

Pembrokeshire Life

The background of the cover is a photograph of a large, ancient stone castle with multiple towers and battlements, situated on a rocky outcrop. In the foreground, a red and white motorboat with the name 'QUEST' and the number 'H371' is on the water. Three people are on board the boat: a woman in a blue shirt and red life vest standing at the stern, and two men in white shirts and red life vests near the bow. A large red and white flag is flying from the boat's mast. The water is calm, and the sky is clear.

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**Keeping alive
Pembroke's
maritime links**

**The true story of
William Roblin**

**A trip down
Memory Lane
in Llangwm**

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Bygones of every kind are on show for one week a year at a remarkable private museum on the shores of the Cleddau

Down memory lane in Llangwm

JEFF James calls it 'The Museum of Scrimpinology' – a remarkable private collection of bygone household goods, vintage electrical equipment, old tools and much, much more, all beautifully arranged and displayed in a cluster of sheds and garages in the garden of his Llangwm home.

"I've had plenty of experience of scrimping and saving over the years, and building up the museum has been a bit like that – hence the name," said Jeff.

Formerly the Wales general manager for a cable TV enterprise, Jeff began collecting 'odd bits and pieces' after retiring to Llangwm.

A vintage car enthusiast, he owns a 1925 Morris 'Bullnose' Cowley and a 1937 Alvis, while his wife Pat has a 1960 Austin Healey Sprite.

He became treasurer of Pembrokeshire Vintage Car Club, and it was from stall-holders at various car shows that he began buying curios that interested him.



Jeff James operates an old petrol pump at his Museum of Scrimpinology.



The one third scale working signal box was built by Jeff for £107. The dummy came from Ocky White's.

By 2002 a neighbour, Ben Cutting, together with other friends and neighbours, had added to the collection by donating odd items found lurking in attics or the back of sheds, while Jeff and Pat were forever scouring antique shops, auctions and bric-a-brac stalls up and down the country for more bits of memorabilia that took their fancy.

It was Ben who suggested to Jeff that he should put on display the growing number of bygones he had acquired, and so it was that the museum first opened its garage doors as part of an 'open gardens' day in the village.

Over 200 people showed up, since when the collection has continued to grow, with its fame spreading to such an extent that groups from all over the county have paid a visit.

"Pat and I only open for about a week each year, since I have to erect two gazebos as cover for the three old cars, to enable people to get into the garages to see the exhibits," explained Jeff.

"We've opened for various local societies and charities for over ten years now, and this year we had eight groups booked in.



The museum exhibits are all neatly laid out and labelled.

"There is no charge, we just like to entertain volunteers from local groups and charities, in an attempt to thank them for the unpaid work they carry out. But we're always happy to accept donations; this year they will be going to the local church in Llangwm."

A GUIDED tour of the museum begins with its most recent addition – the Llangwm signal-box. "I was donated the wood and slates and made it myself for £107," said Jeff.

"It's one third real size, and obviously there is a bit of poetic licence here, because Llangwm never had a railway line, let alone a station!"

Despite this, the signal-box is totally convincing, with GWR crockery, warning bells and a lever that operates a signal just up the narrow-gauge railway line, where a coal dram waits at the entrance to a dummy drift mine.

"The dram wheels are original, but I made the dram myself," said Jeff. "Some of the rails come from the old Hook mineral railway and some from Stepside – I've even got a couple of original iron 'fish-belly' rails which are very rare."

From the railway section the tour moves into the first of the garages for an exhibition devoted to the history of film-making and the movies, with early projectors and other apparatus from a local cinema – a special interest of Jeff's, dating back to his days as a television engineer.

There is also a whole range of wireless sets from the 1950s. "Mrs Joan Griffiths, who lives in Mastlebridge, rang me one day to say that her husband – who used to repair radios – had died and that she had a shed-full of old wireless sets she was happy to donate to the museum," said Jeff.

"Most of the exhibits we have acquired ourselves – some have been rescued from skips – but many others

have been donated in this fashion or loaned, and you'll see lots of cards with the donor's name on them as you wander through the museum."

EVEN though the museum comprises little more than three large garages, a guided tour can take over two hours, there is so much to see and discover – from wind-up gramophones and early typewriters to old printing equipment and a complete collection of baking utensils from Hall the Baker's in Pembroke Main Street.

Most of the equipment is in working order. "I'm pretty good at fixing things, and if it doesn't work when it arrives I can usually get it going," said Jeff.

Continued



Jeff's Bullnose Morris Cowley.

Down memory lane in Llangwm



And he is always happy provide on-the-spot demonstrations of how to operate the perfectly maintained old tills and adding machines, the reel-to-reel tape recorders, cobbler's sewing machine or bus conductor's ticket dispenser.

"These machines were once at the cutting edge of technology and it's important that they are preserved for future generations," said Jeff. "The children who come here are fascinated by these old gadgets."

The exhibits also bring back all kinds of memories for the older members of the groups that Jeff shows around – usually to the soundtrack of an old 78rpm record on one of the gramophones.

"For them it's a trip down Memory Lane – the older you are, the more nostalgic it will be – and I love chatting to the visitors, gathering more knowledge at the same time," he said.

Whatever your interest, there will be something to attract your attention in The Museum of Scrimpinology, from old petrol cans to a section of the original Transatlantic cable, from Royal family commemorative china to military memorabilia, and from old blow-lamps and bicycles to ancient wooden desks from local schools.

Old traffic lights, a coffin template, milk churns, stoneware jars, ancient telephones, a soap-saver from the 1940s, old photographs of Llangwm ... the list goes on and on, and Jeff has a fund of fascinating information about virtually every exhibit.

"Unfortunately, because of having to house the cars in the garages, I can only fully open the museum for one week a year," he said.

"But if two or three people want to come and have a tour round we can usually squeeze them in, as long as they phone well ahead on 01437 890841."

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To see everything on show at the museum can take over two hours.