



# *Ariel*

*"I come to answer thy best pleasure." The Tempest Act 1 Sc.ii*

**The Journal of the Newport Kutaisi Association**

**Issue No 9 January 2005**



- **Mariam Melkadze**
- **Georgian visitors to the Eisteddfod**
- **Georgian Studies Day**
- **Call off the Search**

*Celebrating the cultural links between Kutaisi and Newport*

## EDITORS

Catherine Philpott

Mike Singleton

With acknowledgements to Mariam Melkadze

## CELEBRATION & JUBILATION

At last with the arrival of 2005 we celebrate the issue of Ariel 9 – a little late but nevertheless a celebration it is. We celebrate Mariam Melkadze's success at University of Wales, Newport – her graduation. She gives us her account of how she has enjoyed her time with us.

We greeted our Georgian visitors in July to celebrate the cultural event of the Welsh Eisteddfod that this year was being staged in Newport. And above all we celebrate the honour of having the Georgian Studies Day here in Newport last November. We could not even try to compete with the hallowed atmosphere of London's Guildhall or the Lloyds Building, past GSD venues. We therefore aimed to make up for this by extending a very warm Welsh welcome to the delegates to this land beyond Offa's Dyke. By the responses we were delighted to receive it was felt that it had been a success.

We hope you enjoy the accounts of these and other articles and finally may we urge all our readers to take part in the survey by filling in the questionnaire and sending it to us. Without knowing how you feel we cannot hope to continue improving the journal.

*Happy New Year*

### Our thanks to Rod Macleod and introducing Sonia Fisher



At our AGM in June 2004 we learnt that Rod Macleod, who has been our treasurer for 5 years, wanted to step down. We would like to thank him very much indeed for the excellent way he carried out the task of keeping our accounts in order. When he gave us notice of his resignation he assured the Association that both

he & his wife Julie would continue their interest in all things concerning Kutaisi and to remain in touch with the friends they have made there.

It is not a position many of us want to do and to be able to find a replacement was not easy. So it is with pleasure (& relief) we introduce Sonia Fisher, a NKA member for several years who has agreed to take on the roll of being our treasurer. She has lived in Newport all her life working both in local government and the National Health Service for many years. She is a graduate and fellow of the Chartered Institute of Personal Development and on taking early retirement ran her own business before finally retiring this year.

She is also a member of Soroptomist International of Newport & District which has a friendship link with the Soroptomist Club of Kutaisi. She is very interested in forging stronger links with the Kutaisi International Soroptomists and is very pleased that recently, contact has been made with them. She hopes to visit Kutaisi in the very near future.

CP

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### QUESTION

Why is WALES named Wales and not 'Waleland' or 'Welshland', like England, Scotland or Ireland?

### ANSWER

Wales is the English name for the land west of Offa's Dyke. It is derived from the Anglo-Saxon 'Waelas', meaning 'Foreign'.

'Welsh' literally means 'foreigner' in English. The native term is 'Cymru', meaning 'Land of fellow countrymen'. The Welsh refer to each other as 'Cymreag', meaning 'fellow countryman' or 'comrade'.

Interestingly when one types in the Welsh word for the English, 'Saesneg', into an online translation service, it translates as 'you've been persecuted'!

*Taken from the Times newspaper*



## Mariam Melkadze MA

On a warm day in September I attended my graduation ceremony at the University of Wales, Newport. This day marked the end of what had been a long journey towards my goal of achieving a Master of Arts Degree in Multimedia & Information Design.

I had looked forward to this day hoping very much that my father would have been able to join me. Unfortunately it was not to be. But I was very happy that Catherine Philpott was able to come, taking a memorable film of the ceremony.

It seems a long time ago when I first arrived in Newport to visit the city and the University campus. I met with many people both in the Association and officers working for the City Council. They offered much valuable advice and

within a year I was back again taking up my studies.

I cannot express how much I have enjoyed my experience – meeting students from all over the world, all as enthusiastic as me. The tutors were wonderful, encouraging me to have a new outlook on my work. Changes in my approach soon took place and I developed new skills.

'Virtual Architecture' presented as a digital installation was the subject of my dissertation. The project was aimed at discovering the influence of computer generated images within real space to create a multi-sensorial architectural design.

For the past two years I had the opportunity to work as a 3D visualiser within the large local architect firm of BoyseRees. It was a truly valuable experience. I would like to thank the staff for all their kindness and goodwill.

Next I must express my appreciation for the generous help and friendship offered to me by the members of Newport Kutaisi Association – it is hard to name everyone who has been so kind to me. But special thanks, though, must go to Catherine who, together with Professor Madonna Megrelishvili, gave me all the encouragement and opportunity to embark on such a journey as I have made. It was as long ago as 1998, as a fourth year architect student, that they first put the idea to me. I have come many miles since then!!

I want finally to say how important it is to the young people in Kutaisi to have this chance to study at the University of Wales, Newport and to thank the great generosity of the governors of the University for this.

MM

Above:

Maka Melkadze with Catherine Philpott

R. above: Award ceremony,

R. lower: Maka with her MA group



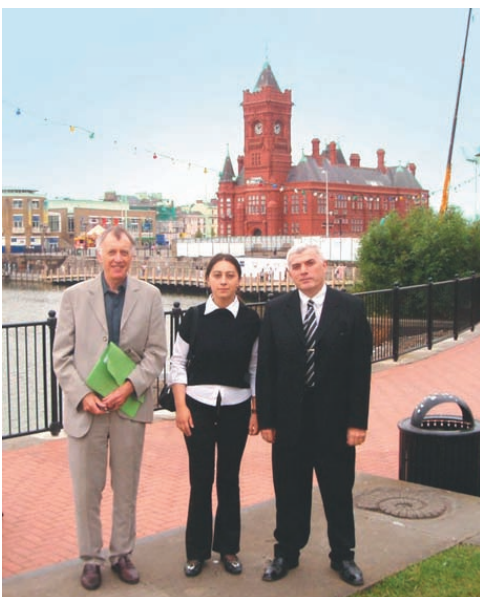
## GEORGIAN VISIT TO NEWPORT AUGUST 2004



*Above & L: Sunday morning church service at St Woolos Cathedral*



*Delegation outside the Mansion House - Mayor of Newport residence*



*L: Cardiff Bay*

*Above: Visit to the City of Cardiff.*



L-R Rezo Robakidze, Prof. Madona Megrelishvili, Natia Zviadadze, Levan Shengelia, Mr & Mrs David Mumladze former Governor of Imereti Region

## A DAY IN LONDON

**Derek Butler wrote:**

**As our friends from Kutaisi were booked into a Heathrow hotel for the night before their flight home, the Mayor's office had organised an attractive programme in Windsor; lunch in a good hotel, a tour of the Castle and a trip on the river. It was idyllic, particularly given the sublime weather. However, some of our guests were desperate to visit London and possessed admirable powers of persuasion. As a result, the luggage was deposited at the hotel and I and our eight visitors set off in two taxis for the capital. For reasons best forgotten, each taxi headed for different destinations in central London but we managed to meet up for lunch at the Festival Hall.**

After coffee I was told that Mr Mumladze, the Governor of Imereti, had left his briefcase in the taxi. My extreme concern.... well, panic.... was only partly eased when a voice answering the phone number found on the taxi receipt gave assurances that the case would be found and returned to the hotel.

We started our tour in intense heat. Progress across Charing Cross pedestrian bridge was slow due to my probably misplaced zeal to point out and give information on every building in sight, numerous stops for group photographs and Mrs Mumladze's advanced stage of pregnancy. When we reached a crowded Trafalgar Square I led the way to the portico of the National Gallery, my favourite London vantage point, only to find that no-one was following. The group was, however, successfully rounded up and escorted under Admiralty Arch to The Mall. Soon after, Mrs Mumladze, Mrs Giorgadze and Madonna settled down with ice-creams on a shady bench in St. James's Park declaring that London was wonderful but their participation in the tour was now over.

Leaving instructions not to go wandering, the rest of us made for Horseguards Parade and Whitehall on a round tour that would eventually bring us back to the shady bench by way of Trafalgar Square. This went well until, back in the Square, our friends asked if they could buy some souvenirs in a nearby shop. I watched as they crossed the road, passed the clearly marked souvenir shop, and disappeared along the Strand. Having been given the enormous responsibility of looking after our Georgian guests, I was alone except for Natia and when, twenty minutes later, she offered to try to find them, there wasn't a single Georgian in sight. For the next half hour or so I pondered on the consequences of losing our visitors. The Mayor would be cross, I would be thrown out of the NKA for gross negligence and Britain's good relations with Georgia would no doubt be in ruins. When all eight strolled back into view simultaneously from three different directions, as if choreographed by Balanchine, their fellow countryman, I was (almost) tempted to give them big Georgian style hugs and kisses.

After that, the day was almost uneventful. We caught a bus to the concert at The Royal Albert Hall with an unexpected extra Georgian (don't ask!), abandoned Mr. Mumladze and Mr. Giorgadze at the entrance to await the Ambassador (we kept our fingers crossed and they'd gone when we came out), and all worried about the condition of Mrs. Mumladze. But back at the hotel, everyone said it had been an enjoyable day and, yes, the briefcase had been returned.

# NOT A DAY FOR A DAYDREAM

Reports of the Georgian Studies Day 16th November 2004 from **Bernard Tyson** Chairman NKA

**This was to be the first Georgian Studies Day held in Newport. The delegates list looked very interesting. We had industrialists, politicians, authors, a tea-importer, a Georgian orthodox nun, a representative of the United States European Command Joint Analysis Centre and an actor who managed to get a day off from filming in the new Dr. Who series in Cardiff, about 50 delegates in all.**

The Mayor, Councillor Paul Cockeram, said some kind words about the Association and its role over the years in helping



L to R: Bernard Tyson, the Mayor, Cllr. Paul Cockeram, Tamara Dragadze, Geoff Edge.



Catherine Philpott Vice Chair NKA. addressing the seminar.



Prof. Janri Kashia Imedi TV with David Megrelishvili.

to give Newport an international face. Showing his real interest he stayed on well into the day until other matters civic called him away.

We heard from Sir Brian Fall, the UK government's special representative in the Caucasus and then Georgia's ambassador to Britain, H.E. Amiran Kavadze, both of whom gave an upbeat but sober assessment of Georgia's present economic and political situation.

My turn to go the lectern. I had been asked to speak about my recent visit to Georgia as part of a Council of Europe mission to see what fellow Europeans could offer to Georgia in building local democracy. As I started I couldn't help but wonder if the reform of local government was as interesting a subject to delegates as it was to me. So I was pleased to move onto an account of how I had seen Georgia compared to my last visit in 2000. I wanted to thank Patrick Long from the Newport and Gwent Chamber of Commerce for their sponsorship of the day. This proved very useful as we talked about possibilities for business twinning. I just had to taste Nigel Melican's 'Old Ladies Georgian Tea' which he was carefully brewing in the corner of the room.

The afternoon saw a talk on the roots of Georgian democracy and its links with Greece, the home of democracy in ancient times. Graham Wall from Canargo then brought us smack up to date with news on oil and gas exploration. Professor Michael Vickers, a veteran Georgian Day Studies speaker crammed what must be a 3 hour archaeological lecture into 15 minutes. After seeing his slides many of us were left thinking of volunteering to join in the dig.

For years Michael Bloom has held the attention of Study Day delegates playing extracts of Georgian music, together with his interpretation of each piece. Despite some technical problems, Michael again was able to illustrate the unique character of Georgian choral music: an interest that I know had brought several delegates to Newport that day.

One delegate then spoke about how he had recently travelled to Georgia and had shot half a film about Georgian singing and was now looking for an angel to meet the cost of completing his work. Catherine Philpott gave an account for the Newport Kutaisi Association and Henry Parry spoke about Bristol and Tbilisi

**It had not been a day for daydreams.**

From **Vera Brown** secretary NKA

I had secretly wondered whether participants would be attracted to the event when held outside London. Fears were unfounded. A striking feature of the day was the wide variety of backgrounds and geographical locations from which those attending (over 50 in all) had come. Dr. Tamara Dragadze, the Convenor and Chair, when explaining how Georgian Studies Days had originated, particularly noted that a significant number in the audience had personal connections with Georgia through marriage, travel and friendship. Items raised by the floor speakers during the 'Work in Progress' programme time (e.g. hospital work, support for choirs, air travel to Tbilisi) gave some indication of the different interests which had drawn the audience together. So too did demonstrations in the lunch break of travel books, music CDs and Georgian tea tasting.

The programme speakers were just as varied but all gave unequalled insights into aspects of life in Georgia. In line with the title theme for the day, the mood was universally one of optimism for Georgia's future, one year on from the Rose Revolution. H.E. Amiran Kavadze in his overview recorded how much had been achieved in one year: a new modern and efficient government determined to solve problems peacefully with its neighbours and eliminate corruption by rebuilding the country on a European model. He set Georgia in the context of the Caucasus region as a crossroads between East and West and, speaking warmly of the UK's support, emphasised the nation's desire to settle difficulties through co-operation and economic means.

Graham Wall, speaking with great warmth of his personal love of the country, gave a very encouraging view from the business stance. Canargo is the only public company entirely focussed in Georgia with its main assets in oil production. He cited many reasons to invest, including the helpful attitude of the new government, the good quality and prolific stocks of the oil, plus the expertise of the local workforce.

After the political and business overviews, culture was not forgotten. Professor Michael Vickers gave a fascinating illustrated talk on his annual excavations of a funeral site at Pichivnari 'the place of the pine trees' where a number of objects had been found. It was clear from this that the practice, mentioned in classical Greek literature, of placing a coin in the mouth of the dead 'to pay the ferryman' actually occurred. He also raised the exciting possibility of a future exhibition in the UK.

Michael Bloom, in his talk on music, explained the origins - predating Christianity - of Georgian singing. Through musical extracts, much appreciated by the audience, he gave examples of unaccompanied three part harmony used for both secular and sacred singing; choirs in London, Stroud, Bristol and Cambridge, dedicated to Georgian music, demonstrate its growing popularity.

Twinning activities reports from Bristol and Newport closed the formal part of the proceedings. The day ended with an innovation - a wine and cheese reception - Georgian wine, of course, kindly donated by the Ambassador. Judging by the number of participants who stayed for this reception, Georgian wine has not lost its appeal. But, as many have commented since, the chance to meet the other participants during lunch and the reception to exchange views and experiences was much valued, and the day can be recorded as a success.

*Pictures from the top:*

*Tasting of Georgian tea.*

*H.E. Georgian Ambassador Amiran Kavadze with Tamara Dragadze Chair.*

*L. Joan Edwards & R. Sonia Fisher with delegates.*

*City of Newport Mayor Cllr. Paul Cockeram.*



## Letters

*We were delighted to receive the following comments on Newport's Georgian Studies Day  
November 2004*

*From **Derek Pickup** Vice Chair BTA*

I just wanted to thank you and the Newport Kutaisi Association for your hospitality yesterday. The day was very well-organised and infinitely better than last year. I do think that the role and purpose of Georgian Studies Day in the light of the Velvet Revolution needs to be debated and a consensus reached. It was nice to see the representative from British Airways being present and I hope that we can all support them in the future as they support us. Canargo, as ever, seem to be doing very well in Georgia. It would have been nice to have heard from other companies who are finding Georgia a good place to do business. I think that we all need to think how we could help to stimulate the SME sector in Georgia.

I think that the development of a local democracy agency based in Kutaisi is a brilliant idea and I feel that we, at the BTA need to support this initiative and talk to the powers at Bristol City Council about their role in its further development and implementation. I would welcome your thoughts on this.

Please thank everybody for their efforts and I would certainly support Newport hosting the event in the future.



*From **Henry Parry** Chair BTA*

I note Derek has written on the programme yesterday; I certainly add my congratulations to you, Catherine, Vera and others.



*From **Michael Bloom** musicologist – expert in Georgian music*

This is to thank you and the other members of the Newport Kutaisi Association for all your hard work in organising Georgian Studies Day and your help with my technical requirements. I enjoyed it very much indeed and learnt a lot - a most useful experience. Thank you all very much again. I look forward to seeing you again next year.



*From **Timothy Watson***

Thank you for your hospitality and for making the day such a success.

I came away with much to feed on. Thank you.

*From **Tamara Dragadze**  
Chair & Convenor*



I would like to thank you, very quickly, for the wonderful success of the Georgian Studies Day. So many people who have attended regularly thought it was one of the best we've had in 17 years! It meant a lot to several people that it should be in Newport in Wales, including myself. The atmosphere was so congenial and it was provided entirely thanks to your personalities as well as to your hard work.

I am rather lost for words when it comes to saying how I really feel, but please accept my heartfelt thanks and admiration for all you have done.



*From **Michael Bloom**, courtesy of **Tamara Dragadze***

*Tamara recieved the following comment. She thought we might like to use it - and we did!*

I enjoyed the Georgian Studies Day very much, particularly the range of speakers and the variety of subjects covered. It was good to hear first-hand from Georgians about the changes that are taking place in Georgia and hear their prognoses for the future of their country. It was also gratifying that many Georgians are taking an interest in various aspects of the country, and are now able to speak authoritatively about their areas of study. I particularly enjoyed the reception at the end of the day and would like to suggest this be made a feature of future study days. It was good to be able to share areas of common interest at the point where all presentations and announcements have been completed. I feel this year's study day proved the value of holding this event annually, and it seems certain it will continue to be supported by a wide range of organisations and individuals.



*From **Peter Naysmith** travel writer*

Thank you for that excellent day at Newport - and nice to chat.



*From **Peter Lindsay** Chair  
Caspian & Turkey Business Information Group  
Director Regional Sales Mabey & Johnston Ltd*

The Georgian Studies day was excellent. I am so pleased that I attended.

I look forward to next year!

## Mother Superior Theodora meets her Newport relations



*Seen in the picture here from L to R: Coral Rock - (Luca's grandmother) Mother Theodora Luca Katie Ketevan-Rock Andrew Rock*

*Below: Making friends with his honorary 'grandmother'*

**Not many Newport-born babies can boast a Georgian Orthodox Mother Superior as their honorary 'grandmother': Luca Rock, born in November 2003, does indeed have this rare privilege.**

Katie Rock (nee Ketevan Potchkua) learned, a few weeks before the Georgian Studies Day, that her favourite cousin, Theodora, Mother Superior at Bodbe Monastery was to be seconded to an Oxford college on sabbatical studies, she was thrilled! Mother Theodora was able to spare the time to spend a few hours with us all there. That afternoon was a really happy occasion; Mother Theodora scooped Luca up in her arms.

A week or so later, however, we were all delighted to find out that Mother Theodora, originally Ketevan also, would be able to arrange a lightning trip to Newport for the Georgian Studies Day. In the morning she enjoyed a full Welsh breakfast with her Newport family. At the end of the day's



programme she told me that this short interlude had been one of the highlights of her full and interesting 24 hours with us all in Kutaisi's twin city, Newport. On the following day, by telephone, she repeated her thanks to everyone she had met here, and especially to those Association members and the speakers who had helped make the Studies Day so informative and enjoyable; she had been particularly interested in the talk given on the potential exploitation of oil close to her monastery! The telephone call ended with one last hug for her newest relative, little Luca, and the expressed hope that they would meet again soon, perhaps next time with the rest of his family in Kutaisi.

**Coral Rock**

*Bodbe convent at Ninotsminda near Signaghi, Kakheti region that lies to the east of Tbilisi*



## Bernard's Visit to Kutaisi

Our Chair, **Bernard Tyson**, took an opportunity after attending the Conference on Local Democracy Agencies held in Tbilisi in November 2004 to spend a few days in Kutaisi with our friends there.

Whilst in Tbilisi I managed to have an excellent evening on the town with Madonna Tkeshelashvili and our last student, David Mindiashvili, who is applying the management skills he learnt at University of Wales, Newport to the problems at the Ministry of Transport. On Saturday October 2, when the Kutaisi seminar was over, the rest of the mission returned to Tbilisi via Khashuri, a possible other location for the Local Democracy Agency. Obviously I took the opportunity, when in Kutaisi, to meet friends by staying on for a few extra days at the end of the mission visit.



I attended a meeting of the Kutaisi Newport International Association at the English Studies Dept. of Kutaisi State University and presented some books donated for their library by the Newport Kutaisi Association. The NKA promotes an annual essay competition in Kutaisi and I had hoped to be able to present the first winners with their awards. Unfortunately the recipients could not be present; however, Professor Madonna Megrelishvili explained that they would receive them at an appropriate ceremony. The video of Mariam Melkadze's MA award ceremony was then shown at the meeting - much to the obvious pride of her parents who were present. I was pleased to meet them.

I visited the hospital, which had received the medical equipment, donated to the NKA by the Royal Gwent Hospital in November 2003. It was explained to me that the government had planned to close the hospital; however, the Georgian Orthodox Church had acquired it and they were providing the services. I was able to see most of the equipment in use. It was obvious that much assistance is still needed to help the staff meet the standards they would wish to provide for their patients. On Sunday I visited Batumi, a port on the Black Sea with Rezo Roboakidze who came to Newport in 2004 for the Eisteddfod.



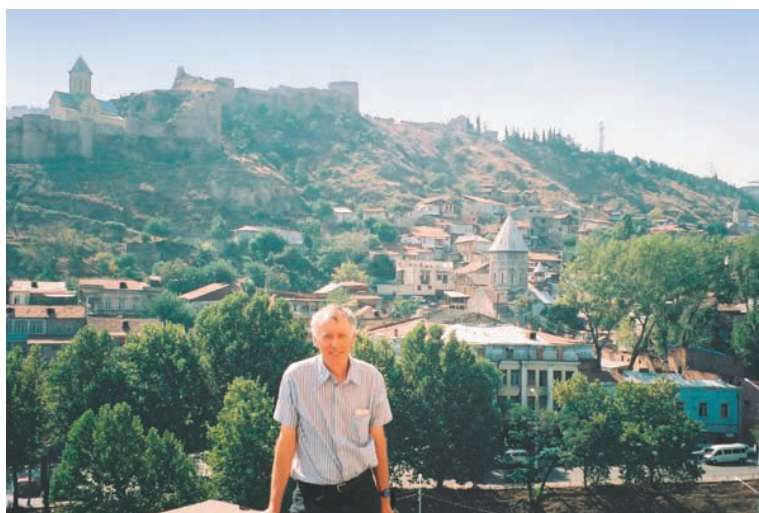
My general impression, comparing this short visit with my first, in 2000, was that Kutaisi seems more 'alive' in the sense that more shops and businesses were obvious. I was told that gas, electricity and water distribution is still a problem and that the new Governor of Imereti Region has been charged with solving these problems or otherwise losing his position. The main highways are now much improved, as are the newly reformed traffic police with their brand new Volkswagens.

I had the good fortune to stay with Mamuka Moralishvili's parents, Henrietta and Tamazi. The hospitality was marvellous and I was most fortunate to have Mamuka as a chauffeur and Sophiko as a guide. I cannot thank them too much for making my short stay interesting and

*Above: Bernard with Prof. Madonna Megrelishvili, Lyala Kobechavidze & Tiniko Devdariani.*

*Middle: Bernard's host family, Henrietta and Tamazi, Sophiko with her children Tazo & Irakli.*

*Lower: Bernard enjoying a view of the historical district of Tbilisi.*



# Talented Ms Katie Melua

*Katie Rock*

**Katie Melua is a beautiful nineteen-year-old singer-songwriter hailing from the Georgian seaside town of Batumi and is managed by the UK impresario Mike Batt. He produced and selected the songs on her very successful CD, 'Call off the Search', released in 2003.**

Since then Katie has toured the world, played to capacity crowds, sent hardened critics into raptures of praise and become something of a household name.

Katie's high, clear voice swoops from the speakers like an exquisitely colourful bird and what it lacks in gravitas and texture the voice makes up for in pitch-perfect clarity.

Let's hope that Katie enjoys a long and successful career, while remaining true to her abundant vocal gifts and daring to explore different kinds of musical terrain.



## 'Call off the Search'

*Jonathan Jones*

**Reporters on behalf of Ariel made every effort to set up an interview with Katie Melua at her concert visit to Cardiff at the NEC stadium recently. But Katie seems to be an 'it' girl at the moment, and so 'hot', you can't get near her even for this renowned publication!**

Katie who originates with her family from Georgia wore her heart on her T shirt with the motif of the Georgian Cross boldly emblazoned across it, as she wowed a near-full house.

Listening to this unpretentious 19 year old sing her way through many of the numbers of her debut album, '*Call off the Search*' it was easy to see and hear the secret of her success. Those dark sultry locks, the crystal clarity of her distinctive voice and the maturity of her vocal interpretation were underlined with every song. When she served up her most successful number to date '*Closest Thing to Crazy*', the audience was just transfixed.

Katie herself says she has been singing since the age of 8. For her, this was just a hobby until 4 years ago when she started song-writing and playing around with her guitar, inspired by the likes of Bob Dylan, Joni Mitchell and Eva Cassidy.

She was discovered by the successful record producer Mike Batt of the '*Wombles*' fame on a visit to her school. He said: '*There are certain things that can't possibly be learnt and she was just totally natural*'. On the evidence of the NEC concert, the audience would surely have agreed.



## A VIEW OF THE RIVERFRONT

The City of Newport has a new landmark, one that many people have waited for, over many years. An Arts Centre now rises from the banks of the River Usk. It appears in daytime as a strange box-like object - a shape that now is becoming familiar to us. It arrived, not without controversy, four months ago. It has been called many unkind names in the press but now doors are open and people are getting used to going inside and enjoying the programme it is becoming part of their lives.

There is an exciting film programme. Plays, musicals, ballet and opera are all here now. Famous actors, actresses, musicians and dancers are coming to Newport. No longer do we have to journey to Cardiff or Bristol to see professional performers.

The new Arts Centre comes into its own when, like Cinderella going to the ball, she becomes transformed into an exciting vision of light and colour. As the visitor approaches Newport, crossing the river by train, they see this building changing continuously from bright blue, to dazzling cerise, to vivid green and back again - a stunning sight.

We look forward to taking our next Georgian visitors to see what theatrical experiences we can offer.

CP

[www.newport.gov.uk/riverfront](http://www.newport.gov.uk/riverfront)



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