

Thursday 12 February 2009

## HAND DRAWN LOVE LETTER DISCOVERED IN SWANSEA

A coded love letter, which is thought to more than 100 years old, has been discovered in Swansea University's Archives.

The hand-drawn coded letter, which is followed by a fuller text un-coded version, was found within the Bryn Diogel Lodge minute book, 1879-1890.

As part of the [Archive Awareness Campaign](#), an ongoing celebration of archives and their treasures, the university is marking 'lover's day' by showcasing this wonderful love letter. Throughout the year, local and national archives open their doors to help the public discover a piece of their own history.

The letter was written by William Weightman to his 'dearest' Fanny and he declares his undying love and devotion to her, as well as his intentions to 'horsewhip' Bill Robirson, a possible rival for her affections.

The letter is made up of symbols, numbers and letters; not unlike the language used in modern day text messaging. Amongst others, William used drawings of eyes to represent 'I', a sketch of a fan followed by the letter E for 'Fanny', the letter W followed by a picture of a hen to stand for 'when' and the letter H followed by the figure 8 for 'hate'. The code is very inventive and trying to translate it has been an entertaining task for the Archive's staff members.

**Elisabeth Bennett, Swansea University Archivist**, said

"It is surprising to come across such an intriguing item in a minute book. Everyone we have shown it to has had a lot of fun reading it. It is not known exactly how old the letter is or why it was written in the Bryn Diogel Lodge minute book, but it is a truly remarkable discovery nonetheless".

**Angela Owusu, Archive Awareness Campaign Officer** said:

“In the run up to Valentine’s day, this discovery in the university’s archive suggests that little has changed over the last 100 years or so in love letter writing and text speak”.

**- Ends -**

For further details, spokespeople or images on Archive Awareness Campaign, please contact **Angela Owusu** on **0208 392 5237** or email

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### **Notes to editors**

- The letter can be roughly translated to read:

*My dearest Fanny*

*I am writing these few lines to tell you that I cannot live any longer without you. I worship you always. I think you are a beauty and the nicest girl I ever saw and I adore you. Oh exquisite Fanny, do not despise me for loving you so well. I shall be broken-hearted if you desert me. Can you meet me on Monday night, when I will take you to the Star Music Hall. I hate that Bill Robirson, who is hanging after you and I intend to horsewhip him when I see him I shall be delighted to hear from you at once. Do not let my suit fruitless. Reply by next post to*

*Your loving*

*William Weightman*

- The Bryn Diogel Lodge Minute book is of a Temperance Society, and includes minutes and poems. Temperance Societies promoted abstention from alcohol, and members took a pledge of teetotalism. This society held its meetings at Rhiwlas Chapel, Caernarfonshire.
- Swansea University Archives holds a significant collection of archives relating to the local area and the University, including the internationally renowned South Wales Coalfield Collection. For more information, please visit: [www.swansea.ac.uk/lis/historicalcollections/Archives](http://www.swansea.ac.uk/lis/historicalcollections/Archives)
- The Archives is open to all, by appointment, Monday-Friday 9.15-13.00 and 14.00-17.00.
- Contact Swansea University Public Relations Office on 01792 295050 or email [press@swansea.ac.uk](mailto:press@swansea.ac.uk).

