

P-04-562 Caernarfon Heritage Centre – Correspondence from the Petitioner to the Committee, 19.11.14

Dear Committee

I would like to offer a few words to add to the request for a Heritage Centre in Caernarfon.

This town deserves a centre to showcase our history, the history of the people, the industry, the language and the arts in a purpose built and attractive building in Caernarfon, which would be a home to the treasures that have been taken from our town.

Such a centre could be home to the relics from Segontium Roman Fort that are currently in Cardiff.

It could also be home to relics offered to the town by Lord Newborough that are now at the Maritime Museum in Liverpool.

Relics from the Maritime Museum in Caernarfon which is now closed and has been turned into toilets!

A **Gallery** for painters, photographers and other artists of the town. In the Institute Building (home of Caernarfon Town Council) there are several canvases that should be shown to the world e.g.

The picture titled '*The Awakening of Wales*' by Christopher Williams is recognised as the most iconic in Wales and portrays Gwenllian, daughter of Owain Glyndŵr, rising to liberty from a fierce dragon. Christopher Williams was born in Maesteg. His father, Evan Williams, was determined that Christopher would be a doctor but when visiting the Walker Gallery in Liverpool, he spent hours staring at a picture of "Perseus and Andromeda" by Fredrick Leighton.

After leaving the gallery, the son knew that he wanted to be an artist. *The Awakening of Wales* is an allegory of national value and personal value to the artist.

At the request of Alun Ffred Jones (Arfon): 'How many people visited Caernarfon Castle in the years 2010–11, 2011–12 and what are the figures for this year (WAQ65542)

John Griffiths: From the beginning of April 2010 to the end of August 2013, 679,889 visitors visited Caernarfon Castle.

The total is as follows:

01 April 2010 to 31 March 2011 192,543 visits

01 April 2011 to 31 March 2012 195,543 visits

01 April 2012 to 31 March 2013 177,275 visits

01 April 2013 to 31 March 2014 114,528 visits

I do not yet have figures for 01 April 2014 to 31 March 2014 but in talking with members of the castle staff, it's clear that there have been a greater number of visits to Caernarfon Castle than the above figures (I'll try to get the figures for this year in the next few days).

A high proportion of visitors stay in the town and always ask 'Where's the museum?' It is quite difficult and embarrassing to have to say that there's no museum in the town itself.

As a tour guide around the old town I'm well aware of the history and heritage of Caernarfon and it pains me that I can't refer visitors to a purpose built building that gives a full description and introduction to the town.

Segontium Roman Fort – a mile from the centre of the town

The unique Medieval Town with many treasures that I showcase on my tours. The town walls and the need to open more of the walls to the public.

Chapels and churches

Religion could be an element covered at the centre e.g.

The growth of Methodism, several churches were pioneers in the growth of Methodism and there's evidence to show that John Wesley stayed in town.

Engedi Chapel and its connection with the Welsh people that went to Patagonia.

St Mary – 14th century

Llanbeblig – 12th century

Llanfaglan – a site from the 6th century – 2 miles from the centre of town

History:

The slate industry, Victoria Dock, the history of Ellen Edwards – a native of Anglesey and daughter of Captain William Francis from Amlwch, a professor of mathematics and navigation in Amlwch. She followed in her father's footsteps as a maritime teacher for 60 years until her death aged 80 in November 1889. Her young pupils had to travel to Liverpool or Dublin to take their exams and Ellen Edwards thought this was very unfair. Therefore, she insisted that the men be allowed to take the exams locally. The chances are she trained over 1,000 young sailors over the years.

Printing (Caernarfon was the Ink Capital of Wales in the 19th century),

The Welsh Language Over 80% of the people of Caernarfon speak the language and the language is alive in every part of cultural, commercial and social life in the town. The 'Cofis' are famous for their wit and it would be worth having a corner to talk about the unique vocabulary.

Llety Arall There are plans to open **Llety Arall** (named after Gŵyl Arall, or 'Another Festival' in English), a cultural festival which has been taking place each July in Caernarfon for some years now. It is hoped that Llety Arall will be located on Stryd y Plas as a unique way of showcasing our town that will build our confidence and passion, as well as the confidence and passion of visitors, for the Welsh language

As Secretary of Caernarfon's Civic Society I have had access to cellars around the old town and there are treasures that could be part of a visit to the Heritage Centre. e.g.

In the Market Hall cellars on *Stryd Twll yn y Wal* and *Stryd y Plas* there are traces of a 'Bonded Warehouse' with rooms to keep drink before moving it through tunnels under the town. And in Castle House on Castle Street and the High Street there are cellars dating to the 16th century, making them

Medieval. There's a fountain under the floor in an empty office on *Stryd Twll yn y Wal*.

I realise there's a small Heritage Exhibition at the Pendeitsh Gallery where the Tourist Information Centre is located, but there is a need for a much larger centre in Caernarfon.

The point of all this is to show just how much there is to share with the public, whether they are local people, school children or visitors. Having a heritage centre in Caernarfon town centre would be of value to the local community; it would offer volunteering opportunities and restore confidence and respect for this amazing old town.

Yours sincerely

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