

# WORKING WITH MUSEUMS, HISTORIC SITES, LIBRARIES AND ARCHIVES: A GUIDE TO GOOD PRACTICE

This guide is intended for Welsh Bacallaureate teachers and coordinators.

## WHAT CAN I EXPECT TO SEE IN MUSEUMS, HISTORIC SITES, LIBRARIES AND ARCHIVES?

Museums, historic sites, libraries and archives (we'll call them MLAs in this guide) are the guardians of our heritage: they collect and preserve information. Sometimes this is 'raw evidence' – i.e. original, not explained – and sometimes it is interpreted, perhaps in exhibitions or with assistance from expert staff. The following table shows the kind of material available in MLAs, and where you would be most likely to find it.

Key	Certainly	Probably	Possibly	Unlikely
Source material	Museums	Heritage sites	Libraries	Archives
<b>Information (i.e. written after the event)</b>				
Books in print and out of print				
Newspapers and magazines				
<b>Original documents (i.e. written at the time of the event)</b>				
Letters, diaries and journals				
Census returns (1841-1911)				
Records of births, marriages, deaths, council meetings, society meetings, court cases, prisons, hospitals; also business accounts and trade directories				
<b>Art and graphics</b>				
Paintings				
Cartoons, posters, photos, prints, drawings				
Historic maps and plans (e.g. houses, towns, roads, canals)				
<b>Audio Visual</b>				
Historic film, video and audio (e.g. oral history, broadcasts)				
Music				
<b>Objects</b>				
Archaeological finds, social history, pottery, coins, musical instruments, World Cultures, sport, science, natural history				
Costume, military, industrial, transport				
Literature				
<b>Heritage</b>				
Historic buildings, archaeological and industrial sites				
Gravestones and memorials				
<b>Expert staff</b>				
Curators, business, commercial and retail staff				
Archivists				
Librarians				
Learning Officers				
Conservation experts				
Actors				
Local historians				

# HOW CAN VISITS TO MLAs HELP TO DELIVER THE WBQ CORE?

## 1. Wales, Europe and the World (WEW)

This is the most obvious link to MLAs. Within the WEW theme the two most relevant elements are 'The Impact of Economic and Technological Change' and 'Heritage and Cultural Perspectives'. However a key feature of MLA visits is the potential for cross-curricular learning, the development of research and other essential skills.

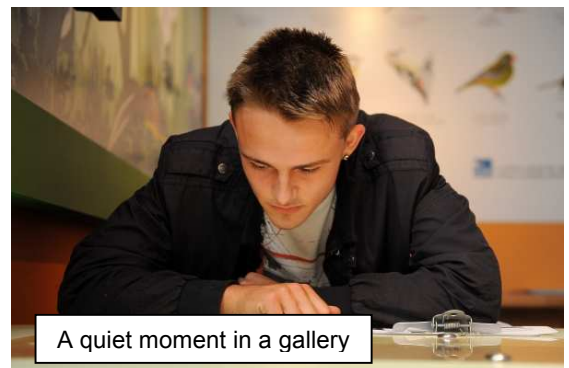


## 2. Personal & Social Education (PSE)

The main part of PSE which ties in with MLAs is Element 4 – 'Understanding development issues and education for sustainable development' – with insights into old and new technologies. Galleries with international exhibitions and displays can be used to look at people's responses to Global Citizenship (key issue 3). There is also the potential for students to work with voluntary organisations – which would include MLAs and heritage sites – as part of Element 5 (Community Participation), such as activities in libraries with young readers.

## 3. Individual Investigation

As MLAs are founded on collections, there is plenty of potential for these to be made available to students for research projects. Archives and libraries are set up to assist with individual research projects so long as they have staff with the time and expertise to guide students, as appropriate to their academic level. It is also important to work with school and college libraries to develop research skills and access online or printed documents. A toolkit for carrying out an Individual Investigation using MLAs is available from CyMAL and from the WBQ teachers' web pages.



## 4. Work Related Education

There is potential for MLAs to be involved with Work Related Education through Work placements and Team Enterprise activities. MLAs vary a lot in size and work experience programmes may be organised by Human Resources departments, education departments or (in very small organisations) by volunteer organisers or curators. The quality of the experience depends on the management and integration of individual students rather than the size of the organisation. MLAs are all involved with providing services for the public, so there is the potential for Team Enterprise activities, working with staff to set up and run events.

## 5. Essential Skills Wales

As MLAs are essentially cross-curricular it is possible to cover Essential Skills on many levels, but archives and libraries are especially suitable for IT and communication skills. A shared visit can also achieve social aims, helping groups to 'gel'.

## CAN MLAs HELP WITH OPTIONS?

MLAs can help with options rather than just through the Core. The options don't need to be historical or cultural, as is shown by these examples of projects:

- Students of Beauty, Childcare and Construction have all visited a 17<sup>th</sup> century manor house, combining their options with WEW by comparing current practice to historic techniques.
- Leisure and Tourism students visit a tourist venue to see how the business works in practice, again linking to WEW.
- IT students worked with a historical archive to develop online trails.



Childcare, 17<sup>th</sup> century style

## WHAT SERVICES CAN I EXPECT FROM MLAs?

- **Museums and heritage sites** offer a wide range of opportunities, either through onsite activities such as tours and workshops, or through outreach services.
- **Archives** offer induction and tours of services on site but are perhaps better placed to provide content which supports research, especially in partnership with other providers such as museums and libraries. Archives have been developing online services in recent years.
- **Libraries** are similar to archives in what they can offer for students: they can provide opportunities for participation in serviced activities on site but can also support research projects and information literacy skills.

## HOW CAN I MAKE THE MOST OF A VISIT?

- Remember that there are many different kinds of MLA, ranging from the tiny local museum or community archive run by volunteers, to the national organisation with specialist staff whose job is to help students with their studies.
- Unless you are close to the MLA and can make several visits, it is likely that the time on site will be quite short, making the visit more useful as a stimulus than as an opportunity for detailed research. Therefore focus on the experience for the students rather than knowledge or information. Ask to see actual historic objects or documents – and even ask whether the students can handle any of them. Say that you want the students to have a variety of encounters – with expert staff, real objects, exciting interpretation, problem-solving.
- It's important to tell the organisation about your objectives, especially in developing skills such as investigation historical evidence or judging different interpretations of events. However, don't be too fixed – be open to the unexpected during the visit, as MLAs are full of hidden gems!
- Decide where the visit fits best in your scheme of work – if it comes at the start it will provide a stimulus; if it comes later you will have a chance to build up prior knowledge before the visit. The MLA will advise you on this.
- Give plenty of warning, to allow the organisation to find things to bring the visit to life.

## USEFUL LINKS

### General

CyMAL / Museums Archives and Libraries Wales: [www.cymal.wales.gov.uk/](http://www.cymal.wales.gov.uk/)  
Culture24: <http://www.culture24.org.uk/places+to+go/wales>

### Museums

Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales: <http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/>  
Welsh Museums Federation: <http://welshmuseumsfederation.org>

### Archives

Using archives: <http://www.arts-scheme.co.uk/>  
Archives Wales: <http://www.archiveswales.org.uk/>  
People's Collection Wales: <http://www.peoplescollectionwales.com/>  
Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales:  
<http://www.rcahmw.gov.uk/> (Public online archive - <http://www.coflein.gov.uk/>)

### Libraries

Libraries Wales: <http://www.library.wales.org/>  
Information Literacy Project: <http://library.wales.org/en/informationliteracy/>  
National Library of Wales: <http://www.llgc.org.uk/>  
Welsh Biography online: <http://wbo.llgc.org.uk/en/index.html>

### Historic sites

Cadw: <http://cadw.wales.gov.uk>  
National Trust: <http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk>  
Landmark Trust: <http://www.landmarktrust.org.uk/>



Harlech Castle, Gwynedd