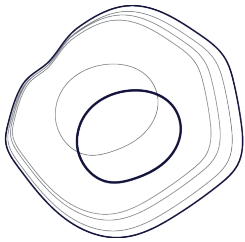


# Commemorative Futures: Advancing Change in the Public Realm



y bydoedd a fynwn  
the worlds we want



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# 1) Introduction

The *Commemorative-Futures Advancing Change* event held on July 27<sup>th</sup> 2023 at Aberystwyth University brought together participants interested in reforming the content and mechanisms of commemoration in Wales. This document collects the work, comments, suggestions and discussions generated during the activities. Participants included academics based at UK Higher Education institutions with disciplinary specialisms in history, philosophy, sociology of education, human geography, international politics, museum studies, development studies, education, archaeology, and urban planning. Also attending were activists, heritage policymakers, anti-racism advocates, planners, politicians, managers of public sector bodies in Wales including Cadw, the Royal Commission of Ancient and Historic Monuments Wales, the National Library of Wales, the Welsh Assembly, the Welsh Government's New Curriculum Working Group, broadcaster S4C, and Race Council Cymru.

## Context

Black Lives Matter demonstrations in the summer of 2020, after the killing of George Floyd, prompted many UK-based organizations to examine their own links to trans-Atlantic slavery and colonialism and begin work on restorative justice and decolonisation. A number of key developments in Wales including the 'Slave Trade and the British Empire: An Audit of Commemoration in Wales' (Legall 2021), the insertion of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic history into the teaching of Welsh history (Estyn 2021), a National Museum Wales decolonising charter (2023), and soon-to-be-released local authority planning guidelines on controversial monuments and statues from Cadw, are each helping to align organisations with equality legislation such as The Well-being of Future Generations Act (2015) and the Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan (2022). Wales has been cast as a global leader in this process of reform in contrast to the more conservative 'retain and explain' approach adopted in England.

Despite pioneer profile, however, there have been a number of limits to the roll-out of reform in Wales and challenges associated with the delivery of anti-racist change in the management of public realm commemorations generally. These include the obduracy of logics and mechanisms within heritage bureaucracies evidenced through, for example, a default assumption that all listed buildings (a category that includes monuments, statues, and memorials) are valuable and should be cherished rather than be conceived of as potentially harmful or offensive.

Challenges also stem from a lack of diversity within the heritage profession as well as local authority planning committees charged with deliberating the meaning of certain histories and their marking in public space. These connect with concerns about identity, local pride, language, belonging and fears of change.

Sanford Levinson's commentary on monument disputes in the United States identifies contrasting Italian-American and Native-American responses to the proposed removal of the famous Columbus Circle column in Manhattan. He suggests that: 'One should look long and hard about the distribution (and redistribution) of "distress" as perhaps the most fundamental reality underlying all controversies about public monuments (1998, 167). Levinson's zero-sum view contrasts with more optimistic and future-orientated strategies in Wales's anti-racist public sector reform but delivery of nation-wide principles of social justice, diversity, equality,

transparency and inclusion are ultimately implemented at a local government level exposed to culture war critiques and populist backlash that impedes reform yet further.

### **Imperatives for Action**

It is within this fraught landscape of public sensitivity, high-level media scrutiny, and local government uncertainty about emerging lexicons of anti-racism and decolonisation, that the commemorative-futures group positions its work.

The event provided a venue for conversation on:

- how to connect the need for reform with policies and systems tasked with delivery;
- what kinds of futures are promoted by Wales's current portfolio of statues, portraits, collections, and place/building-names;
- how might we re-imagine commemoration to create an environment that is welcoming to all and reflective of diversity, equity and inclusion of the many communities that comprise Wales;
- how might we create a space for critical discussions of more problematic histories that recognize injustice and invite new interpretative possibilities.

Participants also discussed more practical actions that could support reform such as:

- Mapping commemorative change in Wales through public consultations and sharing of best-practice for inter-generational healing, restorative justice, and post-colonial repair;
- How to dispel myths and identify positive messages that promote trauma-informed antiracist reform in the management of the commemorative built environment
- How to advance transparency in decision-making and foster a sense of the collective ownership of historic symbols;
- How to create capacity to up-skill personnel with decolonising training, examine procedural justice in current commemorative policy;
- How to develop a pedagogic framework for understanding and potentially intervening in commemorative disputes.

The event was supported by Aberystwyth University's 'The Worlds We Want'. Y Bydoedd A Fynnwnn funding scheme that supports knowledge exchange and research collaboration between Aberystwyth University and the wider community. The scheme's framing around the future works as an orientation strategy since 'the future' moves us away from disputes over historical truth to questions about the messages and values we want to convey moving forward.

## Future-Focus

With that forward-looking lens then we ask:

- What does the current collection of monuments, plaques and statues across Wales say about us now and are we happy with those messages continuing?
- What kinds of historical symbols do we want our children to inherit?

Statues and monuments have always been attempts to shape the future. This can be seen in the speeches and ceremonies that surround specific monument unveilings. In 1828, the first Thomas Picton monument unveiled in Carmarthen came with an inscription that read – ‘His grateful countrymen, to perpetuate past and incite to future exertions, have raised this column to the memory of a hero and a Welshman’. When a plaster cast of Henry Austin Bruce, Lord Aberdare was unveiled in the old college of Aberystwyth in 1899 by the principal and various local dignitaries, the speaker noted ‘It was fitting that there should be a permanent and lasting representation of the late Lord Aberdare before the eyes of the students’ and recited a short homily: Lives of great men all remind us we can make our lives sublime, and departing leave behind us footprints on the sands of time. As Gaynor Legall’s recent audit reveals, Bruce’s footprints are also left in Nigeria where his role as chairman of the National Africa Company and the Royal Niger company connects him to the violent enforcing of palm oil monopolies in the Nembe Kingdom and the killing and maiming of hundreds of native people in Jibu. (see the work of Prof. Nelarine Cornelius).

What happens when effusive honorific statements, whether speeches, statues, plaques or markers, to people and deeds now thought of as abhorrent, are challenged? What paths are available to correct, rebalance, or remove celebration of values now outdated? Are communities given a say in what stands prominently in front of their town hall or city square, or are we held to a symbolic ransom by the choices made by past generations who possessed the wealth, power, and influence to elevate themselves in monumental form?

With an eye to the future, commemorative reform is not just about replacing historical objects or presenting new interpretations, it is an important step toward building the kind of community that celebrates social justice and equality of opportunity in a system of shared decision-making.

## 2) Monumental Moments

The well-known charge 'YOU CANT CHANGE HISTORY!!!' levelled against those advocating removal or replacement of monuments and statues in our public spaces can be countered by accepting the fact that monuments and statues themselves change history by reducing complex individuals to one-dimensional celebratory icons to revere and look up to. Furthermore, the changing of history is a long running and familiar exercise. One of the most dramatic examples of statue toppling was the famous 1566 counter reformation activity in Europe known as Beeldenstorm.



Print of the destruction in the Church of Our Lady in Antwerp, the "signature event" of the Beeldenstorm, 20 August 1566, by Frans Hogenberg – Wikicommons

When statues are not destroyed, they are often relocated into more suitable locations as their surroundings change. The 'Moving Statues' mapping project led by Pete Insole in Bristol <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/e0437ac00d454281be84eaf4494cff18> tracks the journeys of statues and monuments across the city over time. The project notes:

'This should be remembered when considering existing and proposed memorials and how they might be regarded by future communities, as the events of the Black Lives Matter protest in Bristol and elsewhere have demonstrated.'

Similarly, by charting a history of commemorative change in Wales we are better equipped to normalise change and shape its direction. The timeline below features some of the 'monumental moments' in Wales's commemorative journey.

July 2023

Cardiff Bay Codebreakers statue unveiled. Billy Boston Clive Sullivan and Gus Risman feature in the first statue in Wales of non-fictionalised, named black men and recognises their outstanding contribution to sport and improving race relations across the UK.

June 2023:

Cranogwen statue unveiled in Llangranog

June 2022:

Brecon town council removes plaque of 17th century slave trader Thomas Phillips from Captains Walk

September 2021:

Betty Campbell monument unveiled.

June 2021

Heritage Lottery Fund provides £880k for column and statue of first marquis of Anglesey and lord lieutenant of colonial controlled Ireland who lost a leg in battle of Waterloo.

November 2020:

Publication of Task and Finish Group Report and Audit. The Slave Trade and the British Empire: An Audit of Commemoration in Wales.

July 2020:

Cardiff City Council resolves to remove the statue of Thomas Picton from the Marble Hall and to consider placing it elsewhere with a clear explanation of his actions.

March 2019:

Aberfan Memorial Garden opened to the public commemorating disaster of 1966

March 2011:

More than fifty UK academics and thought leaders publish letter in telegraph newspaper appealing for planned statue of Denbigh native son HM Stanley not to be installed in front of town library.

1993:

'People Like Us' bronze sculpture representing people who worked and lived in commercial port Tiger Bay installed in Cardiff's Mermaid Quay.

1988:

Welsh National Garden of Peace opened in Cathays Cardiff

1965:

Cofiwch Dryweryn graffitied on gable wall of cottage near Llanrhystud remembrance of Tryweryn Valley near Bala which was submerged by a reservoir, Llyn Celyn (many attempts to vandalise it, latest with a Nazi swastika)

1922:

Statue of Edward 8th ,chancellor of university, Prince of Wales, and abdicated king vandalised by student protestors. One of a number of occasions that students damaged, and more than once, decapitated the statue.

1899:

Statue of Henry Austin Bruce (Lord Aberdare) presented to students at University College of Wales Aberystwyth

1828:

Opening of a monument 'to the memory of Sir Thomas Picton' in Carmarthen

### **Other monumental moments suggested by the group include:**

The Senghenydd Mining disaster <https://caerphilly.observer/news/926090/national-mining-memorial-unveiled-in-senghenydd-to-mark-100-years-since-universal-colliery-disaster/>

The Nott statue in Carmarthen Nott Square

<https://www.peoplescollection.wales/items/34063#?xywh=-449%2C-21%2C1469%2C888>

Guardian of the Valleys <https://museum.wales/articles/1112/The-Guardian-of-the-Valleys/>  
Betty Cambell statue [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Statue\\_of\\_Betty\\_Campbell](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Statue_of_Betty_Campbell)

Boadicea in Brecon

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Boadicea,\\_Brecon,\\_by\\_John\\_Thomas\\_2.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Boadicea,_Brecon,_by_John_Thomas_2.jpg)

The wooden figurehead of the young Queen Victoria at the former Bull Inn in Aberystwyth  
<https://statues.vanderkrogt.net/object.php?webpage=CO&record=gbwa083>

Boer War memorials in Wales (Nicky Kindersley)

<https://www.angloboerwar.com/forum/2-introductions/31280-boer-war-memorials-of-wales>

Lord Aberdare statue in Cardiff Cathays Park

<https://historypoints.org/index.php?page=lord-aberdare-statue-cardiff>

A comprehensive inventory in Wales of statues and monuments, plaques and markers does not exist and this might be a straightforward first step in any subsequent efforts by commemorative-futures participants. The Legall Audit identified 204 persons of interest, 57 monuments statues and plaques, 93 public buildings and places, 442 street names and 42 historically significant people of Black heritage and is a significant advance to understanding of public commemorations. However, it provided relatively less coverage on Britain's other colonial adventures and more recent 20th Century imperial exercises, for example in South-East Asia and India.



**Useful sources on statues and monuments in Wales include:**

Sturdy, and Sturdy (1977) *Historic monuments of England and Wales* (London: J M Dent & Co)

Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales

<https://rcahmw.gov.uk/discover/coflein/>

Cadw (2014) Caring for War Memorials in Wales <https://cadw.gov.wales/sites/default/files/2019-05/140324caringforwarmemorialsinwalesen.pdf>

Cadw records <https://cadw.gov.wales/advice-support/cof-cymru/search-cadw-records>

ArtUK's database – searchable by location = Wales, Sculpture, outdoor art, *e.g.*

[https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/view\\_as/map/search/outdoor\\_artwork:on--region:wales--work\\_type:sculpture/mapzoom/7--53.2934414361537z-4.195205444335928](https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/view_as/map/search/outdoor_artwork:on--region:wales--work_type:sculpture/mapzoom/7--53.2934414361537z-4.195205444335928) (for example, the Boudicca (Boadicea) statue [https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/boadicea-322545/search/outdoor\\_artwork:on--region:wales--work\\_type:sculpture](https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/boadicea-322545/search/outdoor_artwork:on--region:wales--work_type:sculpture))

Public Statues and Sculpture Association - <https://pssauk.org/>

The Welsh Historic Environment Records “ArchWilo” includes records relating to commemoration although this isn't their sole focus. They aim to record all features of the historic environment irrespective of period and type - <https://archwilio.org.uk/> there are 309 “commemorative” records across the four regional Welsh HERs.

**For recent inventories on statues in the UK see**

Roger Lytollis (2021) *On a Pedestal: A Trip around Britain's Statues*

Peter Matthews (2018) *London's Statues and Monuments: Revised Edition*.

### 3)Case Studies - Presentations

This section documents content delivered in six separate talks given by event participants. Among other things, each talk highlights the importance of geography. Where precisely a statue or monument is situated is crucial in the debates over its reception and longevity.

#### **Prof. Charlotte Williams, Bangor University). The new curriculum and the Black history mandate**

*In the post-BLM 2020 environment, there are lots of new statutory mandates on equality in the curriculum. The new mandate in Wales is that all schools should take on Black history, which is a type of 'citizenship mandate' in the curriculum. This presents a window of opportunity but there are also issues in rolling it out - what are schools actually doing? We don't have a clear sense of what schools the length and breadth of Wales are actually covering as part of 'Black history'. How do they approach it, conceive of it? The Estyn review was useful because it showed a lack of presence of Black history. For schools themselves, there are issues with the conceptual framing of Black history - it's quite a woolly concept.*

*Decolonising is also a contested term and can mean different things.*

*'decolonisation is crucial because unlike diversification is specifically acknowledges the inherent power relations in the production and dissemination of knowledge' (Begum and Saini 2019.198)*

*The Welsh gov. insists it's a new curriculum, but what is Black history? How is that defined? Whose story, which story?*

*Anti-racism is often understood as multiculturalism which is not really true to the radical tenets of anti-racism in terms of dismantling white supremacy.*

*The review was based on the concept of Cynefin*

*There is a mandate issue - schools must address this new approach but they're not given much direction. Individuals like Martin Johnes are asking for slavery to be put into the curriculum. Williams argues there are several publics we want to make these issues salient to.*

*The Set in Stone report flags the significance of the curriculum in raising awareness about colonialism and slavery and about the contested nature of history and remembering (p.31)*

*There is a hidden curriculum. These kinds of issues (like Black history) are often described by the government as a 'sensitive topic'. Teachers are also reluctant to engage in these discussions.*

*We need to do more work on sharing, networking, training. There needs to be coordination and consistency because there has been uneven engagement with these issues. How do we ensure coordination and consistency? Is it about content or cultures of working? It shouldn't be about adding bits to the curriculum but reassessing practices and systems.*

In the subsequent discussion it was also noted by previous teachers that there is limited guidance on how to teach Black history - it often focuses on slavery and white teachers are ill equipped to handle some of the sensitivities around how this should be presented for example in the use of imagery and upsetting descriptions which risk creating a spectacle of black suffering that is both triggering-upsetting and works to reinforce othering and oppression.

There was a call to understand Black history as Welsh history and to avoid creating a distinction between the two.

**Commemorative connections between Wales and the Caribbean (Dr. Alex Scott, International Slavery Museum Liverpool & Andy Bevan, UWTSO Lampeter)**

*The talk relayed progress made in a long process of decolonising University of Wales Trinity Saint David, Lampeter with a review of curriculum and its delivery in the run up to the 200 year anniversary of Lampeter's Old College. Moving from the conventional Eurocentric 'motorway of history' dominated by Greek/Roman classicism, through to Renaissance, age of discovery, enlightenment, imperialism and post-colonialism and instead bring in other contributions and perspectives (Egyptian, Meroe/Kush, Indian Ocean Trade, Chinese, African, Asian and pre-columbian American).*

*The talk also reminded participants of a recent conference 'Wales & the World' that featured research by Alexander Scott and Andy Bevan that examined a major donor to the university Thomas Phillips a slave owner and plantation owner of Camden Park on the island of St Vincent 1820-1851. A bust of Thomas Phillips was wrapped and moved from its location at the university and an exchange study scheme established with Dr Adrian Fraser, Head of University of the West Indies St Vincent Campus to send St Vincent students to Lampeter.*

*The talk flagged a recent article published in Institute of Welsh Affairs Magazine <https://www.iwa.wales/agenda/2023/03/wales-oldest-university-and-its-slavery-links-with-st-vincent-in-the-caribbean/>*

*The work of Akley Olton, Vincentian film-maker – video can be seen here:  
Sugar Lands Youtube link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ScGo734jyys>*

**Knowing our heroes: Commemorating Wales in teaching and broadcasting (Natalie Jones, Race Council Cymru & Ryan Chappell, S4C)**

*This talk conveyed S4C's commitment to increasing diversity in its operations and content, establish S4C as the home of Welsh National experience that reflects Wales in all its diversity. It flagged previous and ongoing programming relating to the new statue of Cranogwen and coverage of renowned 18<sup>th</sup> Century Welsh poet Goronwy Owen who emigrated to the colony of Virginia in 1757 and where he purchased four enslaved people to work on a plantation he had purchased. It concluded by asking participants for input on how S4C might better support educational objectives associated with commemorating individuals.*

**On Colston: Lessons from the South-West (Prof. Tim Cole, We Are Bristol History Commission)**

*In a presentation packed with content detailing survey work carried over recent years compiling responses to the toppling of Colston by residents of Bristol noting distinctly the efforts to include hard to reach sectors of the community through school talks and events, and the important generational schism in public opinion about toppling statues divided by age.*

*Prof Cole noted that it is also important to think about the political context of when statues were put up and unveiled. For example, the Colston statue was installed a time when philanthropy seen as the main mode for social reform and improvement. Also, statues often appear at moments of social unrest in order to keep population in line? Statues as spectacles of state power and vehicles for domination.*

**Responding to monumental obduracy in Carmarthen (Emily Laurens, Artist)**

*Emily Laurens was funded to develop an artistic response to the Picton Monument and other commemorations in Carmarthen with a film and speculative imagined animated replacement of the Picton monument in collaboration with community.*

*Ms Laurens also developed a facebook platform Hoelion Wyth Cymdeithas // Pillars of Society to collect and disseminate critical engagement with the monumental portfolio in Carmarthen. <https://www.facebook.com/pillarscaerfyrdin/>*

*Pillars of Society also features a youtube series of talks about Camarthen's heritage and the history of enslavement and Empire that can be viewed here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CRYIqYVjY\\_s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CRYIqYVjY_s)*

*Ms Lauren's dialogue is signalled by Carmarthenshire County Council via QR code on the recently installed interpretive board placed adjacent to the town's Picton Monument.*

**Rebalancing the portfolio with Betty Campbell and Cranogwen (Elin Jones M.S, Monumental Welsh Women)**

*Elin Jones remarked that lots of men in Welsh Government Assembly have been assiduously keeping notes, journaling for future publication of their diaries - with a view to their legacy. Female politicians in the Assembly are not doing that in same way.*

*Elin Jones mentioned the paucity of females presence in the commemorative landscape in Wales and described her participation in the monumental Welsh women group and the process of shortlisting and selection on women significant to Wales history to be commemorated noting: if these women turn out to be problematic in 100 year's time then fine but let's put them up first.*

*Monumental Welsh Women's original list of 50 brought down to 5. Betty Campbell, Cranogwen, Elizabeth Andrews known for pithead baths, Lady Rhondda a leading suffragette, and writer and feminist Elaine Morgan.*

### **Summary Discussion before lunch**

Natalie Jones commented about how little those who oppose change to the Picton Memorial in Carmarthen think about how it might make you feel as a black woman, whose great grandmothers might have been the victim of rape under slavery when they walk past such a statue.

Elin Jones commented on how a statue is not everything that needs to be done. But she pointed out how the statue in Llangranog will be seen by all the children who walk past it, when they are staying in the Urdd – so it has the power to make a difference.

There was considerable discussion about representation in education. One person commented that this extends beyond teachers, it applies to teaching assistants, it applies to what is available in the libraries, etc. Natalie Jones commented on her own experience of being a black teacher in Wales and how exclusionary the system can be, which doesn't apply to all schools but certainly some settings are hostile environments. Parents spoke about being asked by a headteacher, when they challenged the lack of representation in education "what did you expect moving this far West in Wales".

Charlotte Williams recommended that we need to give the schools a chance to respond to the new curriculum. Nathalie Jones spoke about the formal letter that she has sent to call on Welsh Government to have a system of checking whether these policies are being implemented by schools. Ryan Chappell from S4C talked about the importance of Charlotte's report. He was keen that this discussion cannot focus solely on negative history but should also capture positive history. He argued that we need to drop Black History as a phrase and recognise that it is Welsh history.

## 4) Barriers to Reform Round Table

If there is so much commitment and political goodwill why has reform been difficult? By identifying the barriers to change we can figure out how to overcome them.

### **Objections to change:**

- change is erasure or censorship,
- people being a person of their time – so we shouldn't judge them by today's values,
- if you take that statue down, where does it end
- the artistic value of the artefact
- its an important part of the landscape
- it can lead to a reactionary sentiment
- anchoring – when people are threatened by change
- talked about nostalgia
- wokery
- signalling their own virtue
- it's fashionable to not to want to take statues down
- WHY?
- It uses resources – actually there is a cost of living crises
- (It assumes people all had the same values in the past. In the past everyone was a racist and now everyone isn't – this is nonsense.)

### **Institutional limits to change**

- Institutional identity
- Alumni
- The status quo protects itself
- Lip service is sometimes paid to these things but its not really invested in – a thin performative gesture
- Old colonial money sits in pots – trustees
- Afraid of trustees
- Criticism of departments/ silos/ not looking at curriculum as a whole – 'hands off classics'
- Leadership – strategic indecision and delay – 'no resources'
- Lack of political will/ don't want to rock the boat
- Assumption of safety after preliminary checks of archives – complacency
- Archive staff anxious about how to deal with finding problematic objects
- Resources not there to catalogue – issues with how knowledge is stored and accessed
- No resources to train staff appropriately to deal with such objects
- How to manage students pushing for change – students as consumers with rights

### **Justifications for status quo**

- Civic pride
- Can't re-write histories
- Agendas being imposed by external people/forces
- Role of media shaping cultural memory
- Media not neutral – status quo doesn't just happen
- White supremacy – behind some of the justifications and things people say
- Conservation – shift in generational attitudes to changing the public landscape and what is considered worthy/unworthy. Old = good

- British reaction against European modernity
- Politics of conservation
- General public ignorance of own history – empire as evidence of British greatness/exceptionalism
- Britain hasn't been forced to confront past in the same way as other colonising countries
- How does this work in Wales/England?
- Ethereality of public space – new meanings and attachments to monuments over time – longer memories with particular social attachments
- Welsh independence – someone like Picton complicated in Wales – not just military hero but an oppressor

### **Fears of consequences**

- Cultural changes
- Cost of living, cost to remove
- 'it's just my environment'
- Increased polarisation – does it increase culture wars?
- Fear of backlash from extreme groups
- Loss of values/shared/British values
- You are dismantling idols – some communities very attached
- Fear of being perceived as wrong/racist
- Fear of using wrong terms
- Sensitive issue – reluctance
- Policy fallout – having to rewrite policy, esp in schools
- Fear of re-writing policy and still getting things wrong
- It just causes lots of work – apathy/overwhelmed services
- Fear of threats/violence/litigation
- Frightening legal climate
- Reparations – fear of political implications of having to pay - it would give the far right openings
- Defacing objects – legal consequences but also part of cultural history of object
- neoliberal marketisation – Black people being used as marketing tool to show progressive values
- Francesca Sobande – spectacularisation of Black suffering

### **Group discussion that followed**

- Do we need monuments at all?
- Why do these monuments have to focus on one individual? There is a big difference between having one person represented and the monuments that contain a list of names.
- The representation of women can often be problematic. Where men get monuments about key events in history, statues that are women often represent symbolic idea such as signalling a virtue such as justice, freedom, equality. By making women embody a virtue this dehumanises them.
- Even statues of specific women can be problematic – such as the recent statue of Mary Wollstonecraft which is way too small, and she is naked.

## 5) Priorities for Change

- Alternative ways of commemorating beyond remove/recontextualise
- Presenting accurate information, both of positive and negative associations for each monument with on-site interpretation
- Engage with Welsh military histories of imperialism and their presence in public space
- Open up public, collective research into those who Gaynor called 'people accused of crimes against Black people' (9D in the report).
- A monument to the 1919 race riots?
- More work on how the memorial landscape was created and who had the power over it.
- Frameworks that support inclusive decision-making and foster active and informed engagement with the diversity of our heritage
- Unified guidance for dealing with existing commemorative features and records relating to them
- Encourage engagement by the general public and allow for a more inclusive response to change in public spaces and collections.
- Educating people about why commemorative monuments can be problematic and how changing perspectives can allow us to refocus our own
- Coming to terms with how entwinement with empire and the slave trade is embedded in the Welsh commemorative landscape.
- More transparency and accountability in the decision-making process on listing and commemoration
- Developing formal opportunities to object and contest to monuments deemed problematic
- Encouraging shared ownership of our historical symbols
- Ensuring that commemoration reform in Wales is not just a conversation in and about Wales. Rather, it needs to be a process that actively involves the wider world, particularly people in places that were colonised by Europeans. For example, if commemorations pertain to Welshmen and women who engaged in slavery in the West Indies, then every effort should be to allow people in Caribbean nations to shape how Wales memorialises transatlantic slavery today.

### Group Discussion

Activities that involve really strong challenges can be problematic because if you focus on something negative and come in too hard, then people can dig in against your agenda, and it will ultimately become harder to introduce change.

There is a need for positive stories to be documented – the example given was the case of a slave who managed to jump ashore from a slave boat in the UK when slavery had been abolished in the UK and henceforth lived out his life a free man.

It is important to capture the nuance of the narrative. E.g. the case of the member of the Bute family whose act of philanthropy helped to fund a hospital and he is commemorated for that. However, others have spoken about what a terrible place it was and that people would be sent there to die, so there is often more than one side to the story.



Military commemoration is often problematic. There can be greater number of monuments in areas where there was great poverty and deprivation because these are the recruitment grounds for the armed forces. This means there is an overlap between poverty and loss of life in wars.

## 6)Owning reform, mapping a path for change

- Nina Steele, Royal Commission Ancient Historical Monuments Wales: One of the things we will do in the Royal Commission is make sure that we invest time and resources to go through our existing records
- It needs to be recognised that sometimes preservation is a case of keeping records rather than simply about maintaining objects. [Nina followed this up with a valuable clarification] What I was referring to is the potential applicability of the archaeological concept of “preservation by record” *i.e.* often in archaeological investigations, discoveries (*e.g.* buildings, boundaries, objects, even whole landscapes) are thoroughly recorded during the process of excavation, which means that they are destroyed, to make way for *e.g.* a new development or perhaps in advance of coastal erosion. This means that in theory they can be *virtually* reconstructed because they are fully documented and understood, with the records and the objects in an accredited repository. This principal is easier with regard to objects that can now be recorded using photogrammetry and 3D models. The approach is opposed to “preservation *in situ*” where archaeological remains are left intact and undisturbed in their original location. So, in theory the monumental landscape could be dismantled but recorded in such a way that would mean the monuments and their contexts are not lost, but they are not on display in our landscape as they currently are. This could help to address the some of the issues relating to the resistance to change/rewriting history.
- Although we are committed to decolonisation and have a lot of support for the work, it has to be balanced with all our other commitments as it is only one component of a much wider remit.
- Tom Lewis, Nottingham Trent: Those attending this conference, we all have the same viewpoint. The question I want to grapple with is how do we engage others with different views? What are our strategies for bringing people in?
- Emily Laurens: I’m interested in internal change because it is about people’s emotions. It takes a change in mindset of the people in power.
- Judith Alfrey, cadw: Anyone working in conservation, and certainly this is the case within cadw, we understand that conservation is about managing change, not trying to stop it from happening.
- There was a lot of interest in the relevance of cadw position on conservation being about managing change, and not preventing it. Questions about how this could be more widely understood. Judith explained that cadw say it all the time, which made her question whether cadw needs to find different ways to say it, or in different forums.
- The one thing that people share is their connection to their place – and we need to bring people together, and engage the wider public with this shared sense of place.
- The changes that are happening in the Welsh Curriculum ties in with this sense of place.
- When we talk about place, we also need to think of our own bodies, and tap into that sense of shared humanity – so that we can start to experience place in a different way.
- Nina Steele: In my personal capacity, as a school governor, I’m going to engage with the school on the issues discussed today.

- Judith Alfrey, cadw: We are currently working on a new guidance on commemoration. But in addition to this what I want to do in future is to make a list of buildings and be more responsive to diversity issues.
- Nina and Judith also talked about how cadw could add to the list from the Royal Commission – which is a legally designated list. Specifically, Cadw holds the legally designated records relating to Listed Buildings. We need to ensure that the National Monuments Record, which the RCAHMS is responsible for, fully reflects the revised content Cadw have included in updated LB records.
- Tom Lewis: He intends to work out a framework of how these issues are underpinned by law and specifically by Human Rights law. He's currently working on an article about this. Hate speech can be legitimately curtailed by law. Currently, human rights are under threat. The political discourse is that human rights leads to unelected people imposing their will on the electorate.
- We all have different experience of walking down the same street
- Discussion about how different generations engage – should young people's voice's matter more because they will be around for longer, so there are more greatly impacted?
- Discussion about the need for greater moral leadership from our elected representatives – discussed the way that referendums can be used to cause division or drive an agenda.
- Judith Alfrey – if you do a consultation, it must be transparent who are the people being asked and how is it being done. We need to scrutinise the mechanisms to consider if the right people have been consulted in the right way.
- Emily Lauren's intentions: I'm currently working on my one woman show about Picton. In addition to that I'm working with Gareth in various ways. I am also involved in the National Trust are Dynefor as an engagement officer, so I will introduce these issues to Dynefor as part of this engagement.
- There was interest in relating this to the case of Penrhyn Castle and Powis Castle.

Charlotte Williams: mentioned GEM, an organization of museum educators could be linked. Conwy has been very diverse for a long time but that not often widely understood. Lots of Irish famine refugees and also more recent pregnancy refugees.

BBC bitesize and S4C history might be an avenue to pursue for creating content about race/racism in Wales, or rebalancing curriculum with Welsh histories concerning people with black heritage.

Better to use thematic structures rather than individual heroes in the approach.

Paul O Leary - history of protests could be part of a blue plaque series?

Paul O Leary - Civic Society Aberystwyth approached Department of History for an audit of local plaques around the town.

LLAFUR: The Welsh People's History Society a potential resource and similar enterprise. They have on-line training sessions.

Gareth Hoskins - Ceredigion Local Education Authority could be lobbied to improve delivery of diversity in teaching content and practice. Ceredigion School Governors forum might be a way to connect this.

Paul O Leary - A new curriculum theme about Empire, Colonialism and Wales and the uneven distribution of resources. See Annual and Final report on implementation of the recommendations from the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Communities,

Contributions and Cynefin in the New Curriculum Working Group report

## 7) Esther Muddiman's sign out sheet

Miidong Daloeng	<a href="mailto:miidong.p.daloeng@llyfrgell.cymru">miidong.p.daloeng@llyfrgell.cymru</a>	I am interested in collaborations and projects on decolonisation and diversity. Looking forward to networking and collaborating
Rhys Dafydd Jones	<a href="mailto:rhj@aber.ac.uk">rhj@aber.ac.uk</a>	Decolonisation, race, institutional diversity, migration and diversity in the countryside (outside cities), religious diversity and the built environment
Rhodri Lewis	<a href="mailto:rhodri.lewis@rcahmw.gov.uk">rhodri.lewis@rcahmw.gov.uk</a>	Curriculum, education, war memorials
Alex Scott	<a href="mailto:alexander.scott@liverpoolmuseums.org.uk">alexander.scott@liverpoolmuseums.org.uk</a>	museums, collections, decolonisation
What I want to talk about		
Lucy Taylor	<a href="mailto:lft@aber.ac.uk">lft@aber.ac.uk</a>	practical ways to make change (e.g. in museums and media)
Nicki Kindersley	<a href="mailto:kindersley1@cardiff.ac.uk">kindersley1@cardiff.ac.uk</a>	working on archive research into Henry Austin Bruce and Nigeria; want to find colleagues and co-conspirators for public histories of imperialism in (South) Wales
Natalie Jones	<a href="mailto:jones01@s4c.cymru">jones01@s4c.cymru</a>	education (general public, curriculum, home schoolers), representation in media, resources to support education
Esther Muddiman	<a href="mailto:muddimanek@cardiff.ac.uk">muddimanek@cardiff.ac.uk</a>	interested in decolonisation, radical pedagogies that link to racialised/classed/gendered inequalities; university buildings and their colonial/imperialist histories; scholar-activism research

## 8)Actions

### Whose Heritage? Mapping a path to change.

Using large format outline map of Wales as paper-tablecloth placed on each table identify who is responsible for a particular historical symbol and how the process for changing it operates. What are the key stages along the way? Who do you need to persuade? How are you guided in the process. On whose behalf are decisions made?

### Building support

Justification for status quo often made in the name of 'the public' by state leaders or designated specialists and experts. i.e. there is a lack of public support for removal/modification. Need to demonstrate public support by organising and raising awareness of the hidden/obscured history of a commemorative symbol or object. Identify community groups and leaders, local newspaper editor as venue for letters from community groups to demonstrate broad support. Build email list of supporters, use social media, use on-line petition, organise a rally, contact policy makers to arrange a meeting. Develop a case with key points backed up with factual information. Establish that historic symbol is an active endorsement, emphasize that the community must answer the question, "Who are we as a community today?" Ask what message the display sends to visitors and residents.

### Corrective QR

QR codes can be generated through google chrome and provide a means to discretely install public access to counter narratives that re-balance history and challenge the hagiography of the statue or monument's form. QR codes can be printed and left in situ. Visitors can use these to access webcontent populated, initially by Legall Audit data and supplemented by additional research.

Openstreetmap (OSM) might be used in similar way with generated wikidata content linked to the open source mapping tool

<https://www.openstreetmap.org/#map=17/52.41492/-4.07816>

<https://historypoints.org/> is a north Wales based platform using QR codes maintained by Rhodri Clarke and provides another venue for correcting or rebalancing the past in public space with additional of critical histories that connect Welsh places, people and wealth with colonial ventures overseas.

## 9) Readings

### ***Policy Related:***

- Cadw (2023) Public Commemoration in Wales: Guidance for Public Bodies (Draft)  
<https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2022-11/public-commemoration-in-wales-guidance-for-public-bodies.pdf>
- Stephenson, B. Gourmet, M.A and Burch-Brown, J. (2022) Reviewing contested statues, memorials and place names: Guidance for public bodies.  
Available here: <https://bridginghistories.com/resources/Guidance-for-public-bodies-reviewing-contested-heritage-2.pdf>
- Stephenson, B. Burch-Brown, J. and Gourmet, M.A (2021) Undertaking reviews of monuments and street names: Processes to guide public bodies. Policy Briefing 106: Oct 2021. Bristol University available: [https://bridginghistories.com/resources/InDesign-2021\\_Briefing\\_Burch-Brown\\_FINAL.pdf](https://bridginghistories.com/resources/InDesign-2021_Briefing_Burch-Brown_FINAL.pdf)
- Welsh Parliament: Culture, Welsh Language and Communications Committee (2021) Set in Stone?  
A report on who gets remembered in public spaces - available:  
<https://senedd.wales/media/3jbnhs2d/cr-ld14301-e.pdf>
- Task and Finish Group. (2021) Slave Trade and the British Empire: An Audit of Commemoration in Wales. (Cardiff: Welsh Government).  
<https://www.gov.wales/slave-trade-and-british-empire-audit-commemoration-wales>

### ***Academic Reading***

- Alderman, D. H., & Reuben, R. R. (2020). The classroom as “toponymic workspace”: towards a critical pedagogy of campus place renaming. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 44(1), 124-141.
- D'Ignazio, C., So, W., & Ntim-Addae, N. (2022). The audit: Perils and possibilities for contesting oppression in the heritage landscape. In *The Routledge Handbook of Architecture, Urban Space and Politics, Volume I* (pp. 250-266). Routledge.
- D'Ignazio, C. (2017). Civic Imagination and a Useless Map. *DIY Utopia: Cultural Imagination and Remaking of the Possible*, 21-46.
- Gensburger, S., & Wüstenberg, J. (Eds.). (2023). *De-Commemoration: Removing Statues and Renaming Places*. Berghahn Books.
- Kearns, G (2020) Topple the racists 1: decolonising the space and institutional memory of the university, *Geography*, 105:3, 116-125
- Moody, J. (2020). *The persistence of memory: Remembering slavery in Liverpool, 'slaving capital of the world'* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press).
- Rose-Redwood, R, Baird, I.G Palonen, E. and C.A Rose-Redwood (2022) "Monumentality, Memoryscapes, and the Politics of Place." *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies* 21 (5) 448-467.

# 10) Appendices

The July 27<sup>th</sup> Commemorative Futures Event follows on from in-house activities ('Our University on Display' see below) that hosted discussions between staff, students, residents, alumni groups and other stakeholders on Aberystwyth University's own commemorative content and practices.

<p>'Aberystwyth: Our University on Display'. Thursday, 1 June, Cambria conference room.</p>
<p>Gallery workshop (1): <b>The Old College Galleries; Our Mission Statement.</b> This workshop will start with a presentation on the content of the permanent Old College galleries and the mission statement that has informed them. We will end with an opportunity for feedback to help shape the content and the mission statement for future displays.</p>
<p>Gallery workshop (2): <b>Graffiti the walls; Intangible Culture at Aberystwyth University</b> There are many unofficial traditions, unique to Aberystwyth University that have developed organically over 150 years from the care and creativity of staff and students. This workshop will explore some of these traditions and investigate how Old College could help to host and facilitate activities that connect us to our past and sense of place. These participatory activities would seek to represent and celebrate the diverse voices of the university past, present and future.</p>
<p><b>The Whitewashed Prince; Working with 100 years of response</b> The statue of Prince Edward outside the Old College has been the subject of 100 years of student response when it was whitewashed the night before it was unveiled in 1922. More recently the statue was listed in the 2020 audit of contentious public monuments in Wales by the Welsh Government. This workshop will explore this history and how we respond to the statue in future.</p>
<p><b>Re-imagining commemoration at the university: reforming content and process</b> This session helps us think about what kinds of futures are promoted by the university's existing portfolio of statues, portraits, collections, and place/building-names. If university spaces operate as a hidden curriculum of symbols honouring the lives and values of early patrons and work to carry those values across generations, what other histories have been silenced and suppressed and how might we re-imagine commemoration to create an environment welcoming to all and reflective of diversity, equity and inclusion of the many communities that comprise the university? As well as statue of Edward VIII, the Welsh Government audit listed another university-owned statue of Henry Austin-Bruce (Lord Aberdare) as a 'person of interest' due to his links with the Royal Niger Company and its violent enforcing of palm oil trade monopolies in Southern Nigeria. While many universities in the UK and elsewhere have commenced a process of historical reckoning, Aberystwyth has, so far, been most comfortable celebrating its radicalism, abolitionism and early examples of student diversity. How might we also create a space for critical discussions of more problematic histories that recognize injustice and invite new interpretative possibilities?</p>

## ***Commemorative place-name Reform***

Suggestions for Reform of Commemorative place-naming for use in lobbying for change at university campuses and local authority street naming routines – based on recent advocacy at Aberystwyth University

There is a need to acknowledge:

1. That university building names and names of campus spaces have a duty to operate beyond the remit of institutional promotion and revenue generation. Placenames should be recognised for their capacity to foster a sense of belonging and help create welcoming and inclusive environment that enhances the opportunities of historically marginalized groups to thrive and succeed.
2. That the naming of university owned buildings and spaces, where that naming is commemorative and/or honorific, constitutes a hidden curriculum re-producing a discriminatory built environment that serves the histories and worldviews of some and inflicts symbolic violence on others and therefore has on-going damaging effects.
3. That re/naming decisions provide important opportunities to address long-standing disparities in recognition of historical contributions and struggles of under-represented groups while also supporting the university's institutional values.
4. That place-naming activity can create opportunities to advance campus learning of and respect for different histories and identities.
5. That place-naming activity can be used to drive forward inclusive democracy and signal genuine collective ownership of campus symbols.
6. That place-naming activity can become a focus for conversation about reckoning with history and reckoning with the uneven power to display it.

Therefore, naming practices should be consistent with the university's commitment to shared governance, align with university's pledge to anti-racism, its EDI strategy and be consistent with emerging guidelines and legislation on place-naming and other commemorative activity.

### **Practical suggestions to revise existing policy.**

1. Broaden participation by providing and publicising explicit mechanisms to petition input for name removal, renaming or new naming.
2. Increase visibility of university naming policy and increase transparency of naming and review process.
3. Extend Naming Advisory Group's capacity to create forums and gather input from diverse groups (students, staff, Aberystwyth residents)
4. Develop a Renaming Framework to guide the prospective renaming of buildings, spaces, positions, memorials at Aberystwyth University.
5. Identify currently in-use names that are contrary to current university values and provide guidance on contesting or removing names from university buildings or spaces.
6. Look for opportunities to recognize marginalized individuals or groups' contributions to campus.
7. Create a list of potential individuals for future naming opportunities.
8. Connect any name changes with meaningful initiatives (interpretation, lecture series, website, and student/community activities that align with the values and commitments of the new named person).

9. Reconsider composition of committee overseeing AU current 'policy on naming of university buildings and physical space' as well as the Naming Advisory Group to include student, community, academic and non-academic staff from diverse positions and backgrounds. Members should serve for a maximum 2-3 years with a non-voting committee chair to be appointed by EDI leaders aligned with AU strategic equality plan.

### **Duties of non-erasure**

Naming principles adopted by Yale University speak of a duty to ensure that the opportunity for learning through and about heritage is respected: "Decisions to retain a name or to rename come with obligations of non-erasure, contextualization, and process:

1. When a name is altered, there are obligations on the University to ensure that the removal does not have the effect of erasing history.
2. When a name is retained, there may be obligations on the University to ensure that preservation does not have the effect of distorting history.
3. The University ought to adopt a formal process for considering whether to alter a building name on account of the values associated with its namesake; such a process should incorporate community input and scholarly expertise."

### **Sources**

Alderman, Derek H., and Reuben Rose-Redwood. "The classroom as "toponymic workspace": towards a critical pedagogy of campus place renaming." *Journal of Geography in Higher Education* 44.1 (2020): 124-141.

Bristol University (2023) More time to give views on whether University buildings with links to the slave trade should be renamed

<https://www.bristol.ac.uk/news/2023/january/consultation-extended.html>

Stanford University (2023) Principles and Procedures for Renaming Buildings and Other Features at Stanford University. <https://campusnames.stanford.edu/renaming-principles/>

Yale University (2023) Report outlines principles for renaming campus buildings

<https://your.yale.edu/report-outlines-principles-renaming-campus-buildings>

Brown University (2023) Naming or Renaming University Buildings Spaces, Programs and Positions

<https://policy.brown.edu/policy/naming-renaming>

Public Commemoration in Wales: Guidance for Public Bodies

<https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2022-11/public-commemoration-in-wales-guidance-for-public-bodies.pdf>

### **Other Examples**

<https://monumentlab.com/bulletin/christopher-columbus-we-never-wanted-him-here>

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/baaa29f0b861439984df7792191810be>

<http://www.kanarinka.com/project/the-city-formerly-known-as-cambridge/>

<https://www.leeds.ac.uk/student-success/doc/decolonising-university>