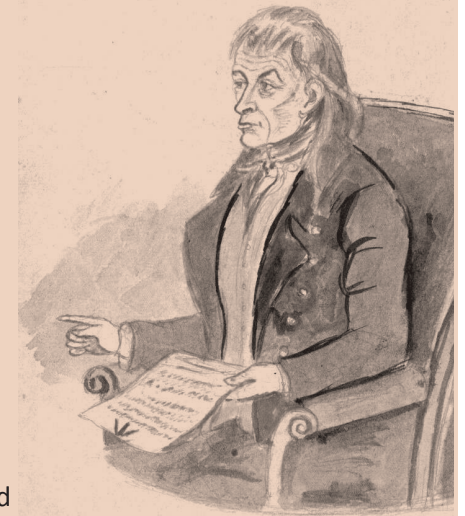
This period sees the start of industries around Llanelli and iron and tinplate manufacture. This included the Carmarthen Ironworks, the Kidwelly Tinworks, and the associated transport improvements (canals and the tramway) and coal production. In 1792 a shortage of official coinage led to businessmen producing their own tokens for payment. John Morgan had five tons of halfpenny tokens minted in Birmingham. A set of portraits painted of the Vaughan family include Bridget Vaughan, known as Madame Bevan patron and champion of the Griffith Jones Circulating Schools. Her husband, Arthur Bevan won Carmarthenshire's first contest election. The schools were founded by Griffith Jones of Llanddowror to teach children and adults to read the Welsh Bible and to learn the Welsh catechism of the Anglican Church. The schools were an important factor in spreading Welsh literacy. The county was a rural one and in 1772, Carmarthenshire's Agricultural Society was set up, Arthur Young described a land where 'the poor live on barley bread, cheese and butter: not one in ten have either pigs or cows; they fare very poorly and rarely touch meat'.

In 1797, the Carmarthenshire Yeomanry Cavalry galloped west towards Pembrokeshire, to meet the threat of the French invasion of Fishguard. They continued in service after the Napoleonic wars, were used to quell the 1818 cheese riots and were finally disbanded in 1827. In 1799, the Llandoverly Bank was founded by David Jones. It was known as the Black Ox Bank because of the image of an ox on its notes. Because of this image and the association of early banking with drovers, the bank has become the most well-known of early private banks in Wales.

The **1800s** are typified by the French Wars and increasing industrialisation and political developments. Industrialisation created a divided culture in Carmarthenshire, between the rural north and west and the industrial south and east. Improved roads and railways allowed people to move around the country and abroad. Carmarthen as a port declined in importance.

1801 census records the population of the county to be 67,317 by 1831 the population had hugely increased causing rural distress and hardship. By the 1891 census the population is 130,566. In Llanelli the population had risen from 2,972 to 32,034. Over 90% of the population spoke Welsh, with 35% speaking Welsh only.

In 1819, Iolo Morgannwg introduced his creation - Gorsedd Beirdd Ynys Prydain (a society of poets, musicians and other representatives of Welsh culture) - to what was then a provincial (Dyfed-based) eisteddfod held at Carmarthen, in the garden of the Ivy Bush Inn.



1839 was the start of the Rebecca Riots. Men dressed as women destroyed tollgates in protest at the tolls charged on roads. This wasn't the only cause of the riots, agricultural depression, a lack of work, high rents and tithes punished the poor.

The notes provided from which this summary has been drawn only goes as far as the 1800s.

## 5.2 Identifying the gaps

Setting out the story of Carmarthenshire chronologically helps to identify which parts of the story are currently told and how the collections correspond to this story. The museum curator Gavin Evans has identified a series of challenges and gaps within the collections which are explored below.

### The Geography of the Collections

Although a county museum service, our museums and heritage spaces, past and present, have been located in the south of the county, though we have worked with community museums in the north, such as at Llandovery and Newcastle Emlyn with varying success. Although our collections are drawn from across the county, there is no doubt that most originate from the main centres of population in the south i.e. Carmarthen, the county town and Llanelli, the largest (industrial) town, both with richer material cultures and people who were interested in collecting. The leading members of the Carmarthenshire Antiquarian Society do not seem to have been interested in the industrial world around them, but more traditionally pursued antiquities and quaint rural customs. The Parc Howard collection does reflect a pride in muck, brass and industrial innovation. And apart from the Llanelli Pottery there is little explanation of the role of the town as an important manufacturing centre.

There are other geographical gaps in the collections. Most of our history is rural and agricultural, but we have little to illustrate the lives of the small rural market towns and their hinterlands in the north and west. The industrial collections are weak such as Pembrey, Burry Port, the hinterland of the Gwendraeth, the small mining villages between Cross Hands and Ammanford and the ribbon settlements of the Amman Valley and the northern edge of the coalfield.

### Some Big Themes and the Collections

Themes around politics, religion, education and cultural identity provide huge opportunities for engagement and conversations. This includes a big sweep from the reformation/renaissance of the 1500s and Humanism through the 1600s, and the growth of dissent through printing, nonconformity and political radicalism (e.g. Tomos Glyn Cothi) in the 1700s and into the 1800s with political activism including trade unions, rediscovery of a Welsh nation (Iolo Morgannwg, the National Eisteddfod, Land of the White Gloves), the fight to disestablish the church, Liberal and Labour ascendancies and the establishment of Plaid Cymru. Education is closely bound with religion and identity. This includes the early schools run by SPCK, circulating schools, nonconformist Sunday schools and the fallout from the Treason of the Blue Books.

The collections contain highpoints for the 1500 – 1700s, but the intellectual context is difficult to interpret with the available collection, mostly printed books. The collections are obviously larger for the 1800s early 20th centuries. These periods have been referred to as British Wales, Imperial Wales and American Wales (in the industrial south). These new worlds came with new jobs, industries, consumerism and moving pictures.

The demographic and economic changes emphasised the division between the rural, Liberal Carmarthenshire embedded in chapels and tight communities and the new, fluid industrial areas where politicised miners and other workers exchanged rural poverty for dreadful working conditions, but improving standards of living and who shared their towns with a new, larger middle class. It is also worth noting that the anthracite field around Ammanford had a different working character to the rest of the coalfield, with a locally-sourced workforce that retained strong roots in its agricultural and Welsh-speaking surroundings.

In Carmarthenshire, the mining communities of the Gwendraeth and Amman valleys are Welsh-speaking and Labour voting. When coal disappeared, a new generation of voters leaned towards Plaid Cymru. Significant political events are the election of Gwynfor Evans as Carmarthen MP and the establishment of the Welsh Assembly. Also, Welsh language legislation and education.

### Carmarthenshire, Wales and the World

Understanding Carmarthenshire's role in Wales and the world helps to understand the significance of the collection and the story of the county and the achievements of people who lived here. There is lots of potential through natural history, ethnography, antiquities, social history, military, trade etc. The Defiance Bicycle company opened branches in South Africa, and a spare wheel is still known as a Stepney in India, definitely an example of Imperial Wales in action. We have stories linked in with the flotsam of Empire, many who married into Carmarthenshire, such as soldiers, diplomats, businessmen and missionaries, which could be explored further. What we lack are the stories of named, ordinary people including English, Irish, Jewish, Basque, German, Italian, evacuees, refugees, economic migrants and post-war populations from all around the world. Some who have been transient, but others who remained and integrated. Also, we lack understanding of the people who left, such as Baptists, Mormons, criminals, soldiers, sailors, Patagonian colonists.



## Chronological Weaknesses in the Collections

Prehistory	There are large gaps in our knowledge, particularly of settlements, from the Neolithic to the iron age. Might resolve itself through excavations and chance finds and loans.
Romano-British AD 43 – AD 410	Similar to above, lack knowledge about true impact of Romans on rural inhabitants e.g. material culture
Early Christian AD 410 – AD 1066/1087	As above, few settlements and artefacts from the period have been identified with certainty.
Mediaeval 1066/1087 – 1485/1542	Little about town-life, all Carmarthen focussed and through religious contexts. But we can talk a little about trade, again Carmarthen. Nothing of settlement outside of early boroughs.
Tudors 16th Century – Stuarts 17th century – Hanover 18th century	<p>Generally, poorly represented in the collections although there is much happening in the real world.</p> <p>Collection highlights: Bible, aristocracy/gentry portraits, potentially civil war, but little about town life, the ‘pre-eminence’ of Carmarthen as a town and as a port and its connections to the wider world and early industrialisation and commercial life in the county.</p> <p>Big sweep from 16th-century religious dissent mutating into political Reformation through to Dissent, nonconformity, 18th century radicalism and on into 19th &amp; 20th century political activism, liberalism, working class consciousness and movements all join up, but difficult to interpret from the collections.</p>
19th –20th century	<p>This is the age of British Wales and Imperial Wales and the ‘American Wales’ of the industrial south. The post-WW1 world has been called the dismantling of Wales, when in Carmarthenshire the dichotomy between an older world of rural liberalism and a new, more confident society in the industrial areas, re-emerges. That division becomes emphasised as the English language increases in industrial areas. The split personality, or a perception of it, endures between the rural and the now mainly post-industrial areas of the county.</p> <p>The older tradition of the countryside expressed itself in a renewed fight for the language and native identity and the birth of Plaid Cymru in the inter-war years and a different national vision of Wales which is part of the Labour dominance.</p>

## Gaps and perceived weaknesses in collection types

Natural History / Earth Science	<p>No Natural History Curator since the early 1990s, so the planned development of these collections ceased. The recent Linking Natural Science Collections in Wales enabled a rediscovery of the collection and its potential value to learning.</p> <p>The main weakness is that the collection reflects the personal interests of collectors, so lacks a Carmarthenshire focus, making its scientific use in a local context limited. Opportunities to collaborate with the Tywi Gateway Project and the council's biodiversity team. The AG-NMW have scientific collections.</p> <p>The geology collection could be developed in a county context, not just for examples of rocks and fossils, but also to illustrate economic use and industry / farming. And could link to a UNESCO Geopark and the coast.</p>
Book collection	<p>Indiscriminate collecting</p> <p>Lack of understanding about significance of books in the collection</p> <p>Books used by researchers but not well known</p> <p>Volunteers are cataloguing the books</p>
Photography	<p>Fantastic collections, but weakness is that many communities and activities are underrepresented. Sharing of digitised collection produced by community group heritage projects, People's Collection, Welsh Women's' Archive etc</p>
Oral History	<p>There is not a collection, but digitised assets are probably available through community group heritage projects, People's Collection, Welsh Women's Archive, South Wales Miner's Library, National Museum of History.</p>
Social History	<p>Gaps not fully identified. Areas which need to be strengthened include political activity and organisations (e.g. trade unions, self-help such as Ivorites), responses to the unemployed in the 1930s, civil protests (women's rights, language, dams, response to the Cold War, the Carmarthen Bunker protests, the Greenham Common march with its west Wales origins), social reform, regulation, health, women, children, entertainment and sport. These link to law and order and municipal regulation and health and education, through organisations and individual experiences.</p> <p>There are local collections held by clubs e.g. Scarlets, Carmarthen Quins and many clubs seem to have a 'historian' or 'remembrancer'.</p>
Farming, Industry, Transport & Maritime	<p>There isn't a large collection of machinery, though there is a representative selection of traditional tools which complements the social insights into rural life of Penrhiwbeili. Industrial collections limited to Kidwelly Industrial Museum, Llanelli and coal mining (a more recent area of collecting). Little connected to transport or maritime despite the importance of ports at Carmarthen and Llanelli Also, Burry Port, Pembrey, Kidwelly, Llansteffan, Laugharne, St. Clears. The coastal routeway linked the ports of the Bristol Channel, this links to the story of slavery. Also, industrial tramways, railways and canals. And pilgrim route by land &amp; river crossings for pilgrims to St David's as well as emigration.</p>
Textiles	<p>A fantastic collection of quilts and samplers which allow appreciation of the objects in their own right as well as explorations of the social history context of their production. Good collection of Welsh costume and local textiles. Good collection of local yeomanry/militia.</p> <p>The extensive costume collection needs an expert assessment to allow it to be used to its full potential and to identify areas for collection. Probably the bulk is late Victorian/Edwardian, domestic, bourgeois(e) and female. Opportunity for a partnership with the Woollen Museum.</p>
Fine Art	<p>Art has been collected to help tell the social history story rather than as pieces of art, this means that much of the art is not high quality and more importantly significant local artists' work has not been collected. There are two significant schools of art in the county and this should be reflected in the collections.</p> <p>Older paintings provide a representative collection of Welsh artists including those with links to Carmarthenshire .</p>
Contemporary Collecting	<p>The museum collections have few objects that are from the late 1900s or 21st century. Contemporary material culture is difficult to collect because society is object rich and it is hard to know where to start. This could be developed thematically as part of a wider project.</p>



## 6. Heritage in Carmarthenshire

We have undertaken a review of other historic sites, museums and heritage centres in Carmarthenshire help to understand how the story of Carmarthenshire is already being told. The full list is an appendix (C). The table below provides a summary of historic sites and museums that are open or accessible to the public.

There is a total of 10 castles in the county which are open to the public. There are over 20 further castles for which only earthworks survive. They date from the Norman or medieval periods although often sit over much earlier defensive sites. Four are managed by Cadw. The two National Trust sites are Newton House and Dolaucothi Gold Mines. There are four museums outside of those managed by Carmarthenshire Museum Service. A few of the gardens open to the public have been listed here to show how they are part of the story.

The historic sites, museums and heritage centres help to tell the story of Carmarthenshire. The themes identified to help us describe the story of Carmarthenshire are shown below with the historic sites that contain part of this story.

Carmarthenshire Archives has recently moved into a newly refurbished building in Carmarthen and once open (after the Covid-19 pandemic) offers research rooms and activities to engage people with the heritage. Local studies sections within many of the county libraries give access to local studies collections.

There are 45 local history societies and groups in Carmarthenshire. The groups tend to have a local focus on a specific town or area, some undertake historic research and they host regular talks, visits and tours.

Theme	Historic sites	
Culture, art & language	Oriel Myrddin Gallery Hywel Dda garden & heritage centre Ffwrness (Parc Howard Museum – CCC)	
Working life & industry	National Wool Museum Woollen mills Coracle Centre Dolaucothi Gold Mines Historic Railways & Goods Shed (Kidwelly Tinplate Museum - CCC) Black Mountain Quarries Harbours Viaducts Canals (Parc Howard Museum – CCC)	Tell stories of specific aspects of working life
The people of Carmarthenshire	Castles Dylan Thomas Boathouse West Wales Museum of Childhood Y Gangell Pentcelyn Farmhouse (Parc Howard Museum – CCC) (Museum of Speed – CCC)	Norman & medieval castles Dylan Thomas Lives of children in past
Religion & politics	Castles Abbeys and priories Roman sites Hillforts Churches (Parc Howard Museum – CCC)	
Worldwide connections	National Botanic Gardens Roman sites Picton's Tower (Museum of Speed – CCC)	
Life in the past	Hafoty Medieval House Court Farm, Pembrey Llandovery Museum Aberglasney Mansion & gardens Lampeter Museum Roman marching camps & amphitheatre Hannes Emlyn Museum Scarlet's Stadium (Kidwelly Tinplate Museum – CCC)	
Nature	Aberglasney Mansion & gardens Pembrey Country Park Wildlife & Wetlands Trust Llyn Llech Owain Reservoirs (Museum of Speed – CCC)	

## 7. Developing the interpretive themes

### 7.1 Gathering the stories

The key stories identified from the review of the collections, workshops and discussions and the narrative of the history of the county have been drawn together into a series of themes. This thematic approach will be further developed to enable the museum to tell interconnected stories about the heritage and people of Carmarthenshire.

#### The themes are:

**Culture, art and language** is the history of traditional crafts, music, art, language and literature that are capable of telling the story of self-expression and identity through intangible and material culture.

**The people of Carmarthenshire** include educators, artists and writers, inventors, sportsmen and women, kings, nobles and saints, rebels and leaders. History must be told from different perspectives with stories of people brought to life.

**Working life and industry** is full of grit and tells a very tangible story of transport, working life, rural life, agriculture, industries, jobs and trade, global connections and the transformations brought by the ongoing changes to how we work.

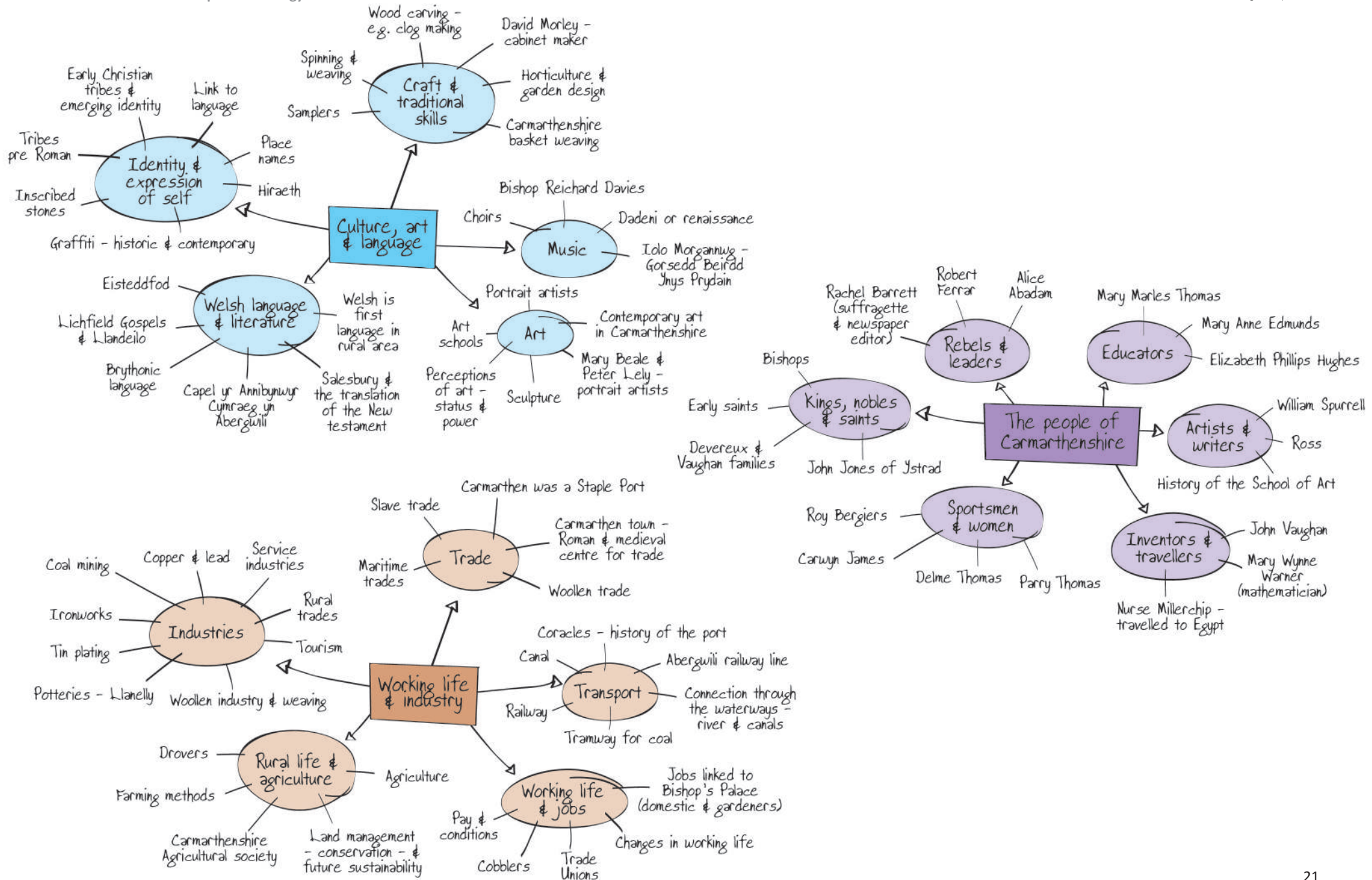
**Religion and politics** is a key story for a county that has seen its share of conflict, war, rebellion, riots, and religion. Which has been shaped by different rulers and forms of government.

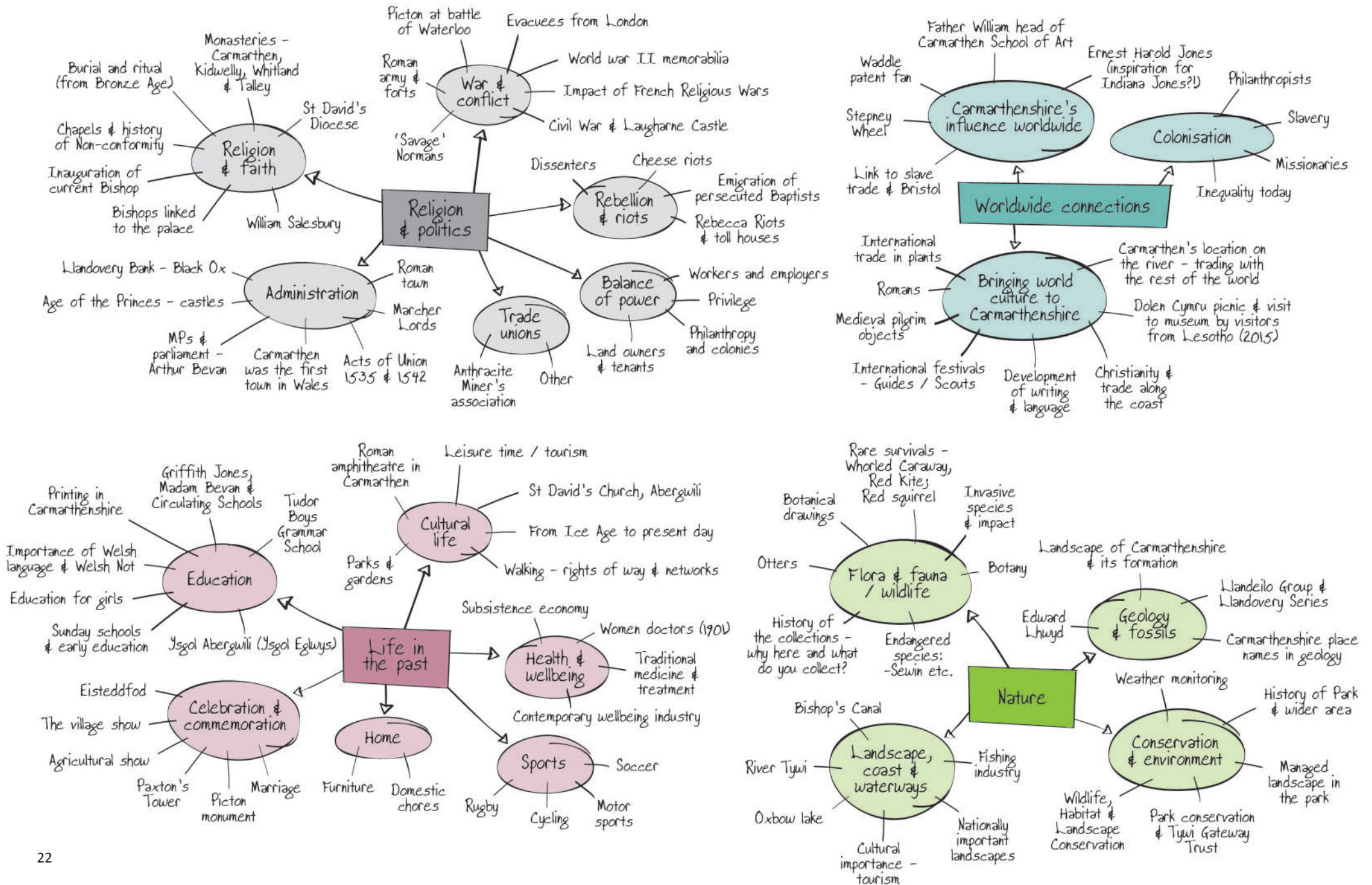
**Life in the past** tells the story of everyday life including health and wellbeing, sports, celebration and commemoration, education and cultural life.

**Nature** helps us understand the formation of the landscape through geology and fossils, landscape, coast and waterway, the fragile environment and conservation and the diversity of wildlife, flora and fauna within the county and the people who help us understand the natural world..

Carmarthenshire has **worldwide connections** and a history of bringing world culture to Carmarthenshire and international inspiration and impact.









## 7.2 Values and principles for interpretation

The museums service has been considering values for the museums. These are:

The (new) values that matter most now:

1. Collections and their stories can connect to people's lives in unlimited and powerful ways. Understanding our place in the world and making personal connections with the past can provide context, a sense of self and stability when things around us can seem uncertain.
2. We are collections stewards. In preserving heritage, we place equal value on researching/ documenting object histories and caring for the physical object. This enables more effective use of collections and it is our duty to pass on a better legacy.
3. Our approach to interpretation and storytelling is people centred.
4. We build a better service by working flexibly and efficiently, supporting our colleagues and pulling in the same direction.
5. We celebrate the diversity of our family of museums, working together as 'CofGâr' and the brand values this represents.

The staff are aware of and want to apply the approach first described by Tilden (Tilden's Interpretive Principles, 1954) and revised by John Veverka as:

1. *Provoke – a statement, graphic or photo that grabs attention*
2. *Relate – a way to relate this to everyday lives of visitors*
3. *Reveal – why the message is important to the visitor, or how they can benefit from the information that was interpreted to them.*
4. *Address the whole – This is the single theme/statement that unites our whole site, e.g. "we are revealing this site's significant heritage and understanding its place in the wider story of the lives of people living and working Carmarthenshire".*
5. *Strive for message unity – when we plan and design our programme, service or media that we use the right colours, designs, style, etc. to support our message (the stage setting and props for theatrical presentation).*

*"Interpretation is our communication strategy to translate information for people from the language of the technical expert to the language of the everyday visitor"*

*"Interpretation is not topic or resource specific. The interpretive communication process can be used for interpreting anything, any subject. If the interpretive communication is effective, then "education" can occur about that subject. Interpretation is an objective driven, and market (audience) focused process that looks for results (the accomplishment of stated objectives). It uses marketing and advertising techniques, journalism strategies, and a host of other material integrate communication strategies to form our Interpretive Communications Strategy. Interpretation is also fun - a recreational learning experience."*

## Telling Stories

The Ekarv approach to writing provides structure for text writing that the museum service could benefit from exploring because it focuses on clarity of meaning (not dumbing down) and avoiding jargon. This principle should be considered and would ensure there's a consistency of approach across the service, uniting our interpretive approach. This way, although all our sites are very different in content, look and feel, there is a consistency to our tone of voice and how we present written information.

The stories described above can be linked to contemporary themes which will make the heritage more relevant to visitors. We want to use our collections to help people explore contemporary themes such as environmental conservation and extinction, Black Lives Matters, poverty and wellbeing.

## Equal Access

Access and inclusion need to be considered from the very outset and at every stage of development. The museums service needs to develop an Access Standard. This would cover getting to the museum, entrances, café, toilets and changing facilities, galleries, staff training and future plans / areas for improvement.

## Behind the scenes at the museum

The museum service would like to develop a principle of transparency, helping visitors and stakeholders to understand more about the process of museum work and the care of collections. This will include highlighting the conservation and care of collection buildings and grounds and introducing these stories into the interpretation. Essentially, any activity the museum undertakes and expends significant resources on should be part of the story we tell and be actively contributing to the way we engage with our visitors. We know it's an area of activity that the public really find fascinating and could be part of our event programming too, e.g. the winter deep clean, firing up the antique motorbikes as part of their care and in-house expertise on how to care for your own antiques/look after your listed property/manage your heritage garden.

## 8. Next steps

This report provides a starting point for the development of an Interpretive Strategy for Carmarthenshire Museum. It is part of a wider range of work developing a new identity for the whole museum service and creating a new way forward.

The Interpretive Strategy will draw on this work already undertaken in order to present:

- An understanding of the current visitor experience
- Summary of current and potential audiences assimilating and undertaking audience consultation (with visitors and non-visitors) and barriers to access
- How the story is currently told
- The stories of Carmarthenshire
- The museum collection and heritage assets
- An Interpretive Framework
- Interpretive Principles
- The way forward

The remaining tasks are:

- Review current audiences – use surveys already undertaken, set up focus groups with families and local adult visitors and develop understanding of target audiences and visitors' perceptions.
- Identify barriers to access and identify which stories are relevant to which audiences
- Assimilate collections information and summarise collections within themes, based on work undertaken for collections store
- Assimilate information and summarise thematic approach
- Create an Interpretive Framework Document for Carmarthenshire Museum (to fit with those for Museum of Speed and Llanelli)

## Appendix A: Stakeholder workshop meeting notes 19th December 2019

The workshop started with a discussion about ‘sacred cows’ and what we would not want to see change in the museum.

The comments have been summarised as things people would not want to see change about the museum and wider site:

- Keep a strong focus on collections
- The museum is like a cabinet of curiosity and discovery
- Retain integrity of the building and historic spaces
- Recreated interiors – cottage, kitchen and school room
- The library (currently used for meetings)
- Outside features – greenhouse, Bishop’s Pond, Ha Ha, trees
- A feeling of magic and discovery
- Sense of chronology
- Stories that are told – Rebecca Riots & Paxton memorial,
- Objects that are particularly significant - Welsh dressers (with ceramic collections), the Salesbury New Testament, Ogham Stones, dairy, mining, ceramics and folklore, archaeology collections, conch shell and samplers
- The connection between the place and the artefacts
- The importance of the link to the Bible and the Welsh language

The group followed this with a SWOT analysis to help understand the current visitor experience for visitors to the museum and the Tywi Gateway.

<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <p>The museum has significant collections and the interpretation has a strong focus on objects</p> <p>Diverse collections</p> <p>An interesting building in a lovely setting with a story of its own</p> <p>Expertise of staff</p> <p>Book collection</p> <p>Parking, bus stop and brown signs</p> <p>Free admission</p> <p>Views into park from inside</p> <p>Link to antiquarian society</p> <p>Physically accessible</p> <p>Friendly staff who are welcoming</p> <p>An old fashioned feel – sense of atmosphere on arrival</p> <p>The entrance is colourful and child friendly</p> <p>The collections are about everyday life – easy for visitors to relate to</p> <p>Visitors can get up close to objects and painting</p> <p>The chapel has a lovely atmosphere and views into the park</p>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <p>People are unaware of the museum</p> <p>Local people don’t visit</p> <p>Static displays (no temporary exhibition programme)</p> <p>No café</p> <p>Unclear orientation on arrival</p> <p>Visual impact of the neglected back of the building</p> <p>The park is full of dogs – difficult to have picnics</p> <p>The current display doesn’t meet the expectations of visitors – looking for experiences</p> <p>The objects are labeled but not connected to the story or each other</p> <p>Lack of variety of interpretive media</p> <p>No hands-on activities</p> <p>The story of Carmarthen, previously told in town museum (now closed)</p> <p>Importance of Bishops Palace and history not highlighted enough</p> <p>Architectural significance of the Old Bishop’s Palace</p> <p>The spaces are small – it’s a domestic setting</p> <p>Disconnect between museum and gardens</p>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <p>Contemporary collecting to help tell recent story of Carmarthenshire</p> <p>Achieve a well looked after feel</p> <p>Interactivity in interpretation related to objects</p> <p>Use wider variety of collections</p> <p>Objects that can be touched (make it clear what is ok to touch and what’s not)</p> <p>Variety of interpretive media – appeal to different people</p> <p>Show how museums link to the wellbeing and future generation act</p> <p>Opportunities to change objects on display within the story</p> <p>Encourage discovery through a Cabinet of Curiosities</p> <p>Link outside with the inside – through Tywi Gateway project</p> <p>Link to new school curriculum</p> <p>Make more of free admission – appeal to tourists and local people</p> <p>Link to cycle track</p> <p>Link to archives and family history</p> <p>Highlight conservation and wider work of the museums service</p>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <p>There are lots of other places to visit</p> <p>People are unaware of events in museums</p> <p>Lack of repeat visits makes it harder to achieve high visitor numbers</p> <p>Lack of resources (staff and budget)</p> <p>Risk of loss of knowledge – staff and volunteers</p> <p>Risk loss of heritage – later 20th century history has not been collected</p> <p>Visitors don’t appreciate cost / value of museum work</p> <p>CCC don’t understand or value museum / service</p>



The group split into small groups and spent time in different parts of the museum considering how the story is currently told, could the story be told in a different way and are there other significant stories that could also be told here with these objects? Notes made during this activity are at the end of this document, emerging principles include:

- Include personal stories – about the people who collected the objects, or owned them or Elsa (the lady who lived in the cottage) and use oral history recordings
- Link the collections and stories to contemporary life
- Have less objects in some galleries and have clear links between them and the story
- Use set dressing in the rooms such as the kitchen
- Create space for reflection, seating and activities
- Present information in different ways (not just written)
- Reveal the architecture and history of the building
- Use the hall for orientation and to introduce the story of the building
- Don't be afraid to discuss or start conversations about controversial subjects – like Picton

The group discussed how they would like to see the museum develop. This was going to be a discussion based around the Generic Learning Outcomes to help identify how people will feel or what they will enjoy. But we ran out of time! The list below are the outcomes suggested by the group. These are a mixture of outcomes, principles and ideas – will sort out later!

### Outcomes

- Chronological approach to interpretation is useful but using themes is more fun
- Changing exhibition programme and displays will help encourage repeat visits
- Interactive exhibits will appeal to lots of visitors
- Create a friendly and welcoming museum
- The museum is about Carmarthenshire it needs to become valued
- People will visit and tell others
- The collections will inspire people to get out and explore Carmarthenshire
- Create a display around 100 objects that shaped Carmarthenshire
- Clearer orientation around the museum and staff and volunteers not just at the entrance to help visitors
- Diverse range of visitors
- The museum helps people feel connected to the collection
- The displays link to the history of the town
- Better interpretation about the Old Bishop's Palace – how it was when Bishops lived here
- General feeling of care and value
- Connection to community – events and come along / place to meet
- People want to volunteer and bring collections to life – conversations and tours – passion
- People proud of it
- Links to schools – link to curriculum
- Offer guided tours
- This becomes a local treasure house
- Create an ongoing sense of discovery
- People leave thinking 'I never knew that'
- The museum becomes a social space which draws people in

## Gallery interpretation review notes

Exhibition area: Penrhiwbeili cottage	
1. What is the story currently told by this area of the exhibition?	How rural Carmarthenshire people lived.
2. How is the story told? (interpretive media, way objects displayed)	Story not really told at present. There's nothing really about Elsa – though she was jam making for WI market; no picture of her. Not clear she was there in 1987. Map same info boards in place.
3. Could the story be told in a different way? (using different interpretive media, from an alternative point of view, to appeal to a wider audience etc)	Disconnect between the photo of the house interior. Need to be better linked create a “box” so you could enter into it, soundscapes in both languages eg. Life in the house, motion sensors voices / lights – torches, cross section drawing. Little garden.
4. Are there other significant stories that could also be told here/with these objects?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Usage of the objects – links with other things within the museum.</li> <li>• Plethora of objects that need explanations.</li> <li>• Where did she sleep? / How did she use X? etc.</li> <li>• Contrast between modern life and how Elsa lived for kids – where are the taps / lights / fridge?</li> <li>• Importance of eg Bible for family history.</li> <li>• Reason for corrugated iron roof (thatch, slate roofs) i.e was thatched not slate roofed as in the mock up</li> <li>• Recording of her niece</li> <li>• Low environmental impact</li> <li>• What's grown locally for thatch</li> </ul>

Exhibition area: Old Kitchen	
1. What is the story currently told by this area of the exhibition?	A muddled story! Supposedly 1930s but eclectic mix with some random articles. Very static, no pretend food, poor lighting.
2. How is the story told? (interpretive media, way objects displayed)	Very little interpretation – laminate photos and one storyboard, objects (slightly random).
3. Could the story be told in a different way? (using different interpretive media, from an alternative point of view, to appeal to a wider audience etc)	<p>Living history actors.</p> <p>Display of in season produce from walled garden.</p> <p>Add drying clothes.</p> <p>“Living fire” in grates.</p> <p>Photos / names of servants / costumes – set dressing.</p>
4. Are there other significant stories that could also be told here/with these objects?	<p>Connection with landscape / walled garden.</p> <p>Servants.</p> <p>Growing food / exotics.</p>

<b>Exhibition area: 20<sup>th</sup> Century Gallery</b>	
1. What is the story currently told by this area of the exhibition?	20 <sup>th</sup> century - too ambitious. Everyday life from World War I to 1980s.
2. How is the story told? (interpretive media, way objects displayed)	By objects and interpretation panels and sheets.
3. Could the story be told in a different way? (using different interpretive media, from an alternative point of view, to appeal to a wider audience etc)	Yes. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oral history.</li> <li>• Videos and sound.</li> <li>• Photographs – individual stories tied to local people.</li> <li>• Questions to prompt information for visitors.</li> </ul>
4. Are there other significant stories that could also be told here/with these objects?	More personal stories. Seating area / circular. Food – could be an exhibition. Fashion / technology. Too much / too many objects in displays Area good for temporary exhibitions. Events – storytellers / fashion shows. Second World War was link with curriculum.

<b>Exhibition area: Carved / inscribed stones</b>	
1. What is the story currently told by this area of the exhibition?	Not a clear story.
2. How is the story told? (interpretive media, way objects displayed)	Flipbook and boards and labels.
3. Could the story be told in a different way? (using different interpretive media, from an alternative point of view, to appeal to a wider audience etc)	Sequence unclear. Grouped differently. Irish immigration 5 <sup>th</sup> 6 <sup>th</sup> century and where found. Map showing locations. Big collection. Images less text.
4. Are there other significant stories that could also be told here/with these objects?	Connection to locations found. Irish connection. Roman connection. Ogham.



<b>Exhibition area: Main Hall &amp; Picton frieze</b>	
1. What is the story currently told by this area of the exhibition?	<p>Architecture (hidden).  Mixture / unrelated objects.  Multiple stories told but no obvious links.  Incoherence.</p>
2. How is the story told? (interpretive media, way objects displayed)	<p>Text panels.  Labels.  Object displayed around walls.  Objects installed because no other better place / space for them.  Photo of room as it once looked hidden away on a back wall.  Column in middle of the room.</p>
3. Could the story be told in a different way? (using different interpretive media, from an alternative point of view, to appeal to a wider audience etc)	<p>Arts and crafts era.  Taking on motifs of building and using design.  Removing items.  Adding contemporary (A&amp;C) era furniture.  Guides for interpretation.</p>
4. Are there other significant stories that could also be told here/with these objects?	<p>Reinterpretation Picton (linking to Guildhall painting) – different conversations - roles of Wales / UK in the world.  Stories about why the room looks the way it does (darkened wood).  Personal stories about the bishops that link them to the space.  Could link the American oak panelling with conversations about the environment / sustainability / park?</p>

## Appendix B: Interpretive media in current exhibitions

Gallery space / location	Interpretive media											Notes		
	Graphic panels	Text labels	Object displays			Interactive			AV		Gallery activities			Reconstruction/room set/ historic space
In cases			Open display	In drawers	Digital	Hands-on	paper based	Audio	Film					
A. Entrance / main hall														Dresser art installation/furniture to look like photo of hallway?
B. Geology														Hands-on interactive about seashore life - feely box & jigsaw
C. Prehistoric archaeology / Clore														Clore learning/activity gallery - variety of activities incl: children’s books, activity sheets, dressing up, hands-on low tech interactives - mortaria?
D. Roman & later archaeology														Roman fort touchscreen AV, Roman kitchen reconstruction & lift up flaps about food
E. 17th Century														
F. 18th Century														
F1. G / F corridors														
G. Folk gallery														
G1. Coal mining gallery														Clogmakers workshop object display, AV screen but not working at time
H. Agriculture gallery														
I. Old kitchen														Historic photos of palace on table, children ‘Washday’ picture book
J. Stairways														
K. 1st floor corridor														Themed objects dipslays in cases include: Medicine, Magic, folklore; Love spoons; Welsh traditions; Llanelly pottery; Carmarthenshire police; Eygptology; Welsh dresser; various paintings showing views of Carmarthenshire & landmarks
L. Chapel														
M. Schoolroom														Objects from Victorian schoolroom, children’s books on Victorian school, items can be handled and touched - hands-on
N. Elsa’s Cottage														Box for toys(?) empty, no entry to reconstruction of cottage
O. 20th C														Cold War items; reconstruction of 1942 back kitchen; different kind of display - objects in context of rooms/periods/styles - in cupboards on tables etc in large cases

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