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NATIONAL MUSEUM OF WALES



THE
MUSEUM SCHOOLS SERVICE

CARDIFF
Published by
THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF WALES
1950

FINANCE

The cost of the service is borne by the Local Education Authorities of the participating counties and county boroughs, and the contribution each makes is proportional to the number of children in its secondary schools. The annual sum required is estimated by the Museum Schools Service Committee and communicated to the Welsh Joint Education Committee which apportions it among the participating authorities.

THE AIM OF THE SERVICE

The aim of the service is to interest, to inspire, and to teach through things. It is a service appropriate to a museum, which is concerned with things, has carefully assembled collections of them, and is practised in exhibiting them in such a way that their relationships to one another are made clear. The sum of the exhibited things from the six existing departments of the museum should help to picture man's natural background (geology, botany, and zoology), and his long history on earth (archaeology, folk life and art).

The emphasis of a museum service must be on interesting and inspiring; the "teaching"—the "learning" on the part of the pupil—should be a natural outcome. The ultimate aim should be similar to that of the museum itself: to make boys and girls more curious about, and ultimately more at home in, the world they inhabit.

Since the things, the people, and the methods are of the museum, the initiative too must be the museum's; but the museum will at all times welcome suggestions from the schools. Because of some practical difficulties which will be discussed later, the greatest measure of co-operation and goodwill between the museum and the schools is going to be necessary to ensure the success of this new service, and it may be helpful at this stage to indicate some of the suggestions received from schools relating to activities that appear to be inappropriate, e.g.,

1. That Museum Schools Service Officers should give broadcast talks. This is inappropriate. The 'air' is a medium of its own and already has its own school service. The essence of our service is the tangibility of things in themselves; it is our peculiar offering.

2. That the Museum Schools Service should arrange a lending library. The use of books is well established. We seek to introduce three-dimensional things. We have them, and the Museum Schools Service Officers are trained to deal with them and will be fully occupied in doing so.

3. That the Museum Schools Service Officers should assist individual schools by giving personal guidance in field work in their localities. This is impracticable since the officers cannot have local knowledge of every part of Wales; it is inappropriate because it is particular and not general. The Museum Schools Service will attempt to give a general picture, and it might, so far as field work goes, give guidance in general principles; it would be appropriate to schools to do detailed work in their own areas.

4. Many of the suggestions received may be described as asking for things "complementary to the curriculum." While this does not necessarily condemn them, it is not an adequate reason for a request. The service should be seen as offering something other than assistance to what schools are already doing; as, indeed, offering something new.

In passing from the negative to the positive, and to indicate what is thought appropriate, it will be as well to confine attention to the departments which at present have Schools Service Officers, i.e., those of Geology and Archaeology.

Geology. Although taught in very few schools, geology is fundamental to many other subjects. It is, also, eminently one to create wonder at the past and curiosity about things which all may see. Exhibits which picture the forces, agencies and changes which have brought into being the lands we see to-day accord with the aim of the service.

Archaeology. This subject as such is not in the curriculum. But it is fundamental to history; and the life of primitively equipped peoples in close touch with nature which it pictures is one of intense natural interest to the young. It gives to human life a perspective similar to that which geology gives to the earth. A series of connected exhibits which tell the story of pre-historical times by means of the man-made objects of those times is one most appropriate to the service.

On their introductory visits to schools the Schools Service Officers were met with many requests for specimens from departments which as yet have no Schools Officer and from the Welsh Folk Museum. It is regretted that these cannot be supplied until the necessary additional officers are appointed.

METHODS

This section, describing something still in a developmental stage, must be tentative. The methods finally adopted will not necessarily be those first tried.