

Museum of English Rural Life (MERL) Fellowship Scheme: 2014-2015

Applications are invited for the **Gwyn E. Jones MERL Fellowship** scheme for 2014-2015, tenable for up to twelve months, to support academic research in subject areas associated with the collections of the Museum of English Rural Life (MERL) at the University of Reading.

This Fellowship has been generously endowed to commemorate the life and work of the late [Gwyn E. Jones](#), who served for many years as a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development here at the University. He was directly involved in the work of this Museum for a number of years as a member of the MERL Advisory Committee. The intention for this Fellowship is to create an opportunity for a researcher to develop and disseminate new work in rural research. Applications should aim to perpetuate Gwyn Jones' own passion for the study of rural matters, and to reflect the spirit of his contributions to this field. [Further details of his life and career can be found here.](#)*

The Museum offers excellent facilities for research. The aim of this scheme is to provide opportunities to pursue research programmes to enhance and extend understanding and knowledge of the countryside, food, and farming in its widest sense, with particular emphasis on exploiting the Museum's outstanding [object, archive, and library collections](#). This also gives great scope for such work to feed into future collections-related activity and programmes of public engagement. With this in mind we would encourage potential applicants to explore the Museum's current programmes and projects, information on which is available from the website.

The Fellowship is open to scholars wishing to pursue collections-related research based at the Museum. It will attract a stipend of up to a maximum of £10,000 for a period of twelve months or less. Applications for shorter programmes of research are welcome but would be expected to attract a commensurately smaller stipend. The funding may be used to offset teaching costs, administration costs, and other research-related expenses. Fellows will be provided with research facilities at MERL. Fellows will also be expected to participate in the academic programmes of the Museum as appropriate, which might include contributions towards the [MERL Seminar series](#), MERL Symposia, the [MERL website](#), MERL exhibitions and displays, and other forms of promulgation of [research linked to the Museum](#). It is expected that the Fellow will take up their position at the beginning of the academic year, other than by special agreement.

Research proposals are invited from any discipline that reflects the broad scope of the Museum collections such as its strengths in practical, technical, farm-level scientific, and economic aspects of agriculture; rural crafts, trades and industries, rural ethnology, material culture, fieldwork, and rural industrial archaeology. The Museum collections have relevance to a broad spectrum of academic disciplines including agriculture, design, archaeology, anthropology, material culture studies, social policy, plant and animal sciences, and social, economic, and disciplinary history (inclusive of rural history,

business history, and the history of collections). We are particularly interested in applications from those able to demonstrate proven or potential research leadership in any academic field associated with the Museum and those with an interest in investigating and highlighting new areas of research interest within its collections. Applications from scholars wishing to conduct research across the wider Museum collections—inclusive of its artefactual holdings—would be especially welcome. We would urge potential applicants to examine details of recent Fellowships awarded and completed, as well as to explore the potential for connectivity with current and ongoing collections-focussed activity at the Museum, such as the Collecting Cultures, Sense of Place, Reading Connections, and Our Country Lives projects.

Applicants should submit a written proposal (of up to 1000 words), as well as a breakdown of expenditure for the stipend requested, a CV, and **ensure that references have been provided by two referees by 1 May 2014.**

Please note that for administrative reasons applicants are responsible for ensuring reach the Museum by the closing date. Referees should send their references direct to Dr Oliver Douglas at the address below. Applicants should ensure that referees are familiar with the content of their proposal and are able to comment directly on their ability to deliver the work outlined. In instances where the applicants have an institutional affiliation, applicants should seek references from external sources.

Applicants should provide details of plans for the dissemination of their research programme, including publication and the preparation of research funding proposals to further their work on the Museum collections. They may wish to include one or more examples of ways in which they would hope to disseminate their research by way of the Museum's own academic and public programmes. Assessment of applications will be by a process of peer review and by an expert panel, with the successful candidate being expected to submit a report on completion of their Fellowship.

You may find it useful to make use of the Museum's online catalogue to search the collections. Furthermore, we would strongly encourage applicants to contact us in advance for an informal discussion about ways in which their work might connect with ongoing activities at the Museum or particular collections.

For further informal enquiries please contact [Dr Oliver Douglas](#):

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0118 378 8660

Short biography of Gwyn E. Jones

Gwyn Jones served for many years as a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Agricultural Extension and Rural Development at the University of Reading. He was directly involved in the activities of this Museum, sitting as he did on the MERL Advisory Committee,

which seeks to guide and influence its activities. He was one of the founders, along with Maurice Rolls and Jancis Smithells, of the Agricultural Extension Training Centre (AETC) at the University of Reading in 1965. The Centre was established, with support from the Kellogg Foundation, to train UK agricultural advisers in communication, education and advisory skills. Gwyn provided grounding in the disciplines of agricultural economics and rural sociology. His academic contribution helped build the reputation of the Centre as it began to attract students from outside the UK.

The Agricultural Extension and Rural Development Centre (AERDC) evolved from the AETC as an academic unit of the university. Gwyn pioneered the MSc course in Agricultural Extension and was instrumental in developing the PhD programme. He personally supervised the research of students from many countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America and Europe.

The AERDC no longer exists independently but has been absorbed into the [School of Agriculture, Policy and Development](#). The MSc course in Communication for Innovation and Development, and the selection of Reading by PhD students from all over the world, continue work in the areas of innovation and the diffusion of new technology and practices within rural communities which were of especial interest to Gwyn. The agricultural advisory services are obviously significant in this; Gwyn researched the establishment and operation of formal advisory services in the British Isles. His meticulous examination of the circumstances and aftermath of the Clarendon Letter – a proposal by the then Governor General of Ireland to recruit itinerant agricultural instructors to introduce new crops and farming methods in the wake of the potato famine – is a testament to his attention to detail as a researcher. Much of his personal library of books about that period of Irish history has recently been accepted into the [MERL Library](#).

Gwyn was a member of the [European Society of Rural Sociology](#) and its President from 1974 to 1979, chairing the World Congress in Poland in 1976 and the European Congress in Cordoba in 1979. He was also Editor of the Society's Journal, [Sociologica Acta](#) for a time.