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Is Heritage 'Gender-blind'?

An Assessment of the Representation of Women

in a Welsh Open-air Museum

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To my grandmother
who inspired my interest in history

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Abstract

This study is concerned with the representation of women in a Welsh heritage museum. As a qualitative study, it wants to contribute to the broad field of gender studies and provide some empirical data for the research in heritage and gender studies. The core of this diploma thesis is the analysis of the outdoor exhibition and the photographic archive of St. Fagans: National History Museum in Wales with regard to the representation of women. The data used for this purpose is the museum exhibition itself as well as a corpus of 72 black-and-white photographs from the photographic archive of the institution. The central question is “Is heritage 'gender-blind'?”, assuming that all spaces are gendered and contribute to the establishment or strengthening of gender relationships, arguing, however, that these relationships are often neglected in research and that heritage museums have a tendency to appeal to nostalgia and empathy in their visitors instead of challenging them and introducing radical new ideas.

As a starting point chapter 2 provides an answer to the question what cultural heritage is, examining the history of the concept as well as introducing some heritage organisations. Chapter 3 illustrates the relationship between heritage and gender studies. Chapter 4 presents the central object of the study, i.e. St. Fagans: National History Museum in Wales. The exhibitions and archives of the institution are introduced and explained briefly and an attempt is made to position St. Fagans in the heritage context. Chapter five is a brief outline of the methodology used for the study and chapter six presents the core of the study: the analysis of the heritage museum focusing on the outdoor exhibition and the photographic archive. Regarding the outdoor exhibition, the representation of women in homes and shops are studied. On top of that the existence of a number of explicitly 'male' buildings on the premises is illustrated. Concerning the photographic archive, the focus lies on images of women doing domestic work. Chapter seven examines some difficulties and limitations a heritage museum has to face: some general and practical problems in museum work and the issue of tourism and the need to attract visitors to preserve the place. The fact that the analysed heritage museum is located in Wales adds another interesting aspect, i.e. national identity. I argue that the establishment and strengthening of a distinct national identity is still a very dominant issue at St. Fagans: National History Museum and other aspects of historical research such as gender only take second place compared to that. Finally some suggestions are made for improvements in museum work regarding the representation of women in heritage museums in the future and chapter eight presents the overall conclusion as well as some personal concluding remarks.

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1 Introduction

I started the research for this diploma thesis in 2009 when I had just finished my first diploma thesis in English and was about to go to Wales for a year. I had already decided to work in the vast field of women's and gender history as my point of interest but I had not found a topic yet. So I went to Wales with the diploma thesis in the back of my mind and the intention to find a good research question in another country. Indeed, I found something very interesting, albeit challenging.

I had already been to the 'Museum of Welsh Life' just outside Cardiff some years before and when I went back there in my year abroad, I knew that I wanted to work there. The museum which had changed its name in the meantime and was now 'St. Fagans: National History Museum' should be the starting point for my diploma thesis in history.

The museum staff was very supportive and highly enthusiastic for my project and I got access to the library as well as some of the archives looking for possible resources and leading questions for my thesis. I started out in the library which held some interesting books and manuscripts and gave me some ideas but no topic or research questions could be formed. So I went on to the archives. I had a look at some manuscripts but – as it is often the case in small museums and collections – the pieces were very interesting but at the same time fragmentary and did not seem to provide a good basis for a diploma thesis. The same was true for the sound archive, where the museum collected recordings of oral history: interviews with Welsh people devised by the museum staff, however, often without any or with very limited background information on who the people were or why they were chosen for the interviews.

Finally, i.e. only a few weeks before my departure from Wales, I was given access to the photographic archive and found something very interesting there. The museum holds a collection of “approximately 150.000 negatives and prints”, as well as “approximately 15.000 slides”¹. The pictures were either taken by the museum staff for documentary and research purposes, or given to the museum by private people either as originals or copies. Many of them have already been catalogued and divided into different categories, genres and themes – just as many have not. As the library and archives have suffered some severe staff shortages in recent years, they have not been able to review all the material they have received so far. At

¹ St. Fagans – National History Museum. Curatorial & research. Social & Cultural History. Photographic archives. <http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/194/>. 18-05-2012.

the same time they are still were busy collecting new resource material. The interest in Welsh history, particularly in the social history of 'ordinary' people, and the status of the museum, which is well-known all over the country, encouraged many Welsh citizens to donate old photos, manuscripts, diaries, and other personal items to St. Fagans. Thus, dealing with huge amounts of incoming material at the same time as having to administer the large corpus that already exists, the museum staff is facing an enormous task at the moment. The current photographic archive is a small room at St. Fagans: National History Museum containing filing cabinets full of photographs adjacent to piles of even more material that has not yet been organised. This was what I started from.

When I first started looking through the photos, I just had my main interest 'women's and gender history' and a slight idea that I might be interested in domestic life in Wales to go from. Consequently I was looking for photos of women in Wales in the domestic sphere and it was not difficult to find some that matched my research criteria. I took a corpus of 72 black-and-white photographs to Austria with me. They were pictures of women doing ordinary day-by-day chores like cooking, baking bread, cleaning their houses, washing the dishes, etc., women in different kinds of clothing (e.g. traditional Welsh dress) and pictures of Welsh kitchens from the 20th century.

Back home in Austria, I started thinking about what to do with my collection of photographs. I was very enthusiastic about the uniqueness of my resources and the fact that most of them had never been used before. For me, this goes back to the essence of historical work: finding sources, reading and interpreting them and making them accessible for future research. This has been done thousands of times before with written documents, charters, images, paintings, and material resources, however, mostly with well-known or somewhat important personalities, where there was a lot of background information to verify and compare information. Whenever this kind of research was conducted with 'ordinary' people, it was either with those who were still alive to provide background information or others where the sources were comprehensive and there was enough background information to be able to draw some objective conclusions. So very soon, I faced the first problems with my collection of photographs of women in Wales in the domestic sphere.

It has been pointed out by many researchers and historians before (Fritzsche², Talkenberger³, Hamann⁴, Tolkemitt & Wohlfeil⁵, etc.) that working with images poses some special problems. Pictures and photographs have often been neglected or merely used as illustrations and not as historical resources for their own sake. That is, according to Fritzsche⁶, because pictures cannot only fill reconstructions of the past with realistic images but also have some severe disadvantages in historical research.

First of all, very often there is only little background information to supplement the images. The essential verification of sources such as “who is addressed, in which context were they made”⁷ is sometimes impossible and therefore they cannot be the basis for generalisable historical research. This problem was also true for my collection of photographs. The background information received by the museum was extremely limited and varied from image to image. Sometimes not even the name of the photographer / donor / vendor or the name of the people in the photograph were given. Frequently the place where the picture was taken or the date were missing. Thus, although the photographs were indeed realistic images of Welsh history, it was hard to draw some generalisations from them and the appropriate path to follow to use them for a diploma thesis was still to be found.

Another problem with images as historical resources is that the context of their provenance is very often unclear. Similar to written resources we can never be sure if the truth is shown in the picture or if anything has been changed. Furthermore pictures always only show a certain part of reality – leaving other aspects out. Hence the researcher has to be very careful in working with pictures and analysing them. Fritzsche even goes as far as to say that pictures can only be read with “demonstrative pronouns”⁸ in front of them (i.e.: that can be seen in **this** (my emphasis) picture) and generalisations are not possible. This is a very extreme point of

² Bruno Fritzsche, *Das Bild als historische Quelle*. In: Vom Bild zum Text. Die Photographiebetrachtung als Quelle sozialwissenschaftlicher Erkenntnis. Volk, Andreas (Hg.) (Zürich 1996).

³ Heike Talkenberger, *Von der Illustration zur Interpretation: Das Bild als historische Quelle. Methodische Überlegungen zur Historischen Bildkunde*. In: Zeitschrift für historische Forschung. Kunisch, Johannes; Luig, Klaus; Moraw, Peter (Hg.). Band 21 (Berlin 1994).

⁴ Christoph Hamann, *Visual History und Geschichtsdidaktik. Bildkompetenz in der historisch-politischen Bildung* (Reihe Geschichtswissenschaft Band 53. Herbolzheim 2007).

⁵ Brigitte Tolkemitt & Rainer Wohlfeil (Hg.). *Historische Bildkunde. Probleme – Wege – Beispiele*. In: Zeitschrift für historische Forschung. Vierteljahresschrift zur Erforschung des Spätmittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit. Beiheft 12. Kunisch, Johannes; Luig, Klaus; Moraw, Peter; Press, Volker (Hg.) (Berlin 1991).

⁶ Fritzsche, *Das Bild als historische Quelle*, p. 13.

⁷ Matthias Bruhn, *Historiographie der Bilder. Eine Einführung zum Themenschwerpunkt „Sichtbarkeit der Geschichte“ von H-Soz-u-Kult und H-ArtHist*. Berlin 2004. In: H-Soz-u-Kult, 19.01.2004, <http://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/forum/id=389&type=diskussionen>.

⁸ Fritzsche. *Das Bild als historische Quelle*. p. 19.

view as it would render historical picture analysis impossible. In my opinion it depends on several factors whether general conclusions can be drawn from the analysis of images like how many (similar) pictures are available, how much background information the researcher has, where the pictures come from, the research question or focus, and so on.

My corpus of images also posed some particular difficulties like, for example, the heterogeneity of the corpus. The photographs stemmed from a variety of different sources. Some of them were taken by the museum staff for research purposes to preserve Welsh folk life; others were private photographs which were donated to the museum as originals or copies.

Finally there were some more practical difficulties and limitations like the quality of the photographs and the descriptions. I only own copies of the photographs and it was often very hard to see the details depicted on them because they were quite blurry and the quality was very poor. The background information was given in handwriting in the Welsh language which made it very hard or even impossible to understand.

All these difficulties made me doubt the usefulness of my resources for a diploma thesis. However, my supervisor encouraged me to work with them and to use them as detailed descriptions of particular women in the Welsh past. If it was not possible to draw general facts from the images, they could still be used to gain more insight into the lives of women in Wales and – maybe most importantly – to make the photographs accessible for further research. This is what I started to do in detailed descriptions of the photographs. However, after two presentations of my diploma thesis in the context of seminars and research groups with other historians present, I found myself confronted with some severe criticism. The same things were pointed out to me that I had thought about myself before: the lack of generalisability, the lack of background information and the danger of being too shallow in my research and of limiting women in Wales to the domestic sphere. Of course, a corpus of approximately seventy pictures cannot represent the women of Wales and I never claimed to do that. On the other hand, a mere description of the photos did not seem to be scientific enough for a diploma thesis.

So I went on to find a way to work with my photographs as I was still convinced that they were legitimate resources and very interesting to work with. I did not want to give them up

and the current diploma thesis is what I made of them. The leading question is “Is heritage gender-blind?”, i.e. are women represented in St. Fagans: National History Museum and if so, how and where are they presented? My corpus of photographs serves as evidence for one area of the museum, i.e. the photographic archive.

The present study tries to answer the question in how far women are represented as an independent category at St. Fagans: National History Museum. The hypothesis is that women are depicted within the exhibition and the archive, however, not from a varied point of view but limited to particular aspects of life such as domestic work, the family and the private sphere. The main purpose of this study is to illustrate the relationship between heritage and gender with a particular focus on the outdoor museum and heritage attraction St. Fagans: National History Museum.

As a starting point chapter two provides an answer to the question what cultural heritage is and where the idea comes from. The history of the concept is examined and some organisations dealing with the identification and preservation of cultural heritage nationally and internationally are presented.

Chapter three illustrates the relationship between heritage and gender studies. It is argued that all spaces are gendered in some way and that this gendering, consciously or subconsciously, contributes to the establishment, strengthening and perpetuation of gender roles and hierarchies in society. Consequently, it is claimed that a more gender-sensitive approach to heritage studies is needed so that these processes are made visible and can be assessed openly and thus altered.

Chapter four presents the central object of the study, i.e. St. Fagans: National History Museum in Wales. It is important to understand the development of open-air and folk museums in general as well as the history of St. Fagans: National History Museum to be able to comprehend the research done at the location. The exhibitions and archives of the institution are introduced and explained briefly and an attempt is made to position St. Fagans in the heritage context.

Chapter five is a brief outline of the methodology used for the study and chapter six presents the core of the study: the analysis of the heritage museum focusing on the outdoor exhibition

and the photographic archive. I examine the representation of women in these domains and both areas of interest are divided into several sub-chapters. Regarding the outdoor exhibition I study the representation of women in homes and shops. On top of that I point out the existence of a number of explicitly 'male' buildings on the premises. Concerning the photographic archive, the focus lies on images of women doing domestic work. I differentiate between images which were given to the museum as donations by Welsh people and photographs which were made or actively collected by the museum staff. In both cases I analyse absences and silences that are striking in the collections and speculate about their backgrounds.

Chapter seven examines some difficulties and limitations a heritage museum has to face: some general and practical problems in museum work and the issue of tourism and the need to attract visitors to preserve the place. The fact that the analysed heritage museum is located in Wales adds another interesting aspect, i.e. national identity. I argue that the establishment and strengthening of a distinct national identity is still a very dominant issue at St. Fagans: National History Museum and other aspects of historical research such as gender only take second place compared to that. Finally some suggestions are made for improvements in museum work regarding the representation of women in heritage museums in the future.

Chapter eight presents the overall conclusion to my diploma thesis, once again summarising the main findings as well as giving an outlook into the possible future of heritage museums and opening up some possibilities for further research.

As a conclusion it has to be emphasised that although the work with images as resources is a complex undertaking and it took me quite a while to finish this diploma thesis, it was a really interesting project. I hope that the present study contributes – at least a little – to the empirical basis needed for gender studies and the work with images in historical research.

2 What is 'Heritage'?

2.1 Definitions

For a study that concerns itself with the broad field of 'heritage studies' it is a prerequisite to have a closer look at the term itself first. 'Heritage studies' has emerged as an independent field of research since the 1990s and a wide variety of researchers and professionals from various backgrounds but also lay people have been involved in it. Thus, the discipline is not a strictly historical one and the boundaries are not clear-cut. History, archaeology and architecture dominated the field in the early stages of its development, but more recent research shows that broader perspectives taken from the fields of geography, anthropology, cultural studies, sociology, performance studies, museology and tourism studies may contribute fruitfully to the discussion.⁹

The same 'fluidity' is true for the definition of 'cultural heritage', which cannot be pinned down in a single sentence or even paragraph. Lowenthal even goes as far as to say that "heritage today all but defies definition"¹⁰. However, some researchers tried to narrow down the concept. In a literal sense heritage is "an inheritance passed on from one generation to another"¹¹. A very broad definition is the one by Johnson & Thomas, who claim that "virtually anything by which some kind of link, however tenuous or false, may be forged with the past"¹² can be heritage.

Hewison has described heritage as

"that which a past generation has preserved and handed on to the present and which a significant group of population wishes to hand on to the future."¹³

The traditional definition has perceived cultural heritage "as a material object or site that plays an important role in representing cultural and national identity"¹⁴. This definition, however, not only dominated Western discussions, but also privileged Western opinions as to what is national identity and what should be preserved. Consequently, the traditional idea of heritage was identified as limited, not grasping the vastness of the term as

⁹ Laurajane *Smith*, General Introduction. In: Laurajane Smith (Ed.). *Cultural Heritage. Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies. Volume 1 – History and Concepts* (London – New York 2007), p. 1 – 2.

¹⁰ David *Lowenthal*, *The heritage crusade and the spoils of history* (Cambridge 1998), p. 94.

¹¹ Briavel *Holcomb*, Gender and Heritage Interpretation. In: Laurajane Smith (Ed.). *Cultural Heritage. Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies. Volume IV – Interpretation and Community* (London – New York 2007), p. 60.

¹² P. *Johnson & B. Thomas*, Heritage as business. In: D. T. Herbert (Ed.). *Heritage, tourism and society* (London 1995), p. 170.

¹³ R. *Hewison*, 'Heritage: an interpretation'. In: D. L. Uzzell (Ed.). *Heritage Interpretation, Vol. 1* (London 1989), p. 16.

¹⁴ *Smith*, General Introduction, p. 2.

“heritage is neither a simply technical process of conservation and management, as it has been traditionally portrayed, nor only the subject of such management practices.”¹⁵

Hall has already used a quite broad definition in his article taking it to refer to

“the whole complex of organisations, institutions and practices devoted to the preservation and presentation of culture and the arts – art galleries, specialist collections, public and private, museums of all kinds (general, survey or themed, historical or scientific, national or local) and sites of special historical interest.”¹⁶

In the present study an even broader definition will be advanced. According to Smith

“heritage is not a 'thing' but rather a cultural practice that is ultimately about managing and negotiating cultural change.”¹⁷

More specifically,

“'heritage' is a cultural process or performance that is concerned with the production and negotiation of cultural identity, individual and collective memory, and social and cultural values.”¹⁸

Further challenges to the concept of heritage are posed by the emergence of and the debates about the concept of intangible heritage. UNESCO's *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*¹⁹ (2003) stimulated discussions about this new concept.

According to this document if we acknowledge that

“'heritage' represents, and is an expression of, the cultural values of a society, and that these values are not inherent in a heritage item or event, it then follows that it is these values that identify and make certain sites, places or events 'heritage', not the other way round. There is not innate value in a heritage item rather each item, place or event is made meaningful because of the role it plays as 'heritage' in fostering the expression, negotiation and performance of a range of cultural and social identities.”²⁰

As a result, all heritage is intangible as it consists of the ideas, values and concepts which are only represented in a particular physical object. The physical object itself therefore gains its value through the ideas and concepts attached to it. Referring to Munjeri,

“cultural heritage should speak through the values that people give it and not the other way round ... the tangible can only be understood and interpreted through the intangible.”²¹

The idea of intangibility of heritage coincides nicely with the previously stated definition of heritage as

¹⁵ Smith, General Introduction, p. 2.

¹⁶ Stuart Hall, Whose Heritage? Un-settling 'The Heritage', re-imagining the post-nation. In: Laurajane Smith (Ed.). Cultural Heritage. Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies. Volume II – Critical Concepts in Heritage (London – New York 2007), p. 87.

¹⁷ Smith, General Introduction, p. 2.

¹⁸ Smith, General Introduction, p. 2.

¹⁹ UNESCO. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001325/132540e.pdf>. 20-06-2012.

²⁰ Smith, General Introduction, p. 4.

²¹ Dawson Munjeri, Tangible and intangible heritage: from difference to convergence. In: Laurajane Smith (Ed.). Cultural Heritage. Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies. Volume 1 – History and Concepts (London – New York 2007), p. 332.

“a cultural process or performance or meaning making, in which identity and cultural and social values are negotiated, affirmed or rejected.”²²

Harvey calls this process “heritageisation”²³, i.e. the creation or making of heritage.

Even though the values attached to the heritage sites seem to give the place, object or resource in general its significance and justify its preservation, it is still necessary to have a closer look at one more term – that of heritage places. What are heritage places? How are they found? How are they defined? Very often they are synonymously described as “[a]boriginal and historic places”, “prehistoric and historic sites” or “cultural resources”²⁴ but neither of these terms covers the whole range of the concept underneath. Therefore the definition needs to be even broader and more refined. First of all the whole world can be divided into the natural and cultural environment. Natural resources, on the one hand, are “elements of the natural environment that people value, use, modify, enjoy and because of this seek to manage and conserve, or to exploit”²⁵. Cultural resources, on the other hand, are “the result of humanity's interaction with or intervention in the natural world or its natural resources”²⁶. In its broadest sense this definition includes everything from buildings, landscapes and artefacts to literature, language, art, music and folkways. Thus there needs to be a distinguishing feature that makes a cultural site a heritage place. These features are the previously mentioned intangible qualities of heritage sites, i.e. certain characteristics that show that the place is of particular value to a community. This value can be religious, historical, political, cultural and so on. It is the historian's or cultural resource manager's task to decide whether a place should be preserved or not and she or he will base her or his judgement on her or his specialised knowledge but also on subjective reasons and intuition because there are far too many cultural resources to conserve them all and there must be a selection. Such a selection is obviously value laden and many faceted and the historian or manager has to apply rigour and process. The intangible qualities of cultural resources, the values and significance are also called heritage value and places or resources which have these values are therefore called heritage places.²⁷

²² *Smith*, General Introduction, p. 4.

²³ David C. *Harvey*, Heritage pasts and heritage presents. Temporality, meaning and the scope of heritage studies. In: Laurajane Smith (Ed.). *Cultural Heritage. Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies. Volume 1 – History and Concepts* (London – New York 2007), p. 26.

²⁴ Michael *Pearson*, Sharon *Sullivan*, Looking after the Past. An introduction to the management of heritage places. In: Laurajane Smith (Ed.). *Cultural Heritage. Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies. Volume 1 – History and Concepts* (London – New York 2007), p. 196.

²⁵ *Pearson & Sullivan*, Looking after the Past, p. 196.

²⁶ *Pearson & Sullivan*. Looking after the Past, p. 196.

²⁷ *Pearson & Sullivan*, Looking after the Past, p. 196 – 198.

2.2 The History of the Heritage Concept

The concept of heritage has always been with us as every society has a relationship with its past. However, most of the research defines heritage as a modern phenomenon with its roots either in the late nineteenth or the second half of the twentieth century. Harvey, however, claims that the concept of heritage has always existed and can be traced back at least to the middle ages where it was already used to create and strengthen national identity. Particular ideas and concepts but also sites were used to legitimate a “national consciousness”²⁸ or a communal memory to form an early “nation state”²⁹. One example Harvey gives is the legend of St. George and the dragon and its influence on English national identity. Not only was and is it exploited in modern 20th century football rituals but already Edward III. tried to use the legend to strengthen the link between the people and the monarchy. He fuelled the cult of St. George and placed himself in line with the popular saint. This can be interpreted as

“a dialogue between the lay traditions, oral heritage and popular memory of ordinary people on the one hand, and the higher agenda of the Monarchy on the other. People were taught to refer to their heritage in a particular way.”³⁰

This was a way for the monarchy to get into contact with the people and St. George can be seen as a product of heritage. Hence heritage was – and still is – non-elite and popular. The process of using the legend of St. George to strengthen national identity and the bonds between the people and the monarchy can be defined as a medieval version of heritageisation and nationalisation of the monarchy.

The Monument is often seen as a material product of a later 17th-century “heritage industry”³¹ but Harvey also gives an interesting example taken from Roman history. During the process of Christianisation non-Christian remains were placed within an overtly Christian story. Specific heritage stories were narrated in particular places all over the city of Rome. Non-Christian stories and images, i.e. existing popular memories, were re-interpreted and re-arranged subtly over the period of several centuries to transform the city into a Christian metropolis. Thus “the present is informed by the past and the past is reconstructed by the present”³². If not overtly, the Romans seemed to be aware of the fact that physical objects can take on and transport non-material values. According to Harvey

“this Roman example suggests that the development of the heritage process from the medieval world to the (post)modern, can be characterised in part by an increasing

²⁸ *Harvey*, *Heritage Pasts and Heritage Presents*, p. 32.

²⁹ *Harvey*, *Heritage Pasts and Heritage Presents*, p. 32.

³⁰ *Harvey*, *Heritage Pasts and Heritage Presents*, p. 33.

³¹ *Harvey*, *Heritage Pasts and Heritage Presents*, p. 32.

³² *Harvey*, *Heritage Pasts and Heritage Presents*, p. 34.

symbolic value becoming attached to actual physical remains as opposed to the heritage significance of sites themselves.”³³

Although it is not likely that medieval people were aware of 'heritage issues' such as even lay people are nowadays, they still had a relationship with their past and knew that it could be manipulated, preserved or destroyed. In this respect, they did similar things that are done in heritage studies, heritage production and heritage management today – only in different terms.

Alongside her argument that heritage has always been with us and can be traced back at least to the Middle Ages if not earlier, Harvey argues that heritage is always strongly linked to the present and she calls that the “presentness”³⁴ of heritage processes and practice. She claims that the very nature of the heritage concept relates entirely to present circumstances. According to Tunbridge and Ashworth “the present selects an inheritance from an imagined past for current use and decides what should be passed on to an imagined future”³⁵. That means that the only point of reference for heritage is the present, it is only responsible to the present and only accomplishes the tasks of the present. All heritage is – and must be – produced in the present and therefore the relationship with the past it establishes is influenced by our present needs and views on history. It has been argued that heritage even threatens or destroys history as it destroys its authentic version and replaces it by mere replications of that past. This view, however, is rather extreme and implies that history up to the arrival of heritage was more reliable, authentic and trustworthy than afterwards. However, the traditional way of 'doing history', i.e. telling what happened in the past, is not so objective after all. The facts based on historical evidence cannot always be separated from the interpretation of the researcher and thus all history is in some way subjective, manipulated and influences the past in one way or the other. Consequently, heritage sites are just another way of telling and presenting history – not better or worse than traditional history. According to Harvey, heritage should be understood as a process and “as an instrument of cultural power in whatever period of time one chooses to examine”³⁶. Thus, on the one hand heritage is subjective and value-laden but on the other hand it is “intrinsically reflective of a relationship with the past, however the 'past' is perceived or defined”³⁷.

³³ *Harvey*, *Heritage Pasts and Heritage Presents*, p. 34.

³⁴ *Harvey*, *Heritage Pasts and Heritage Presents*, p. 27 – 31.

³⁵ *J. E. Tunbridge & G. J. Ashworth*, *Dissonant heritage: the management of the past as a resource in conflict* (Chichester 1996), p. 6.

³⁶ *Harvey*, *Heritage Pasts and Heritage Presents*, p. 31.

³⁷ *Harvey*, *Heritage Pasts and Heritage Presents*, p. 31.

2.3 Heritage Organisations

2.3.1 International Heritage Organisations

Natural and cultural heritage that offers some kind of heritage value and therefore is worth being conserved also needs organisations which deal with this conservation. This starts with the educated choice of what is cultural heritage and what should or should not be preserved, goes on to the actual physical conservation but also to the presentation and preparation for a general audience. There are several organisations which deal with these tasks – the best-known is probably the UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), a specialised agency of the UNO (United Nations Organization), which concerns itself with the preservation of heritage sites all over the world. ICOMOS is yet another organisation that concerns itself with the preservation of heritage sites on an international level. However, there are also smaller organisations which attend to heritage places in their own country to preserve and strengthen national identity and represent their country to the outside world. In the following chapters a brief overview will be given and some main organisations worldwide and in Great Britain will be introduced.

UNESCO

The UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) is one of the specialised agencies within the United Nations Organization (UNO). It has its roots in the year 1942³⁸ when the governments of the European countries met – although still entangled in the Second World War – and tried to build strategies to reconstruct their systems of education after the war. They met in the United Kingdom for the Conference of Allied Ministers of Education (CAME) and the importance of their ideas was underlined when the United States of America joined in after a few years. A United Nations Conference for the establishment of an educational and cultural organization (ECO / CONF) was held from 1 to 16 November 1945. The forty-four countries which were present at the conference agreed on the creation of an organization that would help to encourage and maintain a culture of peace and thereby prevent the outbreak of another world war. As a result of the conference, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization was founded by thirty-seven countries. The Constitution of the UNESCO was signed on 16 November 1945 and came into force with the twentieth ratification on 4 November 1946.³⁹

³⁸ For the history and development of the UNESCO compare: Heinrich *Kipp*, UNESCO. Recht, sittliche Grundlage, Aufgabe. Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Staatslehre und Politik e.V. Mainz (Bd. 8) (München 1957). p. 19 – 34.

³⁹ UNESCO. The Organization's History. <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/about-us/who-we-are/history/>. 28-06-2012.

The main purpose of the organisation as given in the Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization is

“to contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among the nations through education, science and culture in order to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms which are affirmed for the peoples of the world, without distinction of race, sex, language or religion, by the Charter of the United Nations.”⁴⁰

To implement this main idea the organisation will

- ▲ “advance the mutual knowledge and understanding of peoples
- ▲ provide fresh impulse to popular education and to the spread of culture and
- ▲ maintain, increase and diffuse knowledge
 - by the preservation and protection of the world's inheritance of books, works of art and monuments;
 - by the encouragement of cooperation between the nations in all areas of intellectual and educational activities and
 - by giving the people of all countries access to printed and published materials produced by any of the member states.”⁴¹

The main organs of the UNESCO are the General Conference, an Executive Board and a Secretariat. The General Conference is composed of the representatives of the State Members of the Organization. They meet every two years to define the policies and the main lines of work of the organization as well as to set the programmes and the budget of the UNESCO. The working languages of the General Conference are Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish.⁴²

At present, the UNESCO has 195 member states and 8 Associate Members.⁴³ In 2009 Irina Bokova was elected UNESCO's tenth Director-General – she is the first woman to occupy this post.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ UNESCO. Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2012). <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002161/216192e.pdf#page=7>. 27-06-2012.

⁴¹ UNESCO. Constitution. <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002161/216192e.pdf#page=7>. 28-06-2012.

⁴² UNESCO. UNESCO's governing bodies. <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/about-us/who-we-are/governing-bodies/>. 27-06-2012.

⁴³ UNESCO. Member States. http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=11170&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html. 27-06-2012.

⁴⁴ UNESCO. Director-General. <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/unesco/about-us/who-we-are/director-general/>. 28-06-2012.

The World Heritage Convention

In 1972 the UNESCO agreed on the World Heritage Convention, which first and foremost is a document that ensures the identification, preservation and protection of national and international heritage sites. The need to protect heritage places not only from human intervention and natural decay, but also from natural disasters and the impact of environmental change was seen as imperative and this conviction led to the implementation of the *Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*. The convention acknowledges that cultural heritage can be threatened by various problems (natural or man-made) and that protection on the national level often remains partial and insufficient resulting from a lack of economic, scientific, technological or even human resources. For that reason the World Heritage Convention was created as an international forum to protect cultural and natural heritage of “outstanding universal value”⁴⁵.

The convention links together two separate movements: one focusing on the preservation of cultural sites and another concerned with the conservation of nature. The fusion of these two movements was initiated by the United States of America when in 1965 they called for an organisation that would encourage international cooperation to protect “the world's superb natural and scenic areas and historic sites for the present and the future of the entire world citizenry”⁴⁶. The convention should also emphasize the fact that people always interact with nature and that it is necessary to retain the balance between the two.

The main duties of the member states are first of all the identification of potential world heritage sites. These are then collected on a list – the so-called World Heritage List. This list is constantly added to and the places on the list are what is internationally agreed on as our World Heritage. The second duty of the member states is to protect and preserve these World Heritage sites. They should

“integrate the protection of the cultural and natural heritage into regional planning programmes, set up staff and services at their sites, undertake scientific and technical conservation research and adopt measures which give this heritage a function in the day-to-day life of the community.”⁴⁷

To ensure financial help on an international scale the World Heritage Fund was established as

⁴⁵ UNESCO. Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972). <http://whc.unesco.org/archive/convention-en.pdf>. 29-06-2012.

⁴⁶ UNESCO World Heritage Centre. The World Heritage Convention. <http://whc.unesco.org/en/convention>. 27-06-2012.

⁴⁷ UNESCO World Heritage Centre. The World Heritage Convention. <http://whc.unesco.org/en/convention>. 27-06-2012.

a trust fund. Money from this fund is to be used for the protection and safeguarding of natural or cultural heritage sites all over the world in agreement with the World Heritage Committee.⁴⁸

World Heritage as defined by the *Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* considers that “parts of the cultural or natural heritage are of outstanding interest and therefore need to be preserved as part of the world heritage of mankind as a whole”⁴⁹. In the Operational Guidelines it is further described as being

“among the priceless and irreplaceable possessions, not only of each nation, but of mankind as a whole. The loss, through deterioration or disappearance, of any of these most prized possessions constitutes an impoverishment of the heritage of all the peoples in the world. Parts of that heritage, because of their exceptional qualities, can be considered to be of outstanding universal value and as such worthy of special protection against the dangers which increasingly threaten them.”⁵⁰

What, however, is 'outstanding universal value'? How can it be defined and what are the criteria? Sometimes it is synonymously called World Heritage value but although it is often mentioned and referred to in the World Heritage Convention as well as in the Operational Guidelines there is no straightforward definition for the concept. The Glossary of World Heritage Terms refers to the Expert Meeting on Evaluation of general principles and criteria for nominations of natural World Heritage sites to narrow it down:

“The expert group recalled that different interpretations have been made of the term *"outstanding universal value"* which is a key to the establishment of a selective World Heritage List. In a number of cases the term has been also interpreted as implying *"best of its kind"*. The expert group stressed that the notion of outstanding universal value has been constructed over time and may be interpreted as a concept incorporating both uniqueness and representativeness.” (original emphases)⁵¹

Interestingly enough, the *Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* defines the term “cultural heritage” in a strictly physical sense. As the definition of cultural and natural heritage, it provides a list of cultural and natural places and sites. “Cultural heritage” as considered in the World Heritage Convention shall therefore be:

“monuments: architectural works, works of monumental sculpture and painting, elements or structures of an archaeological nature, inscriptions, cave dwellings and

⁴⁸ UNESCO. Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972). <http://whc.unesco.org/archive/convention-en.pdf>. 29-06-2012.

⁴⁹ UNESCO. Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972). <http://whc.unesco.org/archive/convention-en.pdf>. 29-06-2012.

⁵⁰ UNESCO. Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention (2011). <http://whc.unesco.org/archive/opguide11-en.pdf>. 29-06-2012.

⁵¹ UNESCO. Glossary of World Heritage Terms. <http://whc.unesco.org/archive/gloss96.htm>. 29-06-2012. Original quote taken from: UNESCO. Report of the Experts Meeting on Evaluation of general principles and criteria for nominations of natural World Heritage sites (1996).

combinations of features, which are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science;

groups of buildings: groups of separate or connected buildings which, because of their architecture their homogeneity or their place in the landscape, are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science;

sites: works of man or the combined works of nature and man, and areas including archaeological sites which are of outstanding universal value from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological point of view.”⁵²

“Natural heritage” is enumerated as follows:

“natural features consisting of physical and biological formations or groups of such formations, which are of outstanding universal value from the aesthetic or scientific point of view;

geological and physiographical formations and precisely delineated areas which constitute the habitat of threatened species of animals and plants of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation;

natural sites or precisely delineated natural areas of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science, conservation or natural beauty.”⁵³

This physical definition, or rather list, of natural and cultural heritage was widened later on in the *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* of 2003. The “deep-seated interdependence between the intangible cultural heritage and the tangible cultural and natural heritage”⁵⁴ was acknowledged and the intangible cultural heritage was seen as a “mainspring of cultural diversity”⁵⁵ as it had already been pointed out in the UNESCO *Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore* of 1989, in the UNESCO *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity* of 2001, and in the *Istanbul Declaration* of 2002.⁵⁶ In the preamble of the *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* it is pointed out that although the processes of globalisation and social transformation endanger and threaten the intangible cultural heritage and although the will to protect and safeguard this heritage is internationally present, a binding multilateral instrument for the protection of the intangible cultural heritage had not yet been established. As a result, the convention wanted to raise the awareness for the intangible qualities of cultural heritage and enrich and supplement existing international agreement accordingly.

⁵² UNESCO. Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972). <http://whc.unesco.org/archive/convention-en.pdf>. 29-06-2012.

⁵³ UNESCO. Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972). <http://whc.unesco.org/archive/convention-en.pdf>. 29-06-2012.

⁵⁴ UNESCO. Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003). <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001325/132540e.pdf>. 29-06-2012.

⁵⁵ UNESCO. Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003). <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001325/132540e.pdf>. 29-06-2012.

⁵⁶ UNESCO. Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003). <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001325/132540e.pdf>. 29-06-2012.

Finally it is stated in the preamble of the convention that “the invaluable role of the intangible cultural heritage as a factor in bringing human beings closer together and ensuring exchange and understanding among them”⁵⁷ cannot be underestimated.

“Intangible cultural heritage” as defined in the *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* means

“the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity.”⁵⁸

As for the tangible cultural and natural heritage, a list is given what is to be considered “intangible cultural heritage” according to the *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*:

- (a) “oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage;
- (b) performing arts;
- (c) social practices, rituals and festive events;
- (d) knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe;
- (e) traditional craftsmanship.”⁵⁹

The term “safeguarding” is understood as

“measures aimed at ensuring the viability of the intangible cultural heritage, including the identification, documentation, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, transmission, particularly through formal and non-formal education, as well as the revitalization of the various aspects of such heritage.”⁶⁰

Similar to the World Heritage List, a Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity has to be compiled, kept up to date and published by the World Heritage Committee to make the intangible cultural heritage visible to a wider audience and raise

⁵⁷ UNESCO. Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003). <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001325/132540e.pdf>. 29-06-2012.

⁵⁸ UNESCO. Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003). <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001325/132540e.pdf>. 29-06-2012.

⁵⁹ UNESCO. Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003). <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001325/132540e.pdf>. 29-06-2012.

⁶⁰ UNESCO. Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003). <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001325/132540e.pdf>. 29-06-2012.

public awareness. Moreover, a separate fund – the “Fund for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage”⁶¹ - was established to ensure the financial means for the protection of the intangible cultural heritage.

ICOMOS

ICOMOS, the International Council on Monuments and Sites, is “a non-governmental international organisation dedicated to the conservation of the world's monuments and sites”⁶². It was founded in 1965 after the adoption the Venice Charter (International Restoration Charter) by the Second Congress of Architects and Specialists of Historic Buildings in 1964. The headquarters are situated in Paris. Similar to the founding process of the UNESCO, ICOMOS was an answer to the increasing interest in the conservation of cultural heritage at the time of the First and Second World War. Until then these interests had been purely on a national basis but the creation of UNESCO and ICOMOS marked the birth of the cultural internationalism that exists today.⁶³

As the only non-governmental organisation of its kind ICOMOS also has a strong relationship with the UNESCO. Its main aim is to “promote the conservation, protection, use and enhancement of monuments, building complexes and sites”⁶⁴. The terms “monument”, “group of buildings” and “site” are defined by ICOMOS as follows:

- a) “The term “monument” shall include all structures (together with their settings and pertinent fixtures and contents) which are of value from the historical, artistic, architectural, scientific or ethnological point of view. This definition shall include works of monumental sculpture and painting, elements or structures of an archaeological nature, inscriptions, cave dwellings and all combinations of such features.
- b) The term “group of buildings” shall include all groups of separate or connected buildings and their surroundings, whether urban or rural, which, because of their architecture, their homogeneity or their place in the landscape, are of value from the historical, artistic, scientific, social or ethnological point of view.
- c) The term “site” shall include all topographical areas and landscapes, the works of man or the combined works of nature and of man, including historic parks and gardens, which are of value from the archaeological, historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological point of view.

⁶¹ UNESCO. Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003). <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0013/001325/132540e.pdf>. 29-06-2012.

⁶² ICOMOS. international council on monuments and sites. <http://www.icomos.org/en/>. 07-08-2012.

⁶³ ICOMOS. international council on monuments and sites. History. <http://www.icomos.org/en/about-icomos/mission-and-vision/history>. 07-08-2012.

⁶⁴ ICOMOS. international council on monuments and sites. ICOMOS' Mission. <http://www.icomos.org/en/about-icomos/mission-and-vision/icomos-mission>. 07-08-2012.

- d) The terms “monument”, “site”, and “group of buildings” shall not include:
- ⤴ museum collections housed in monuments,
 - ⤴ archaeological collections preserved in museums or exhibited at archaeological or historic site museums,
 - ⤴ open-air museums.”⁶⁵

Moreover, ICOMOS is the Advisory Body of the World Heritage Committee for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention of the UNESCO, i.e. it provides specialist advice to the UNESCO regarding the selection of world heritage sites, it reviews the nominations of cultural world heritage of humanity and ensures the conservation status of properties. ICOMOS is committed to the values of cultural and social diversity, collegiality, impartiality, exchange between countries, solidarity, transmission and youth involvement and free access to information. In this way the council not only uses a network of experts of various fields to give advice technology independently and in accordance with ethical rules, but also provides help in times of great natural disasters to protect cultural heritage sites.⁶⁶ Practically speaking, the International Council on Monuments and Sites has got many areas of work. First of all, they are actively involved in the process of disseminating knowledge about and raising the awareness for cultural heritage on an international level. They have got several publications and newsletters, an open archive and a documentation centre. Furthermore, they are actively involved in international conventions and they provide their expertise to set up standards regarding the definition, selection and conservation of cultural heritage sites. Finally they are also engaged in education and training and they even have a fund, the Raymond Lemaire International Fund Programme for the next generation skills, that supports young professionals in their education and training.⁶⁷

The International Council on Monuments and Sites is composed of four different types of members: Individual Members, Institutional Members, Sustaining Members and Honorary Members.⁶⁸ These members form a network of experts of various disciplines (architects, historians, archaeologists, art historians, geographers, anthropologists, engineers, town planners) that profits from interdisciplinary exchange. Additionally, each member country has

⁶⁵ ICOMOS. international council on monuments and sites. ICOMOS Statutes. http://www.international.icomos.org/publications/EN_Statuts_1978_20110301.pdf. 07-08-2012.

⁶⁶ ICOMOS. international council on monuments and sites. ICOMOS' Mission. <http://www.icomos.org/en/about-icomos/mission-and-vision/icomos-mission>. 07-08-2012.

⁶⁷ ICOMOS. international council on monuments and sites. What we do. <http://www.icomos.org/en/what-we-do>. 07-08-2012.

⁶⁸ ICOMOS. international council on monuments and sites. ICOMOS Statutes. http://www.international.icomos.org/publications/EN_Statuts_1978_20110301.pdf. 07-08-2012.

the right to form a National Committee. In 2011 ICOMOS had 11.088 individual members, 95 national committees and 27 international scientific committees.⁶⁹

ICOMOS' administrative structure is very similar to that of the UNESCO. Its main bodies are the General Assembly, the Executive Committee and Bureau, the Advisory Committee and Bureau, the National Committees, the Specialised International Committees and the Secretariat.⁷⁰

To sum up, the UNESCO, and particularly the World Heritage Convention, as well as ICOMOS are international organizations concerned with the protection and preservation of cultural – or even world – heritage. However, there is a number of national organizations which focus on the conservation of their national heritage, thereby strengthening their national identity and passing on national values to the future. For the purpose of this study, we will have a closer look at the national organization in the United Kingdom, with a particular focus on Wales.

2.3.2 Heritage Organisations on a National Level (Great Britain)

National Trust

The National Trust is the British organisation concerned with the identification, protection and preservation of cultural and natural heritage places and the largest voluntary conservation organisation in Europe⁷¹. It is also the most important conservation body in both England and Scotland, supported by Acts of Parliament.⁷² The idea for such an organisation was born in 1885 when Octavia Hill, one of the founders, was asked to help with the preservation of Sayes Court garden in south east London. However, it should take another ten years until the organisation was finally established. In the same year, i.e. 1895, it received its first piece of land: five acres of cliff top at Dinas Oleu in Wales. The first building to be acquired for only ten pounds was Alfriston Clergy House in Sussex. Over the years the National Trust received many more natural and cultural heritage sites all over Britain (i.e. England, Wales and Northern Ireland – there is a separate National Trust organization for Scotland which was

⁶⁹ ICOMOS. international council on monuments and sites. Introducing ICOMOS. <http://www.icomos.org/en/about-icomos/mission-and-vision/mission-and-vision>. 07-08-2012.

⁷⁰ ICOMOS. international council on monuments and sites. ICOMOS Statutes. http://www.international.icomos.org/publications/EN_Statuts_1978_20110301.pdf. 07-08-2012.

⁷¹ National Trust. Who we are – Fascinating facts & figures. <http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/what-we-do/who-we-are/fascinating-facts-and-figures/>. 29-06-2012.

⁷² Stana *Nenadic*, Museums, Gender and Cultural Identity in Scotland, In: Gender and History 6/3 (1994), p. 430.

founded in 1931). In 1946 the National Land Fund was established by Dr. Hugh Dalton, the Chancellor of the Exchequer. With the help of this fund, many great country houses entered into possession of the National Trust. In 1970 the National Trust celebrated its 75th anniversary with the foundation of National Trust Enterprises, which transformed the organisation into a more commercial enterprise selling merchandise such as tea towels. In 1995 the organisation looked back on a hundred years of protecting British cultural and natural heritage. In these one hundred years the National Trust had become the guardian of 580.000 acres of countryside in England, Wales and Northern Ireland; 545 miles of coast; 230 historic houses and 130 important gardens. Today the organisation has about four million members all over Great Britain and is still actively protecting the country's natural and cultural heritage.⁷³

The purpose of the National Trust is to look after historic houses, gardens, mills, coastline, forests, farmland, moorland, islands, castles, nature reserves, villages and pubs all over the United Kingdom and to protect and preserve them for future generations as well as to raise the awareness of a wider public for the necessity of such an endeavour.⁷⁴

Critical voices argue that the organisation is too much involved in the 'heritage industry' reproducing similar museums in different locations. In addition to that the past is often presented as “a safe retreat, a nostalgia-laden, predominantly rural idyll distanced from the grimy realities of late twentieth-century urban Britain”⁷⁵. Furthermore, the organisation is criticised for its “consumerist focus”⁷⁶ as the museum visitors are normally lead through the exhibition to arrive at the shop where National Trust own-brand products are sold and “the popular demand for bric-à-brac in pastiche antique style”⁷⁷ is exploited. These products are typically geared towards women being related to decorative gardens, kitchen ware and similar areas of interest. According to critics this popular and consumerist focus distracts from what should be the primary aim, i.e. the (scientific) presentation of history.

⁷³ National Trust. Who we are – Our history. <http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/what-we-do/who-we-are/our-history/>. 29-06-2012.

⁷⁴ National Trust. What we protect. <http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/what-we-do/what-we-protect/>. 29-06-2012.

⁷⁵ *Nenadic*, Museums, Gender and Cultural Identity in Scotland, p. 430.

⁷⁶ *Nenadic*, Museums, Gender and Cultural Identity in Scotland, p. 430.

⁷⁷ *Nenadic*, Museums, Gender and Cultural Identity in Scotland, p. 430.

National Heritage Acts

The British National Heritage Acts are a further measure to ensure and promote the protection of national heritage sites. In total there are four Acts of Parliament of the United Kingdom which crucially influenced the way in which Britain's national heritage sites are managed and protected. The National Heritage Act of 1980 was the first governmental act of this kind and it established the National Heritage Memorial Fund.⁷⁸ The National Heritage Act of 1983 had the purpose to establish the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Science Museum, the Armouries and the Royal Botanic Gardens as well as the Armed Forces Museum. In addition to that it established the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission, which had the following main functions:

- (a) “to secure the preservation of ancient monuments and historic buildings situated in England,
- (b) to promote the preservation and enhancement of the character and appearance of conservation areas situated in England, and
- (c) to promote the public's enjoyment of, and advance their knowledge of, ancient monuments and historic buildings situated in England and their preservation.”⁷⁹

The National Heritage Act of 1997 and the National Heritage Act of 2002 were amendments and modifications of the previous acts (e.g. the National Heritage Act of 2002 extended the powers of the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission to comprise underwater archaeology)⁸⁰.

2.4 Heritage as a Critical Debate

Similarly to other dominant discourses in history, the heritage concept has been challenged and criticised as focusing too much on a Western hegemonic male culture, neglecting other aspects or so-called minority groups with regard to race, class, religion or gender. Sullivan even goes as far as to speak of “cultural imperialism”⁸¹ which was (or maybe still is) exercised by Western powers such as the United Kingdom or the United States of America. She describes the concept as a kind of

⁷⁸ legislation.gov.uk. National Heritage Act 1980. <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1980/17/contents>. 08-08-2012.

⁷⁹ legislation.gov.uk. National Heritage Act 1983. <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1983/47/crossheading/historic-buildings-and-monuments-commission-for-england>. 08-08-2012.

⁸⁰ legislation.gov.uk. National Heritage Act 1997. <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1997/14/contents>. 08-08-2012. & legislation.gov.uk. National Heritage Act 2002. <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/14/contents>. 08-08-2012.

⁸¹ Sharon *Sullivan*, Cultural Values and Cultural Imperialism. In: Laurajane Smith (Ed.). Cultural Heritage. Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies. Volume II – Critical Concepts in Heritage (London – New York 2007), p. 160 – 171.

“hang-over from imperial days: the values of white, anglo saxon settlers have been paramount, in the traditional telling of our history. In particular these values have come dangerously close to sweeping away and destroying the values and living traditions of the country's original inhabitants.”⁸²

Sullivan goes on to argue that colonial or post-colonial societies used cultural imperialism to spread their own cultural values as they were not able to see or acknowledge any other values or cultures. A desire to categorise and catalogue things and to establish rules for everything is deeply rooted in Western cultures and this desire led to the listing of heritage sites all over the world. The World Heritage List can be seen as such an effort to organise and rank places of international cultural importance. Cultural heritage from everywhere in the world is thereby schematised and made accessible to a wider public. The problem with this Western classification system, however, is that the peoples or cultures who actually own or use the heritage site are normally excluded from the selection, research and presentation process. Consequently, they feel marginalised, ill-represented or even totally excluded. Another problem with Western categorisations of international heritage sites is that Western research and analyses are often very clinical and abstract, reducing the actual historical place or drawing too much attention to the scientific analysis and thereby away from the actual object. Similarly cultural heritage or traditions are sometimes even damaged or falsified as they can be insensitively interpreted or their purity, antiquity or importance might be exaggerated. Finally there is the danger of fossilizing heritage sites or traditions. By conserving places or traditions they get stuck in one place and cannot live on or be changed in the future.⁸³

Byrne suggests that researchers might have to accept that there is more than just one definition of heritage. They ought to be more open-minded with regard to alternatives to the Western way of looking at heritage. If there can be alternative histories, why can there be no alternative heritages or alternative models of heritage management?⁸⁴ According to Byrne the focus in the Western heritage concept lay on material objects or sites for a very long time. In contrast to that the conception of other (often indigenous) societies very often lies on the spiritual or religious significance of a heritage place.⁸⁵ Furthermore, these spiritual heritage

⁸² *Sullivan*, *Cultural Values and Cultural Imperialism*, p. 160.

⁸³ *Sullivan*, *Cultural Values and Cultural Imperialism*, p. 160 – 171.

⁸⁴ Denis *Byrne*, *Western Hegemony in Archaeological Heritage Management*. In: Laurajane Smith (Ed.). *Cultural Heritage. Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies. Volume II – Critical Concepts in Heritage* (London – New York 2007), p. 156.

⁸⁵ *Byrne*, *Western Hegemony in Archaeological Heritage Management*, p. 155. As was pointed out earlier in this thesis (Chapter 2.1) the definition of heritage has undergone many changes from a strictly material definition of heritage as places and objects to a broader definition of intangible heritage including underlying values and beliefs as expressed through the material objects. Therefore I cannot agree with Byrne completely in his view that Western historians need to be more open-minded and take into account the more spiritual or

places are often still actively used and transformed, which poses a problem to the classification and conservation ethic of Western societies. This tension between the need or desire for conservation on the one hand and the actual usage and transformation by the owners on the other hand can only be solved if we accept different concepts of heritage and refrain from the rigid wish for classification on an international scale.

The dominant nations – consciously or sub-consciously – also used heritage as a means of power over other nations and cultures, i.e. the so-called minorities. Their own white culture was stressed and presented whereas other aspects of the country's population were simply left out or given as 'uncivilised' pre-history⁸⁶. This, however, cannot only be seen with regard to race, but also with regard to class. The history that was narrated was that of the upper classes, that of the powerful and dominant people. From that it can be concluded that heritage always reflects the dominant assumptions of its time and context, which are presented as natural, true and inevitable. However, these assumptions are not stable and fixed for eternity but must be subject of discussion and re-interpretation as time goes on, governing classes change and history reverses itself. According to Hall, heritage is always “time- and context-bound, historically specific, and thus open to contestation, re-negotiation, and revision”⁸⁷.

Several aims are reflected in this process: First of all the powerful classes want to demonstrate their power and constantly remind people of it. However, the collection, conservation and presentation of heritage sites can also be seen as an instrument to build and create national identity. Hall describes “The Heritage” as a “discursive practice”⁸⁸ by which “the nation slowly constructs for itself a sort of collective social memory”. In this respect, a nation-state is not only a political and territorial entity, but also an “imagined community”⁸⁹, where people who are seemingly unrelated share the same ideas of what constitutes the nation-state they live in as well as some common values which form the basis of their society. Hence a shared national identity “depends on the cultural meanings which bind each member individually into the larger national story”⁹⁰. Consequently, those who are not reflected in this picture, those who are not represented in the national heritage, cannot properly belong. They stay on

religious heritage concept of other societies.

⁸⁶ cf. *Byrne*, *Western Hegemony in Archaeological Heritage Management*, p. 152 – 159.

⁸⁷ *Stuart Hall*, *Whose Heritage? Un-settling 'The Heritage'*, re-imagining the post-nation. In: *Laurajane Smith* (Ed.). *Cultural Heritage. Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies. Volume II – Critical Concepts in Heritage* (London – New York 2007), p. 90.

⁸⁸ *Hall*, *Whose Heritage?* p. 89.

⁸⁹ cf. *Benedict Anderson*, *Imagined Communities* (London 1983).

⁹⁰ *Hall*, *Whose Heritage?* p. 88.

the outside and are not properly included in the nation-state.

The solution to this problem seems quite simple: It is only necessary to include the minorities, the unrepresented parts of society in heritage (and thereby also in history), to give them some space and public representation and thereby include them in the nation-state, in history and society. However, just to mention minorities in heritage places or to include images of black people, Asians, workers, farmers, women or Muslims does not solve the problem but simply create another one. Littler and Naidoo call this the “problem of embeddedness”⁹¹. They argue that images of people belonging to minority groups in heritage places, in books or on leaflets might be 'inclusive', but these sorts of images do not make their audience think about the role of particular minority groups in the nations history. Littler and Naidoo elaborate that

“such images can fail to question the frameworks through which we understand the nation's past. Instead they 'add on' certain people to the narrative without inviting us to think critically how they have always been present implicitly.”⁹²

By just adding minorities on top of heritage or history that has already been there, they are again presented as something 'other' or 'different' from the ordinary. Their 'otherness' is their primary defining feature in contrast to something vaguely defined as 'the majority'. Their cultural difference from European norms in terms of non-whiteness, their 'marking' by ethnicity, religion and 'race' is foregrounded. They are presented as deviant from the standard Western norms. According to Hall “this is a negative figuration, reductive and simplistic”⁹³. Instead of finally truly including minorities in mainstream history and heritage studies, they are again reduced to stereotypes – a quick solution to the problem which cannot be satisfying.

Knowing that no single programme can solve the problem of under- or misrepresentation of minorities in heritage, Hall suggests an agenda which encompasses several elements: As a first step, the majority or mainstream versions of heritage should be revised and re-written, i.e. the dominant assumptions of what national heritage is should be re-defined. Secondly, contemporary artists of all fields from minority groups should be taken into account and included in heritage lists. If there are no reference books, no comparative materials, no scholarship, no passing-on of a tradition of work to younger practitioners and curators, and so on, these minority groups stay heritage-less and will therefore simply vanish. Thirdly, the

⁹¹ Jo Littler & Roshi Naidoo, *White Past, Multicultural Present*. In: Laurajane Smith (Ed.). *Cultural Heritage. Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies. Volume II – Critical Concepts in Heritage* (London – New York 2007), p. 106.

⁹² Littler & Naidoo, *White Past, Multicultural Present*, 106 – 107.

⁹³ Hall, *Whose Heritage?* p. 94.

record of the migrant experience should be considered. Fourthly, there are the 'traditions of origin' of the minority groups. Although they do have a rich history even before there was any link with the Western world, with imperialism or colonialism, the public (or even researchers) deeply uninformed about these aspects. The fifth and final point is the engagement with the production of new diasporic forms. Today's popular culture shows many hybrid or 'cross-over' cultural forms (e.g. in music, dance, street-style, fashion, film, multi-media) which “mark the production of 'the new' and the transgressive alongside the traditional and the 'preservation of the past’”⁹⁴.

What has happened in this respect in Great Britain so far has been summarised by Littler and Naidoo as “White Past, Multicultural Present”⁹⁵. They argue that whereas the British population today is largely described as a multicultural one comprising all the cultures of the former empire, the British past is still dominantly white. Although most major heritage organisations are nowadays aware of the gaps in their material, the problem of how to close them and include minority groups has not yet been satisfyingly solved.

The absence of certain classes in heritage has been discussed abundantly in previous articles and books. The dominance of Western cultures has featured prominently in articles by black and white historians alike. However, the striking absence or very one-sided representation of women in heritage (heritage places and heritage studies alike) has not yet attracted so much attention. Littler and Naidoo explain that the

“dominant mode of heritage to be found in British public spaces had been to enshrine imperial masculine prowess and heroism; if women were depicted it was usually as abstract and mythically transcendent figures [...]. New types of heritage experience attraction frequently depicted women's roles and occupations as part of their focus on the 'everyday', highlighting, for example, shop assistants or servant girls in their dramatisations of history.”⁹⁶

Comparable to the 'added on' images of other minority groups women were marginalised, presented in a very superficial way or just added on top of 'ordinary' heritage as the 'other', the 'opposition to the male' or the 'out of the norm'. This certainly helped to maintain and prolong stereotypes about women and to fix their position within the nation. Recent discussions of the inclusion or exclusion of gender in heritage will be dealt with in more detail in chapter three.

⁹⁴ *Hall, Whose Heritage?* p. 95 – 99.

⁹⁵ *Littler & Naidoo, White Past, Multicultural Present*, p. 101 – 113.

⁹⁶ *Littler & Naidoo, White Past, Multicultural Present*, p. 103.

2.5 Summary

In this chapter some important terms and concepts were introduced. An attempt was made to find a suitable definition for 'heritage' and the history of the concept was examined briefly. Furthermore, it was pointed out that the idea of 'heritage' always also refers to the present, as it is the present where it is presented and processed and this necessarily has an impact on the choice of heritage places as well as on the way of presenting them to the public. The chapter also introduced some organisations which deal with the identification, protection and preservation of natural and cultural heritage: the UNESCO was pointed out as an international organisation, ICOMOS as an international non-governmental organisation and the National Trust was chosen to exemplify such an organisation in the United Kingdom. Furthermore, the British National Heritage Acts were explained briefly. Finally the concept of heritage was challenged again as it can be criticised as a hegemonic concept that neglects minorities (race, gender, religion, etc.) and provides a partial and subjective view on the world. From here this idea will be developed further with a focus on the relationship between gender issues and the heritage concept.

3 Gender & Heritage

History includes men and women in equal measure – however, for a very long period in time (and maybe even today) men were given preference in historical research. Historical narratives were about great men and their deeds which took place in male-dominated spaces like battlefields, court houses, castles and fortresses, and the like. Although women were equally present in each period in history, they were less likely to be represented in historical research as their deeds were considered less important and their spaces were not deemed special enough for conservation. In the following chapters the relationship between gender and heritage will be explored in more detail, starting from the assumption that every space is gendered and this gendering provides the basis for the under-representation of women in heritage.

3.1 Gendered Landscapes and Buildings

There is no doubt that space (natural, cultural or man-made) is gendered, i.e. the relationship between women and men is both created and reflected (or even perpetuated) in space. Space can be gendered in different ways: Firstly, it is important who created it and with regard to that it is no exaggeration to claim that today's world is largely man-made. Most professions and occupations which shape the cultural landscape (like farming and forestry, architecture or engineering) are male-dominated and although this has not always been the case everywhere in the world (Architecture, for example, was considered a female discipline in North America and today the numbers of women studying architecture are increasing again.), the majority of construction workers, sculptors, urban planners and landscape architects are still men.⁹⁷ Secondly, it must be considered who is reflected in the cultural environment. It is argued that men are not only numerically better represented than women, but that they are also better visible. The majority of statues and monuments in public places still depict men. A good example is the arcade court of the university of Vienna where many important men have their busts or memorials but Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach is still the only woman represented there (she has a quite modest plaque without her image on it). Moreover, Vienna offers a huge amount of statues, memorials, busts and plaques of politicians, artists, composers, writers, and so on and most of them are men. Holcomb gives similar examples for New York City where she identified only three statues of women.⁹⁸ She claims, however, that woman are better

⁹⁷ Briavel *Holcomb*, Gender and Heritage Interpretation. In: Laurajane Smith (Ed.). *Cultural Heritage. Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies. Volume IV – Interpretation and Community* (London – New York 2007), p. 59, p. 60 – 62.

⁹⁸ *Holcomb*, Gender and Heritage Interpretation, p. 63.

represented if allegorical figures are taken into account. Virtues like liberty, truth, justice, mercy and peace are mostly depicted as scarcely-dressed women⁹⁹ which can obviously also be criticised. Thirdly, it should be taken into account who actually uses the given cultural space. Von Saldern indicates that both sexes need a kind of “social knowledge”¹⁰⁰ to interpret their cultural environment appropriately. On the one hand they have to know which spaces women and men are allowed and able to use without any danger and on the other hand they must be aware of how to behave in a suitable way. The cities were divided in female and male spaces: Bars, pubs, gentlemen's clubs, fire brigades and shooting associations were traditionally male environments whereas laundry facilities, workers' houses, girls' schools, shops and women's clubs represented female spaces. Women were under considerable pressure to behave accordingly – their clothes, posture and pace as well as their knowledge whether to be in a certain environment alone, in the company of other women or accompanied by a man, expressed whether they were respectable women or the opposite (i.e. prostitutes). Von Saldern argues that in the course of the 20th century women were able to take over more and more public spaces like shopping malls, cafés and cinemas.¹⁰¹ However, even today there are spaces in our cultural environment that women are not supposed to enter and numerous codes of behaviour are still in action – many of them under the premise of protecting women from danger (for example, women are not supposed to walk through parks at night).

A typical gendering of spaces is described in the dichotomy between the public (male) versus private (female) spaces.¹⁰² According to this division men traditionally occupy more public spaces as they are the ones who leave the house to earn money and cater for the family. They are also more likely to be found in positions as politicians, judges, doctors, professors, scientists and the like. Women, on the other hand, are supposed to be more at home in the private sphere of the home where they care for the family and children and do the housework. According to von Saldern this could still be seen in the beginning of the 20th century when women actually started to take over more public spaces. However, houses and flats were still considered to be their natural environment and modern technical achievements ought to help them with their household duties but also the modern media like radio and television should entertain and inform them without the need to leave the private sphere.¹⁰³ Women in public

⁹⁹ *Holcomb*, Gender and Heritage Interpretation, p. 63 – 64.

¹⁰⁰ *Adelheid von Saldern*, Die Stadt und ihre Frauen. Ein Beitrag zur Gender-Geschichtsschreibung. In: Informationen zur modernen Stadtgeschichte 2004/1, p. 12 – 15.

¹⁰¹ *Von Saldern*, Die Stadt und ihre Frauen, p. 10 – 11.

¹⁰² cf. *Holcomb*, Gender and Heritage Interpretation, p. 59.

¹⁰³ *Von Saldern*, Die Stadt und ihre Frauen, p. 12.

spaces were long seen as signs of “Chaos, Masse, Massenkultur und Massendemokratie”¹⁰⁴, particularly by male right-wing citizens.

In this respect the built environment is gendered in several ways (by the fact who built it, who is reflected in it and who actually uses it) and also defines social behaviour decisively. Furthermore, social values and perspectives are reflected in and supported by our cultural environment and without a doubt male views are privileged¹⁰⁵. In this way also power structures and relationships between the sexes are represented in space. The questions who created our environment, who is reflected in it and who primarily uses it have a considerable impact on the shaping of societies in the past but also the present. Monk argues that the beliefs which people have about gender are expressed in the landscape and the landscape thereby mirrors power inequalities between the sexes by “embodying patriarchal cultural values”¹⁰⁶. This is further enhanced by the frequent depiction of women as victims. Holcomb gives a number of examples for the victimisation of women. Mary Queen of Scots, Joan of Arc or Virginia Dare are just a few of them and illustrate that the traditional role of a woman is that of a passive, vulnerable being. The depiction of women as daring, dominant, sexy and strong is rather seldom and also not unproblematic. The “victim question”¹⁰⁷ in the built environment, however, stays sensitive and unresolved and thus the dominance of men and the subordination of women are inscribed in the landscape and thereby perpetuated for the future.

Landscapes can be understood as means of communication between generations and it is of great importance that we are qualified to read them accordingly. The experience, values, customs and aspirations which make up culture are transferred via the built environment and hence culture can be weakened or strengthened by this message. However, there are also groups of people who do not have the chance to leave their mark on the landscape, i.e. who “have lived but left no traces, are deprived of this supportive environment”¹⁰⁸. In accordance with Holcomb I argue that women are one such group “whose imprint on the landscape is less visible and more ephemeral, less clarifying and more ambiguous than their male peers”¹⁰⁹. Where, however, can we look for women and their history in our environment then? Holcomb

¹⁰⁴ *Von Saldern*, *Die Stadt und ihre Frauen*, p. 9. “chaos, mass, mass culture and mass democracy”

¹⁰⁵ *Holcomb*, *Gender and Heritage Interpretation*, p. 60.

¹⁰⁶ J. Monk, “Gender in the landscape: expressions of power and meaning”, In: K. Anderson & F. Yale (eds.), *Inventing Places: Studies in Cultural Geography* (Melbourne 1992). cited in *Holcomb*, *Gender and Heritage Interpretation*, p. 61.

¹⁰⁷ *Holcomb*, *Gender and Heritage Interpretation*, p. 69 – 70.

¹⁰⁸ *Holcomb*, *Gender and Heritage Interpretation*, p. 61.

¹⁰⁹ *Holcomb*, *Gender and Heritage Interpretation*, p. 61.

suggests “oppositional readings, in which the observer deconstructs the text and reads the silences”¹¹⁰ thereby making sense of absences and filling the text with new meanings. This 'oppositional reading' makes the missing “herstories”¹¹¹ visible and provides space for women not only in history but also in our cultural landscape and thereby in our heritage.

3.2 Gendered Heritage

The extent to which public space can be classified as predominantly male space profoundly influences the selection but also the interpretation of heritage sites. The male dominance can not only be seen in public spaces in general but also in an analysis of heritage places. According to Holcomb

“the great majority of the heritage sites which are preserved, recognised and interpreted were both built by, and commemorate the actions of, men, although obviously women lived in and are integral to the history of virtually all such sites”¹¹².

Why is this the case? First of all, if there are more male spaces in our cultural environment, it seems logical that more of these spaces are adopted into our cultural heritage. This numerical over-representation can be exemplified with many public monuments depicting male heroes, victims (of war, especially) and generally Great Men. War memorials are especially popular in the USA and almost exclusively deal with men. Britain's many sites of industrial heritage mention women only as a footnote and even the growing industry of historical re-enactments is mostly concerned with male domains like battles and other scenes of war. A difference can also be seen in the presentation of monuments and heritage sites. Men are usually shown in “dominant, assertive and active stances while women are typically passive, recessive and subordinate”¹¹³, which ties in neatly with the 'woman as victim' theme. Apart from quantitative issues, female spaces are also often considered as 'ordinary places', i.e. of no particular importance. As discussed earlier heritage sites must be of “outstanding universal value”¹¹⁴ and typically female spaces like houses and flats, shopping centres and supermarkets, cafés and cinemas were not attributed this kind of importance.¹¹⁵ As a consequence women were there and lived their lives alongside their men but today they are not visible any more. That which

¹¹⁰ Holcomb, *Gender and Heritage Interpretation*, p. 62.

¹¹¹ Holcomb, *Gender and Heritage Interpretation*, p. 62.

¹¹² Holcomb, *Gender and Heritage Interpretation*, p. 65.

¹¹³ Holcomb, *Gender and Heritage Interpretation*, p. 64.

¹¹⁴ UNESCO. Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972). <http://whc.unesco.org/archive/convention-en.pdf>. 29-06-2012.

¹¹⁵ A similar argument was brought forward by Dolores Hayden, *The Power of Place Project. Claiming women's history in the urban landscape*, In: Laurajane Smith (Ed.). *Cultural Heritage. Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies*. Volume IV – Interpretation and Community (London – New York 2007), p. 89 – 98.

is presented as women's heritage or monuments depicting women is very often problematic too as it provides a partial picture of the female sex. The victimisation of women has already been mentioned earlier and the values, gender roles and power relationships inscribed in these heritage sites are thereby not only shown and confirmed but also prolonged and perpetuated. The preservation and conservation of material heritage thereby becomes the preservation and conservation of certain 'desired' values and cultural meanings¹¹⁶.

Hayden suggests a tripartite approach to “reverse the neglect of physical resources that are important to women's history”¹¹⁷. Firstly, she wants the entire urban landscape to be claimed as an essential part of history in contrast to seeing them solely as architectural monuments. Secondly, she stresses the need to identify all examples in our built environment which illustrate women's work and everyday lives. Thirdly, she argues in favour of finding creative ways to interpret these cultural places.¹¹⁸ Thereby women's history could be made visible in the landscape and interpreted in critical ways. Making women's history visible in public spaces, however, does not only have educational and informative purposes. It has the power to inscribe female values in our cultural landscape and to alter existing or create new power relations between the sexes. Furthermore, these places of women's history can also “claim political territory in tangible ways”¹¹⁹. Women can use these places for their own purposes, they can meet and work there and strengthen their identities as self-confident users of public space.

3.3 Gender Issues in Heritage Museums

The institution 'museum' is a relatively young development in history. In the nineteenth century the impending danger of the loss of traditions and culture brought about by the developments of the Industrial Revolution motivated people to create institutions where these values could be protected and preserved for the future. They predominantly collected artefacts and information related to the peasant cultures of rural Europe and their main aims were to educate the public, to fight against superstitions and to present cultures and technologies for future generations.¹²⁰ Apart from the desire to conserve cultural treasures, museums also wanted to promote civic and national pride, demonstrate 'progress' (i.e. that the present is

¹¹⁶ *Smith*, General Introduction, p. 6.

¹¹⁷ *Hayden*, The Power of Place Project, p. 90.

¹¹⁸ *Hayden*, The Power of Place Project, p. 90.

¹¹⁹ *Hayden*, The Power of Place Project, p. 97.

¹²⁰ *Martine Segalen*, Here but Invisible: The Presentation of Women in French Ethnography Museums, In: *Gender and History* 6/3 (1994), p. 335 – 336.

superior to the past) and the superiority of Western cultures measured against the so-called primitive cultures.¹²¹

Women can be found in museums on two levels: Active – as workers in different areas of these institutions or passive – as parts of the exhibitions. Although museum work was a largely male profession in the nineteenth century, women have been involved in museum work from the very beginnings. However, very often they worked as volunteers or supporters or in the lower ranks of the museum hierarchy.¹²² In many cases their contributions to the development of museums have not been noticed as women's work as collectors and museum workers has never been documented.¹²³

Exhibits related to women's history are almost always present in museum collections. Nevertheless, Nenadic, who had a look at Scottish house museums, argues that there are many museums in Scotland that commemorate 'great men' but there is not a single institution that is devoted to the life of a 'great woman'¹²⁴. Most museums, however, feature women's history in one way or the other but the presentation is not unproblematic. First of all, the profession of museum curator is still dominantly male and exhibitions might be created and exhibits chosen by men. According to Porter “the authoritative, anonymous voice of the museum speaks itself from a relative position” namely that of “the Western, white bourgeois man”¹²⁵. She goes on to argue that masculinity and femininity are often displayed as opposites, i.e. public and private, work and home, active and passive, and the woman is always the subordinate partner. Traditionally, women are depicted in a private surrounding like the kitchen, the living room, the household in general. Whereas men are usually shown in typical work environments which are presented as active, powerful and signifying hard labour – women are normally not shown there at all. In the typically female domains of the household everything is presented neat and tidy, clean and peaceful. The agent 'woman' is very often not mentioned – instead passive constructions are used in explanation panels. Housework is not presented as work at all and women's lives are romanticised as having been full of leisure activities like reading,

¹²¹ *Holcomb*, *Gender and Heritage Interpretation*, p. 66.

¹²² *Holcomb*, *Gender and Heritage Interpretation*, p. 66.

¹²³ Helen *Knibb*, 'Present but Not Visible': Searching for Women's History in Museum Collections, In: *Gender and History* 6/3 (1994), p. 353 – 354.

¹²⁴ Stana *Nenadic*, *Museums, Gender and Cultural Identity in Scotland*, In: *Gender and History* 6/3 (1994), p. 426 – 434.

¹²⁵ Gaby *Porter*, How are women represented in British history museums? In: *Museum International* 43 (1991), p. 159.

needlework and shopping.¹²⁶ Similarly, Nenadic argues in her assessment of Scottish house museums that although some of these institutions feature representations of women, most of them are highly associated with nostalgia and consumption.¹²⁷ Other areas of women's lives (like professional work, child rearing or pregnancy) are simply not mentioned. Furthermore, a feminist perspective on women's history is generally missing in most exhibitions. Although exhibits exemplifying women's history are used in most heritage museums, they are often displayed in a partial way and not discussed critically or placed within their context.¹²⁸ This kind of presentation does not challenge the audience at all. It provides a romantic, nostalgic view on the past and does not make the visitors think about gender relationships or gender roles in the past or in the present. Segalen even doubts that such complex issues like the relationship between the sexes and gender roles can be discussed and problematised appropriately in the context of an exhibition. She suggests that some topics should better be dealt with in the written form of articles and papers as complex thoughts can be explained much better in this way. The average visitor of a museum has not had any formal training in reading exhibitions and making meaning out of objects and there is the danger that issues might get trivialised or even seen as unnecessary or unaesthetic. This, however, might lead to the wish to explain facts and circumstances in more detail and too much commentary might be provided which could easily demand too much of the visitors or even contribute to the impression that museums are boring and too hard to understand.¹²⁹ I do not fully agree with this opinion although it is certainly true that not all visitors of a museum can grasp the full intended meaning of an exhibition. However, I am of the opinion that well-presented exhibitions can create an interest in the audience, raise the awareness for certain issues and thereby provoke thoughts and discussion which might even lead to further study of the topic (probably then in written form).

One way to deal with the problem of representing women appropriately in museum contexts was to devote independent exhibitions to women's history or add a female perspective wherever it was totally missing. However, Holcomb calls this the “add-women-and-stir” recipe¹³⁰ which is a good beginning and at least makes the problem visible but definitely not enough. Jones and Pay think that a feminist perspective is absolutely necessary because the past always also influences the present and today can only change in accordance with a re-

¹²⁶ Porter, *How are women represented in British history museums?* p. 159 – 162.

¹²⁷ Nenadic, *Museums, Gender and Cultural Identity in Scotland*, p. 431.

¹²⁸ Holcomb, *Gender and Heritage Interpretation*, p. 66.

¹²⁹ cf. Segalen, *Here but Invisible*, p. 334 – 344.

¹³⁰ Holcomb, *Gender and Heritage Interpretation*, p. 70.

evaluation of the past.¹³¹

One institution that tries to bring about such a change in Great Britain is WHAM! (= Women, Heritage and Museums). Founded in 1984 predominantly by museum workers this organisation raised the awareness for sexism and racism inherent in many museum representations of the past.¹³² Besides introducing a feminist perspective to analyse museum representations, the main aims of the organisation were to “promote positive images of women through museum collecting, exhibitions and activities”¹³³, offer professional training to improve museum practice in relation to women's contribution to society, make museums known as places to study women's history, offer a wider forum to discuss issues related to women's heritage, fight for equal employment opportunities for men and women in museums, initiate debates and fight against racism and discrimination in general.¹³⁴ It is a fact that during recent years the awareness for sensitive issues like gender, race and ethnicity increased and a lot has already happened in these areas. However, a lot still remains to be done – to include women's history in museum representations, to analyse it critically and thereby to raise awareness for, influence and challenge existing gender roles and relationships.

3.4 Summary, Problems and Outlook to the Future

In this chapter an attempt was made to illustrate the relationship between gender and heritage. First of all the gendering of landscapes and the built environment was pointed out and it was argued that gender roles and relationships are created, promoted and perpetuated through the material world. Secondly it was reasoned that women are under-represented in heritage because of simple quantitative reasons (there are more 'male' buildings and memorials) but also because of the general assumption that men made history whereas women only lived in it.¹³⁵ A brief look at the history of museums led us to the role of women within the museum context which can be active (as a museum worker) or passive (as a subject represented in the exhibition). It was illustrated that women feature in almost every museum but that they are very often represented in certain, partial ways (as victims, only in relation to the private sphere – the household or as subordinate to men) which again contributes to the perpetuation

¹³¹ S. Jones & S. Pay, The legacy of Eve, In: P. Gathercole & D. Lowenthal (eds.), *The Politics of the Past* (London 1990), p. 169 quoted in Briavel Holcomb, *Gender and Heritage Interpretation*. In: Laurajane Smith (Ed.), *Cultural Heritage. Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies*. Volume IV – Interpretation and Community (London – New York 2007), p. 68.

¹³² Holcomb, *Gender and Heritage Interpretation*, p. 66.

¹³³ Porter, *How are women represented in British history museums?*, p. 159.

¹³⁴ Porter, *How are women represented in British history museums?*, p. 159.

¹³⁵ Holcomb, *Gender and Heritage Interpretation*, p. 67.

of existing gender roles and relationships. A feminist perspective is very often still missing and no critical analysis challenges the viewer to re-assess his or her views. Several attempts have been made to change this situation (e.g. the devotion of whole exhibitions solely to women's history) but more often than not this resulted in a simple 'addition' of women without any critical assessment, which can be seen as a good start but which is certainly not enough. Finally, one institution that actively engages in making women's history visible and discussing it critically, i.e. WHAM! (Women, Heritage and Museums), was mentioned as an example of steps that have already been undertaken.

It must be clear, however, that a lot of work is still ahead and much remains to be done. According to Holcomb “feminist heritage interpretation requires research in both content of the past and presentation in the present”¹³⁶. She summarises some helpful suggestions which might make a better representation of women in museums possible including:

“greater attention to oral and archival sources, better documentation of objects at the time of accession, collaboration with women's groups, regional collaborations to facilitate specialisation and sharing of resources, greater effort in primary research and active collecting rather than reliance on what is already in the collection.”¹³⁷

Knibb also acknowledges the importance of a general improvement of museum practice so that these institutions can be used as resources for women's history. She has similar suggestions for future museum work such as acknowledging women's history as a special type of collection within every history museum which requires special administration, collection and accessibility practices, working together with women's groups, developing a clear classification model for exhibits and documenting provenance much better, opening archives and collections to the public, collecting popular culture and contemporary material, and so on and so forth.¹³⁸ With the help of these suggestions it will be possible to make women visible from different perspectives, provide a balanced view on women's history and to analyse it more critically. Thereby it will also become possible to re-evaluate current gender roles and challenge existing models. Thus, although museums have always collected women's history, “these collections deserve to be used in a [more] meaningful and thoughtful way”¹³⁹.

¹³⁶ Holcomb, *Gender and Heritage Interpretation*, p. 69.

¹³⁷ Holcomb, *Gender and Heritage Interpretation*, p. 68.

¹³⁸ Knibb, 'Present but Not Visible', p. 363 – 365.

¹³⁹ Knibb, 'Present but Not Visible', p. 368.

4 St. Fagans: National History Museum

4.1 The Development of Open-Air Museums

St. Fagans: National History Museum is an open-air museum. Thus, first of all the history and scope as well as the problems and possibilities of such an institution are examined in more detail. Open-air museums came into existence in the second part of the nineteenth century as a response to the wide-spread fear that national identity and folk culture might get lost under the influence of industrialisation and urbanisation. Thus, this type of museum represents “the first example in history of a deliberate museum response to a social need”¹⁴⁰. The first step towards the institutions we know today was the development of folk museums and open-air museums followed hereafter. Both types of museum originated in Scandinavia and the first example of a true folk museum was Nordiske Museet in Stockholm. It was founded in 1873 by Artur Hazelius with the aim to present the nation's life and culture. In 1891, the open-air section of Nordiske Museet was opened in Skansen just outside of Stockholm. There, buildings that had been taken from all over Sweden were re-erected and furnished in order to recreate a picture of life in the past. Skansen kept its close relationship with Nordiske Museet as its primary purpose was to enhance the exhibitions of the latter one. The development of the first open-air museum in Sweden had an enormous impact on the museum world and today several hundred such open-air museums exist all over the world.¹⁴¹

Nordiske Museet as well as its subsidiary Skansen were created as immediate responses to the rapid social changes in Europe during the late nineteenth century. Industrialisation and urbanisation seemed to threaten the 'traditional' way of life and thus a highly romanticised version of this folk life was created. All over Europe both researchers and academics and lay people were suddenly interested in folklore, folk song and dance, customs and dialects. The collection of “everyday antiquities” and “bygones”¹⁴² became a fashionable activity and the first folk museums developed out of this interest in material culture. Thus, it can be said that one of the main aims of the first folk and open-air museums was to preserve traditional folk culture and customs for future generations. Another aim was the creation of a distinct national identity or culture and the location of an “authentic and essentially unchanging *Volksgeist*”¹⁴³ to give the population a sense of belonging and togetherness in times of political change and

¹⁴⁰ John Williams-Davies, 'Now Our History is Your History': The Challenge of Relevance for Open-Air Museums, In: Folk Life: Journal of Ethnological Studies 47 (2009), p. 116.

¹⁴¹ Williams-Davies, 'Now Our History is Your History', p. 116.

¹⁴² Williams-Davies, 'Now Our History is Your History', p. 116.

¹⁴³ Williams-Davies, 'Now Our History is Your History', p. 117. (original emphasis)

turmoil. As the late nineteenth century was also shaken by decisive political changes (old empires were destroyed and new countries were formed), the newly-established folk museums had the very important task to “create a sense of nationhood amongst the population”¹⁴⁴. They accomplished that by reminding the people of their common origin and roots and thereby creating a sense of belonging. However, not only the new countries were in need of such nation-building institutions. Even in long-established states there was “a perceived need to forge a coherent national identity, to bind the nation together in the face of the social tensions that were emerging in the new urban / industrial societies”¹⁴⁵. The aim was to unite different groups into one national culture. Of course, the effectiveness of open-air museums as creators of national identity can be questioned but it was certainly the intention of their founders and hence it can be said that they are “principally concerned with the creation and maintenance of identity”¹⁴⁶.

Although most folk and open-air museums are quite ordinary in their presentation, they can be described as radical in at least two respects: First of all they are radical in their subject matter. They were the first museums which dealt with the history and life of ordinary people as opposed to traditional history museums which only dealt with the cultural concerns of a ruling elite, the rich and wealthy and 'important personalities' in general.¹⁴⁷ Secondly, folk and open-air museums are radical in terms of their approach. These institutions wanted to reach the people, to be popular and accessible. They wanted to inform and educate the people about their common heritage in non-academic ways. In that they differed a lot from traditional museums and because of that they were also heavily criticised. It was claimed that folk and open-air museums only appeal to nostalgia and romanticism and provide a false picture of the past. Historians called them ahistorical and argued that they ignored the process of change. Museologists were equally suspicious of these organisations and called them “unscholarly, unscientific and vulgar”¹⁴⁸. It seemed that the association of a museum with entertainment and fun was not deemed possible and so folk and open-air museums were condemned from the outset. However, the institutions themselves wanted to be populist in their approach and they deliberately chose this path. They wanted to attract people and to appeal to their emotions using this strategy as “a legitimate hook [...] to draw people towards the higher things”¹⁴⁹.

¹⁴⁴ *Williams-Davies*, 'Now Our History is Your History', p. 117.

¹⁴⁵ *Williams-Davies*, 'Now Our History is Your History', p. 117.

¹⁴⁶ *Williams-Davies*, 'Now Our History is Your History', p. 117.

¹⁴⁷ *Williams-Davies*, 'Now Our History is Your History', p. 116.

¹⁴⁸ *Williams-Davies*, 'Now Our History is Your History', p. 118.

¹⁴⁹ *Williams-Davies*, 'Now Our History is Your History', p. 118.

They understood that feelings and imagination can be used as paths to knowledge. Of course, they also knew that their venues were not as scientific or academic as other – more traditional – museums but nonetheless they did not consider themselves to be less relevant.

Relevance was a topic with which open-air museums had to deal a lot. From their early beginnings they had to justify themselves against the afore-mentioned criticism and there was always the pending question whether such institutions were need after all. After the first wave of enthusiasm, museums had to deal with decreasing visitor numbers. The messages they wanted to convey, the values they stood for and the stories they wanted to tell were no longer valid and did no longer attract an audience. Therefore, the museums continually had to adjust themselves to current needs. They had to find new ways to stay relevant and to bring in new aspects of history relevant at the time. One way to do so is, of course, to acquire new buildings, to enlarge the museum or to build new and modern visitor facilities. However, this cannot always be done for very practical, i.e. spatial reasons. Another way to develop is to make use of the modern media (radio, television, internet). Some changes were even more long-lasting and influential like the idea of the multi-period museum. That means that the exhibition illustrates the progress from the past to the present (very often with a continuance to modern times) “bringing the displays into direct contact with the current generation of users”¹⁵⁰. Another idea was that of inclusion. The multicultural set-up of society was at least accepted and appreciated and minority groups were included into exhibitions. Thereby, on the one hand these groups were given a voice in folk and open-air museums and on the other hand they were established as a whole new group of users / visitors of these institutions.¹⁵¹ This inclusion should then, of course, be taken one step further to include not only different races, ethnicities and religions but also to illustrate the notion of gender. The logical consequence of this development would be to make women visible and give them a voice as well. Yet another way to adapt would be to focus on universal topics such as love, violence and death and “thereby linking current concerns with the same issues within an earlier time-frame”¹⁵². According to Williams-Davies the changes in these institutions have to go even deeper. He argues that “there has to be a fundamental shift in our conception of culture and the way we present it”¹⁵³. It is commonly acknowledged now that identities are not fixed but fluid and subject to constant change and development. Therefore there is no singular national identity

¹⁵⁰ Williams-Davies, 'Now Our History is Your History', p. 119.

¹⁵¹ Williams-Davies, 'Now Our History is Your History', p. 121.

¹⁵² Williams-Davies, 'Now Our History is Your History', p. 122.

¹⁵³ Williams-Davies, 'Now Our History is Your History', p. 121.

that can be presented in museums. According to Williams-Davies “heritage is no longer unproblematic and has to be presented in a far more sophisticated way”¹⁵⁴. Museums can no longer tell the nice and cosy stories that people want to hear but they have to challenge people, provoke thoughts and discussions and leave the past open to contestation.

It is a narrow path for folk and open-air museums between the desire to educate the population and present social history in a scientific way and the need to attract audiences. Clearly enough, it does not make any sense to present the finest heritage and a huge amount of artefacts if nobody comes to see it. This wish to be popular also brings some danger with it as governing bodies might see open-air museums solely as “cash cows”¹⁵⁵ or might even want to exploit them for their own political agendas. In conclusion it can be said that folk and open-air museums have to deal with a number of differing issues which can sometimes make it hard to find the right balance between the various interests and it is definitely not possible to satisfy everybody. Subsequently, one particular folk and open-air museum, St. Fagans: National History Museum, is analysed in more detail.

4.2 St. Fagans: National History Museum

St. Fagans: National History Museum is located four miles west of Cardiff city centre¹⁵⁶ and on its homepage it classifies itself as “one of Europe's leading open-air museums and Wales's most popular heritage attraction”¹⁵⁷. Mainly an open-air museum, but also a folk museum and research institute comprising several archives and a library, the museum is a branch of the National Museum Wales¹⁵⁸. It was built on the grounds of St. Fagans Castle and Gardens which is a late sixteenth-century manor house. Its main attractions are the large open-air museum comprising more than forty original Welsh buildings from different historical periods which were taken from various locations all over Wales and re-erected on the museum grounds, the demonstrations of traditional crafts and activities like bakery, milling or the work of a blacksmith and, of course, the magnificent St. Fagans Castle.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁴ Williams-Davies, 'Now Our History is Your History', p. 121.

¹⁵⁵ Williams-Davies, 'Now Our History is Your History', p. 119.

¹⁵⁶ St. Fagans: National History Museum. Visiting. <http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/stfagans/visit/>. 16-08-2012.

¹⁵⁷ St. Fagans: National History Museum. About the museum. <http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/stfagans/about/>. 16-08-2012.

¹⁵⁸ Rhiannon Mason, Museums, Nations, Identities. Wales and its National Museums (Cardiff 2007), p. 149.

¹⁵⁹ St. Fagans: National History Museum. About the museum. <http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/stfagans/about/>. 16-08-2012.

Similar to other open-air museums, the institution's main aim is to represent the life and culture of Wales¹⁶⁰ or more specifically “to illustrate and interpret the daily life and work of the people of Wales from the Middle Ages to the present day”¹⁶¹. However, they do not only see themselves as a heritage attraction but they characterise themselves as “an institution which aims to bring history alive, educating and challenging visitors rather than merely presenting them with entertaining stereotypes”¹⁶². This corresponds with the views expressed by Williams-Davies who argues that it cannot be the task of a folk museum to present its visitors with nice, unchallenging stories but that it should rather challenge its audience, encouraging reflection and discussion about various topics and providing multiple stories and multiple experiences.¹⁶³ It cannot be denied though that a strong focus of the museum is the creation and presentation of the Welsh national identity. This is not only done in the exhibition through artefacts of Welsh folk life but can also be seen in the organisation of the institution. It is a bilingual organisation which means that every panel provides information in both English and Welsh and all the museum staff has to be fluent in both languages. St. Fagans is also one of the few places in South Wales where you can actually hear the Welsh language used on a daily life basis (apart from some Welsh speaking schools). Thereby it is “a major contributor to contemporary Welsh-language culture, via publications and presence at eisteddfodau, for example”¹⁶⁴. It should also be emphasised that the language policy of the National Museum Wales not only encourages translation but that much of the work done in these institutions actually originates in Welsh.¹⁶⁵

St. Fagans: National History Museum also attracts a varied audience including people from all over the world. In accordance with its main aim to represent and teach people about Welsh culture and heritage a great number of visitors are indeed Welsh citizens of all generations who come there again and again. Out of the more than 600.000 visitors a year about 100.000 are school children¹⁶⁶ who come there to learn about their history and traditions. However,

¹⁶⁰ St. Fagans: National History Museum. Visiting. <http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/stfagans/visit/>. 16-08-2012.

¹⁶¹ St. Fagans: National History Museum. Curatorial & research. Social & Cultural History. <http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/stfagans/collections/>. 16-08-2012.

¹⁶² St. Fagans: National History Museum. Curatorial & research. Library. Collections. <http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/library/collections/>. 06-02-2012.

¹⁶³ *Williams-Davies*, 'Now Our History is Your History', p. 121.

¹⁶⁴ National Museum Wales, Position Statement 2001: 3 cited in *Mason*, *Museums, Nations, Identities*, p. 22.

¹⁶⁵ National Museum Wales, Position Statement 2001: 3 cited in *Mason*, *Museums, Nations, Identities*, p. 22.

¹⁶⁶ Clare *Hutchinson*, National History Museum at St Fagans soars to the top of UK's favourite tourist sites, In: *Western Mail* (WalesOnline.co.uk 29-09-2011). <http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/2011/09/29/national-history-museum-at-st-fagans-soars-to-the-top-of-uk-s-favourite-tourist-sites-91466-29507382/>. 16-08-2012.

there is also a huge number of tourists who come and visit the site every year. The museum was rated one of the UK's top ten free attractions by users of TripAdvisor, which is the world's largest travel review site¹⁶⁷ and in 2011 it was made the UK public's favourite attraction in a survey conducted by Which? Travel Magazine based on overall satisfaction and the likelihood of recommending the attraction to others¹⁶⁸. It is also mentioned and highly recommended on all popular travel advisor sites which definitely contributes to its ongoing success.

4.2.1 History

St. Fagans: National History Museum belongs, as has already been mentioned earlier, to a larger museum network which is called National Museum Wales. The first National Museum of Wales was granted its charter in 1907 and opened in Cardiff



1. *Amgueddfa Genedlaethol Caerdydd*
National Museum Cardiff
2. *Sain Ffagan Amgueddfa Werin Cymru* St Fagans: National History Museum
3. *Amgueddfa Lechi Cymru*
National Slate Museum
4. *Amgueddfa Lheng Rufeinig Cymru*
National Roman Legion Museum
5. *Big Pit: Amgueddfa Lofaol Cymru*
Big Pit: National Coal Museum
6. *Amgueddfa Wlân Cymru*
National Wool Museum
7. National Collections Centre
8. *Amgueddfa Genedlaethol y Glannau Abertawe* National Waterfront Museum, Swansea

in 1927. The first site was *Image 1: Map of the National Museums Wales*

called *Amgueddfa Genedlaethol Caerdydd – National Museum Cardiff*, today one of eight branches of *Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales*. This network was first only a loose confederation of individual sites – in the beginning only including the National Museum and the Welsh Folk Museum. Whereas the National Museum of Wales originally wanted to show that “Wales was a fully fledged nation with the requisite institutions: a national museum, a national library and a national university”¹⁶⁹, the Welsh Folk Museum had the aim of “valuing the vernacular culture of Wales”¹⁷⁰. In 1995 the National Museum developed into the National Museums and Galleries of Wales under director Colin Ford and in 2005 it received its present name: National Museum Wales under the directorship of Mike Houlihan. The museum network now comprises eight sites: the National Museum Cardiff, St. Fagans: National History Museum, the National Slate Museum, the National Roman Legion Museum, Big Pit: National Coal Museum, the National Wool Museum, the National Collections Centre

¹⁶⁷ St. Fagans: National History Museum. About the museum.
<http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/stfagans/about/>. 16-08-2012.

¹⁶⁸ Hutchinson, <http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/2011/09/29/national-history-museum-at-st-fagans-soars-to-the-top-of-uk-s-favourite-tourist-sites-91466-29507382/>. 16-08-2012.

¹⁶⁹ Mason, *Museums, Nations, Identities*, p. 151.

¹⁷⁰ Mason, *Museums, Nations, Identities*, p. 151.

and the National Waterfront Museum, Swansea.¹⁷¹ Within this network all the sites have equal status and rights. Even though some sites are larger or have a longer history there is not one leading organisation with the other, smaller ones as its subsidiaries. All the sites are of equal importance and this characterises this federal network of museums.¹⁷²

St. Fagans: National History Museum came into existence as “collection of Old Fashioned Things / Welsh 'Bygones’”¹⁷³ at the Cardiff Municipal Museum and Art Gallery. In 1913 it received a temporary exhibition space at the National Museum. In 1936 it became part of the Department of Folk Culture and Industries within the National Museum and finally, in 1948, it acquired its own site at St. Fagans, situated on the periphery of the city of Cardiff, and thereby also a separate identity as the Folk Museum of Wales / Welsh Folk Museum.¹⁷⁴ St. Fagans Castle together with twenty acres grounds was given to the people of Wales by the Earl of Plymouth in 1946.¹⁷⁵ Through the collection of funds from a public appeal and with the Earl of Plymouth's donation the first national open-air museum in Britain could be opened in 1948.¹⁷⁶ In 1995 the institution was re-named Museum of Welsh Life and in 2005 it received its current name St. Fagans: National History Museum.¹⁷⁷

Today National Museum Wales is an Assembly Sponsored Public Body (ASPB) and therefore receives “both funding and strategic direction from the Welsh Assembly Government and the Minister for Culture, Welsh Language and Sport”¹⁷⁸. It is also a registered charity and an independent chartered body which gets its “core funding through grant-in-aid from the Welsh Assembly Government”¹⁷⁹. The current director general is called David Anderson¹⁸⁰ and several changes and improvements are going to happen in the course of the next few years. In 2010 St. Fagans: National History Museum passed the first round in the qualification process for funding by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). This fund uses money earned through the National Lottery to conserve and present various kinds of heritage (cultural and natural) for present and future generations. From the qualification in the first round onwards the museum

¹⁷¹ *Mason*, *Museums, Nations, Identities*, p. 19 – 20.

¹⁷² *Mason*, *Museums, Nations, Identities*, p. 22.

¹⁷³ *Mason*, *Museums, Nations, Identities*, p. 21.

¹⁷⁴ *Mason*, *Museums, Nations, Identities*, p. 21.

¹⁷⁵ St. Fagans: National History Museum. About the museum. <http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/stfagans/about/>. 16-08-2012.

¹⁷⁶ *Mason*, *Museums, Nations, Identities*, p. 151.

¹⁷⁷ *Mason*, *Museums, Nations, Identities*, p. 21.

¹⁷⁸ *Mason*, *Museums, Nations, Identities*, p. 21.

¹⁷⁹ *Mason*, *Museums, Nations, Identities*, p. 21.

¹⁸⁰ National Museum Wales. About us. Director General. <http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/director/>. 16-08-2012.

had two years to prepare fully developed proposals to compete for a firm award.¹⁸¹ In 2012 it was announced that St. Fagans: National History Museum will be granted 11.5 million pounds by the HLF. Together with six million pounds from the Welsh government and with the support through a one-pound-per-visitor appeal the museum will now be able to finance some major on-site improvements.¹⁸² These will include the introduction of the National Archaeology Collection, the creation of an integrated indoor and outdoor experience, an expanded programme of events and activities, the geographic integration of the site and an upgrading of the visitor facilities. According to the Heritage Minister, Alun Ffred Jones, these measures shall transform the open-air museum into a “world-class visitor attraction” which will act “as a gateway to our history and culture for tourists visiting Wales”¹⁸³.

From the 'Welsh Folk Museum' to the 'National History Museum'

Interestingly enough, St. Fagans has already had two changes of its name. The museum started out in 1948 as the 'Welsh Folk Museum' but in 1995 it was re-named 'Museum of Welsh Life'. In 2005 there was again a change in the nomenclature and from then on the museum was to be known as St. Fagans: National History Museum.¹⁸⁴ At the same time the overall network of museums changed its name from National Museums and Galleries of Wales to National Museum Wales¹⁸⁵ and all other branches of this network were re-named too (e.g. Big Pit – National Coal Museum). Interestingly enough, this did not affect the Welsh naming. The Welsh name of St. Fagans remained 'Amgueddfa Werin Cymru' which can be translated to its first name 'Welsh Folk Museum'.¹⁸⁶ These changes have both been appreciated and criticised. First of all it is quite striking in all the name-changes that the term 'national' was very much foregrounded. This could be due to a greater self-confidence within Wales and it might reflect the impression that 'national' is the more appropriate term today. Mason quotes a newspaper article which appeared prior to the re-naming and argues that the dropping of the term 'Welsh' in favour of the term 'national' reflects a stronger self-confidence of the Welsh people about their nation and the fact that there is no longer the need for the term 'Welsh'.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸¹ Heritage Lottery Fund. St Fagans National History Museum. Plans to develop St Fagans National History Museum backed by Heritage Lottery Fund (01-03-2010).

<http://www.hlf.org.uk/news/Pages/StFagansNationalHistoryMuseum.aspx>. 22-08-2012.

¹⁸² BBC News Wales. St Fagans National History Museum in £ 25 m appeal (20-07-2012).

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-18900042>. 22-08-2012.

¹⁸³ Heritage Lottery Fund. St Fagans National History Museum. Plans to develop St Fagans National History Museum backed by Heritage Lottery Fund (01-03-2010).

<http://www.hlf.org.uk/news/Pages/StFagansNationalHistoryMuseum.aspx>. 22-08-2012.

¹⁸⁴ *Mason*, Museums, Nations, Identities, p. 149.

¹⁸⁵ *Mason*, Museums, Nations, Identities, p. 173.

¹⁸⁶ *Mason*, Museums, Nations, Identities, p. 173.

¹⁸⁷ Robin Gwyn, *Western Mail*, 15-10-2005: 2 cited in *Mason*, Museums, Nations, Identities, p. 263 – 264.

Although this opinion received a positive response from Plaid Cymru's Shadow Culture Minister, John Thomas¹⁸⁸, it was heavily criticised in a responding article in the same newspaper. Basini, who sees the fundamental task of Welsh museums as “[p]ersuading incomers and tourists of the value of the Welsh culture and its traditions” and “reminding the rest of us of their richness”¹⁸⁹ feared that the dropping of the term 'Welsh' would lead to a “smoothing over” of the things that separate Wales from the rest of Great Britain.¹⁹⁰ As previously mentioned, the same change of names did not happen in the Welsh language and Mason argues that this divergence might suggest the “development of a differentiated branding strategy tailored to different audiences within Wales”¹⁹¹. Another theory could be that the term 'folk' has many negative, old-fashioned and non-scientific connotations in English but the same cannot be said for the Welsh language¹⁹² so the attempt might have been to give the institution a more scientifically respectable name.

4.2.2 Exhibitions and Archives

St. Fagans: National History Museum is composed of several parts, the best-known and most popular being the open-air exhibition. It comprises more than forty original buildings from various historical periods taken from all over Wales and re-erected on the museum grounds.¹⁹³

Among these buildings are:

- ▲ “farm houses, cottages, barns, hayshed, pigsty
- ▲ bakehouse, pottery, tannery, gorse mill, sawmill, smithy, saddler, woollen mill, cider mill, coach house
- ▲ Oakdale Working Men's Institute, Rhyd-y-car ironworkers cottages decorated in the styles of 1805, 1855, 1895, 1925, 1955, and 1985
- ▲ tollhouse, chapel, school, local stores, cockpit, post office, a cenotaph, church
- ▲ Celtic village, St Fagans castle and gardens, boat house, summer house, a post Second World War pre-fab, and a recent ecological experiment: the House for the Future”¹⁹⁴

At present the museum plans to acquire the Vulcan Hotel, one of Cardiff's best preserved Victorian pubs¹⁹⁵ and Taffs Well station, a Victorian police station¹⁹⁶ to be re-erected at the museum grounds.

¹⁸⁸ Mason, *Museums, Nations, Identities*, p. 265.

¹⁸⁹ Mario Basini, *Western Mail*, 22-10-2005: 24 cited in Mason, *Museums, Nations, Identities*, p. 264.

¹⁹⁰ Mario Basini, *Western Mail*, 22-10-2005: 24 cited in Mason, *Museums, Nations, Identities*, p. 264.

¹⁹¹ Mason, *Museums, Nations, Identities*, p. 265.

¹⁹² Mason, *Museums, Nations, Identities*, p. 265.

¹⁹³ St. Fagans: National History Museum. About the museum. Historic Buildings.

<http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/stfagans/historic-buildings/>. 16-08-2012.

¹⁹⁴ Mason, *Museums, Nations, Identities*, p. 152.

¹⁹⁵ BBC News South East Wales. Vulcan pub in Cardiff dismantled for St Fagans museum rebuild in 'several years' (04-05-2012). <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-south-east-wales-17955268>. 16-08-2012.

¹⁹⁶ BBC News South East Wales. St Fagans: National History Museum police station plans (21-07-2011).

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-south-east-wales-14221017>. 16-08-2012.

Of course, there is also an indoor exhibition divided in a temporary exhibition space and permanent galleries devoted to material culture, agriculture and costume.¹⁹⁷ In 2007 a new gallery 'Oriell 1'¹⁹⁸ was created. It deals with the topic 'Belonging' (Welsh: 'Perthyn') and wants to emphasise the “multiplicity and diversity of identities and ways of 'belonging' present within Wales today”¹⁹⁹. The themes 'Voices, Beliefs, Family and the Nation' are used to thematise the crucial questions: What makes us who we are? What does it mean to be Welsh? The visitors are challenged and invited to think critically about these questions. Thus the exhibition presents the long history of the Welsh language on the one hand and on the other hand there is the Wall of Languages, featuring 80 of the languages spoken in Wales today.²⁰⁰ According to Beth Thomas, Keeper of Social & Cultural History at St. Fagans: National History Museum, this modern exhibition provided a wholly new way of interpreting the collections at St. Fagans. She claims that curatorial ideas and visitor expectations have changed a lot and it is not possible any more to present a fixed idea of a national identity that is true for everybody in the state. Rather, these fixed ideas have to be challenged through the inclusion of communities from all over Wales and hence people should be encouraged to respect each other's languages, beliefs and customs.²⁰¹ Williams-Davies' ideas to keep folk and open-air museums relevant to the population (see Chapter 4.1.1) correspond nicely with these arguments. Critics, however, regard the inclusion of other cultures within St. Fagans as “a betrayal of the museum's original aim of illustrating Welsh life and culture”²⁰². All in all, Oriell 1 can be described as an attempt to modernise the exhibition, using universal themes and including various communities to challenge the visitor and provoke critical thinking.

Further attractions at St. Fagans: National History Museum are the demonstrations of traditional crafts and activities. Among them are a blacksmith, work at a Woollen Mill, the Saddler's Workshop and the Corn Mill and visitors can usually purchase the finished products. Derwen Bake House sells traditional bread and cakes and Gwalia Stores offer fine Welsh food. Visitors can have their picture taken in period costumes at Moss-Vernon's photography studio.²⁰³ All these demonstrations bring the museum to life and attract even more visitors.

¹⁹⁷ *Mason*, *Museums, Nations, Identities*, p. 153.

¹⁹⁸ *Mared Wyn McLeavey*, *Renewal or Betrayal? An Experiment in Reflecting Welsh Identity at St. Fagans: National History Museum*. In: *Folk Life: Journal of Ethnological Studies* 47 (2009), p. 58 – 65.

¹⁹⁹ *Mason*, *Museums, Nations, Identities*, p. 174.

²⁰⁰ St. Fagans: National History Museum. About the museum. Oriell 1. <http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/stfagans/oriell1/>. 16-08-2012.

²⁰¹ Museum News Release, 29-06-2006 cited in *Mason*, *Museums, Nations, Identities*, p. 174.

²⁰² *Williams-Davies*, 'Now Our History is Your History', p. 122.

²⁰³ St. Fagans: National History Museum. About the museum. St Fagans – a Living Museum. <http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/stfagans/living-museum/>. 16-08-2012.

Furthermore, Welsh people as well as tourists come to enjoy St. Fagans Castle and the beautiful gardens. The castle is one of the finest Elizabethan manor houses in Wales and was originally built in 1580. Today, much of the interior stems from the nineteenth century.²⁰⁴ In addition, there is a modern visitor centre, restaurants and a shop. Finally it is also part of the museum's representational work to actively engage in today's life by celebrating St. David's Day or commemorating the Battle of St. Fagans.²⁰⁵

In addition to the museum's exhibitions and visitor attractions, it also houses a variety of facilities for research and study in various fields (archaeology, social and cultural history, art, industrial history, etc.). There is the manuscript archive, the photographic archive as well as the sound archive and an extensive library. These facilities are mainly for the museum staff but may also be used by external researchers on request. The photographic archive comprises approximately 150.000 negatives and prints and about 15.000 slides depicting Welsh folk life. The photos are either originals acquired as donations, or copies made from originals loaned to the museum or part of the more active collection scheme of the museum since 1948 when the staff took photographs of Welsh folk life.²⁰⁶ The manuscript archive offers an assortment of documentary material such as farmer's diaries, craftsmen's account books, bidding letters (printed), school exercise books, inventories, relevant research thesis, printed ballads, carols and anthems, etc. Furthermore, the archive comprises the answers to a bilingual questionnaire on various aspects of Welsh folk culture that was devised in the 1930s as well as so-called 'answer books', i.e. books that were sent out to people who were considered to have specialised knowledge in certain fields and which now contain very insightful answers.²⁰⁷ The sound archive is a comprehensive collection of oral history interviews on various aspects of folk life. Collecting tapes was already begun as early as 1957 and today the archive comprises over 9.000 field recordings, many BBC recordings, over 1.000 commercial disks as well as some early phonograph cylinders. Most of the recordings are in the Welsh language as priority was given to informants in areas where the language, the local dialect or the traditional way of life were under threat. However, there are also a number of recordings in the English language.²⁰⁸ The library at St. Fagans primarily provides a resource and a service to the

²⁰⁴ St. Fagans: National History Museum. About the museum. Castle and Gardens. <http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/stfagans/castle-and-gardens/>. 16-08-2012.

²⁰⁵ *Mason*, *Museums, Nations, Identities*, p. 153 – 154.

²⁰⁶ St. Fagans: National History Museum. Curatorial & research. Social & Cultural History. Photographic archives. <http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/194/>. 16-08-2012.

²⁰⁷ St. Fagans: National History Museum. Curatorial & research. Social & Cultural History. Manuscript archives. <http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/193/>. 16-08-2012.

²⁰⁸ St. Fagans: National History Museum. Curatorial & research. Social & Cultural History. Sound Archive.

museum staff. However, external researchers are welcome as well. The library includes approximately 40.000 volumes, 200 maps and 260 current periodical titles.²⁰⁹

4.3 Positioning St. Fagans in the Heritage Context

St. Fagans: National History Museum describes itself as “Wales's most popular heritage attraction”²¹⁰. It certainly is a collection of heritage places which might not have “outstanding universal value”²¹¹ but which definitively are of 'national value' as they represent aspects of Welsh folk life. Similar to the concept of folk or open-air museums as representing ordinary people²¹² such institutions also feature the heritage of these ordinary people. In contrast to stately mansions and the houses of the political elite St. Fagans presents farm houses, industrial housing, stores and churches.

According to Mason the museum forms links to local intangible heritage by commemorating events like the Battle of St. Fagans.²¹³ Although I do agree with that partly, I think that St. Fagans has many more links to intangible heritage, i.e. the values, ideas and concepts attached to material objects. A farm house on its own would not be of particular value if it had not attached to it the values of rural family life, the modes of life of the different members of the household (i.e. men, women, children), the beliefs of the people, etc. which can be seen in the arrangement of rooms, the decorations and artefacts used at the time. The tangible, in my opinion, cannot be thought without the intangible – the concepts have to complement each other to help the historian to make meaning out of the heritage site.

Finally the term 'heritage attraction' shall be discussed briefly as it unites two quite different phenomena: the historic, high-cultural idea of heritage on the one hand and the modern, popular concept of attraction on the other hand. The term is used by the museum itself on the cover page of its internet presentation and in my opinion it is used deliberately to link the two opposing concepts: education and fun, history and modernity, boring and interesting. The unification of these two concepts can also be seen throughout the museum as information and education are always linked with fun and entertainment. As was already pointed out before,

<http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/195/>. 16-08-2012.

²⁰⁹ St. Fagans: National History Museum. Curatorial & research. Library.

<http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/196/>. 16-08-2012.

²¹⁰ St. Fagans: National History Museum. <http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/stfagans/>. 16-08-2012.

²¹¹ cf. UNESCO. Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972).

<http://whc.unesco.org/archive/convention-en.pdf>. 29-06-2012.

²¹² cf. *Williams-Davies*, 'Now Our History is Your History', p. 116.

²¹³ *Mason*, *Museums, Nations, Identities*, p. 153.

this also includes the danger of over-simplifying things and exploiting the museum for money matters only.²¹⁴ There is a very fine line between the wish to attract visitors and present matters in a fun way and the need to present history in a critical and thought-provoking way and it is not always easy to find the appropriate balance.

4.4 Summary

This chapter had a closer look at the object of the study: St. Fagans: National History Museum. An attempt was made to give an outline of the history of folk and open-air museums which developed in response to the perceived dangers of industrialisation and urbanisation. They were created as institutions to preserve folk culture, i.e. the culture of the ordinary people, for future generations. One such museum is St. Fagans: National History Museum and it is the largest open-air museum in Great Britain. A concise overview was given about the museum in general, the history of the institution (with a brief digression about its changing names) and the exhibitions and archives. Finally some thoughts concerning the positioning of St. Fagans: National History Museum within the heritage context were uttered and the term 'heritage attraction' was discussed critically.

²¹⁴ cf. *Williams-Davies*, 'Now Our History is Your History', p. 119.

5 Methodology

The central question of the present diploma thesis is 'Is heritage gender-blind?'. The underlying assumption or hypothesis is that heritage in general is male-dominated as has already been explained in chapter three. Mere quantitative reasons as well as the way 'male' heritage is presented account for the theory that women do not play a major, or even equal, role in heritage presentations. Wherever women are represented in such contexts they are often just 'added' on top of an otherwise all-male collection.²¹⁵ Furthermore, women are very often restricted to certain areas or topics as the household, the private sphere, the family and child rearing or depicted in particular ways different to the ways men are shown (i.e. more passive).²¹⁶ If this hypothesis could be proven true in the course of my analysis, the logical consequence would be the need to first of all raise the awareness for the necessity of an appropriate representation of gender relations and women in heritage and museum contexts but also for thorough analysis of existing collections from a feminist point of view. In the same way that women share life and time with men, they should be represented as equals in heritage.

Considering the previously mentioned assumptions, the central question 'Is heritage gender-blind?' can be divided into several sub-questions:

- ⤴ What is heritage and in how far is it related to gender?
- ⤴ How (if at all) are women represented in heritage?
- ⤴ Which questions / problems arise from their presentation?
- ⤴ What is not mentioned / left out, i.e. what are gaps or silences in the presentation?

These questions will form the basis of the following analysis of St. Fagans: National History Museum.

My central question 'Is heritage gender-blind?' is dealt with focusing on the Welsh museum St. Fagans: National History Museum. The conclusions drawn in this thesis result from two main research approaches: On the one hand there is the analysis of exhibition space, collections and archives at St. Fagans: National History Museum using recent museological and cultural-theory research²¹⁷. As the scope of this study had to be limited in some way the focus of the exhibition analysis is on the open-air exhibition, i.e. the heritage places. The

²¹⁵ cf. *Holcomb*, Gender and Heritage Interpretation, p. 59 – 73.

²¹⁶ cf. *Porter*, How are women represented in British history museums?, p. 159 – 162.

²¹⁷ cf. *Rhiannon Mason*, Cultural theory and museum studies. In: Sharon Macdonald (ed.). *A Companion to Museum Studies* (Oxford 2006), p. 17 – 32.

exhibition will be discussed in total and some buildings will be analysed in more detail paying special attention to the gender aspect. The photographic archive will form the basis for a second point of analysis. The photographic archive was chosen for reasons mentioned in the introduction of this diploma thesis and because a corpus of photographs was available and thus a more detailed analysis was possible.

On the other hand there is a strong focus on aspects of gender in the analysis and hence the second research approach used in this thesis is feminist criticism. As has been pointed out by Holcomb amongst others there is often a noticeable lack of feminist critiques of women's representations in museums²¹⁸. Although women are present in certain areas of the collections, very often they are not analysed critically enough and simply described for what they are.

Feminist criticism is not unproblematic in itself. Although it was very modern in the so-called second wave of feminism there are several voices today which claim that feminism and feminist critique are dying and no longer as critical and rebellious as they used to be.²¹⁹ The word feminism itself seems to carry a lot of negative connotations today and most women asked whether they would consider themselves to be feminists would say 'no'. However, if they are told that feminists are usually women who are in favour of women's rights like, for example, equal pay for equal work, they usually change their mind and claim that in this case they could be considered to be feminists.²²⁰ Moreover, there is still a huge demand among students of literature, history and related disciplines to write diploma theses and dissertations in the field of feminism or using feminist criticism. Thus, it cannot be considered a dying field of studies – not as long as there is still so much to do and there are still so many aspects of life that are in need of a feminist perspective.

According to Fausch, feminism is not a single viewpoint but “where oppression, exploitation, objectification, or marginalization of women occurs, there a feminist position can be taken”²²¹.

Eagleton explains that

²¹⁸ cf. *Holcomb*, *Gender and Heritage Interpretation*, p. 59 – 73.

²¹⁹ cf. Sharon *Marcus*, *Feminist Criticism: A Tale of Two Bodies*, In: *Modern Language Association PMLA 121 / 5* (2006), p. 1722 – 1728. & Susan *Stanford Friedman*, *The Futures of Feminist Criticism: A Diary*, In: *Modern Language Association PMLA 121 / 5* (2006), p. 1704 – 1710. - These articles provide interesting discussions of the question whether feminist criticism should be considered dead (or dying) or not.

²²⁰ cf. Debra *Coleman*, Introduction. In: Debra *Coleman*, Elizabeth *Danze* & Carol *Henderson* (eds.), *Architecture and Feminism* (New York 1996), p. x. & *Marcus*, *Feminist Criticism*, p. 1723.

²²¹ Deborah *Fausch*, *The Knowledge of the Body and the Presence of History – Toward a Feminist Architecture*. In: Debra *Coleman*, Elizabeth *Danze* & Carol *Henderson* (eds.), *Architecture and Feminism* (New York 1996), p. 38.

“[a]ll forms of feminist criticism will recognize the under-representation of women in published writing, will want to challenge that and will see in writing a space of both imaginative and political potential for women”²²²

and Marcus summarises the goals of feminist criticism as follows:

- (f) “Feminist criticism negates the status quo by questioning misogyny and other invidious gender distinctions and by analyzing constructions of femininity and masculinity.
- (g) Feminist criticism constructs definitions of gender that do not depend on female inferiority or male supremacy, expanding our sense of what women and men are, have been, and might become and asking what it might mean to be free of gender altogether.
- (h) Feminist criticism attends to differences among women, often by being self-critical, and thus extends its purview not only to gender in general but to all inequalities that affect women or intersect with gender.²²³

These goals are valid for literature and history alike and thus feminist criticism can be used in various disciplines.

From the First Wave of feminism in the 1970s onwards the movement has undergone some developments and changes. In the beginning feminism was seen as a “white middle-class movement bent on achieving legal and political equality for white women”²²⁴. Over time the movement got more critical with and in itself and as a result feminism seems to encourage the representation and critical analysis of other categories like class, race or ethnicity²²⁵.

In this study feminist criticism will be applied as a historical mode of scholarly inquiry, critically analysing the representation of women in St. Fagans: National History Museum. That means that the depiction of women in the museum will be assessed with regard to its implication on gender roles and relationships. The attempt will be made to examine the collections looking beyond traditional gender representations and asking critical questions regarding the impact of the exhibitions on today's society. Furthermore, absences, omissions and silences will be analysed using so-called “oppositional readings”²²⁶ and trying to learn from these blank spaces asking questions like: Why are women left out in certain areas? Are the omissions deliberate or what determines these omissions? What conclusions can be drawn from these absences? How do these silences affect today's society?

²²² Mary Eagleton, *Working with Feminist Criticism* (Oxford 1996), p. 135.

²²³ Marcus, *Feminist Criticism*, p. 1722.

²²⁴ Nancy Hewitt & Tessie Liu, Preface, In: *Feminist Studies* 28 / 2 (2002), p. 251 – 256.

²²⁵ cf. Holcomb, *Gender and Heritage Interpretation*, p. 59 – 73.

²²⁶ Holcomb, *Gender and Heritage Interpretation*, p. 62.

Marcus provides a very good illustration of these processes in her essay on feminist criticism in literature which is worth to be quoted at length:

“When there are no women writers on the syllabus, or fewer than there could be, the message is that women's writing is less valuable than men's, that women, by extension, are worth less than men, and that female students will be valued only if they devote themselves to what really counts – the masterworks of genius that too many syllabi still assert to be male handiwork.”²²⁷

The same can be said for feminist criticism in history. When there are less representations of women in museums, or when they are restricted to certain areas like the household or the private sphere, the implication might be that women are less important, that they contributed less to memorable history or that they just had an effect on certain domains and these ideas or concepts might thereby be perpetuated and prolonged into the future. These processes shall be identified by a feminist critique of exhibitions and collections in museums so that women might get a more balanced representation in the future.

As a conclusion, it can be said that this study will analyse the representation of women in the open-air exhibition and the photographic archive of St. Fagans: National History Museum. The methodology used will be exhibition analysis on the one hand and feminist criticism on the other hand. These approaches seem to be most promising in answering the central question of this diploma thesis which is 'Is heritage gender-blind?'

²²⁷ *Marcus, Feminist Criticism*, p. 1724.

6 The Representation of Women at St. Fagans: National History Museum

The central question 'Is heritage gender-blind?' will be evaluated based on observations made in St. Fagans: National History Museum. Of course, the conclusions drawn from this assessment cannot be valid for every heritage museum but they will provide an insight into the current situation concerning heritage and gender representations which further research may draw upon. Not a lot has been written about St. Fagans: National History Museum in general so far and even less about the representation of women or the role of women's and gender history in that institution but there are a few studies which I would like to point out as they might be of interest for further reading and deeper understanding. Mason's study²²⁸ of national museums in Wales not only tries to pin down what a national museum is but also attempts to answer the question in how far the National Museums Wales contributed to the building and establishment of a Welsh national identity. Tibbott – herself working for St. Fagans: National History Museum – devoted her study²²⁹ specifically to domestic life in Wales. Despite her being called “a pioneer in the field of women's studies in Wales”²³⁰, her work very much remained on the level of folk history and did not cross the border to gender studies. Nevertheless, her study is an insightful overview not only over the history of domestic life in Wales but also over collection practices and working styles at St. Fagans: National History Museum. Rees²³¹ explicitly deals with women's and gender history examining issues of gender equality in the last twenty-five years in Wales.

The subsequent analysis focuses on two areas of St. Fagans: National History Museum due to the limited scope of this diploma thesis. First of all, the open-air exhibition is examined, an overview about the exhibition is given and some buildings are used to exemplify modes of representations and prevailing approaches concerning the presentation of gender in heritage thereby looking at the connection between museum work and presentation to an audience. Secondly, the relationship between museum work and research is examined focusing on the photographic archive in St. Fagans: National History Museum. A quantitative analysis as well as a general description of the structure and organisation of the archive is followed by the detailed examination of some photographs to exemplify the depiction of women and their roles in the photographic archive of the museum.

²²⁸ Rhiannon *Mason*, *Museums, Nations, Identities. Wales and its National Museums* (Cardiff 2007).

²²⁹ Minwel S. *Tibbott*, Beth *Thomas* (Ed.), *Domestic Life in Wales* (Cardiff 2002).

²³⁰ *Tibbott*, *Domestic Life*, blurb.

²³¹ Teresa *Rees*, *Women and Work. Twenty-five years of gender equality in Wales* (Cardiff 1999).

Knibb points out that

“these collections [i.e. museum collections which have been associated with women in some way], despite biases of gender, class, race and creed, fragmentation, incompleteness and regional disparities, can be an important primary resource for the study and presentation of women's history.”²³²

I would like to take that point even further by claiming that these collections have the responsibility to form the link between research and the ordinary people, those audiences who visit the museums, spend time there and interpret them. Therefore it must be of crucial importance that women and gender relations (as well as questions of race, ethnicity, religion and other so-called minority groups) are presented in an objective and diversified way, so as not to perpetuate stereotypes or limited gender roles into the future of our society. Consequently, open-air and folk museums do have great responsibility to find the balance between the need to attract visitors and the necessity to challenge them at the same time, i.e. to make them think about questions and theories of current (gender) research. For that reason the current diploma thesis assesses two areas of a typical open-air and folk museum from a women's history perspective.

6.1 The Open-air Exhibition

6.1.1 The Roles of Museums and Exhibitions

The open-air exhibition in St. Fagans: National History Museum can definitely be defined as the central part of the institution. It is the main reason for people (tourists and locals alike) to visit the museum and consequently this part of the museum is under a lot of pressure to unite the different requirements and demands from various sides. On the one hand there are the expectations of the visitors as well as the interests of the museum staff and researchers on the other hand, which do not necessarily converge.

St. Fagans: National History Museum must be counted among the conglomerate of National Museums Wales and as such has a specific set of aims. According to Mason a national museum can adopt several roles. As one of the primary functions she identifies the need to “provide the nation with an 'origin' story”²³³, i.e. a sense of belonging and a tangible history. Explaining her point further she claims that “[n]ationalism is generally atavistic and seeks to construct a tradition stretching back in time in order to support contemporary claims of

²³² Helen Knibb, 'Present but Not Visible': Searching for Women's History in Museum Collections, In: *Gender and History* 6/3 (1994), p. 352.

²³³ Rhiannon Mason, *Museums, Nations, Identities. Wales and its National Museums* (Cardiff 2007), p. 73.

precedent and longevity”²³⁴. Thus the key role of a national museum is to collect and present artefacts which illustrate or even materialise the nation's history as well as to “differentiate the nation from its 'others' and to nationalize and essentialize those cultural differences”²³⁵. Objects chosen for representation in national museums should therefore be special in some way to the particular nature of the nation. This approach is questioned frequently with the changing concepts of what a 'nation' really is and whether it still exists or has ever existed as a homogeneous entity. Moreover, Mason provides the example of the Museum of Scotland where Scottish people were invited to “choose things which, in their view, have made a major impact on life in Scotland over the last 100 years”²³⁶. Interestingly enough, the items chosen included many non-Scotland specific things such as a washing machine, a biro or a guitar as well as some objects that are undeniably Scottish like a copy of the Scotland Bill establishing the new Scottish Parliament.²³⁷ The same collection process can be identified in St. Fagans: National History Museum as well. Alongside many objects that are particularly Welsh there is a vast majority of items such as farming or household tools, furniture, etc. which could just as well be in an Austrian, French or Swedish museum. Watban argues that while these objects have the potential to illustrate 20th century life, they do not necessarily contribute to the formation or presentation of national identity.²³⁸ Another role of a national museum can be that of presenting a “nation-in-miniature”²³⁹. This approach can certainly be seen in St. Fagans: National History Museum as they announce in their visitor guide: “In the open-air section of the museum, aspects of Welsh life are seen together, as they would have been in real life”²⁴⁰. Thereby they collect and present things which are considered 'typically national'. This is, of course, very problematic as museums like this often claim to represent the nation as a whole. However, this is simply impossible as the “the selection of certain aspects of the nation over and above others is invariably linked to the operation of hegemony”²⁴¹. Representation always depends on selection and exclusion and hence can never represent a nation (or any other concept as a whole. Museums can also adopt the role of “instruments of civic pride”²⁴² representing the nation to the outside world and thereby strengthening their

²³⁴ *Mason*, *Museums, Nations, Identities*, p. 73.

²³⁵ *Mason*, *Museums, Nations, Identities*, p. 76.

²³⁶ R. *Watban*, Public perception of history: the twentieth century gallery. In: J. M. Fladmark (ed.). *Heritage and Museums: Shaping National Identity* (Oxford 2000), p. 53 quoted in *Mason*, *Museums, Nations, Identities*, p. 80.

²³⁷ *Watban*, Public perception of history, p. 57 quoted in *Mason*, *Museums, Nations Identities*, p. 81.

²³⁸ *Watban*, Public perception of history, p. 59 quoted in *Mason*, *Museums, Nations, Identities*, p. 81.

²³⁹ *Mason*, *Museums, Nations, Identities*, p. 82.

²⁴⁰ *Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales*, St. Fagans: National History Museum. Visitor Guide (Cardiff 2011, 5th edition), p. 6.

²⁴¹ *Mason*, *Museums, Nations, Identities*, p. 83.

²⁴² *Mason*, *Museums, Nations, Identities*, p. 87.

own status in international relationships. All these different roles of a national museum might be implied in the name St. Fagans: National History museum and as has been discussed in brief they are not unproblematic. Furthermore, they are not necessarily the same as is perceived or expected by the audience.

Visitors coming to St. Fagans might have various expectations and “‘receiving’ the museum’s histories”²⁴³ might not be their primary aim. First of all the visit normally forms part of their leisure time and as a consequence they want to be entertained as well as educated at the same time. According to Kavanagh the timing, the company as well as the access are important and “no two visitors come with the same expectations or agendas”²⁴⁴. The aims of the museum staff are often in opposition with the expectations of the visitors. They want to be entertained and the images should be “easy to understand, comfortable, and unchallenging”²⁴⁵. Museums cannot normally present things that irritate people or that masses cannot understand or relate to as they are dependent on the visitors for funding and financing. If visitors are too openly and aggressively challenged or simply do not understand the exhibitions or questions discussed, they are not likely to come again and this would destroy the museum. On a very practical side the museum depends on its visitors, it needs to attract them and has to cater for them in certain ways. It is important to keep these practical limitations in mind when analysing a museum as they determine decisively what can be shown and what is absent.

The same is true for St. Fagans: National History Museum as will be shown throughout the next few chapters. The museum, describing itself as the “most visited heritage attraction in Wales”²⁴⁶ underlies certain restrictions and practicalities just like any other institution, it has a history and a particular development and modern ways of thinking – however interesting they might be – need time to be fully incorporated.

²⁴³ Gaynor Kavanagh, Looking for Ourselves, Inside and Outside Museums, In: Gender & History 6/3 (1994), p. 373.

²⁴⁴ Kavanagh, Looking for Ourselves, p. 373.

²⁴⁵ S. Jones & S. Pay, The legacy of Eve, In: P. Gathercole & D. Lowenthal (eds.), The Politics of the Past (London 1990), p. 162 quoted in Briavel Holcomb, Gender and Heritage Interpretation. In: Laurajane Smith (Ed.). Cultural Heritage. Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies. Volume IV – Interpretation and Community (London – New York 2007), p. 68.

²⁴⁶ *Amgueddfa Cymru*, Visitor Guide, p. 3.

6.1.2 The Open-air Exhibition

The open-air section of St. Fagans: National History Museum comprises “over forty original buildings moved and re-erected from various parts of Wales”²⁴⁷ in an area of some 42.3 hectares of which some 17 hectares still remain woodland²⁴⁸. The following table²⁴⁹ provides a brief overview of the buildings presented:

Name	Description
<i>Kennixton Farmhouse</i>	a typical farmhouse from Gower in south-west Wales Llangynydd Gower Swansea Built 1610 Re-erected 1955, barn rebuilt 2012
<i>Circular Pigsty</i>	a form of a pigsty once common in south Wales Hendre Ifan Prosser Pontypridd Built about 1800 Re-erected 1977
<i>Melin Bompren (Corn Mill)</i>	a typical water-driven Welsh corn mill used to convert corn to flour Cross Inn Ceredigion Built 1852 / 53 Re-erected 1977
<i>Llwyn-yr-eos Farmstead</i>	a tenanted farm on the Plymouth estate displayed as a substantial early 20 th century home, with gas lighting and comfortable furniture Original site Built from 1820 onwards Opened in 1989
<i>Hendre'r-ywydd Uchaf Farmhouse</i>	a typical farmhouse of the better class of Welsh in the late Middle Ages Llangynhafal Denbighshire Built 1508 Re-erected 1962
<i>Nant Wallter Cottage</i>	a unique building as its walls are built of clay or mud, known locally as clom – plain furniture typical of the home of a farm labourer Taliaris Carmarthenshire Built about 1770 Re-erected 1993
<i>Llainfadyn Cottage</i>	Cottages were the homes of people who did not own enough land to live off, like farm labourers, craftsmen or, in this case, quarrymen and their families. Rhostryfan Gwynedd Built 1762 Re-erected 1962
<i>Cae Adda Byre</i>	a cowshed from Snowdonia used to house a couple of cows over winter

²⁴⁷ *Amgueddfa Cymru*, Visitor Guide, p. 3.

²⁴⁸ *Amgueddfa Cymru*, Visitor Guide, p. 10.

²⁴⁹ All information taken from *Amgueddfa Cymru*, Visitor Guide, p. 12 – 75.

<i>Tollhouse</i>	<p>Waunfawr Gwynedd Built late 18th – early 19th century Re-erected 2003 a tollhouse from the Aberystwyth South Gate – just one room</p>
<i>Derwen Bakehouse</i>	<p>Penparcau Aberystwyth Ceredigion Built 1772 Re-erected 1968 a commercial bakery or communal oven</p>
<i>Tailor's Shop</i>	<p>Thespian Street Aberystwyth Ceredigion Built 1900 Closed 1924 Re-erected 1987</p>
<i>Post Office</i>	<p>Cross Inn Ceredigion Built 1896 Enlarged 1920s Re-erected 1992 the smallest free-standing post office in Wales served a small rural community</p>
<i>Cockpit</i>	<p>Blaen-waun Carmarthenshire Built 1936 Re-erected 1993 17th century circular thatched cockpit originally used for cockfighting</p>
<i>Gwalia Stores</i>	<p>Hawk & Buckle Inn Denbigh Denbighshire Built 17th century Re-erected 1970 a grocery business</p>
<i>Urinal</i>	<p>Ogmore Vale Bridgend Built 1880 Re-erected 1991 a public toilet for men</p>
<i>War Memorial</i>	<p>Llandrindod Wells originally from Caetwmpyn Park overlooking the industrial town of Newbridge – built in 1936 – commemorating the victims of World War I and World War II</p>
<i>Workmen's Institute</i>	<p>Oakdale Caerphilly a focus for social, educational and cultural activities</p>
<i>Pottery</i>	<p>Oakdale Caerphilly Built 1916 Re-erected 1995</p>
<i>Sawmill</i>	<p>Ewenni Bridgend Kiln built about 1900 Re-erected 1988</p>
<i>Tannery</i>	<p>Ty'n Rhos Llanddewi-Brefi Ceredigion Built 1892 Re-erected 1994 the last traditional tannery to work in Wales</p>

<i>Celtic Village</i>	Built late 18 th century Re-erected 1968 reconstructions based on the excavated remains of actual buildings from the Iron Age Re-created 1992
<i>Gorse Mill</i>	a water-powered mill to bruise and crush gorse which was used as horse fodder Deheufryn farm Dolwen Denbighshire Built after 1842 Disused 1866
<i>Haverfordwest Trader's House</i>	a small late-medieval house that was probably the home of a trader Pembrokeshire Dismantled in the early 1980s Rebuilding started early in 2010
<i>Timber Circle</i>	a full-scale model of a 4.000-year-old sacred site Welshpool Powys Reconstructed 1998
<i>St. Teilo's Church</i>	Llandeilo Tal-y-Bont Nr Pontarddulais Swansea 12 th - 16 th century Re-erected 2007
<i>Y Garreg Fawr Farmhouse</i>	a two-storeyed house that replaced the type of house common in the Middle Ages – probably the home of a wealthy farmer Waunfawr Gwynedd Built 1544 Re-erected 1984
<i>Hendre-wen Barn</i>	a typical barn where corn was stored and threshed over winter Llanrwst Gwynedd Built about 1600 Re-erected 1982
<i>Clogmaker's Workshop</i>	the workshop of the last traditional clogmaker in Pembrokeshire, if not Wales, Thomas James Carnhedryn, Pembrokeshire Opened 2011
<i>Maestir School</i>	a small rural school St. Mary's Board School Maestir Lampeter Ceredigion Used 1880 – 1916 Re-erected 1984
<i>Saddler's Workshop</i>	a simple two-roomed workshop St. Clears Carmarthenshire Built 1926 Used until 1982 Re-erected 1986
<i>Smithy</i>	Llawr-y-glyn Powys Originally built 18 th century Re-erected 1972
<i>Communal Oven</i>	an oven that could be used by the housewives of an area to bake the bread for their family

<i>Rhyd-y-car Iron Worker's Houses</i>	Georgetown Merthyr Tydfil Built about 1800 Re-erected 1987 a small terrace providing housing for iron workers displayed to illustrate different periods of their history: 1805, 1855, 1895, 1925, 1955 and 1985
<i>Type B2 Aluminium Prefab Bungalow</i>	Merthyr Tydfil Built about 1800 Re-erected 1987 a prefabricated bungalow developed as a means of providing large numbers of houses quickly after the Second World War
<i>Cilewent Farmhouse</i>	Gabalfa Cardiff Built 1948 Re-erected 2001 a longhouse that was once common in mid and south Wales
<i>Hayshed</i>	Llansanffraid Cwmteuddwr Rhaeadr Powys Originally built 1470 Rebuilt 1734 Re-erected 1959 Maentwrog Gwynedd Built about 1870 Re-erected 1977
<i>Abernodwydd Farmhouse</i>	typical of the timber-framed houses of mid-Wales and the Marches Llangadfan Powys Built 1678 Re-erected 1955
<i>Pen-rhiw Chapel</i>	a Unitarian chapel typical of early Welsh nonconformist chapels Dre-fach Felindre Carmarthenshire Opened 1777 Re-erected 1956
<i>Tŷ Gwyrdd: learning centre</i>	an exemplar eco-friendly family home and garden built using low carbon design and traditional building techniques Original site Built 2001
<i>Barn</i>	Stryd Lydan Penley Wrexham Originally built about 1550 Re-erected 1951
<i>Woollen Mill</i>	a typical woollen mill Esgair-moel Llanwrtyd Powys Originally built 1760 Re-erected 1952
<i>Boat-house and net-house</i>	Replicas of examples at Chepstow Monmouthshire Opened 1973
<i>Summer House</i>	originally from the grounds of Cardiff Castle Bute Park Cardiff

<i>Dovecote</i>	Built about 1880 Re-erected 1988 a place to breed pigeons for meat, eggs and fertilizer Original site
<i>Cider Mill and Press</i>	a modern building which displays a selection of traditional equipment used for producing cider
<i>Castle Gardens</i>	the gardens belonging to St. Fagans Castle Many of the features are still original to the site.
<i>St. Fagans Castle</i>	a Grade 1 listed building and one of the finest Elizabethan manor houses in Wales In 1946 the Castle, together with eighteen acres of land, was donated by the Earl of Plymouth to the National Museum of Wales as a site for a national open-air museum.
<i>The Rosery</i>	Original site Built 1580 Opened 1947 Laid out in 1899 Restored in 2001
<i>Italian Garden</i>	Laid out in 1902 Restored 2003

For the subsequent analysis several buildings have been chosen to exemplify how (or if) women are represented in Welsh heritage at St. Fagans: National History Museum.

6.1.2 Analysis of the Open-air Exhibition

Where (if at all) can women be found in the open-air exhibition of St. Fagans: National History Museum? How are they represented and what can be learned from these representations? Or is heritage at St. Fagans indeed gender-blind? Although this question has not been addressed very often yet, a number of studies concerned with the representation or inclusion of women already exist²⁵⁰. This overview does not attempt to cover all available literature but merely wants to give an idea of the available literature in this field. The following analysis focuses on three main aspects of the open-air exhibition: homes and

²⁵⁰ cf. *Porter*, How are women represented in British history museums?, p. 159 – 162.

Porter, Gender Bias, online source.

Knibb, 'Present but Not Visible', p. 352 – 369.

Nenadic, Museums, Gender and Cultural Identity in Scotland, p. 426 – 434.

Kavanagh, Looking for Ourselves, p. 370 – 375.

Laurence *Grant*, 'Her Stories': Working with a Community Advisory Board on a Women's History Exhibition at a Canadian Municipal Museum. In: *Gender & History* 6 / 3 (1994), p. 410 – 418.

Donna *Cooper Graves* & Carol *Green Devens*, Subject as Audience: The Politics of Public Exhibits on Women. In: *Gender & History* 6 / 3 (1994), p. 419 – 425.

Rachel *Hasted*, Tales of the City: Women in a Community History Exhibition. In: *Gender & History* 6 / 3 (1994), p. 397 – 409.

Rebecca *Machin*, Gender representation in the natural history galleries at the Manchester Museum. In: *museum and society* 6 / 1 (2008), p. 54 – 67.

houses, shops and crafts as well as 'gendered' buildings. Moreover, absences and silences in the display are addressed and some thoughts on the problems with the current depiction of women in heritage museums form the conclusion of the analysis.

Homes – Women in the household and the family

The main part of the open-air exhibition at St. Fagans: National History Museum is composed of farmhouses, cottages and 'homes' in general. A great variety of different buildings can be seen presenting the living space of Welsh families throughout history beginning with prehistoric times (cf. the Celtic Village) and leading up to contemporary history (e.g.: Tŷ Gwyrdd). The focus of the displays is, first of all, on the outward appearance and the surroundings of the buildings. However, a strong focus is also laid on the interior, i.e. the



Image 2: Rhyd-y-car Iron Worker's Houses

living room, sleeping areas and – very dominantly so – the kitchen. Almost every house features kitchen utensils of some kind used at the presented time, pots and pans and – very importantly – the fire place. Hereafter, I would like to centre my descriptions on the Rhyd-y-car Iron Worker's Houses from Merthyr Tydfil, which was the largest town in Wales between 1800 and 1860. The small terrace comprises six terraced houses originally built by Richard Crawshay, the owner of a large iron-ore mine in the mining town of Merthyr Tydfil, to provide housing for

his workers. Compared to other working-class families the ironstone miners were relatively well-off as their houses have survived to the present day and are still a testimony to the lifestyle of miners from the nineteenth to the twentieth century. However, none of the houses had even basic amenities like piped water or toilets. In the course of time living conditions improved and today the houses are displayed as a time-line taking the visitor on a journey through the history of the living conditions of iron workers in Wales. The six houses have been re-erected in 1987 and were re-furbished to represent life of the years 1805, 1855, 1895, 1925, 1955 and 1985. The surrounding of the houses is also used to represent the particular period of time. As a result you can find a pigeon-house typical of the time in the garden of the 1925 house, a living-shed in that of the 1955 house and even an Anderson Air Raid Shelter

behind the living-shed, which is a reminder of the threat of aerial bombing during the Second World War.²⁵¹ The interior of the houses takes the visitor on a journey through history and presents the same rooms in the course of time. The living room, the bedroom as well as the kitchen are presented. Interestingly enough, the rooms are heavily decorated with household linens of several kinds, representative tableware, silverware, curtains and so on.

It can be concluded from the display and arrangement of the rooms that women are clearly present at the Rhyd-y-car Iron Worker's Houses. Although they are not explicitly visible as people, the type of presentation makes continued reference to a female presence. Even more so, the rooms seem to be predominantly female with their decorations, the allusions to child-rearing and the focus on kitchens and kitchen utensils. Like many other small history museums these houses at St. Fagans are full of objects associated with women. However, does that also mean that the exhibition shows an awareness of gender issues?

First of all it should be noted that although there are many artefacts related to the female sphere, women are nowhere visible in the displays. They are only represented by the utensils they used in their daily lives and remnants of their personal history. Kavanagh²⁵², however, strongly questions the presumed fact that lives (male or female) can be represented properly by any kind of artefact. She argues that objects can indeed tell us very little about people's lives. They are souvenirs, which can add to a story or which can be of personal importance if the underlying story is known to the person looking at the object. Kavanagh illustrates her point with a straightforward example. She explains that people do not usually use objects to introduce themselves or tell people anything about themselves.

“People do not say: 'let me introduce myself, here's my leather jacket', but: 'hello, I'm Jenny, I live in one of the flats over at Maple Avenue I work in an insurance office it's boring but the pay's OK I used to live with this great bloke Mike, but he was killed last year in a motorbike accident This used to be his jacket, I wear it all the time'.”²⁵³

In the same way women cannot be described thoroughly by the “bits and bobs in the[ir] kitchen drawers”²⁵⁴ but as Kavanagh puts it: “How could they be? What woman would want to be remembered by the make of her toaster?”²⁵⁵ These parts of material culture can only be fragments of unrecorded lives. Although they “may help provide testimony to culturally

²⁵¹ *Amgueddfa Cymru*, Visitor Guide, p. 52 – 53.

²⁵² *Kavanagh*, Looking for Ourselves, p. 371.

²⁵³ *Kavanagh*, Looking for Ourselves, p. 371.

²⁵⁴ *Kavanagh*, Looking for Ourselves, p. 371.

²⁵⁵ *Kavanagh*, Looking for Ourselves, p. 371.

determined and commercially reinforced gender roles”²⁵⁶, they can never show the whole picture or a more diversified story. A common excuse from the side of the museums is that the established collections simply do not contain records of the type needed to present a more balanced picture of the past. The main problem here is the collection practice. Kavanagh explains at length:

“Most social history museums have, for example, many flat irons without any documentation of the lives of which they were part. From the records kept, you would never know who used them, why and for what form of payment, nor could you know if they had alternative uses, anything from defensive weapons in domestic disputes to doorstops.”²⁵⁷

Kavanagh points out that the problem usually starts when the object is taken on into the museum collection not taking any more information than something along the lines of “pair of gloves, leather”²⁵⁸. Consequently, this would be the point where change and re-thinking should start. Collecting objects for museums the curators should ask many more questions like: where and why was the object bought, when and by whom was it used, etc. but also ask for personal stories to complement the picture. Only with that kind of information is it possible to write social history, which is, according to Kavanagh, always emotional. “It can be as thorough and objective as the historians can make it, yet still have an empathic quality.”²⁵⁹ Maybe it is this empathic quality that the exhibition in St. Fagans lacks. The rooms of the Iron Worker's Houses are full of objects that can be linked to women but there are no person stories to support them. There is scarcely any background information, if any then it is about the houses themselves but never about the material artefacts displayed inside the homes. For the visitor this results in the experience that she / he cannot relate to the objects and if there is “little to engage our feelings, the learning potential of the exhibition is lost”²⁶⁰. The solution to this problem could simply be to ask different questions. If the same object is addressed with different questions, the outcome can be very different. If the same representative tableware was presented answering questions like 'Who bought this tableware with which money and why? What was it used for? Did it have any alternative uses? What significance did it have for the owner?', the exhibitions would be far more “positively subversive, poignant, and sharply relevant in the histories they create”²⁶¹. The woman who lived in the Iron Worker's Houses and used the utensils on display had feelings, ambitions and frustrations but we learn nothing

²⁵⁶ Kavanagh, *Looking for Ourselves*, p. 371.

²⁵⁷ Kavanagh, *Looking for Ourselves*, p. 371.

²⁵⁸ Kavanagh, *Looking for Ourselves*, p. 371.

²⁵⁹ Kavanagh, *Looking for Ourselves*, p. 375.

²⁶⁰ Kavanagh, *Looking for Ourselves*, p. 374.

²⁶¹ Kavanagh, *Looking for Ourselves*, p. 372.

of them if we do not ask the right questions. In Kavanagh's words

“[t]he role of the museum here is certainly not to make judgements on people's lives, but to ensure that something of individual self-perception and personal record forms part of the permanent archive we call a museum”²⁶².

Furthermore, the display of the Iron Worker's Houses at St. Fagans: National History Museum forms part of the popular male / female dichotomy. While masculinity is usually associated with activity, the outside world and work, femininity is generally linked to passivity, the home and seen as the subordinate partner.²⁶³ Although masculinity is clearly present in the open-air exhibition (see below), the interior of the Iron Worker's Homes is presented as predominantly female. However, this cannot be classified as a gender-sensitive approach giving women a space in the museum and critically discussing gender issues but rather as the “add-women-and-stir”²⁶⁴ recipe described by Holcomb. Simply adding women to an otherwise uncritical presentation of stereotypes cannot be the gender-sensitive approach asked for in the 21st century.

Finally it is also interesting to look at *how* homes are usually presented. The objects of material culture are laid out neat and tidy, everything is clean and bright and has a positive atmosphere. The visitor almost immediately imagines a comfortable afternoon spent as a family in front of the fire, the woman doing some decorative needlework, the men reading a newspaper and the children playing harmoniously. According to Porter, “in this setting working tools and equipment are arranged for display, rather than for work”²⁶⁵. In different settings like those of shops, work and craftsmanship the tools and utensils are usually presented in the context of work, laid out as if they had just been used including dirt and an atmosphere of work in progress. In the presentation of the Iron Worker's Houses any “[v]isual and material references to heavy, manual work are avoided”²⁶⁶. This is true for museums of housework and the home in general. Their “rhetoric is that of stasis, silence, cleanliness and tidiness, work is expunged”²⁶⁷. Thus housework is simply not seen as work at all. According to Porter this is partly in the “nature of housework, it shows only when it is *not* done”²⁶⁸ (original emphasis). However, work is also banned through curatorial decisions and devices.

²⁶² Kavanagh, *Looking for Ourselves*, p. 373.

²⁶³ Porter, *How are women represented in British history museums?*, p. 160.

²⁶⁴ Holcomb, *Gender and Heritage Interpretation*, p. 70.

²⁶⁵ Porter, *How are women represented in British history museums?*, p. 161.

²⁶⁶ Porter, *How are women represented in British history museums?*, p. 161.

²⁶⁷ Porter, *How are women represented in British history museums?*, p. 161.

²⁶⁸ Porter, *How are women represented in British history museums?*, p. 161.

Shops and Crafts

A second important category of buildings at St. Fagans: National History Museum are shops and crafts. Several craftsmanships are not only displayed but still practised on the museum grounds and the products are for sale. Among the crafts are a bakery, a pottery, a sawmill, a tannery, a clogmaker, a saddler, a smithy, and a cider mill.²⁶⁹ A first striking insight is the fact that most of these crafts are presented as male spheres – only the bakery leaves room to imagine a female baker, all the other crafts are presented as explicitly male. This corresponds again with the male / female, active / passive dichotomy. Men, the active sex, are usually associated with work outside the home, i.e. hard work involving a good deal of dirt and sweat. Women, on the other hand, are usually depicted as passive, inside the home and at home (as could be seen in the previous chapter), work is not present. Workplaces or workshops are depicted as “dirty, crowded, scattered with tools and offcuts, shavings and sawdust”²⁷⁰. According to Porter “the workplace is presented as part of a dynamic chain”²⁷¹ where work in progress and the processes of manual labour and production are shown. This atmosphere of productivity is even continued and prolonged into the present by demonstrators and craftspeople who showcase the traditional crafts.

In the previous chapter it has already been argued that there is usually a huge disparity between the presentation of housework, which is normally presented clean and tidy and as no 'real' work at all, and work outside the home, which is generally understood as the 'real' hard work. I would like to take the point even further in that it can be said that there is also a huge distinction between the display of more 'male' and more 'female' professions. In St. Fagans: National History Museum there are the 'male' professions of smithery, clogmaking, pottery, work at a sawmill or at a cider mill, tannery or saddlery on the one hand and the more 'female' profession of baking on the other hand. In distinction to the 'male' professions, baking is displayed as something romantic, clean and associated with the family being together at mealtimes. There is no mentioning of the hard work that was needed for many of the operations involved: kneading the bread dough, firing the oven, lifting heavy trays, cleaning the shop, etc. Quite the opposite is true for the presentation of the so-called 'male' professions, where the hard work is foregrounded. The workshops are displayed dirty, showing work in progress. The men present themselves hard-working and sacrificing themselves for their families. The point I wish to pursue here is that not only housework is romanticised in

²⁶⁹ *Amgueddfa Cymru*, Visitor Guide, p. 25 – 67.

²⁷⁰ Porter, How are women represented in British history museums?, p. 160.

²⁷¹ Porter, How are women represented in British history museums?, p. 160.

museum display but the female sphere in general thereby working towards and prolonging still existing stereotypes of the role of women.

It is also worthwhile to have a closer look into the visitor guide to analyse the different representations of crafts at St. Fagans: National History Museum. The first thing that is striking is the imagery used. The bakery is presented in a very positive, neat and tidy way. The goods are presented orderly in front of the shop. A traditional table cloth enhances the feel-good atmosphere. The flowers in the window support the impression that female hands cared for everything and prepared the goods. However, there is no person (male or female) in the picture, so it can only be guessed that all this was prepared by female hands. Contrary to that there are men in literally every photo depicting a 'male' profession. In addition to that the men are shown actively doing their



Image 3: Visitor Guide - Bakery at St. Fagans: National History Museum

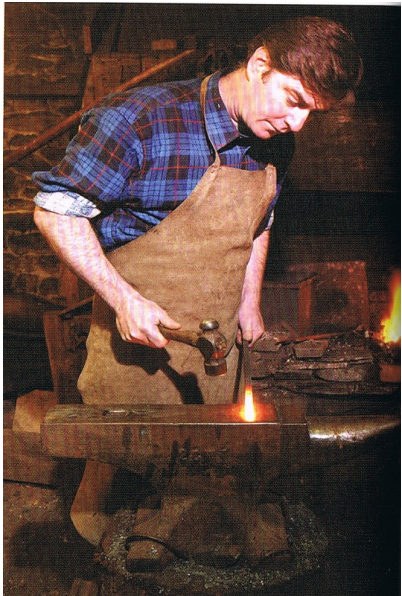


Image 4: Visitor Guide - Smithy at St. Fagans: National History Museum

work, the potter with his hands dirty in a jug, the sawmill full of offcuts and sawdust, the clogmaker with a hammer in his hand, the saddler holding some kind of tool in the process of doing his work, the smith working on a glowing piece of metal, and a group of men in front of the cider mill. Not only are the men clearly and unmistakably visible, but also is their work shown as it was – dirty, exhausting manual labour. The women are “present but not visible”²⁷² in that they are only implied.

²⁷² Knibb, 'Present but Not Visible', p. 352.

Another point I would like to make with regard to the visitor guide is the use of personal names. The use of personal names and history normally helps the visitor or reader to identify further²⁷³ with the people on display. Interestingly enough, the only personal names used are those of men (usually the founders of the workshops). In the case of the bakery, a reference is made to the daughters of the founder, Evan Jenkins, as he created the business especially for them.²⁷⁴ However, their names are never mentioned even though they were the primary operators of the bakery. Thereby women are silenced in history as they are always there but never explicitly mentioned or shown.

Male Buildings: The Workmen's Institute, the War Memorial, the Urinal

It is quite striking that there are three clearly 'male' buildings on the grounds of St. Fagans: National History Museum, yet there is not a single strictly 'female' one. Firstly, there is the Workmen's Institute. It was originally built in Oakdale Caerphilly in 1916 and re-erected on the museum grounds in 1995. So-called Miner's Institutes or Workmen's Halls were very popular in the industrialised areas of south and north-east Wales at the end of the nineteenth

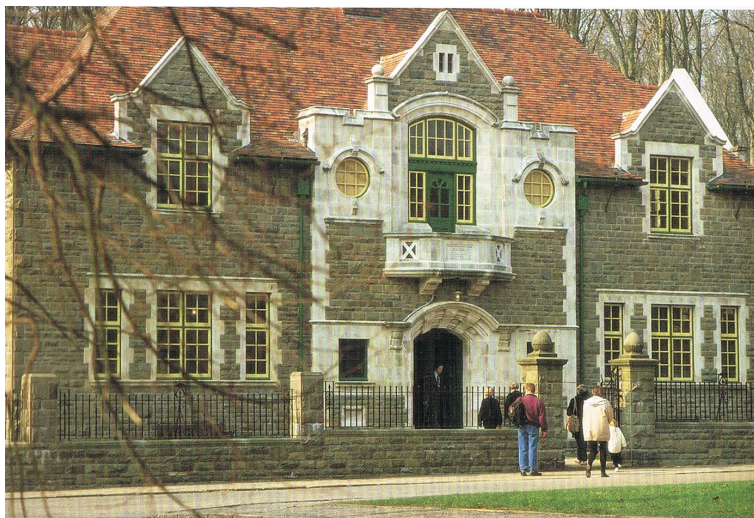


Image 5: Visitor Guide - Workmen's Institute at St. Fagans: National History Museum

and the beginning of the twentieth century. They were centres of social, educational and cultural activities. The Workmen's Institute now at St. Fagans: National History Museum was originally built in Oakdale with the support of the Tredegar Iron and Coal Company. The building was a “purpose-built Library and Institute”²⁷⁵ primarily used for the social and cultural life within the

community. It was funded by a loan from the Company which the miners paid back in the course of the following years. The building offered a Library, a Reading Room and a Committee Room on the ground floor as well as two small offices for the Secretary and the Manager of the Institute. On the first floor a large Concert Hall with seats for up to 300 people could be found. A Billiards Room was housed in an adjoining building as well as a cinema in

²⁷³ Porter, How are women represented in British history museums?, p. 161.

²⁷⁴ *Amgueddfa Cymru*, Visitor Guide, p. 25.

²⁷⁵ *Amgueddfa Cymru*, Visitor Guide, p. 32.

later years. The Institute buildings were used for all kinds of public events: concerts, eisteddfodau, political meetings, lectures, pigeon and poultry shows, dances and miners' lodge meetings. Furthermore, the building was also used as a venue for a range of local clubs and societies including the Women's Institute, a Chess Club, St. John's Ambulance and Debating Society and the local Dramatic Society and Silver Band.²⁷⁶

Secondly, there is a War Memorial. The small cenotaph, which originally stood in Caetwmpyn Park overlooking the industrial town of Newbridge, was donated to the museum in 1995. It was first erected in 1936 to commemorate seventy-nine servicemen from the town who lost their lives in World War I. Their names are immortalised on a bronze plaque on the left side of the memorial. A second plaque was added on the right side of the memorial after the Second World War, reminding people of the names of thirty-seven local servicemen who died in this war. The dates of the two World Wars are carved into the stone and below that the words that are usually spoken at services to remember the fallen of past military conflicts are engraved: "At the going down of the sun and in the morning we will remember them."²⁷⁷

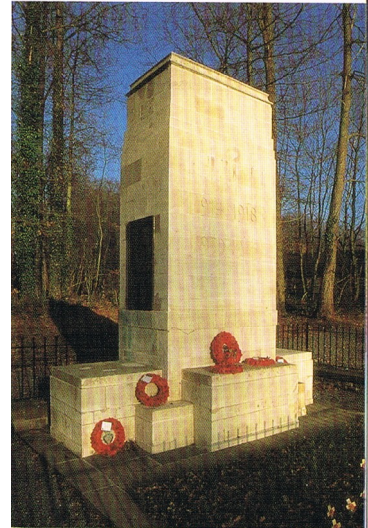


Image 6: Visitor Guide - War Memorial at St. Fagans: National History Museum

Every year on Remembrance Day, 11 November, a special memorial service is still held on the museum grounds.²⁷⁸

Thirdly, there is a Urinal, one of the first public toilets designed for men. The urinal was made from cast iron in Glasgow by Walter Macfarlane Ltd. Public toilets only started to appear in larger numbers from Victorian times onwards. The first public toilets were exclusively for men and the charge for their use was one penny. During the Second World War many such buildings disappeared as the cast iron was needed for war material.²⁷⁹

It is quite interesting that there are three obviously 'male' buildings on the grounds of St. Fagans: National History Museum, whereas none of the structures could be clearly classified as 'female'. Of course, women are present in their homes and houses (see above) and even in

²⁷⁶ *Amgueddfa Cymru*, Visitor Guide, p. 32 – 33.

²⁷⁷ *Amgueddfa Cymru*, Visitor Guide, p. 31.

²⁷⁸ *Amgueddfa Cymru*, Visitor Guide, p. 31.

²⁷⁹ *Amgueddfa Cymru*, Visitor Guide, p. 30.

their workplaces (see above) but implicitly so. Their names are not mentioned, they are not even shown. They have no buildings attributed specifically for their use, no memorials to remember their names, no public spaces they are allowed to occupy. It has been noted earlier that

“the great majority of the heritage sites which are preserved, recognised and interpreted were both built by, and commemorate the actions of, men, although obviously women lived in and are integral to the history of virtually all such sites.”²⁸⁰

The same phenomenon can be observed at St. Fagans: National History Museum. Although women lived in the farmhouses and cottages, worked in the workshops, prayed in the churches, etc. just like men, they are less visible in the museum representations and if so, they are continually reduced to stereotypes of housewives and mothers. The Workmen's Institute is a good example for 'male' space as it was primarily used for social, educational and cultural purposes among men. Holcomb claims that all space is gendered²⁸¹ and that our world “accurately reflects power relationships between people”²⁸². She goes on to argue that gender roles are not only reflected in our world and surroundings, but that these structures actively help create them.²⁸³ It is interesting that Holcomb explicitly mentions war memorials in her article as one reason why men are without question numerically over-represented in heritage products. War memorials commemorating war heroes, victims or Great Men are very common in many parts of the world. Even though the war memorial at St. Fagans: National History Museum is only a huge stone structure and, according to the visitor guide, the annual memorial service commemorates “all the men and *women* of Wales who gave their lives for their country”²⁸⁴ (my emphasis) the names on the plaques are only the names of servicemen making the memorial a predominantly male structure. Space is not only gendered but also reflects power structures – even more so: It can award power to some people and render others utterly powerless. With regard to the urinal the visitor guide of St. Fagans: National History Museum explains that “[n]early all public conveniences were for men, with few provided for women. This was because women were considered more likely to stay at home.”²⁸⁵ Hence, the simple structure of a public toilet awarded men with the power to go outside, be active and take their space in public. At the same time women were expected to stay at home, they had no right to spend too much time in public and were thereby confined to

²⁸⁰ Holcomb, *Gender and Heritage Interpretation*, p. 65.

²⁸¹ Holcomb, *Gender and Heritage Interpretation*, p. 59.

²⁸² Holcomb, *Gender and Heritage Interpretation*, p. 60.

²⁸³ Holcomb, *Gender and Heritage Interpretation*, p. 64.

²⁸⁴ *Amgueddfa Cymru*, Visitor Guide, p. 31.

²⁸⁵ *Amgueddfa Cymru*, Visitor Guide, p. 30.

the private sphere. However, these problematic aspects are not addressed by the simplistic explanation given in the visitor guide. Nor are any challenging or poignant questions asked concerning either of the 'male' buildings. They are rather presented in a romanticised and unchallenging way suited to perpetuate not only stereotypes but also what is presented as traditional power structures.

Absences, Silences and Exclusions

Finally, it has to be pointed out that when you are looking at gender representations, it is also important to look at the absences and silences, the things that are left unsaid and that are mentioned nowhere. While “[c]urators use objects as pure reflections of the world, representing the past simply and unambiguously” and do not “address the gaps and omissions in museum collections”²⁸⁶, Holcomb argues that these

“[o]ppositional readings, in which the observer deconstructs the text and reads the silences, supplies meaning not intended by the 'author' and 'reads' into the text new meanings, are certainly one strategy by which women (whether consciously or not) are able to 'see' both sources of oppression and missing herstories.”²⁸⁷

Thus, questions should be asked like: Who were the women (and men, of course) who lived in these farmhouses, cottages and worker's homes? How did they live? In which way did they use the utensils on display? Why are there only men's names on the plaques of the war memorial? Where are the women who served for the state? Moreover, questions should be found to challenge stereotypes, to break open power structures, to make people think about what they saw at the museum and to stimulate discussion. Posing and answering questions like these will be the task of future exhibitions. Kavanagh points out that

“[w]e encounter exclusions in many aspects of our lives. Most are ideological and are placed upon us culturally. These are the exclusions which we as women have grown used to, tired of, and angry with. We work to turn exclusions into inclusions, and museums are beginning to play their part.”²⁸⁸

6.1.4 Conclusions

Porter claims that

“[w]omen in smaller museums are almost entirely confined to domestic and shop settings, as consumers, assistants, and housewives. Domestic displays rarely suggest the range of activities typical in the living room of most households, and few (if any) make reference with objects or words to productive work in the home. The domestic setting presents itself apart from, in opposition to, productive work outside the

²⁸⁶ Gaby Porter, *Gender Bias: Representations of Work in History Museums*, In: *The Australian Journal of Media & Culture* 3/1 (1990), online source.

²⁸⁷ Holcomb, *Gender and Heritage Interpretation*, p. 62.

²⁸⁸ Kavanagh, *Looking for Ourselves*, p. 374.

home.”²⁸⁹

Exactly that can also be observed at St. Fagans: National History Museum. The designated folk museum (consciously or unconsciously) restricts women to the private sphere and even there makes only implicit references to them by the display of utensils and furniture commonly used by women. Stereotypes with regard to gender roles and power relations are thereby perpetuated or even created. Furthermore, there are many gaps and silences, blank spaces where women are not mentioned at all. However, to just add women to the picture cannot be the solution. This results in a simplified picture which, again, only works towards existing stereotypes. The solution should rather be to ask new and challenging questions, to address and analyse silences and exclusions and to be aware of the fact that there is more than one possible interpretation of any picture or display. Women's history thereby “challenges traditional approaches to exhibition development and conventional modes of interpretation in history and community museums”²⁹⁰. According to Porter “[f]eminists are concerned to show that we interpret experience differently according to gender, class, and race”²⁹¹. There is not only one possible way to present a living room and certainly there is not only one way to read it. What I mean here is that traditional museum work will have and slowly is about to change to be able to present more challenging and varied insights in the future.

In my opinion St. Fagans: National History Museum is yet at the beginning of this development. From my point of view the open-air exhibition shows only limited awareness of the need to include Women's and Gender History in their displays. The representations are very traditional, thereby perpetuating stereotypes with a strong romantic aspect. Women are largely non-existent or confined to their traditional roles as housewives and mothers, subordinate to men. As I see it, St. Fagans: National History Museum still has to find a way to include aspects of Women's and Gender History in their open-air exhibition.

6.2 The Photographic Archive

The second part of my analysis deals with the archives of St. Fagans: National History Museum. How are women represented in the archives of such an institution? In which ways is their heritage collected? How are they categorised? Are they and their remnants even accessible for further research in the field of women's and gender history and – pursuing that question further – what is the possibility of change in the exhibition in the future? Due to the

²⁸⁹ Porter, Gender Bias, online source.

²⁹⁰ Knibb, 'Present but Not Visible', p. 357.

²⁹¹ Porter, Gender Bias, online source.

limited range of the present diploma thesis and the nature of my resources, only the photographic archive was taken into account.

6.2.1 Structure and Organisation of the Photographic Archive

The photographic archive at St. Fagans: National History Museum, comprising approximately 150.000 negatives and prints and 15.000 slides²⁹² is divided into different categories and sub-categories. The archive is organised in a small room full of filing cabinets which again are full of photographs and other images. The pictures are organised in different categories like clothing, various types of occupation, housework, etc. They are kept on A4-sized cardboard sheets which present the image as well as the background information. This information is very often hand-written, i.e. hardly readable; only the newer photographs have it typed on the computer. Moreover, the additional information accompanying the photographs is usually very fragmentary and limited. Only the minority of images I had a look at has even the most basic information like who or what is depicted in the picture, who gave it to the museum, where was it taken, why was it given to the museum, when was it taken, when was it given to the museum, not to mention more details about the donor or the person or scene in the image.

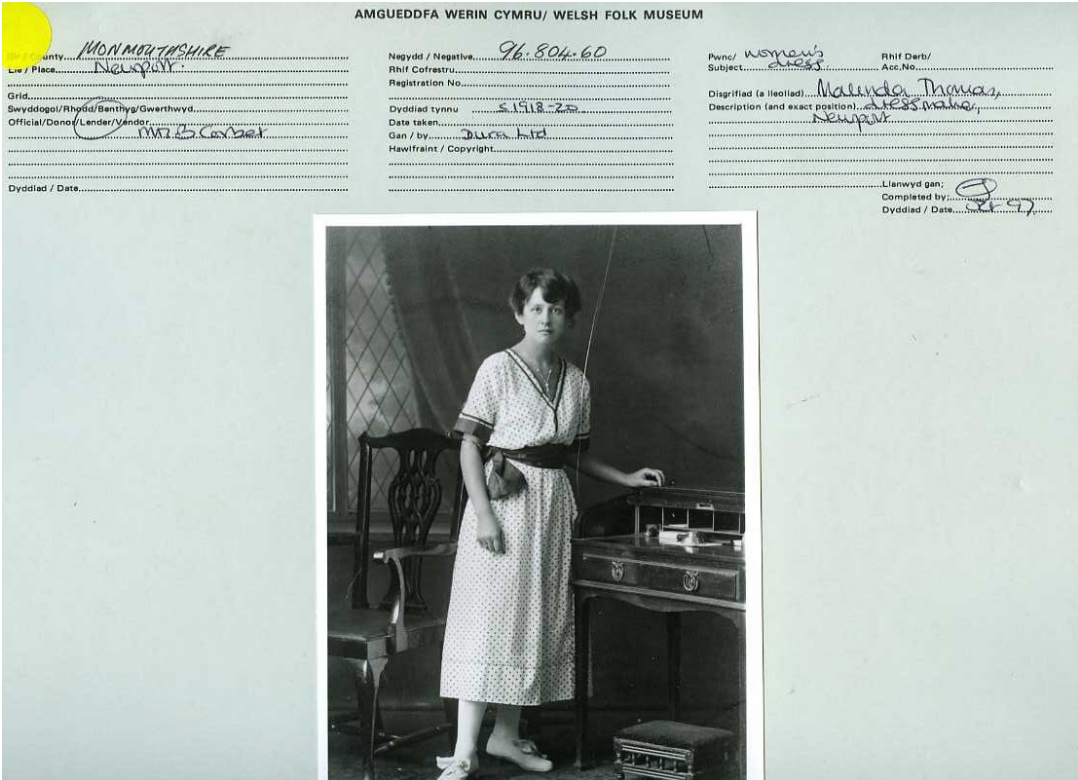


Image 7: Photograph collected on an information card in the photographic archive at St. Fagans: National History Museum

²⁹² National Museum Wales. Curatorial & Research. Photographic archives. <http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/194/>. 25-11-2012.

These circumstances make the usage of the images for research purposes by 'outsiders' very difficult as there is no sufficient data to work with and no resources to rely on.

The structure and content of the archive is largely determined by the collection practices of the institution. In an informal interview, Richard Edwards, the librarian at St. Fagans: National History Museum pointed out that the museum first and foremost tries to preserve traditional Welsh folk life and the photographic archive has to aim of collecting images of ordinary everyday life. Therefore the pictures stem from various sources: they have been donated, there have been calls for pictures and material in local newspapers, the museum staff has collected different items of interest (screen-shots of films, advertisements, etc.) or even arranged the production of photo-series of cultural practices worth being collected at the folk museum. Interestingly enough, the museum has never rejected anything²⁹³, i.e. whatever is presented to them, they do take into their archive. The National Museums Wales are an institution well-known all over Wales and thus people from everywhere in the country donate old objects, photos, etc. to it.²⁹⁴ That not only accounts for the structure of the archive but also adds the interesting point that the collection actually comprises a conglomeration of what Welsh people consider as worth being collected and representing Welsh folk culture and what the museum staff considers as such.

The lack of background information accompanying the images can also be explained by the collection practices of the institution. The archive has only rarely made a specific call for photos. Everything is collected and sometimes there is a more extensive collection of photographs, objects and texts belonging together but people are not encouraged to bring more – related or background – material.²⁹⁵ This is, of course, at least partly, due to staff shortages. There are simply not enough people working in the archive who could deal with such amounts of information.

The pictures thus collected are organised within the following categories:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domestic Life • The House • Cooking • Dairying 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cerddoriaeth • Offerynnau Cerdd • Sports and Games • Agriculture
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²⁹³ Richard *Edwards*, informal interview, 29-07-2011.

²⁹⁴ *Edwards*, informal interview, 29-07-2011.

²⁹⁵ *Edwards*, informal interview, 29-07-2011.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Domestic Misc. • Furniture Fabric • House Fabric • Furniture • House Fittings • Laundry Appliances • Lighting Appliances • Ornaments • Tableware • Dress: Civil • Children's Clothing • Men's Clothing • Personal Use and Ornament • Miscellanea • Women's Clothing • Groups • Corporate Life • Civil • Business and trade • Firefighting • Heraldry • Law and Order • Medicine • Personalia • Civil Societies • Fighting Services • Weapons • Ecclesiastical • Anglican Church • Judaism • Nonconformity • Yr Eglwys Babyddol • Transport • Cultural Life • Education • Entertainment • Folklore and Customs • Institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultivation • Sowing • Harvesting • Threshing and Winnowing • Stock • Agricultural Societies • Basket making • Beekeeping • Malting and Brewing • Charcoal Burning • Cider Making • Clock and Watchmaking • Cornmilling • Dry Stone Walling • Fishing • Hunting • Forestry • Horsehair Work • Horticulture • Iron Work • Smithcraft • Leatherwork • Lipwork • Mining • Pottery • Printing • Ropework • Rushwork • Sail Making • Straw Work • Textiles • Woollen Mills • Thatching and Roofing • Tinwork • Woodwork • Wheelwrighting • House Types
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The categories have a strong focus on private life, houses and various fields of agriculture, but also on different kinds of handicraft. There is only one category explicitly mentioning women, i.e. women's clothing. Interestingly enough, this category is also much larger for women (approximately 734 photos) than for men (approximately 309 photos). While men's clothes are divided into various sub-categories of clothes (e.g.: smocks, suits, coats and jackets,

waistcoats), there is also a separate category for occupational dress. Furthermore, there are categories for uniforms and official dress as well as particular occupations (e.g.: police, post office, railway, court, etc.). Women's clothing on the other hand has sub-categories mostly referring to types of clothes (e.g.: bedgowns, gowns, corsetts, fashion illustrations, night dresses, petticoats, shawls, underwear, etc.). Although there is a separate category for occupational dress (housework, agriculture, fishing, miners' women, tip girls, cement workers, bakers, tinsplate workers, etc.), there are no sub-categories for particular occupations. Interestingly enough, the sub-category 'wedding' can be found in the women's clothing compartment although it mostly consists of pictures of couples.

Another category in which women feature largely is 'domestic work'. There are approximately 534 images in this category depicting various types of work such as cooking, baking (bread), preparation of oatcakes and laverbread, ox-roasting, milking and butter making as well as a variety of objects including bakestones, bottle jacks, cooking pot cranes, cooking pots, dog spit wheels, Dutch ovens, gingerbread moulds, jelly moulds, kettle tilters, lemon squeezers, meat hooks and kitchen interiors. Finally there are also several series of images illustrating typical work processes such as baking bread, making oatcakes or butter.

It is quite interesting to note that gender does not feature prominently in the descriptors of the categories. However, the majority of images with people on them show men and only a much smaller number of images depict women. These photographs are spread randomly all over the categories within the archive and are not easy to be located by the gender historian or women's history researcher. When Richard Edwards was asked about the role of women at St. Fagans: National History Museum, he almost seemed to be surprised. Apparently women are not seen as a separate category in the archive (the museum, the institution) at all. Nevertheless the following analysis tries to locate women in the photographic archive and to point out their significance within the institution as well as to discuss the representation of women in the archive of a folk museum.

6.2.2 Analysis of the Photographic Archive

The main categories representing women in the photographic archive at St. Fagans: National History Museum have already been identified. The following analysis focuses on these categories, predominantly on domestic work and the household. Firstly, it is analysed what is seen as folk culture (and therefore worth being preserved) by the Welsh people themselves.

Which images are usually donated or lent to the museum or given to the institution in response to a call for resources? Secondly, it is discussed what is seen as part of the Welsh folk culture and worth being preserved by the museum staff. Which pictures are normally commissioned by the institution itself for preservation or documentation purposes? Moreover, absences and silences in the collection are addressed and some thoughts on the problems with the current collection practices in photographic archives form the conclusion of the analysis.

Donations, collected and acquired photographs

One of the categories in which women are represented in the photographic archive of St. Fagans: National History Museum is 'Domestic Work' or 'Housework'. There are several sub-categories and the present chapter is going to discuss some specific examples and their significance for the archive, for research and for women's and gender history. As has already been pointed out, on the one hand the museum has never rejected anything, but on the other hand there were no specific calls for images either. Hence the photographs given to the museum by lay people represent those areas which are deemed worth being remembered, specifically or particularly Welsh or can be spared in the house. Porter identifies various reasons why material enters museum collections like “a strong sense of pride within a group which feels its own culture is worthy of preservation”²⁹⁶ or “the space to store things which are not of immediate use and value”²⁹⁷. A similar point is made by Knibb and although she refers to objects, the same can be said for photographs:

“Artifacts likely to survive include objects: [...] to which their owners demonstrate a strong emotional, sentimental, spiritual, or even superstitious attachment (christening and wedding gowns, photo-albums, family bibles, souvenirs, mourning jewellery);”²⁹⁸

and in the case of photographs this results in a vast number of pictures of christenings, weddings, funerals or similar emotionally laden situations;

“which the donor believes to be of symbolic significance to the community, region or nation, [...] (medals, commemorative items, military uniforms, objects associated with a famous person or event);”²⁹⁹

and in the case of the corpus of images used for the present study that would be photographs of typically Welsh activities like the preparation of oatcakes, the washing and stoning of the doorstep or the carrying of a child 'Welsh fashion';

“which are old, obsolete, and / or dated in style and the donor no longer wishes to

²⁹⁶ Porter, Gender Bias, online source.

²⁹⁷ Porter, Gender Bias, online source.

²⁹⁸ Knibb, 'Present but Not Visible', p. 355.

²⁹⁹ Knibb, 'Present but Not Visible', p. 355.

store but is reluctant to discard (furniture, books, costume),³⁰⁰ and in the case of photographs it seems likely that large numbers of images in the form of piles, cartons or albums are among the assets of a relative, which cannot be stored by the heiresses and heirs and thus are given to museums or archives. Furthermore, what is donated to a museum or archive has always been “pre-selected” with respect to factors like particular “societal norms, beliefs and values”³⁰¹ and the selection of material might frequently be influenced by “what they [the donors] had seen in other museums, or even commonly held stereotypes of museum collections”³⁰². Thus, everybody has certain expectations and assumptions as to what 'should be' exhibited in museums, which is normally associated with a certain kind of specialness, great (material) value or age.

St. Fagans: National History Museum is an institution well-known in all parts of the country. Despite the name change from St. Fagans – Museum of Welsh Life to St. Fagans: National History Museum it is still seen as the major and most important folk museum preserving typically Welsh practices, life styles and thereby contributing to a Welsh national identity. It can be assumed that most people who donate objects or images to the museum have already been there and thus have certain expectations as to what to find there and what should be exhibited and is appropriate in such a museum. Consequently the donated pictures of women revolve around certain topic areas like domestic work, the household and the family.



Image 8: Miss Blodwen Jones, Charles Street, Tedegar, washing clothes in a wooden tub, 1920s - 1030s

A folk museum – usually associated with lives and customs of ordinary people and day-to-day life – is a place where images of housework and daily chores can be preserved and put on display. Ordinary Welsh people sold, donated or lent photographs of such scenes to the photographic archive at St. Fagans: National History Museum. The first example presented here are four photographs of women washing clothes. Although this is an ordinary household chore which can probably be found in every culture and is not specifically Welsh, people

³⁰⁰ Knibb, 'Present but Not Visible', p. 355.

³⁰¹ Knibb, 'Present but Not Visible', p. 355.

³⁰² Knibb, 'Present but Not Visible', p. 355.

regarded it as something worth being remembered and stored in a museum.



Image 10: Donor's mother + cousin washing clothes in a tin bath tub at the rear of the family home at Beach Rd., Pyte, Mix [...]



Image 9: Mrs. Esme Rees, assisted by her granddaughter, Helen Edwards (age 2) to peg out the washing at 54, Johnswear Rd., Theorchy, Rhondda

The images are from various periods in history starting from the 1920s or 30s in image 8 and leading up to the 1970s in image 11. The pictures nicely illustrate the changing methods over time from washing clothes in a wooden tub to the more modern tin tub and finally illustrating the implementation of electricity in the common household with the use of an electric drier. Unfortunately there is not much background information about the photos but it can be assumed that all of them are private, family photos which were taken as parts of everyday life and put into family albums.



Image 11: Lender's mother, Evelyn Potter, 8, Riverside Street, Glanllyly, Taffs Well, coping with the electric spin drier in her kitchen

Another household chore that frequently appears in the images is 'cleaning the doorstep'. This task is considered typically Welsh and is even mentioned in general works on Welsh history:

“The boom in housing ended in 1924 and women, whose expectations had been raised by new job opportunities during the Great War, were once more enslaved to the kitchen, the wash tub, the mangle and the front doorstep.”³⁰³

Cleaning the doorstep is a task usually associated with miners' families and miners' villages. The people in those villages were usually very poor; the man working in the mines, the women responsible for the household (yet often they also had jobs in the mines or in other business to support their families). Cleaning the doorstep formed part of the daily routine of

³⁰³ Geraint H. Jenkins, *A Concise History of Wales* (Cambridge 2008), p. 234.

most housewives. Evidence for that can also be found in the manuscript by the “Women's Institute” of Wales with the title *Old Customs* where it says: “Not many housewives still clean the front step with a donkey stone or bathbrick. This was done before 8 o'clock in the morning too”³⁰⁴.

Several images in the photographic archive at St. Fagans: National History Museum illustrate



Image 12: Mrs. Olwen Napier (lender's mother) scrubbing the back doorstep

this household task. Image 12 is a private photograph, which was given as a loan to the museum, depicting a young woman cleaning her doorstep. The woman is wearing a dark dress and she is smiling at the camera – so she is obviously aware of the photographer and does not mind being photographed which can be concluded from the fact that the look on her face is friendly and open. In her right hand she has got a cloth and there is a bowl next to her. Maybe it contains the white stone colour for the whitewashing of the doorstep. Behind her the viewer can get a look into the woman's house through the open front door. There is a table made of dark wood with some china ware on it. Above the woman there are white curtains.

Image 13 is a private photograph that was given to the St. Fagans: National History Museum by Roy Williams. The photo shows Anne Mary Williams scrubbing her front door step. She is a fairly young woman and she is looking directly at the camera – so she is obviously aware of the photographer and knows that the picture is taken. Next to her there is a bucket with water and probably some kind of cleaning liquid. She has got one hand in the bucket and one hand in front of her body. From the background it can be concluded that she is kneeling on a pavement next to a street. The walls of her house are brick walls and there is a little child sitting on the next doorstep that



Image 13: Anne Mary Williams scrubbing the front door step at 22, Dunraven Street, Cwmgwrach

³⁰⁴ Women's Institute. *Old Customs*. Hand-written manuscript from St. Fagans: National History Museum.

might be her child.

Image 14 is a private photograph as well. It was given to St. Fagans by the grandniece of the older woman in the picture. She does not seem to be aware of the photographer whereas the woman in the background (her daughter) knows about the picture being taken. She is looking into the camera and smiling. From the background of the photo it can be concluded that the women are in the backyard of their house. The house is a simple stone building. From the description it



Image 14: Lender's great aunt and her daughter washing dishes and scrubbing the back door step at 13, Stuart Street, Treherbert, Rhondda

can be seen that the women are washing the dishes and scrubbing the back door step – however, this could not have been seen just by looking at the picture so there probably was some kind of background information available to the museum staff.

The question now is: Why was this household task so important for the miners' women? The life in a miners' village was characterised by poverty for many families. People had to content themselves with poor housing and it was almost impossible to keep homes clean. There was dust and grime in the air and the men brought it home with their clothes and shoes when they returned from work in the evenings. Thus it was all the more important for the women to create an impression of cleanliness. They wanted their homes to look clean from the outside even though it was impossible to achieve that state of cleanness within their houses. This explains why the scrubbing of the doorstep was a daily chore which was done early in the morning to prepare the house for the whole day. Furthermore, the doorstep was not only cleaned and washed but also whitened to deepen the impression of cleanliness and even brightness.

Apart from the housewife's desire for cleanliness in such a dirty and poor surrounding there are also social and cultural reasons for the importance of this daily routine. The miners' women tried to fulfil certain social expectations within the village community because

“a woman acquires a reputation for hard work and excessive cleanliness among her

neighbours and thus earns their respect.”³⁰⁵

It is implied that a good housewife had to be able to cope with all her duties and chores and keep her home nice, clean and tidy. This was a social convention and she was judged accordingly within her community.

The category 'Domestic work' consists of pictures of household items, places, women doing



Image 15: Lender's father making ice-cream at the rear of the house, 9 Miles St., St. Thomas - for vending along with general groceries

their chores but almost no men. Therefore it is worthwhile discussing one of the rare images showing a man. Image 15 shows a man making ice-cream together with a child. Both of them are looking directly at the camera, therefore it can be presumed that they were aware of the photographer. Interestingly enough, this image of domestic work is still different from the images showing women. The task performed here is not one of those described as “invisible” by Porter. She points out that

“[m]uch of women's labour, paid or unpaid, was in making articles for immediate consumption. [...] At home, they might bake a pie to be eaten, or iron a shirt to be worn; while the purpose of most cleaning is to make itself invisible.”³⁰⁶

In contrast to that the men's ice-cream was meant for sale, i.e. something made for the outside world, something to earn money with. Thus, whereas women are presented as housewives, doing their chores for the family, the man is shown as a worker earning money.

To sum up, it can be said that photographs are given to archives or museum collections for various reasons by ordinary people and it would be worthwhile to study their motives or maybe even educate the public so that collections can become more varied and multi-layered.

Self-made material – photographs taken / collected for the purpose of preservation

Another group of images was neither donated nor lent to the museum but was taken, bought or gathered by the museum staff. Firstly, there are pictures of buildings on the museum grounds, rooms within those buildings and objects from the collections. These images are

³⁰⁵ Diana Gittins, Women's Work and Family Size between the Wars. In: Oral History, Volume 5 No. 2 (Women's History Issue), 1977.

³⁰⁶ Porter, Gender Bias, online source.

partly to form an inventory and partly to make these buildings and objects available to further research and a larger group of people.

Secondly, there are photographs which have been prompted by the museum staff. They are taken to preserve certain processes which are deemed typically Welsh but which are not normally well-documented such as baking bread, making oatcakes or butter, cleaning the doorstep or ironing.

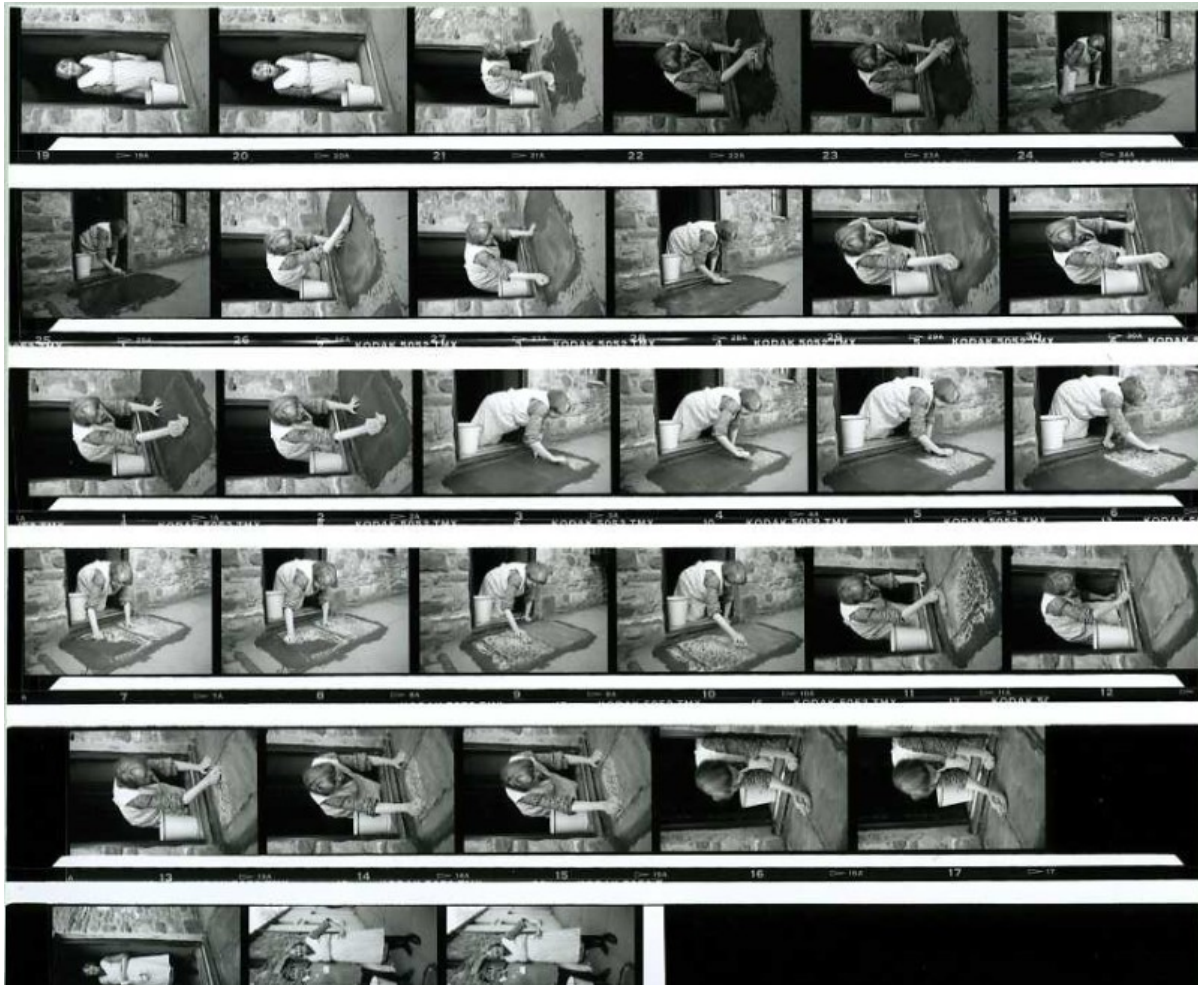


Image 16: Demonstration of washing and stoning of doorstep by Mrs. Eirona Richards. Location Rwyd-y-Car Cottage 1920s (WFM)

Image 16 is a series of 32 negatives. This series of pictures was taken for research purposes especially for St. Fagans: National History Museum. The photos were taken on 13 April 1994 to show how Welsh women – probably miner's women – used to clean their doorsteps. The pictures are supposed to show the typical working process of the 1920s. All the pictures show Mrs. Eirona Richards in her front door. In the first picture she is already kneeling in front of her doorstep. A bucket is next to her and she is holding on to the side of it. In the following 31 pictures she demonstrates the process of cleaning the doorstep of a Welsh home. She uses a

bucket of water (or probably soap), a wet cloth and a 'bath brick' or 'donkey stone'. First she cleans and scrubs the front doorstep and then she whitens it with the special stone to make it look even brighter.

Similar series can be found in the archive about the baking of bread, the preparation of oatcakes, the making of butter or the process of ironing. Without these series of pictures the processes could never be documented so well. Usually only single photographs are taken or remain which cannot reflect the working process. The decision, which tasks or skills are worth being preserved and which are not, is made by the museum staff on grounds of extensive research but also personal choice.

Thirdly, images are also collected or even bought from various sources. Image 17 was taken from the film “A Silent Village” by Humphrey Jennings. This drama documentation was the response of some Welsh miners to the Nazis' massacre of over 170 men in a Czech mining village. The film wanted to show that such a horrible thing could have happened anywhere in the world. It was shot in an authentic Welsh miners' village. There are no actresses and actors in the film but the real people from the village doing their daily work and representing their ordinary lives.³⁰⁷ The scene on the photo shows a Welsh woman cleaning her front doorstep and was therefore chosen by the museum staff to be part of the photographic archive.

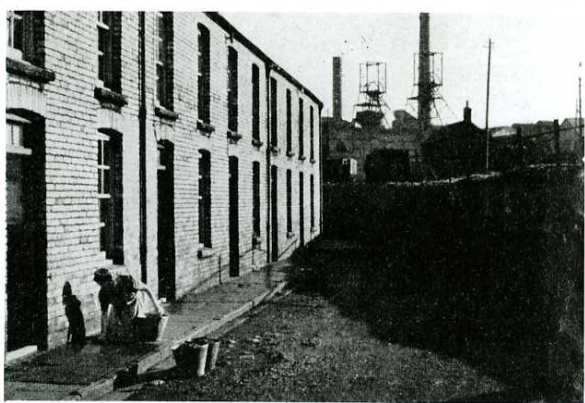


Image 17: Scrubbing the Front Doorstep taken from the film “The Silent Village” by Humphrey Jennings



Image 18: Mrs. Jane Jones standing beside table with Bara Ceirch

Image 18 was purchased from *Y Cymro*, a Welsh language newspaper.

³⁰⁷ BFI Screenonline. The definitive guide to Britain's film and TV history. The Silent Village (1943). <http://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/998098/index.html>. 24-01-2013.

These active collection processes illustrate how “[c]urators select clusters of material which they perceive as rich, diverse, and interesting”³⁰⁸. However, this selection can also lead to absences, silences and exclusions, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Absences, Silences and Exclusions

While it is, of course, very useful to study museum collections and exhibitions,

“[a]n understanding of the omissions in a collection, as well as the apparent biases, can reveal much about the community and its collectors and what they have chosen to document, remember or ignore, as well as what they believe is important for posterity.”³⁰⁹

Consequently it is interesting to see that women in the photographic archive at St. Fagans: National History Museum are confined to two major categories which are clothing and domestic work. This fact has already been pointed out by Porter who argues that

“[p]redominant images identify women with the spheres of domesticity, reproduction, and consumption, and trivialise women as workers, yet 48,7 % of all women in Britain are in waged work and women form about 40 % of the workforce.”³¹⁰

The photographic archive at St. Fagans: National History Museum does not have separate categories for women's occupations or other areas in women's lives. The majority of photographs of women shows them doing housework or representing the dress code of a time, an era or a particular event. The reason for this might partly be that St. Fagans: National History Museum is still seen as a folk museum by the Welsh people. It wants to represent ordinary people but also has a strong focus on agriculture, only recently devoting more space to Wales' industrial heritage. This focus has led to people having certain expectations as to what is appropriate for such a museum or what will be found or exhibited in there.

Another striking fact is that there “seem to be no distinctions between paid and unpaid work carried on at home, nor between housework done at home and paid work for other people in homes or business premises”³¹¹. Whenever a woman is depicted doing a household task, it is assumed that she is a housewife going about her daily chores. However, as is pointed out by Tibbott³¹² and others, household tasks were not only carried out as unpaid work within the own home but also as paid work for other families or even as servants or maids in other homes. Yet, the assumption that housework is unpaid never seems to be questioned.

³⁰⁸ Porter, Gender Bias, online source.

³⁰⁹ Knibb, 'Present but Not Visible', p. 355 – 356.

³¹⁰ Porter, Gender Bias, online source.

³¹¹ Porter, Gender Bias, online source.

³¹² cf. Minwel S. Tibbott, Beth Thomas (Ed.), *Domestic Life in Wales* (Cardiff 2002).

Summing up, it must be said that the photographic archive at St. Fagans: National History Museum suffers from vast silences and gaps. Although women are certainly present in the archive, they are shown in a very one-sided way and there is the danger or perpetuating stereotypes or romanticising history. There is little room for a feminist perspective as women are still confined to their traditional roles and “the lives and histories of specific groups of women such as the poor, the working classes, the homeless, immigrants, women of colour, lesbian and aboriginal women”³¹³ are not present at all.

Problems in Archives

It has already been pointed out that locating women in the photographic archive at St. Fagans: National History Museum is not the easiest task. They are very much restricted to certain areas like domesticity and clothing but largely absent from areas like gainful employment and minority groups are not present at all. Generally speaking, it can be said that it was not too difficult to find photographs “which had an obvious gender association”³¹⁴ in the archive but photographs “beyond the scope of what Gaby Porter refers to as the 'distinct and autonomous' group of artifacts [our in this case photographs] traditionally associated with women”³¹⁵ were more difficult to find. Knibb criticises that “lack of a standardised form of nomenclature for objects”³¹⁶ but also points out that objects are sometimes simply not correctly identified. This makes it very challenging for the researcher to locate specific items and frequently leaves no other choice than looking or skimming through the whole collection searching for the material needed for a particular study.

Another difficulty is that from the moment objects or images enter a museum collection, they “are separated and arranged in storage by type and / or material, not kept together”³¹⁷ which makes research even more complicated. It is immensely difficult and time-consuming if not impossible to restore the relationship between artefacts – even more so when they are stored in different archives. For instance, some of the photographs in St. Fagans: National History Museum were indeed accompanied by written resources like diaries or letters or oral history like interviews with the donors or lenders. However, this accompanying material was not cross-referenced with the images and difficult to find for the researcher. Moreover, Knibb

³¹³ Knibb, 'Present but Not Visible', p. 356.

³¹⁴ Knibb, 'Present but Not Visible', p. 360.

³¹⁵ Knibb, 'Present but Not Visible', p. 361.

³¹⁶ Knibb, 'Present but Not Visible', p. 360.

³¹⁷ Knibb, 'Present but Not Visible', p. 361.

criticises the lack of “meaningful correspondence between prospective donors and museum staff”³¹⁸ as well as the fact that donors are not encouraged to bring associated material or relate personal memories or background information to the museum. Thus, the objects or images remain “examples of a type”³¹⁹ without a context. In the same way there are many photos of women in their houses, doing household tasks or wearing particular clothes in the photographic archive at St. Fagans: National History Museum but the background stories are missing. We do not know who the people in the photographs are, why the pictures were taken, how the women felt about the photos, what the situation was like – hence the pictures remain an empty testimony of a time long gone.

The afore-mentioned problems in archives and museum collections can – among other factors – also be ascribed to pragmatic reasons such as staff shortages, limited time or money available. The existence of projects such as the “Sammlung Frauennachlässe”³²⁰ at the University of Vienna (a project dedicated to the collection of women's testimony) is threatened by financial issues and during the research at St. Fagans: National History Museum the shortage in staff was clearly noticeable. Individuals, who are solely responsible for complete archives, cannot manage, organise and structure all the material given to them. Consequently, some practical changes would be necessary in most such institutions.

6.2.3 Conclusions

Similar to what has been said about the outdoor exhibition at St. Fagans: National History Museum, women are certainly present in the photographic archive and they are not too difficult to find. However, they are again limited to the private sphere of domestic work, the household and the family. Furthermore, there is a large section on women's clothing as this field seems to be associated with femininity as well. In other domains less commonly related to the female sphere women are not so easy to be found.

The collection of images in the photographic archive at St. Fagans: National History Museum is largely shaped by the personal taste of the donors and lenders and the museum staff “rather than by any systematic or planned effort to develop representative community history”³²¹. In this way Welsh people were probably influenced by the type of the museum on the one hand

³¹⁸ *Knibb*, 'Present but Not Visible', p. 361.

³¹⁹ *Knibb*, 'Present but Not Visible', p. 359.

³²⁰ collection of women's testimony

³²¹ *Knibb*, 'Present but Not Visible', p. 361 – 362.

(i.e. the designation as a folk museum) and their experiences in the exhibition on the other hand. Donors usually have certain preconceptions as to what is appropriate for a museum, what can / should be given to an archive and what is worth preserving it. In the same way the museum staff selects certain practices and customs as preservable and others as not.

Even though the collection at the photographic archive at St. Fagans: National History Museum does not follow any systematic organisation but simply accepts everything which is donated by the Welsh people, some structural changes or improvements would be possible in my opinion. As I see it, the photographic archive as well as the outdoor exhibition at St. Fagans: National History Museum “offered an unexpected wealth of material relating to the study of women's history”³²². However, so far they have not been used as resources for this study field. They represent customs and work processes, they illustrate dress and traditions but they are not used as sources for women's history. In my opinion this material offers a massive potential and thus deserve more study in the future.

6.3 Summary

Chapter six forms the centre of the current diploma thesis, i.e. the analysis of the representation of women in St. Fagans: National History Museum. Two aspects or areas were chosen for this analysis: the outdoor exhibition which is best-known among the visitors and could be defined as the trademark area of the museum collection and the photographic archive which is not accessible for the public but for researchers and the museum staff only. The analysis focused on the location of women within the pre-defined areas but it was also investigated in which way women are presented in these fields. The study of the outdoor exhibition was divided into a discussion of homes, shops and typically 'male' buildings and it was shown that women are definitely present in the outdoor exhibition but very much confined to the categories domesticity, family and private life. Thus it proved useful to do some research with regard to absences and silences within the exhibition. A similar process was followed in the analysis of the photographic archive. After a brief outline of the structure and organisation of the archive as well as the representation of women in the categories within the archive, it was analysed which kinds of images are given to the collection by the Welsh people and what is actively collected, purchased or even produced by the museum staff. A brief look at absences and silences as well as problems within (photographic) archives rounded off this investigation. Concludingly, it can be said that although women are definitely

³²² *Knibb*, 'Present but Not Visible', p. 362.

present in the outdoor exhibition and also in the photographic archive, they are confined to certain areas and neither women in the workforce nor minority groups are explicitly mentioned. These shortcomings and why they might arise as well as some suggestions for the future are discussed in chapter seven.

7 Challenges and Limitations of Heritage Museums

In the analysis of the representation of women in the heritage museum of St. Fagans: National History Museum several shortcomings and difficulties could be identified. However, it is not always so easy to solve these problems, as institutions like St. Fagans have to satisfy and cater for several parties which might not have the same goals. In the following chapters some aspects are pointed out which influence the collection and presentation practices at the heritage museum and which constantly have to be balanced.

7.1 Problems with Research Work in Museums

According to Knibb “museum collections are probably the most neglected resource for research” and “they have also been neglected as a source for women's history”³²³. This is partly due to the fact that there are “history museums with thousands of objects in the collection but few 'natural' links or relationships between them”³²⁴ as well as only limited background information if there is any at all, i.e. the level of documentation for a particular object is frequently inadequate or the necessary information for scientific research is completely absent. The recorded information is often speculative or misleading³²⁵ and it is not possible to base a scientific study on this kind of data. These problems are based in

“the failure to establish and document provenance on receipt of a donation. If the prime opportunity to interview the donor is missed, critical questions regarding the methods of use, context, adaptation, obsolescence and meaning and value of the object are never asked.”³²⁶

Exactly this is also the case in some areas of St. Fagans: National History Museum. On the one hand, the outdoor exhibition and the material used in the galleries is reasonably well-documented and a sufficient number of studies has already been based on these objects and places. On the other hand, concerning the material in the photographic archive the picture is a quite different one. The images are difficult to be found, there is no satisfying organisation and – most importantly – the background information documented for each image is in most cases not sufficient. The example I would like to present is from the corpus of approximately seventy photographs I gathered from the photographic archive at St. Fagans: National History Museum during my research process in 2010. Most of the images only contain the most basic information – some of them miss even such crucial details as who is on the photo, who took

³²³ Knibb, 'Present but Not Visible', p. 354.

³²⁴ Knibb, 'Present but Not Visible', p. 355.

³²⁵ Knibb, 'Present but Not Visible', p. 354.

³²⁶ Knibb, 'Present but Not Visible', p. 364.

it, where it was taken, when it was taken, etc. More detailed information is only accessible in a few singular cases. Thus, the images seem to be of limited use for scientific research. In those cases where the basic documentation is sufficient, the images are usually used for documentary purposes, to illustrate processes or customs in social history studies. More difficulties arise with those images where even the most basic information is missing. These images can hardly ever be used for scientific research as the most elementary verification of sources is not possible and hence the images would most likely not be acknowledged by a scientific audience. In addition to that, using images as illustrations is only one – and certainly not the best – way of using them. However, the usage of such images as resources for social history studies in themselves is hampered by the lack of documentation in the collection process.

Another problem with research work in museums is that most historians are not educated for this kind of analysis. Material history studies does not usually feature in the university curriculum, and “the skills and knowledge base required for object analysis are not being developed at the undergraduate or even graduate level”³²⁷. Consequently, most historians are reluctant to work with material resources as they have never learnt how to deal with them and thus consider their work unscientific.

Finally the question is whether museums are always the best places to store artefacts. Limited space in archives and storage rooms frequently leads to an overload of objects being stored in poorly designed buildings. On top of that a large percentage of the artefacts taken into the collections is neglected and forgotten as soon as it has been catalogued³²⁸. As a consequence, some archives degenerate into warehouses with vast amounts of different objects which are difficult to access and might never be used for research or exhibition purposes.

Summing up it can be said that there are still many problems with research work in museums. However, it cannot be neglected how many unique and informative resources are currently stored in such places and thus it is imperative that we find a solution for the existing problems and shortcomings so that researchers will be able to use museums as the invaluable source they are for all kinds of historical studies in the future.

³²⁷ *Knibb*, 'Present but Not Visible', p. 354.

³²⁸ *Knibb*, 'Present but Not Visible', p. 366.

7.2 Heritage Museum vs. Tourist Attraction

A heritage museum is not only an educational institution but has to cater for various needs. On the one hand it is a place for scientific research and education but on the other hand it is an attraction with the aim of entertaining local people and tourists alike. Certain tensions arise from the need to satisfy different (and often opposing) interest groups and this tension is never more apparent than in the “interpretation of heritage items and sites for public and tourist consumption”³²⁹.

Since the 1970s and 1980s there has been a “remarkable expansion in sites which purported to be representations of the past”³³⁰. Walsh uses the term “heritage boom”³³¹ for this phenomenon. In general, what was developed was called “heritage industry”³³², i.e. the preparation of the past in an entertaining way for a mass audience including

“open-air museums, heritage centres which often employed new technologies to produce multi-media experiences, and certain established museums which decided to adopt some of the representational techniques developed by heritage attractions.”³³³

The development of a 'heritage industry' is “regarded as one of the most significant and fastest growing components of tourism”³³⁴ since the 1990s.

In Britain this development coincided with a period of economic recession and thus the need to make money by putting “the past' in the market”³³⁵ arose. Of course, this was further encouraged by the fact that many traditional museum displays and exhibitions were quite dull and unexciting. Another aspect of the need to earn money to preserve heritage sites is that of sponsorship. If a heritage site or museum has an official (political or economic) sponsor, it might not likely criticise those institutions.³³⁶ However, this endangers the objectivity and the scientific and educational value of those places.

The newly established heritage attractions worked with the concepts of nostalgia³³⁷ and

³²⁹ *Smith*, General Introduction, p. 3.

³³⁰ Kevin *Walsh*, *Simulating the Past*. In: Laurajane Smith (Ed.). *Cultural Heritage. Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies. Volume III – Heritage as an Industry* (London – New York 2007), p. 87.

³³¹ *Walsh*, *Simulating the Past*, p. 87.

³³² cf. Yaniv *Poria*, Richard *Butler* & David *Airey*, *The Core of Heritage Tourism*. In: Laurajane Smith (Ed.). *Cultural Heritage. Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies. Volume III – Heritage as an Industry* (London – New York 2007), p. 391.

³³³ *Walsh*, *Simulating the Past*, p. 87.

³³⁴ *Poria*, *Butler* & *Airey*, *The Core of Heritage Tourism*, p. 391.

³³⁵ *Walsh*, *Simulating the Past*, p. 87.

³³⁶ *Walsh*, *Simulating the Past*, p. 89.

³³⁷ cf. *Knibb*, 'Present but Not Visible', p. 367. or *Walsh*, *Simulating the Past*, p. 90.

empathy³³⁸. The visitors should be able to relate to the past that is presented. The aim was that the audience should be able to feel the past and to recognise particular elements like, “that's just like the iron we used to have!” or “this living room looks exactly the same as Grandma's!”³³⁹. Of course, every visitor had her or his own interpretation of the exhibits, which made it possible to reach different people from various backgrounds. This exploration of nostalgia is not necessarily something negative as “people's emotional attachment to that which they remember is of paramount importance”³⁴⁰. Nevertheless, such sites should not be misused as mere entertainment centres but should be taken seriously as for some people they might be the only source to learn about history.³⁴¹

Driven by the need to attract visitors and please them with a positive experience of the past, heritage sites were equipped with multi-media experiences of the 'living' past, with entertainment of different sorts and of action-packed spectacles. The past was put into artificial places, situations were re-located and processes or items presented out of context. This artificiality very often decreased the educational value of heritage attractions although they varied a lot “in their emphasis on the education / entertainment ratio”³⁴².

The danger with these developments is that the entertainment or amusement aspect of these institutions prevails while the educational aspects remain on the margins of the experience if they are consumed at all. For instance, the 'Blitz experience' and the 'Trench Experience' in the Imperial War Museum in London are seen as a spectacle by many visitors which “*has to be seen*”³⁴³ (original emphasis). It remains to be negotiated, however, if they actually learn something about the horror of war. It seems that such re-creations, enactments or spectacles have the effect of trivialising complex or serious matters or even of perpetuating stereotypes as in the case of Kentwell Hall, Suffolk, where the re-creation of Tudor times takes place every year. As the re-enactment is aimed at school children, Walsh quotes Phillips who says,

“Few boys between, say, 12 and 16 have no interest in seeing, say, armour being made or a plumber making lead. Most girls are sufficiently interested in cooking, baking, spinning, sewing etc. to want to see how it was done previously without modern aids’.”³⁴⁴

³³⁸ *Walsh, Simulating the Past*, p. 93.

³³⁹ *Walsh, Simulating the Past*, p. 91.

³⁴⁰ *Walsh, Simulating the Past*, p. 92.

³⁴¹ *Walsh, Simulating the Past*, p. 93.

³⁴² *Walsh, Simulating the Past*, p. 95.

³⁴³ *Walsh, Simulating the Past*, p. 103.

³⁴⁴ P. Phillips, 'One man's view of teaching Tudor domestic life'. In: *Heritage Interpretation* 26 (Spring 1984), p. 10 – 11. quoted in *Walsh, Simulating the Past*, p. 94.

It could not be any clearer how stereotypes about gender roles go unquestioned in this statement and are probably enforced and perpetuated by the re-creation in Suffolk. This kind of unquestioning empathy can certainly be dangerous and “falls short of competent history”³⁴⁵. Similarly, the idea of 'time travel', i.e. the recreation of the past in artificial surroundings and out of context, is a rather dangerous method and should only be used as one method among others.

The hope of most institutions featuring such entertainment programmes or spectacles is that after the consumption of the “marketing gimmick designed to attract visitors”³⁴⁶ people will “move on to the more didactic experiences”³⁴⁷. The danger remains that the spectacle or attraction will superimpose the educational or didactic aspects of the heritage site. Consequently, it is necessary to educate the visitors. A “certain amount of cultural competence is required”³⁴⁸ so that visitors can make the most of their visits of heritage attractions. First of all, viewers need some kind of “object literacy skills”³⁴⁹ as they are very often not able to interpret or understand objects correctly. Furthermore, visitors should be educated to behave appropriately on heritage sites, to be mindful and respect the sites – and consequently to support the preservation of these institutions.³⁵⁰ Finally it is also important that the visitors can relate to the heritage presented as 'theirs'. Lowenthal argues that “[o]nly a heritage that is clearly ours is worth having”³⁵¹.

In St. Fagans: National History Museum some of these tensions between educational and didactic purposes and the need to be a heritage attraction full of entertainment can be observed. On the one hand the museum wants to inform and educate people about “the life and culture of Wales”³⁵² and on the other hand it praises itself as “Wales's most popular heritage attraction”³⁵³. On the one hand it offers interesting indoor galleries and informative texts on various exhibits but on the other hand it is questionable if visitors have a look at the

³⁴⁵ *Walsh*, *Simulating the Past*, p. 94.

³⁴⁶ *Walsh*, *Simulating the Past*, p. 104.

³⁴⁷ *Walsh*, *Simulating the Past*, p. 102.

³⁴⁸ *Walsh*, *Simulating the Past*, p. 91.

³⁴⁹ *Knibb*, 'Present but Not Visible', p. 363.

³⁵⁰ Gianna *Moscardo*, *Mindful Visitors*. *Heritage and tourism*. In: Laurajane Smith (Ed.). *Cultural Heritage. Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies. Volume III – Heritage as an Industry* (London – New York 2007), p. 339 – 363.

³⁵¹ David *Lowenthal*, *Fabricating Heritage*. In: Laurajane Smith (Ed.). *Cultural Heritage. Critical Concepts in Media and Cultural Studies. Volume III – Heritage as an Industry* (London – New York 2007), p. 109 – 124.

³⁵² St. Fagans: National History Museum. *Visiting*. <http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/stfagans/visit/>. 31-12-2012.

³⁵³ St. Fagans: National History Museum. <http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/stfagans/>. 31-12-2012.

indoor exhibition at all as the outdoor exhibition is so popular and tends to superimpose other aspects of the museum. Re-creations and re-enactments of traditional crafts but also the arrangement of houses and rooms certainly appeal to nostalgia and empathy but also contain the danger of being too superficial and perpetuating (gender) stereotypes. Moreover, the houses are taken from their natural surroundings and placed on the museum grounds in an artificial space out of context. The danger is that visitors only see St. Fagans: National History Museum as a park full of entertainment and do not profit from the educational offerings. This tension between the need to attract visitors and the desire to educate them should be taken seriously by every heritage museum and the aim should be to find a balance between the two demands.

7.3 Wales and the Importance of National Identity

Although according to Kavanagh “[i]n Britain, the study of the representation of women in history museums is now safely on its way”³⁵⁴, in Wales – and particularly in St. Fagans: National History Museum – this does not seem to be equally true. On the contrary, it seems that Wales is still dealing with some more pressing matters than the proper representation of women. Nenadic, who writes about Scottish country house museums, argues that Scottish history is “intimately connected with the construction of national identity” yet at the same time “striking for its blindness to gender”³⁵⁵ and draws the conclusion that “it seems that the politics of gender will always take second place to the politics of national identity”³⁵⁶. In my opinion the same is true for Wales and particularly St. Fagans: National History Museum.

At the outset of St. Fagans: National History Museum it had the primary aim to preserve the vernacular culture of Wales. It was supposed to deal with the 'ordinary people of Wales' and their lives. In contrast to that, the first National Museum of Wales was “originally intended to show that Wales was a fully fledged nation with the requisite institutions: a national museum, a national library and a national university.”³⁵⁷ However, it cannot be denied that St. Fagans: National History Museum as well had the establishment and preservation of a Welsh national identity on its flag. Through the preservation of Welsh heritage places, i.e. buildings of different styles and functions from all over the country, as well as traditions and customs, the museum supplies identity claims of a Welsh nation with precedent and legitimacy provided by

³⁵⁴ *Kavanagh*, *Looking for Ourselves*, p. 370.

³⁵⁵ *Nenadic*, *Museums, Gender and Cultural Identity in Scotland*, p. 426.

³⁵⁶ *Nenadic*, *Museums, Gender and Cultural Identity in Scotland*, p. 432.

³⁵⁷ *Mason*, *Museums, Nations, Identities*, p. 151.

the authority of a public institution. The museum's first curator, Dr. Iorwerth Peate, wanted the institution to be “a catalyst for the renewal of national pride and national identity”³⁵⁸. Williams-Davies claims that the first open-air museums, St. Fagans being one of them, “were primarily concerned with forging a shared identity, based on a common inherited culture – real or imagined”³⁵⁹ and no matter if the process is called nation-building or nation-strengthening, it is a fact that open-air museums actively engaged themselves in the area of national identity.

These primary aims and ideas slowly had to adjust to changing expectations and a new *Zeitgeist* and in their struggle to remain relevant in modern times³⁶⁰, they had to find new ways to present themselves and up-to-date approaches to their collections. The first step in this direction was maybe done in the 1980s, when the museum finally dismissed its sole focus on rural Wales and acknowledged the country's industrial heritage by adopting the Rhyd-y-car ironworkers' cottages in its outdoor exhibition. Several other buildings associated with the industrial past of Wales were taken on in the following years.³⁶¹ Another step was taken when the museum underwent a (indeed two) name change(s). The first one occurred in 1995 when the museum was no longer the Welsh Folk Museum but the Museum of Welsh Life. The second re-naming occurred in connection with the general re-structuring of the National Museums Wales and St. Fagans is now called 'National History Museum'.³⁶² It is quite striking that the reference to the nation (and thereby the creation of national identity, one might say) became stronger with each new name. Thus it can be concluded that the enforcement of the Welsh national identity is still one of the main issues at St. Fagans: National History Museum³⁶³. A major step was taken in March 2007 when the gallery Oriel 1 was opened. This gallery finally added totally new perspectives on what it means to be Welsh and what Welsh identity really is or whether it really exists. The theme of the exhibition is 'Belonging'³⁶⁴ and it provides a “clear emphasis on the multiplicity and diversity of identities and ways of 'belonging' present within Wales today”³⁶⁵. For the first time in the history of the museum, the exhibition included a variety of ethnic groups.³⁶⁶ The aim was to “ensure that our collections

³⁵⁸ *Williams-Davies*, 'Now Our History is Your History', p. 117.

³⁵⁹ *Williams-Davies*, 'Now Our History is Your History', p. 117.

³⁶⁰ cf. *Williams-Davies*, 'Now Our History is Your History', p. 115 – 123.

³⁶¹ *Mason*, *Museums, Nations, Identities*, p. 161.

³⁶² *Mason*, *Museums, Nations, Identities*, p. 173.

³⁶³ *Mason*, *Museums, Nations, Identities*, p. 262.

³⁶⁴ cf. *Mason*, *Museums, Nations, Identities*, p. 174 – 175. & *McAleavey*, *Renewal or Betrayal?*, p. 58 – 65. & *Williams-Davies*, 'Now Our History is Your History', p. 115 – 123.

³⁶⁵ *Mason*, *Museums, Nations, Identities*, p. 174.

³⁶⁶ *Williams-Davies*, 'Now Our History is Your History', p. 116.

and exhibitions [i.e. the collections and exhibitions at St. Fagans] reflect a diversity of lifestyles and cultural backgrounds”³⁶⁷. This meant the inclusion of smaller communities and minority groups regarding ethnicity and race – however, it did not mean the explicit inclusion of gender issues.

During my research concerning the representation of women in the outdoor exhibition and the photographic archive at St. Fagans: National History Museum I found a surprising wealth of materials about women which were, however, not used to illustrate women's lives, thoughts or concerns in general. They were not examined from a feminist point of view or simply for the sake of looking at gender issues but more to illustrate customs, traditions and the lives of ordinary Welsh people – regardless whether they were women or men. From everything I experienced in the course of my research at, with and about the museum I deduced that gender is just not the primary concern at St. Fagans: National History Museum. The museum is still very much concerned with the building, creation and preservation of its distinct national identity (thereby also delineating itself from England). Other aspects like ethnicity and race only slowly enter the exhibitions but as far as I am concerned there is no room for gender yet. As I see it, there seems to be a kind of hierarchy and only when the matter of a national identity is not so urgent any more will there be room for gender issues to enter St. Fagans: National History Museum.

Thus we have to wait for the institution's next step into the future, the attempt to stay relevant as it might bring about the inclusion of gender issues and maybe this change is already on its way. Williams-Davies argues that

“[c]hange has to go far deeper in open-air museums, however, than simply including other cultures in our displays. There has to be a fundamental shift in our conception of culture and the way we present it. [...]

We can no longer tell convenient stories that people want to hear. We now have to tell multiple stories and show multiple experiences. We also now need to explore the factors that create identity as much as (if not more than) trying to reflect a particular regional or national heritage. [...] The past is now open to contestation.”³⁶⁸

Surely this change also means the inclusion of gender issues into the permanent exhibitions of museums in general and St. Fagans: National History Museum in particular.

³⁶⁷ *McAleavey*, *Renewal or Betrayal?*, p. 59.

³⁶⁸ *Williams-Davies*, 'Now Our History is Your History', p. 121.

7.4 Gender Issues – Suggestions for the Future

The examination of the representation of women at St. Fagans: National History Museum showed that women are definitely present at the museum. There is an abundance of artefacts related to women's history, however, they have not yet been studied from a feminist point of view. Suggestions how to improve this situation have been provided by a number of researchers³⁶⁹. Knibb offers a list of advice and suggestions concerning the use of museum collections for women's history research and from a feminist point of view. First of all, she proposes that

“women's history should be recognised as a special type of collection, even within a general community museum, which requires specific management practices in selection and acquisition, the ethics of collecting, approaches to access, storage and display, and the use and disposal of collections.”³⁷⁰

It is still a fact that women very often only feature in special or temporary exhibitions with a focus on particular topics like domestic work or the family and Knibb rightly argues that “[w]omen's history in museums should consist of much more than an interpretation of domestic history or even of women's labour”³⁷¹, however, they frequently do not form a part of the permanent make-up of a museum. For all that, “half of human experience has been female”³⁷² and thus women should have their space in heritage sites, museums and exhibitions. They should not be treated as 'the other' to the norm, as 'something special' not appropriate to be represented in a the standard exhibitions of a museum but simply as the other half of human experience. This demand makes necessary some changes in museum work and practice like “a specific commitment to building more representative collections”³⁷³. Hence curators and museum staff should devise a careful plan for the collections' growth, they should have an overview of what they already have and it is imperative that they collect material “not to explain the artifacts but to explain how they have been used to change people's lives”³⁷⁴, i.e. striving for clear documentation as well as the active collection of background information and additional personal histories. Broad and varied collections should be achieved through exchange programmes among regional museums but also by educating lay people how to collect family history and what to donate to archives. Thereby 'ordinary' women could be of help as “highly effective stewards and custodians of their cultural and

³⁶⁹ cf. *Knibb*, 'Present but not Visible', p. 363 – 368.

Holcomb, *Gender and Heritage Interpretation*, p. 68.

Hasted, *Tales of the City*, p. 397 – 409.

³⁷⁰ *Knibb*, 'Present but not Visible', p. 363.

³⁷¹ *Knibb*, 'Present but not Visible', p. 367.

³⁷² *Holcomb*, *Gender and Heritage Interpretation*, p. 59.

³⁷³ *Knibb*, 'Present but not Visible', p. 364.

³⁷⁴ *Knibb*, 'Present but not Visible', p. 364.

community fabric”³⁷⁵. Furthermore, Knibb suggests that “the coordination of women's history projects on a regional basis should be a priority”³⁷⁶ and recommends the cooperation with women's groups, women of colour and other cultural groups. Holcomb argues that “feminist heritage is more class / race / sexual orientation sensitive than mainstream heritage”³⁷⁷ and hence more suited for the exploration of such aspects. However, established museums should change their approach and include minority groups and oppositional interpretations into their display. Finally, “a classification system and inventory that identify the full range of objects related to women”³⁷⁸ must be used which might ask for the implementation of new methods as traditional classification models might prove unsatisfactory.³⁷⁹

With the help of all these suggestions completely new types of exhibitions could be developed. These new formats

“might challenge the visitor to engage in active dialogue and reflection through interactive questioning techniques and visual confrontation; use artifacts in non-traditional formats such as massed groupings and juxtaposition; feature first-person accounts from women past and present as well as the curatorial voice, and include documentation and authorship of exhibitions; link the visitor with past and present issues and concerns; explore women's history in context, including the environment and natural heritage as well as the urban setting; encourage women to participate in and contribute to the development of a greater understanding of themselves and their histories through documentation experiences in the gallery; and include outreach programmes such as activities in the workplace.”³⁸⁰

In connection with these new exhibition formats the visitor must not be forgotten. As has already been discussed, visitors have certain expectations about what they want to see in a museum and what they think is appropriate. They might even have a desire for the feeling of nostalgia about the 'good old days' and not react in a positive way when presented with challenging new ideas or confronted with “popularly held myths or stereotypes of women”³⁸¹. As a result, the museums also have to accept their responsibility to educate their visitors and to slowly lead them towards a new understanding of history. Davey and Chambers even suggest to “push visitors beyond stereotypes by shocking them into questioning their own assumptions”³⁸².

³⁷⁵ Knibb, 'Present but not Visible', p. 366.

³⁷⁶ Knibb, 'Present but not Visible', p. 364.

³⁷⁷ Holcomb, Gender and Heritage Interpretation, p. 70.

³⁷⁸ Knibb, 'Present but not Visible', p. 364 – 365.

³⁷⁹ Knibb, 'Present but not Visible', p. 363 – 365.

³⁸⁰ Knibb, 'Present but not Visible', p. 367.

³⁸¹ Knibb, 'Present but not Visible', p. 367.

³⁸² Frances Davey and Thomas A. Chambers, 'A Woman? At the Fort!': A Shock Tactic for Integrating Women's History in Historical Interpretation. In: Gender and History 6 / 3 (1994), p. 473.

As a conclusion to these ideas and suggestions it must be said that the inclusion and representation of women in museums and heritage places is improving³⁸³ and also in St. Fagans: National History Museum the attempts to change the current situation and adapt to modern times are apparent. However, a lot still remains to be done and although museums, including St. Fagans, “have always collected women's history, [...] these collections deserve to be used in a meaningful and thoughtful way”³⁸⁴.

7.5 Summary

The current chapter is supposed to round off the analysis of the representation of women at St. Fagans: National History Museum. After the detailed examination of the outdoor exhibition and the photographic archive in chapter six, chapter seven pointed out some general problems and challenges of heritage sites and museums. Thus the criticism of the previous chapter must be seen from an objective and balanced perspective and it must be acknowledged that heritage sites and museums have to please several parties and it might not always be so simple to change established structures. Several problems were brought forward like difficulties with museum work concerning collection practices and the organisation of the material and the tension between heritage sites as educational facilities or tourist attractions. Furthermore, the question was examined why gender has not yet been seen as a category worth researching and representing in a more balanced way at St. Fagans: National History Museum and it was argued that the need to establish and preserve a national identity seems to superimpose other aspects such as the representation of other cultures, ethnicities and gender. A beginning has already been made at St. Fagans: National History Museum with the gallery Oriel 1 but further steps still remain to be taken. Finally some suggestions were made, how to improve the representation of women in heritage sites and museums in the future.

³⁸³ *Holcomb*, *Gender and Heritage Interpretation*, p. 68.

³⁸⁴ *Knibb*, 'Present but not Visible', p. 368.

8 Conclusion

The main purpose of the present diploma thesis was to forge a bridge from the heritage concept to the representation of women within this concept by analysing a particular heritage museum in Wales. The particular focus was set on the folk and outdoor museum of St. Fagans: National History Museum. After a first examination of the heritage museum based on common sense and personal interests two areas were identified as particularly interesting and suitable to study the central question of the thesis:

- the outdoor exhibition as the best-known part of the museum
- the photographic archive representing the research department of the institution

The leading question of the study was 'Is heritage gender-blind?', i.e. is it true that most heritage (my heritage concept being a very broad one including tangible as well as intangible heritage, not limiting itself to buildings and places but rather to all materials containing cultural information of any value to be preserved for the future) is

- either considered as 'male' representing male values and power structures and imposing them on our society
- or not 'gendered' at all thereby ignoring power relations and gender stereotypes inscribed in those materials and places.

The assumption was that heritage in itself might not be, what I called 'gender-blind', but that it has very often been interpreted in such a way.

After an initial clarification of the heritage concept and the introduction of some organisations concerned with the preservation of heritage sites on an international level as well as in Britain, this concept was linked with the gender aspect. It was argued that landscapes and places are gendered, containing and reflecting gender relations and power structures. This relationship has to be seen to be able to analyse heritage sites correctly and to include several perspectives. Thus, every object, place or artefact can be analysed from various points of view and “[f]eminists are concerned to show that we interpret experience differently according to gender, class, and race”³⁸⁵: A farmhouse at St. Fagans: National History Museum can be analysed for its architecture, its interior design or for objects and customs of everyday history – but just as well for gender roles within the household or specific aspects of social history.

The perspective chosen for the analysis in the current diploma thesis was a feminist one,

³⁸⁵ Porter, Gender Bias, online source.

questioning the outdoor exhibition and the photographic archive at St. Fagans: National History Museum for their representation of women taking into account absences, silences and exclusions as well. The museum belongs to a network of museums called National Museums Wales, which are spread all over the country. However, in this study the museum was examined individually as more would have gone beyond the scope of a diploma thesis. St. Fagans: National History Museum was chosen for several reasons: First of all, a personal interest in the museum and the region existed as I had lived in Cardiff for approximately a year. Secondly, the museum staff was very friendly and supportive and I was given access to the necessary material for my research. Thirdly, the heritage museum proved to be particularly interesting for my question as it combines different aspects like the outdoor exhibition, the indoor galleries and the archives, the need to present itself as a heritage attraction and the desire to be educating and the still dominant concept to create, establish and strengthen the country's national identity.

In the course of the research it could actually be shown that the St. Fagans: National History Museum holds a wealth of materials related to women's history. There are buildings like family homes, farm houses, workers' houses, objects like cooking utensils, furniture, clothes and a variety of photographs of women. However, the use and interpretation of these materials often leave room for development. In many cases the museum caters for the needs of St. Fagans as a heritage attraction with the aim of attracting a large audience and creating feelings of nostalgia and empathy in them. Women are presented partially and in stereotypical surroundings doing stereotypical tasks like cooking and baking reflecting the 'good old days'. Even more, these strategies could also be observed in the visitor guide of the museum, where women are largely absent whereas men are shown in images representing the crafts and active work processes. Interestingly enough, the only explicitly gendered buildings in the outdoor exhibition were 'male' buildings such as the Workmen's Institute, the War Memorial and a Urinal. The photographic archive gave a similar picture. It reflects the collection practices of the institution as well as what is considered appropriate for such an organisation by the Welsh people. The collection in the archive shows that people donate things which are associated to the exhibition topics or seem to fit with the overall idea of a folk museum.

Concluding from these insights it can be said that women are definitely represented in some ways at St. Fagans: National History Museum but quite apparently not from a feminist perspective. Several reasons were isolated why this might be the case and moreover, why it

might not be too simple to change this situation. Present archive work and collection practice has to come to terms with a variety of challenges such as shortages in staff, huge amounts of collected but poorly documented material and the lack of time and potential to collect new material in a better structured way. In addition to that, institutions like St. Fagans: National History Museum have to struggle with the permanent tension between the need to present themselves as exciting heritage attractions to win visitors and thereby money and the desire to be an educative facility. Special to St. Fagans: National History Museum is the fact that Wales has a strong wish to delineate itself from England and British rule and thus has been busy promoting a sense of national identity among the Welsh people over the last decades. Some of the most important measures taken were the boost of the Welsh language, making it compulsory in school, the establishment of the Welsh Assembly as an independent parliament but also the strengthening of a sense of belonging, a sense of being Welsh, i.e. distinct from English or British among the people. This challenge is still dominant at St. Fagans: National History Museum and seems to be more important than the inclusion of other aspects like ethnicities, other cultures or gender. This trend is only now changing and I suppose that it will take some more years until these aspects will acquire their proper place in the museum's exhibitions and collections.

As a conclusion to this diploma thesis I would like to add some final remarks and personal thoughts on the topic and the findings of this study as well as on its development. It has already been pointed out that within St. Fagans: National History Museum women are still very much confined to the private and domestic sphere. Of course, I do see the problematic aspects of this confinement, however, I also see a potential for further research that sometimes seems to be neglected by women's history researchers. From my personal experience I have to relate that whenever I mentioned that my resources dealt with women doing housework, I was told that these materials are too partial, downgrading and devaluing women. However, I argue that these historians contradicted themselves as there are many different ways to interpret and analyse resources. In my opinion all knowledge about women is valuable and housework, this cannot be denied, formed a large part in women's lives for many centuries. This area should indeed not be devalued by feminists. I argue that illustrating women's lives from various perspectives, as housewives, as mothers, as wives, as organisers of the family, as workers, as fighters, etc. will result in a more varied picture of women's past and housework and the private life is just one more aspect that should not only be compared to paid work but also studied in its own right.

A second final point I would like to make is that in the process of my work for this diploma thesis I realised that there is an abundance of resources that lies in archives and storage spaces but is never used by historians because there is only little documentation. Of course, it is very difficult to base scientific work on sources where the provenance is not known and there is no background information available. However, these sources might hold valuable insights into various aspects of people's lives and they should not be neglected as sources for social history. There are some historians who have already accepted that. Grant describes how he assembled a women's history exhibition called "Her Stories" at a Canadian Municipal Museum³⁸⁶ based on personal objects with limited background information. He explains that they

"were demonstrating courage, with so few objects and so little information, to expect to have an exhibition that was original, of interest to the public, with visual material such as photographs and reproductions of artwork, and with translated text and labels, in such a short time."³⁸⁷

In my opinion it is a pity that there are not more historians and researchers who have this courage to edit existing resources, to develop new ways of working with resources and thereby to create a fuller understanding of our past.

In this way I would like to see my study as opening doors to further research and new ways of looking at my resources and I hope that there will be some courageous historians to do that in the future.

³⁸⁶ Grant, 'Her Stories', p. 410 – 418.

³⁸⁷ Grant, 'Her Stories', p. 413.

9 References & Resources

9.1 Primary Resources

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9.2 Secondary Literature

9.2.1 Books

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Image 3: Visitor Guide – Bakery at St. Fagans: National History Museum. *Amgueddfa Cymru* – National Museum Wales, St. Fagans: National History Museum. Visitor Guide (Cardiff 2011, 5th edition), p. 25.

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Image 6: Visitor Guide – War Memorial at St. Fagans: National History Museum. *Amgueddfa Cymru* – National Museum Wales, St. Fagans: National History Museum. Visitor Guide (Cardiff 2011, 5th edition), p. 31.

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Image 12: Mrs. Olwen Napier (lender's mother) scrubbing the back doorstep. St. Fagans: National History Museum. Photographic archive. 93.403-4.60.

Image 13: Anne Mary Williams scrubbing the front door step at 22, Dunraven Street, Cwmgwrach. St. Fagans: National History Museum. Photographic archive. 35/40. /47-8 (copyright Roy Williams).

Image 14: Lender's great aunt and her daughter washing dishes and scrubbing the back door step at 13, Stuart Street, Treherbert, Rhondda. St. Fagans: National History Museum. Photographic archive. 93.346.60.

Image 15: Lender's father making ice-cream at the rear of the house, 9 Miles St., St. Thomas - for vending along with general groceries. St. Fagans: National History Museum. Photographic archive. 93.382.60.

Image 16: Demonstration of washing and stoning of doorstep by Mrs. Eirona Richards. Location Rwyd-y-Car Cottage 1920s (WFM). St. Fagans: National History Museum. Photographic archive. 35/41, 808-39 (copyright WFM).

Image 17: Scrubbing the Front Doorstep taken from the film "The Silent Village" by Humphrey Jennings. St. Fagans: National History Museum. Photographic archive. Cysyllter Â'r Central Office of Information, Llundain (95.288.60).

Image 18: Mrs. Jane Jones standing beside table with Bara Ceirch. St. Fagans: National History Museum. Photographic archive. (copyright y Cymro).

11 Appendix

11.1 Appendix 1: German Abstract

Die vorliegende Diplomarbeit befasst sich mit der Frage, ob Frauen in unserem kulturellen Erbe repräsentiert werden. Sie versteht sich als Beitrag zur Frauen- und Geschlechtergeschichte und als Aufbereitung empirischer Daten für weitere Forschungsarbeiten. Im Zentrum der Arbeit steht die Analyse eines walisischen Freilicht- und Volksmuseums, St. Fagans: National History Museum. Der Fokus liegt dabei auf der Freilichtausstellung und dem Foto-Archiv, die auf ihre Repräsentationen von Frauen hin untersucht werden. Die verwendeten Quellen waren einerseits die Freilichtausstellung des Museums selbst, andererseits ein Korpus von 72 Schwarz-Weiß-Fotos aus dem Foto-Archiv von St. Fagans. Die Leitfrage der Studie lautet: „Ist unser kulturelles Erbe blind für Geschlechterbeziehungen?“. Es wird davon ausgegangen, dass alle Orte durch Gender geprägt sind und dadurch zum Aufbau und der Stärkung von Geschlechterbeziehungen und -hierarchien beitragen. Gleichzeitig wird diese Vergeschlechtlichung von Orten oft ignoriert und Volksmuseen und historische Freizeitparks neigen dazu Inhalte zu simplifizieren und sich der nostalgischen Vergangenheitsverherrlichung zu verschreiben, statt die Besucherinnen und Besucher durch die Aufbereitung radikaler neuer Ideen zum Denken zu bringen.

Am Beginn der Arbeit steht die Auseinandersetzung mit dem Begriff „heritage“, der auf Deutsch nur wenig zufriedenstellend als „kulturelles Erbe“ übersetzt werden kann. Einige Begriffsdefinitionen werden diskutiert und anschließend das Konzept des Begriffs vorgestellt, das in der vorliegenden Arbeit verwendet wird. Ein Überblick über die Geschichte des Begriffs, sowie die Vorstellung einiger (internationaler und nationaler) Organisationen, die sich mit der Identifikation und dem Schutz von so genanntem Weltkulturerbe befassen schließen Kapitel 2 ab. Kapitel 3 verbindet das Konzept kulturellen Erbes mit Geschlechtlichkeit und zeigt den Zusammenhang zwischen dinglichem und nicht dinglichem Kulturgut und Geschlechterbeziehungen und -rollen auf. Kapitel 4 stellt das Museum vor, in dem die Recherchen durchgeführt wurden: St. Fagans: National History Museum, ein Freilichtmuseum außerhalb von Cardiff, Wales. Zunächst wird die Geschichte der Freilichtmuseen im Allgemeinen erörtert, um dann genauer auf St. Fagans einzugehen. Die Ausstellungen und Archive des Museums werden vorgestellt und ein Zusammenhang zwischen dem Freilichtmuseum und dem Begriff „kulturelles Erbe“ wird hergestellt. Kapitel 5 zeigt den methodischen Zugang, der für die Arbeit gewählt wurde, nämlich ein feministischer Zugang zur Geschichtsforschung, bei dem die vorliegenden Quellen kritisch und aus einer

geschlechtersensiblen Perspektive beleuchtet werden und auch Abwesenheiten und bewusste oder unbewusste Auslassungen analysiert werden. Kapitel 6 bildet das Herz der Studie, d.h. die Analyse der Freilichtausstellung und des Foto-Archivs von St. Fagans: National History Museum. Die Darstellung von Frauen in den Gebäuden von St. Fagans wird genau beschrieben und dabei muss man feststellen, dass das weibliche Geschlecht auf einige wenige Bereiche reduziert wird, nämlich Hausarbeit und Familie. Eine kritische Auseinandersetzung mit der Rolle und den Leben der Frauen ist weitestgehend nicht gegeben. Interessanterweise ist es möglich einige offensichtlich 'männliche' Gebäude zu identifizieren, während das selbe für 'weibliche' Orte nicht möglich ist. Im Bezug auf das Foto-Archiv wurde absichtlich der Fokus Hausarbeit gewählt. Den Einstieg bildet eine kurze quantitative Beschreibung der Struktur und Organisation des Archivs, der Hauptteil besteht jedoch aus einer qualitativen Analyse einzelner Bilder und Bildgruppen, sowie der Herkunft der Bilder. Unterschieden wird zwischen Bildern, die dem Museum gespendet wurden und solchen, die vom Museumspersonal in Auftrag gegeben oder zu Dokumentationszwecken sogar selbst gemacht wurden. In beiden Bereichen werden auch Auslassungen und Absenzen analysiert. Es ist festzustellen, dass das Museum einerseits zwar eine Fülle von Quellen zur Frauen- und Geschlechtergeschichte beinhaltet, diese andererseits jedoch sehr einseitig und unkritisch behandelt werden. Kapitel 7 zeigt die Probleme auf, mit denen Freilichtmuseen und historische Freizeitattraktionen zu kämpfen haben und will somit verdeutlichen, dass die bestehenden Schwächen nicht immer leicht zu beseitigen sind. Es gibt Probleme bei der Arbeit mit Museen und Archiven. Weiters besteht eine große Spannung zwischen der Institution als Bildungseinrichtung und der Notwendigkeit Publikum anzuziehen und somit ein gewisses Maß an Unterhaltung zu bieten. Im Fall von Wales wird noch ein weiterer Faktor deutlich: Die Abgrenzung zu England und der englischen oder britischen Kultur ist nach wie vor sehr wichtig und der Aufbau und die Erhaltung einer nationalen Identität scheinen schlicht und einfach wichtiger als die Einbeziehung von Geschlechtergeschichte. Abschließend werden einige Vorschläge für Verbesserungen in der Zukunft gemacht und Kapitel 8 fasst die Inhalte der Studie noch einmal zusammen und endet mit einigen persönlichen Abschlussbemerkungen.

11.2 Appendix 2: CV (Lebenslauf)

Kontaktinformationen

Vor- und Zuname: Petra Bohrn

Akademischer Grad: Mag. phil.



Aus- und Weiterbildung

Volkschule:	1989 – 1993	Volksschule St. Elisabeth, 1020 Wien
AHS, Unterstufe:	1993 – 1997	Unterstufe des Bundesrealgymnasiums Vereinsgasse, 1020 Wien
HLW3 Erdberg:	1997 – 2002	Höhere Lehranstalt für wirtschaftliche Berufe, Schwerpunkt Fremdsprachen, Erdbergstraße 70, 1030 Wien
Matura:	Juni 2002	Schulabschluss mit Matura in der HLW3 Erdberg
Studium:	2002 – 2009	Lehramt UF Englisch und UF Geschichte, Sozialkunde und Politische Bildung an der Universität Wien
	3. März 2009:	Abschluss des Lehramtsstudiums mit Auszeichnung Diplomarbeit: English as a Lingua Franca: Negotiating Common Ground in Business Interaction (Student Award)
	2004 - 2013	Diplomstudium Geschichte an der Universität Wien
Weiterbildung:	2003 – 2006	Ausbildung zur staatlich geprüften Tanzlehrerin beim VTÖ (Verband der Tanzlehrer Österreichs) Ausbildungs-Tanzschule: Tanzschule Stanek, 1010 Wien
	13.09.2006	Abschluss der Tanzlehrausbildung mit Auszeichnung Staatlich „Geprüfte Tanzlehrerin“

Berufserfahrung

- Oktober 2007 – August 2009** – Angestellte „Geprüfte Tanzlehrerin“ in der Tanzschule Stanek (Tätigkeiten: Leiten von Tanzkursen für Erwachsene und Jugendliche, Verkauf, Beratung, Büroarbeit und Administration, Privatstunden)
- Oktober 2009 – Mai 2010** – Sprachassistentin für den Deutsch-Unterricht in Cardiff (Wales / GB) Radyr Comprehensive School / Whitchurch High School
- ab September 2010:** Tanzlehrerin in der Tanzschule Stanek (freie Mitarbeiterin – geringfügig beschäftigt)
- September 2010 - August 2011:** Unterrichtspraktikum in den Fächern Englisch und Geschichte, Sozialkunde und Politische Bildung am De La Salle Gymnasium in Wien Strebersdorf, Anton-Böck-Gasse 37, 1210 Wien
- ab September 2011:** AHS Lehrerin für Englisch und Geschichte, Sozialkunde und Politische Bildung am De La Salle Gymnasium in Wien Strebersdorf

Besondere Kenntnisse

- Grundausbildung in Daten- und Textverarbeitung (3 Jahre Schulausbildung) Microsoft Office, Internet
- Sprachen: Deutsch (Muttersprache)
Englisch (kompetente Sprachverwendung – C2)
Französisch (Selbstständige Sprachverwendung – B1)
Spanisch (Selbstständige Sprachverwendung – A1)
Latein (Latinum an der Universität Wien)
- Führerschein (Klasse B)

Persönliche Interessen

- Literatur
- Geschichte
- Gesellschaftstanz
- Reisen

Wien, 20. Jänner 2013