

CDA Partners and supervisors: AC-NMW, Dr. Mark Lewis (Senior Curator in Roman Archaeology); University of Bristol, Dr Angela Piccini (Screen Media); University of Southampton, Prof. Stephanie Moser (Archaeology).

\*\*\*If you wish to express an interest in undertaking this project and would like to find out more about the candidate selection process, please contact the full supervisory team at: [bella.dicks@museumwales.ac.uk](mailto:bella.dicks@museumwales.ac.uk); [A.A.Piccini@bristol.ac.uk](mailto:A.A.Piccini@bristol.ac.uk); [sm1@soton.ac.uk](mailto:sm1@soton.ac.uk) \*\*\*

**What is the project about?** This practice-based PhD spans Film/Screen Media and Heritage/Museum Studies. It will involve a range of audio-visual media, as appropriate to inform the earliest stages of new museum and gallery development planned over the next few years at The National Roman Legion Museum (NRLM), Caerleon (part of Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales (AC-NMW)). It will respond to the existing NRLM Roman archaeology collections and displays. It will test ideas for refreshing and communicating critical dimensions of the history of Roman occupation of Wales to new audiences in and around the site.

**What is the research context?** Roman Caerleon lives on the Western edge of Empire. Never an isolated fortress, it is the site of an imperial invading force whose arrival inaugurated a long period of cultural mixing and assimilation in Wales with local Iron Age peoples, bringing new ideas and trade over more than 200 years that still reverberate today. In key respects, this is not an easy story to tell. Firstly, the Welsh frontier of the Roman Empire is diffuse and often unmarked, contrasting with the linear and better-known Hadrian's Wall. It is also a 'challenging heritage' (Kidd et al 2016) in a devolved Welsh context, where 'Celtic' identity is often more enthusiastically acknowledged (Piccini, 2001). The existing NRLM displays, unchanged since 1987, currently offer a limited story, concentrating on a Romano-centric presentation of the past in geographical Wales. Recent studies (e.g. Gardener, 2013; Mattingly, 2014; Polm, 2016) emphasise cultural complexity and hybridity in Roman occupation, with negative and positive aspects. How should a legionary museum respond to these developments in presenting them to the wider public? Is there a danger of suggesting that conquest was a positive, civilising process? Should there be an exhibit on 'The Violent Imposition of Roman Rule'? Should museums attempt to remove biases or openly acknowledge them in a post-colonial spirit?

**What are the likely research questions?** 1) What techniques/stories about the Roman occupation do UK and European museums currently use? 2) What challenges (cultural, aesthetic, interpretative, educational, technical) are posed by the NRLM material collections in retelling the story of Wales' Roman occupation? 3) How can new screen-based approaches to communication and learning, tested with potential audiences, inform the development of new content for a refreshed NRLM? 4) How do potential audiences view the history of Roman occupation and how does this relate to public perceptions of the 'story of Wales'? 5) How might screen-based techniques help develop new public understandings and representations of this history?

**What are the main works or collections in this area?** NRLM collections comprise internationally significant material culture relating to the legionary presence in modern Wales at Caerleon (Isca) and Usk (Burrium), as discussed in a reconsideration of the frontiers in Wales and the Marches by Burnham and Davies (eds) (2010). Additionally, an extensive literature and series of media works span the disciplinary fields of archaeology, museum studies, heritage studies, film, television, media, fine art and the professional museums, heritage and media sectors. The student should demonstrate a critical, interdisciplinary approach, informed by these fields, as in Macdonald's *Behind the Scenes at the Science Museum* (2002), or Karp et al's *Museum Frictions* (2007).

**What approach is proposed?** The student will survey existing UK and selected European exhibitions concerning the interface between Rome and local cultures. Diverse museological approaches to media-based interpretation will be compared and the range of screen approaches to working with space, place and heritage analysed. The Senior Curator in Roman Archaeology, who will be a fully-involved member of the supervisory team, will help the student understand the broad characteristics of the Roman collections, assess the existing displays, access visitor evaluation data and understand the Museum's approach to refreshing the content. The student will be supported by the Learning/Engagement and New Media teams to experiment with techniques and test these with diverse potential visitors in the locality, utilising the Museum's networks and contacts. *Thesis to Comprise:* a) a screenwork/series of screenworks for platforms appropriate to the museum (projection, mobile phone, VR/AR, installation); b) a 40,000-word written element critically analysing the practice elements and identifying the original contribution to knowledge.

**Why is this a doctoral project?** This will make a significant contribution to the interdisciplinary fields of critical Museum Studies and public history/archaeology. A focused area of enquiry, it nevertheless allows the student to make it their own (e.g. by concentrating on particular techniques or audience groups) and to achieve impact by feeding into

opportunities for change and improvement at NRLM. The student will develop a wide range of transferrable skills, valuable for both academic and professional practice worlds.