Narberth Museum – Back where it belongs

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The challenge ahead was daunting but volunteers and staff were determined to return the Museum to its rightful place at the heart of the community.

With funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and the Welsh Government, the Trust has restored an historic building in the town, The Bonded Stores. For over a hundred years, this was where the firm of James Williams Ltd blended and bottled whisky, rum, brandy and port and stored it ‘duty free’ until it was sold on.

Security at ‘the Bond’ needed to be tight and the original, distinctive barred windows have been retained. The imposing entrance door with its two padlocks – one to be opened by the revenue inspector and one by the stores manager – can still be seen.

This building, designed to keep people out, will now welcome visitors to see how it has been transformed into a modern museum.

On the ground floor they will find research facilities for local and family historians, students and the generally curious, a community room with the latest installations for modern conferences and talks, a storage room, a coffee shop and a gift shop.

On the first floor exhibitions and displays tell the story of Narberth in new and innovative ways. There are lots of interactive and hands-on activities for all ages.

These include a Mabinogion-themed storytelling area where children can dress up in costumes of the period. You can lay siege to the castle - digitally - and watch a short film on the life of James Williams as seen through the eyes of a contemporary young girl. Other displays explore Narberth’s development as a typical market town and a centre of commerce.

HLF awarded a £986,500 grant towards the project. Dr. Madeleine Havard, HLF Committee for Wales member, said: “It’s fantastic to see the Bonded Stores back in use as new home for the museum’s significant collection of 15,000 items. The interactive exhibitions and digital technology really help bring the historic stories to life for visitors and local people.

“Volunteers have played a significant role in making this project happen and we hope the opening of the museum encourages more people to get involved in their local heritage.”

Pauline Griffiths, Curator at Narberth Museum, said: "This is a culmination of tremendous amount of hard work and dedication by our army of volunteers over a long and turbulent 9 year period! We are also indebted to our professional team who have been sensitive of the impact of this project on our neighbours. And finally we would to thank our funders who without their support our dream would not have become a reality."

Narberth Museum is being officially opened by architectural historian, Tom Lloyd and Chairman of the Museum

Trustees, Henry Langen on Saturday 7 July and from 2pm that day will finally be open for business again.

Further information

For media information please contact Helen Newton or Elinor Evans on 029 2076 4100 or email hlf@equinoxcommunications.co.uk.