



st fagans  
sain national  
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werin  
cymru  
history  
museum

# Collecting the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: A Welsh Perspective

Owain Rhys  
Curator of Contemporary Life  
National History Museum  
St Fagans, Wales



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# St Fagans: National History Museum

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- Open air museum since 1948
- Specialising in reconstructed buildings
- Originally intended for preservation of Welsh rural life
- Later, industrial era buildings and material culture
- One of seven National Museum Wales sites
- Most popular tourist attraction in Wales (600,000 visitors)

# Contemporary Collecting

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“Contemporary collecting is one of the most difficult of practices because of its overwhelming and multifaceted nature, and because we are collecting things that reflect our own society, which we know to be complex. Collecting historical material only seems easier because there is less of it, we know it less well, and because historians have constructed narratives which value one thing above another”

(Knell, S.J. 2004. *Altered Values: Searching for a New Collecting*. In Knell, S.J. (Ed) *Museums and the Future of Collecting (Second Edition)* Aldershot: Ashgate, 1-46)

# Definition

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- Existing, occurring, or living at the same time; belonging to the same time; of the present time; modern
- Post World War II, post Cold War, the Information Age, and a time of terrorism
- Popular culture, mass-production and disposability - “non-authentic spurious”
- Filling gaps in the collection
- Recording the experiences of local communities

# What and how to collect?

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- Objects or alternative forms of representation?
- Community experiences?
- Popular culture?
- Working with private collectors?

# Materiality and Intangibility

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Although 'there are more effective means of recording people's lifestyles, through video, film or photography rather than through objects... objects remain an uniquely tangible primary source'

Clayton, N. 2004. Folk Devils in our Midst? Collecting from Deviant Groups. In Knell, S.J. (Ed) *Museums and the Future of Collecting (Second Edition)* Aldershot: Ashgate, 146-154

# Contemporary Collecting in the past

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# SAMDOK

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## Collecting today

rdning.

*Today the focus has shifted  
from peasant society and folk culture  
to industrial and post-industrial society.  
With fresh perspectives, museums document  
contemporary life and work, trends and traditions,  
and issues of identity, power and diversity.*

*Not everyone needs to collect everything.  
Swedish museums collaborate  
through a network known as Samdok,  
an abbreviation of the Swedish words for  
contemporary documentation,  
cooperation and coordination.*



# Collecting Policy

“Despite the spread of the use of collecting policies, collecting remains a largely untheorized and ill-considered area of museum work”

(Moore, K. 1997. *Museums and Popular Culture*. London and Washington: Cassell)

- collect direct parallels or modern versions of items already in the collection?
- social study research (questionnaires, photography, interviews and object collection)?
- histories of under-represented groups?

# Methods

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# Oriel 1 Community Dresser

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# Nethan Nichols

## Cwm Carn Boxing Club

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This represents me losing weight through boxing and running. It keeps your body temperature at its highest to make you sweat more. The other day, I lost a stone in two days. I wouldn't recommend it! But I've been Welsh Champion and Silver Medallist in the British this year. I'm going to win more next year!



# Olwen Ingham, Johnstown

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Every time people came from different countries to Llangollen International Eisteddfod, we made sure that they had a place to stay. One was a reverend from just outside Johannesburg. And what surprised me more than anything was that he was against black people. I hadn't thought of such a thing in the '60s.

# Shopping List

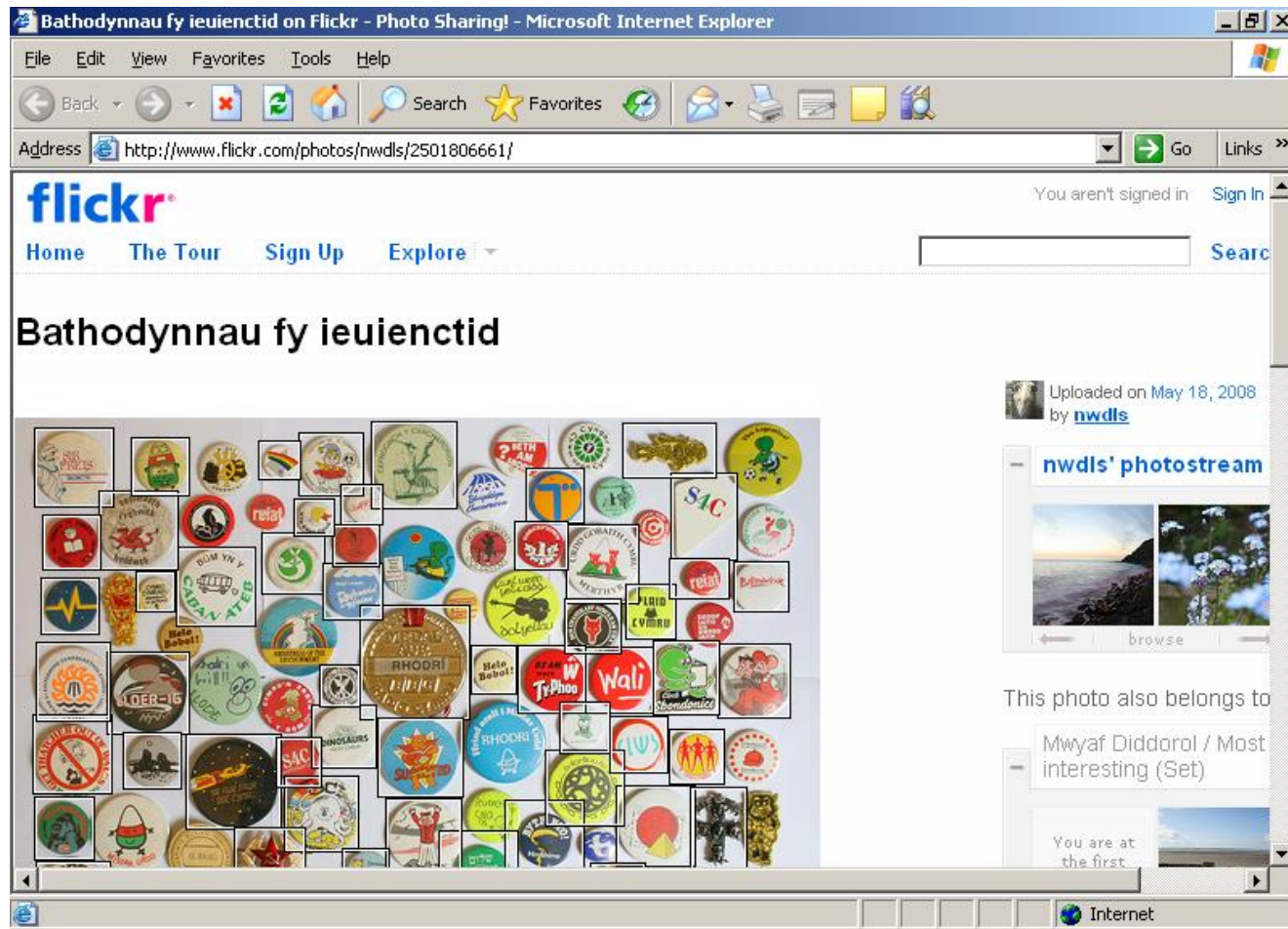
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# World-Wide-Museum

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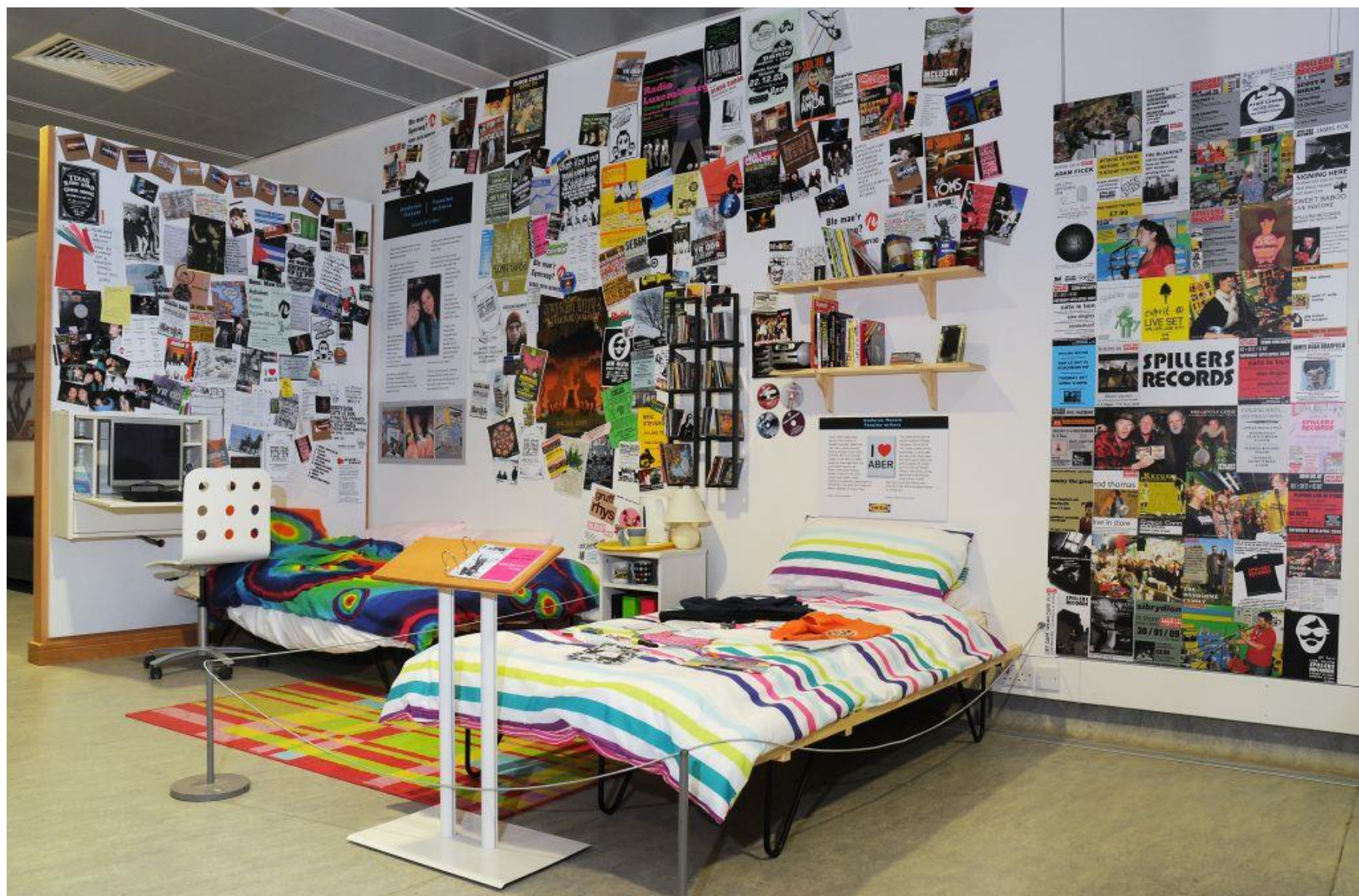
# Pop Peth

















**'give us some of your carrier bags'**



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# Roxe Foundation







# Roxe Foundation

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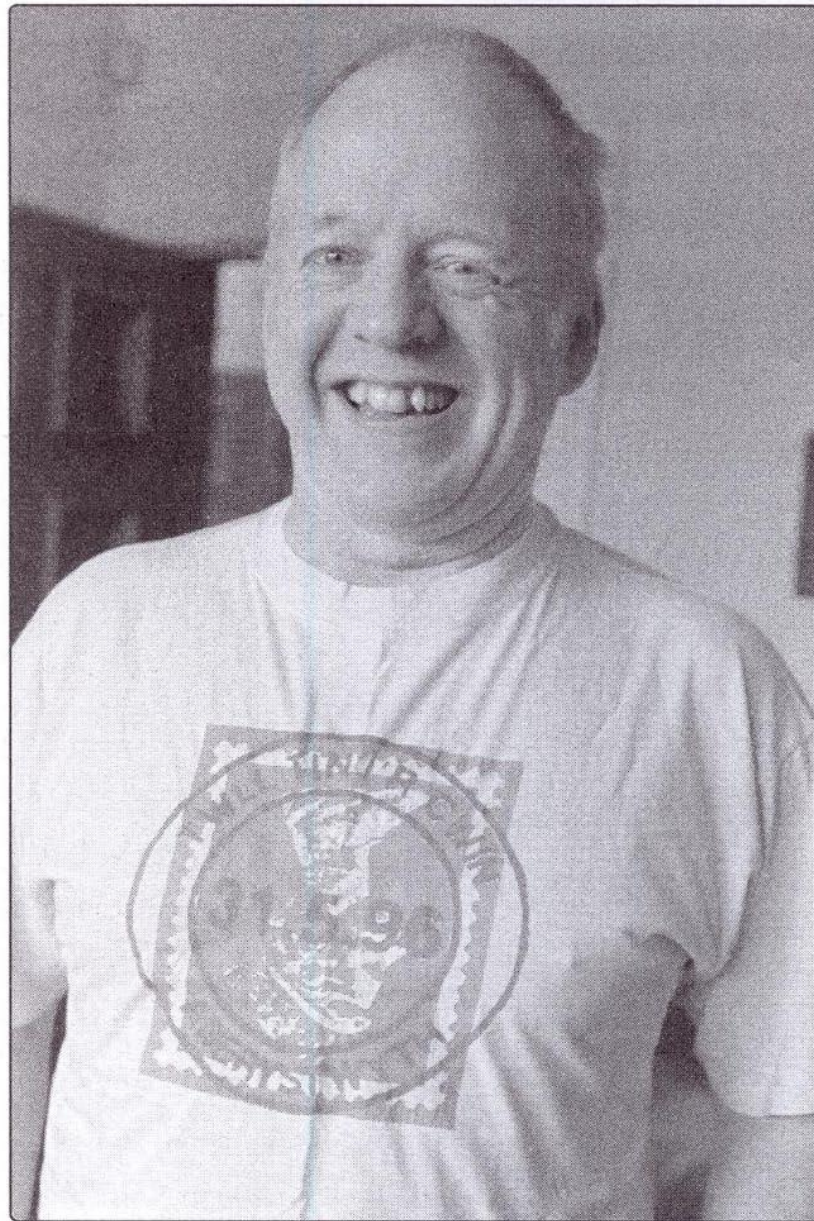
“Around six months after I started, a lot of the boys dropped out. A lot of them were being caught by police; a lot of them were getting caught by teachers, and never did it again. Sort of grew out of the phase. I always wanted to keep doing it, always wanted to be out there. You get better, you get a better hand style, your letters start to flow, your letters start to look nice, then you feel more confident with what you’re doing. You’ve got to make it fast, quick – get it everywhere – and it feels great!”

***Anon***





# Y Frenhines: Celf a Delwedd The Queen: Art and Image



# Amgueddfa Genedlaethol Caerdydd National Museum Cardiff



## Y Frenhines: Celf a Delwedd

I goffáu Jiwbilli Ddiemwnt y Frenhines,  
60 o ddelweddau trawiadol o Elisabeth II  
trwy gydol ei theymasiad.

4 Chwefror – 29 Ebrill 2012  
Mynediad am ddim

## The Queen: Art and Image

To mark The Queen's Diamond Jubilee,  
60 striking images of Queen Elizabeth II,  
spanning her reign.

4 February – 29 April 2012  
Free entry

© National Portrait Gallery  
Reproduction of the portrait of Queen Elizabeth II by Sir Allan Ramsay, 1766  
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Amgueddfa Genedlaethol Caerdydd  
Parc Cathays, Caerdydd CF10 3NP  
Ffôn: (029) 2039 7951

Ar agor dydd Mawrth-dydd Sul  
a'r mwyafnir o Wylau Banc  
10am–5pm

[www.amgueddfacymru.ac.uk](http://www.amgueddfacymru.ac.uk)

National Museum Cardiff  
Cathays Park, Cardiff CF10 3NP  
Tel: (029) 2039 7951

Open Tuesday–Sunday and  
most Bank Holiday Mondays  
10am–5pm

[www.nmuseumwales.ac.uk](http://www.nmuseumwales.ac.uk)



national  
museum  
cardiff  
amgueddfa  
genedlaethol  
caerdydd



National  
Portrait  
Gallery

Yn eiddoedd yr arddangosiadau hon gan yr Oriel Portreidd  
Genedlaethol, Llundain  
Exhibition organized by National Portrait Gallery, London

# Tŷ Ffoadur Refugee House













## Cred

Her special love for the kitchen  
Gave her a sense of purpose, and a sense  
Of being at the center of the world  
To be a woman in the kitchen was to be  
A woman in the world. She was the  
Heart of the home, the center of the  
Universe. She was the one who made  
the world go round.

She was a woman who was  
At the center of the world  
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#### BAGIAN DELAT

Bagian ini adalah bagian yang paling penting dalam kehidupan sehari-hari. Di sini, kita dapat melihat bagaimana kehidupan sehari-hari di masa lalu.

#### KLOSET

Kloset ini adalah bagian yang paling penting dalam kehidupan sehari-hari. Di sini, kita dapat melihat bagaimana kehidupan sehari-hari di masa lalu.

Informasi tentang bagian ini akan tersedia di bagian lain dari pameran.

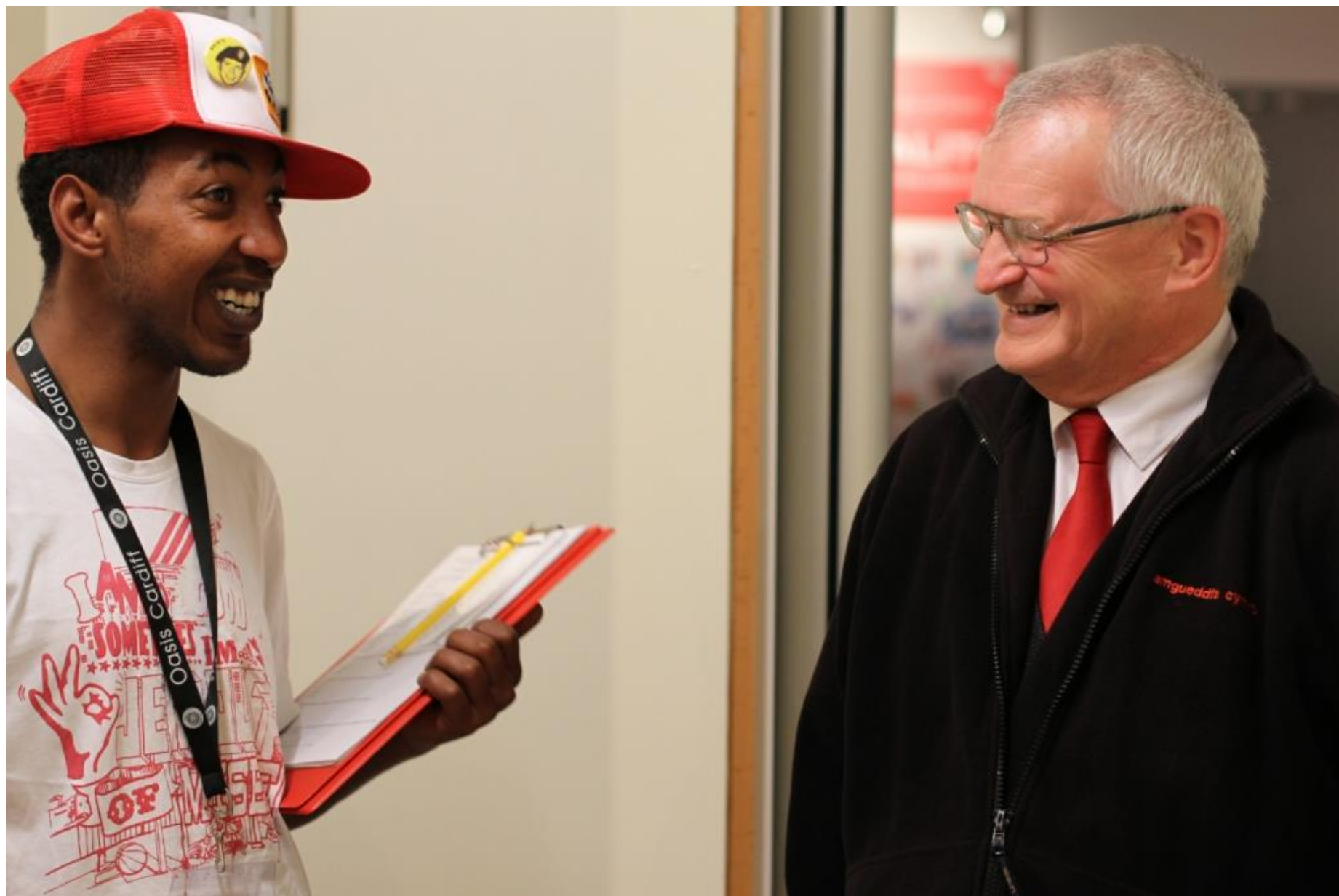
NOVEMBER 2011























# Mis Hanes LHDT LGBT History Month













EXHIBITION BY GAY AMMANFORD  
TO CELEBRATE  
LESBIAN GAY BISEXUAL TRANS HISTORY MONTH  
FEBRUARY 2011

Everyone's journey is individual. If you fall in love with a man, then you fall in love with a man.  
If you fall in love with a woman, then you fall in love with a woman. Love knows no gender.  
Love is love.

Some people are so far in the closet that they're having adventures in Narnia.

In order for society to accept you, you must first accept yourself.



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- Community experiences
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# Conclusion

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A contemporary collector should be “part cultural anthropologist, folklife expert, sociologist, industrial and commercial archeologist [sic], social psychologist, in addition to being a technological, social and cultural historian”

(Schlereth, T. J. 1982. ‘Collecting Today for Tomorrow’, *Museum News*, 60 (4), 29-37)

Owain Rhys  
Curator of Contemporary Life  
National History Museum  
St Fagans, Wales

029 2057 3428

[owain.rhys@museumwales.ac.uk](mailto:owain.rhys@museumwales.ac.uk)