

St Fagans is an open-air museum that take people through history, from prehistoric times to the present day. It first opened its doors in 1948 and offered a different sort of perspective since it focused on the mundane aspects of Welsh life. Since then, the museum has been re-erecting old building on the lands to attract more visitors to learn Welsh heritage.

St. Fagans offers the experience to walk through a historic Welsh town and learn about each of the different buildings that resides there. You can explore the town gain an understanding of the lives of the people who would have worked and lived in the buildings there. With buildings such as a bakery, a woodmill, and multiple farmhouses for a more in depth view. The museum also houses a castle with a manor to view the life of the upper class. It is also surrounded by a garden that enhances the experience and adds more colour and greenery to the museum. Once inside there is a gallery to explore the objects of everyday life. There is the ability to explore how humans have evolved from neanderthals and vikings, as well as a view into the lives of soldiers in the Great War. These ability to learn about their stories allows visitors to receive a more personal look at the people of the past. There are also interactive elements to the gallery in order to immerse themselves into the ways of the past, with the ability to try on clothes and handle the equipment used for cooking or farming. This museum offers immersive experiences and can allow for a greater understanding of what life was and is in Wales.

St. Fagans has many strengths that allow it to be an unforgettable and enjoyable experience for anyone who goes. One strength of St. Fagans is the ability to have an up-close view of Welsh life. Visitors can enter the buildings to see how big the were and put themselves in the shoes of the people who lived there. They also have a large plot of land, 100 acres, so they were able to include a lot of different areas and building which provide a greater experience. They also have enhanced smells and sounds around the grounds. This ensures that guests can be fully immersed in the experience that they present at this museum. They also make the facility more inclusive by providing quiet times, elevators to the second floor, as well as accessible bathrooms for those who need it. They also allow service dogs on the premises for those who require it. This inclusivity ensures that they can grant experiences for people with many different needs. At the museum there are also many events that showcase different aspects of welsh heritage and offer different ways to experience it. Something that they do there are ghost tours where they offer stories about ghost encounters and Welsh superstitions regarding death. They provide events that are more inclusive such as a dementia friendly activity to go see pregnant ewes and sow seeds, as well as bringing babies to come enjoy the welsh music, songs, and Welsh language play. There are also many other events showcasing welsh holidays and crafting. These strengths provide an environment that encapsulates what life is like in Wales and allows people to enjoy things that might not have known about before.

Since it happened to be the first of its kind in Wales, there are many weakness present that may limit the amount a visitor can partake in when they visit. One weakness at St. Fagans would be the inaccessibility of the outdoors sections specifically for wheelchair users. The outdoor terrain and uneven paths make it very difficult for people in wheelchairs and the wheelchairs provided by the museum must be kept indoors. Though the indoor sections are accessible, the outdoor sections are very hard to maneuver unless visitors books the buggy service which must be booked at least 2 weeks in advance. This can limit the experience for some people since they are not able to walk around or those with busy schedules might not be able to plan that far ahead. Another weakness could be the

structural integrity of the buildings. Since they are very old building, repairs need to be done more often which can limit the amount of places visitors can enter.

The removal of artifacts in museums is not a new thing that happens. Since St. Fagans is filled with old buildings, the integrity of the buildings may start to lessen over time. As the begin to degrade, it would need to be removed or repaired for the safety of the visitors since a lot of the buildings are accessible. While they may be able to close down the inside for safety, weather damage may cause the building to completely collapse and would then be necessary for them to remove it. Many of the buildings were also brought to St. Fagans from somewhere else and did not come from that area. Many people might argue that St. Fagans has no right to keep those buildings there if the original owners were to claim it back.

Although repatriation has been an issue for museums, there are many reasons not to remove certain things due to the growing concern of losing the knowledge of the past. Due to the vast amount of grassy areas, St. Fagans is able to keep sheep, as well as other farm animals, on the land. These sheep preserve vital Welsh heritage and graze the field in order to properly maintain it. The sheep also help enhance the experience of the museum and provide a real look into what a farm would look like. The buildings are also important in keeping welsh heritage alive and so it is important to provide an area where people can have that view. If they were to remove the buildings or items from the museum, that heritage might be lost or harder to learn about. Although the mundane life is not as interesting as big events, it is important to know about how everyday people had gone about life to truly understand the working class life.

Both tangible and intangible heritage is important in representing the history and lives of the welsh people. The tangible heritage of Welsh life is represented by the buildings themselves. They are a direct look into the past and provide an interactive experience. They also have their galleries that include objects, such as a coffee maker brought to Wales from Italy in 1921 or the remains of a Neanderthal boy who lived in Wales 230 000 years ago, that allow for a look into the daily activities of the past. They also touch on more political aspects of Wales including 1997 vote on Welsh Devolution. Visitors are able to fully interact with the objects of the past while learning how those objects were used and who owned them. Tangible heritage provides a physical aspect the past that allows people to see for themselves how the people of the past used to live. It is a relic of the ways it used to be and presents a way to visualize how much Wales has developed as a country.

Intangible heritage is also important for learning more about the culture. At St. Fagans they host events where they guide people on tours telling stories of welsh life in the past. It allows visitors to hear the experiences instead of only relying on what they see. They also have signs at the buildings telling the story of how it came to be and what would have happened there. There are plenty of events that introduce people to the music and dance aspect of welsh life. People get to enjoy the same music they would have heard in the past and bridges the gap between the past and present. Events like the South Wales Makers Market brings the crafting aspect of Wales to St. Fagans These intangible aspects provide a way to communicate and immerse people into welsh culture.

The future holds even more opportunities for the museum to celebrate Wales' heritage and culture. As Wales grows as a country and more people participate in the culture, the museum can begin to introduce new aspects of the country and how it has changed over time. Given that they are open for donations, more people will be willing to share with others the unique items or buildings their family might have owned. With the different events, more people would be able to share their stories or their own culture they

have brought to the country and allow others to participate and learn new things. They may be able to introduce a new building onto the grounds which would provide a newer point of view and further enhance the knowledge of the culture.

At every building around St. Fagans they have information of the buildings. This allows visitors to picture the history of the building when stepping in. The interactive aspects of the museums allow for a complete understanding of how one would go about their everyday life. They have a running shop, restaurant, and bakery which allows people to buy souvenirs and get an idea for what they may have eaten at these stores. There are games that can be played in the gallery to test some knowledge that people have of the past and to get people of all ages to have fun learning Welsh history. The museum also allows schools to visit and walk around the museum.

As St. Fagans grows in popularity, so does the knowledge Welsh culture of the past. The representation of Welsh culture at this museum is abundant and a great way to ensure people of all ages and nationalities can learn more about how Wales has become the country that it is. While most museums show items with a long paragraph of what is it, St. Fagans lets its visitors truly experience the past by allowing them to have an interactive and educational experience. Welsh heritage is important to learn as it connects all generations and ensures that the experiences of the past are not forgotten by the future.

Sources

St. Fagans National Museum of History. <https://museum.wales/stfagans/>