

St Fagans in the national museum of history for Wales, it claims to be “a people’s museum” [*St Fagans Museum*]. It is a collection of buildings and structures from across Wales, which have been disassembled and rebuilt on the site. Its goal is to reflect “Wales’s story”. [*St Fagans museum*]

This was not my first time visiting St Fagans, I was taken when I was a small child by my parents when they still believed family days out would mend their broken relationship, I have vivid memories of following my parents around as they communicated with open hostility before deciding that the place was big enough that they could look around separately, my earlier memories of the museum were rather strange ones paired with the fact I believe the history of the site was lost on my 6 year old self, so I looked forward to getting a new perspective on it.

The visitor centre was the first thing I was met with walking into the site; it was something that had not stuck in my memories of the place. It was unexpected how it stood there, imposing, how I imagined a prison in a low budget sci-fi film, something strong and imposing that crushed all the former ideas about the place being filled with quintet little thatched cottages. But in a way walking through this large, strange building, felt like entering a different world, stepping thought the centre and into the site, being greeted with trees and greenery did, for a second feeling like stepping back in time, before I started to register all the other visitors dressed in brightly coloured polyester, standing out drastically against this ‘old timey’ world I had just stepped into.

Another thing that stood out to me instantly, to my right was the high ropes, a large obstacle course stretching across the trees. Although it seemed out of place in hindsight it appears to be another way St Fagans tries to appeal to all audiences.

There was just so much at St Fagans, wandering round the site there was a new property every minute and each property had enough history to make its own mini museum and yet I found myself almost running to the next one, even from the very start I felt the pressure of time, I knew I did not have the time to properly look at each structure in the museum. After a while I almost became desensitised to it all, if it was in any other scenario I would have spent a good while admiring the properties, if I passed one on the street I would have stopped and admired the outside, but not here, after a while it became ‘just another old building’. The sheer quantity of historically significant buildings massively lessened their impacts.

Walking round the site it felt like I was being thrown from one era to another unable to totally get a grasp on one certain era. It felt rather jarring being capitulated between eras. However, this isn’t necessarily a bad thing, the main purpose of this museum is to show as much of Welsh history as a very visual way, [*Dafydd*] and it does do that.

However, I began to develop a slightly different opinion on the site when I came across the Lampeter School building. Lampeter is a place I’ve visited quite a bit and the large amount of history in the town is what I consider to be one of the best things about the town. It was sad to learn that I couldn’t see this structure in its original place. I wanted to see it in Lampeter. It gave a bitter feeling to the other buildings around the site. By getting to experience these structures here, meant someplace in Wales was deprived of its history. It makes me think of my hometown and how the older structures, shops and houses really stand to be the heart of it, it’s what makes it special, and to have that removed would really be a loss for the place, it’s the same for these structures. It is not just me who felt this; St Fagans has faced a large amount of criticism especially following the recent relocation of the Vulcan Pub [*Bailey*].

However, there is also the sad truth that any older buildings are difference and expensive to look after, and if anything, them being here means that they are preserved, and maintained. Furthermore, it means the strain is not put on small communities who may not have the money or resources to give these buildings the care they need for preservation. In someways it is carrying the burden and means the structures are still being looked after.

Despite everything I do believe it was successful at what it was trying to do, however I did not feel that I am the intended audience for this, the place was full of family on a day out, young kids wanting to have a view into the past of Wales, and it is a good way to introduce children to history.

It's a different way of viewing history, I am so used to museums with vast boards of information and spending most of the time reading however this was very different, there was something about walking around a place and being totally engulfed by history which was just fun.

St Fagans wants to be a museum for everyone, it hits some of these category's very well, it's very family friendly, however in a way to cater to everyone St Fagans fails to cater to anyone fully.

Despite my criticisms and the lists of things I disliked about the museums I did really enjoy myself. It was a good day out and for most visitors that's important part, despite not being the exact target for the museum I still got something out of it which I can only claim makes the museum successful.

Bibliography

Bailey, B. (2024). *Does The Vulcan Hotel belong in a museum?* [online] *Boak & Bailey's Beer Blog*. Available at: <https://boakandbailey.com/2024/06/does-the-vulcan-hotel-belong-in-a-museum/> [Accessed 23 July 2026].

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