

A SUCCESSFUL PROJECT

Two years ago the July 2007 Newsletter announced that the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) had awarded a major grant of £187,000 to AMC/WAW. This July we can report the successful conclusion of the Women's History Roadshow Project. Our team has taken the Roadshow to 17 locations covering all regions of Wales. Many people have brought historic items which have been photographed or scanned and their stories recorded. Many of these items have been donated to AMC/WAW, and deposited in county record offices, greatly increasing the resources of women's history in Wales. All that remains is to write our report to HLF, which is now in hand. This will be available to members at our Conference in October.

A DATE FOR YOUR DIARIES

ANNUAL CONFERENCE & AGM IN CARDIFF

The AMC/WAW Annual Conference and AGM will be held in the Old Library, Cardiff on Saturday and Sunday 17th & 18th October 2009.

The theme this year is 'Women and Health' with a number of speakers talking about their research on women, health and health services in Wales. We will be presenting the stories of several women who worked as nurses and doctors in Wales and further afield, based on archive material which was brought to our hugely successful Women's History Roadshows. The Roadshow Project, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, ended with the final event in Merthyr Tydfil in June. There will be a session reporting on the Project as a whole. We will also be holding our traditional Conference Dinner on the Saturday evening.

Further details will be sent out towards the end of August, but we hope you will be able to join us for another really good weekend.

THE FINAL ROADSHOWS

It seems like only yesterday that we were launching the roadshow project at the Senedd in Cardiff. We've seen a lot of Wales since then and met many wonderful women along the way.

Earlier this year we brought together Catrin Collier and Elaine Morgan for the roadshow at Pontypridd Museum. They both delighted visitors with their fascinating stories and inspiring words. We also met Len "Rocky" James – a former boxer and brother of Jenny James, the Pontypridd legend who swam the English Channel in 1951.

As ever, Archive specialists got to see an eclectic range of items – including a beaded shawl, references for a woman going into service, a Second World War evacuation tag and a certificate of qualification as an "insane asylum nurse".

For the next Roadshow we ventured north to the Wrexham County Borough Museum and Archives.

Professor Cynthia Burek once again shared her knowledge of the role of women in geology in Wales and Wrexham Museum's Dawn Adams brought to life the story of local motorbike adventurer, Marjorie Cottle.

Education and nursing were a strong theme among the items we saw at Wrexham – the opportunity to study at Bangor Normal College was clearly a defining moment for many young women. There must be something about Wrexham women and motorbikes, too, because we were presented with lady's leather motorcycle helmet and had to borrow a doll from the museum to model it for a photograph.



Roadshow participants arriving at Cyfarthfa Castle.

Next stop was Merthyr's Cyfarthfa Castle Museum for the final leg of the current roadshow project. Our "Setting the Record Straight" exhibition was on display at Dowlais library during the month before the Roadshow. The Merthyr branch of the Glamorgan Family History Society dedicated their May meeting to "celebrating women in Merthyr Tydfil", which was very well attended and gave everyone a chance to look at the display of some the items that the Archive has acquired thanks to the Roadshow project.

There was glorious sunshine on the day of our very last Roadshow and the room we had at Cyfarthfa Castle was the grandest setting to date. Carolyn Jacob from Merthyr Libraries had done a very good job of gathering up items from people who were unable to attend and brought us postcards of colliery girls, photographs of women working at the pithead and a copy of *The Suffragette* newspaper, dating from 1913.

Contributions to the Newsletter are welcome from all members. If you are able to submit your contribution bilingually this would be greatly appreciated. Please send items for consideration by the editors to:
info@womensarchivewales.org

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If you would like a copy of this Newsletter in large print either in Welsh or English, please contact Jenny on the email address above or phone 01792-874143

This Newsletter was edited by Jenny Sabine and translated by Catrin Stevens.

www.womensarchivewales.org

Dewi Bowen, who had been an art tutor when Cyfarthfa Castle was still a grammar school, visited us in his former staff room and shared stories with Deirdre Beddoe about life in old Merthyr. He also donated a collection relating to his mother, Elizabeth, who had been a nurse in the World War I.

And then it was all over. During the Roadshow project we've heard so many fascinating stories about women's lives in Wales; some of them impressive, some intriguing, some inspiring, some sad and some hilarious. All of them a valuable record of the past that should be kept alive for the future.

*Justine Hankins,
Field Officer,*

Women's History Roadshow Project.



Dewi Bowen showing some documents to Deirdre Beddoe and Helen Thomas, while Steffan Walker records his story.

DONATIONS TO THE ARCHIVE

Financial and otherwise

Like any charitable organization whose main source of funding is membership-based, most work is carried out on a voluntary basis. From financial accounts, routine clerical work, future planning for expansion, organizing conferences to additional input to the Roadshows, work is subsidized and carried out by the Committee and other AMC/WAW members. Over the past year, the successful Roadshow project has created a significant expansion of AMC/WAW's public profile and, in turn, its work. In order for the Archive to maximize and sustain the momentum created by this project it is imperative that its revenue expands.

Apart from the successful funding events initiated by Angela Brunt over the past few years, aided by the generous assistance of a core of members, we now need to focus on another potential source of income, financial donations. Donations enable people to support the Archive without making the long-term commitment of becoming a member. Making a donation provides an opportunity for a single gift of any size.

In the future, AMC/WAW intends to make greater use of its website, publicity and membership leaflets to encourage donations. However, many members at events express a desire to become more involved with the Archive's work, one way of fulfilling this interest would be on the donations front. Encouraging friends and colleagues to make donations is a basic but

extremely useful start. Approaching high profile personalities and companies, encouraging donations in money or possessions in wills are two other significant avenues to explore.

If as an individual, or with a group of other members, you feel that this is a way of contributing to the Archive that would interest you, or for which you have ideas or experience, then please get in touch.

Cheryl Law

JOINT LLAFUR AMC/WAW CONFERENCE

12th September 2009, Swansea

Honouring Ursula Masson

Ursula Masson was the inspiration for the Women's Archive of Wales, and was a highly respected historian. Her untimely death in April 2008 has left a huge gap in our own organisation, as well as in Llafur, the Welsh people's History Society where she was a longstanding member and joint editor of the Journal for many years. She will also be much missed by colleagues in university history teaching in Wales.

To honour Ursula's life and work, the Women's Archive and Llafur are holding a joint day-school in Swansea on September 12th. There will be contributions from friends and colleagues who worked with Ursula in her many different roles, as well as a unique opportunity to see the three films made by Ursula and the Swansea Women's History Group: *Back of the Front Line*; *Smiling and Splendid Women*; and *Swansea Conchie Controversy*. This will be a great day. Please put it in your diaries now. Details and booking arrangements will be sent out nearer the time.

Helen Thomas

STILL SISTERS – WALES' WOMEN'S LIBERATION MOVEMENT WORKSHOP

Do you remember the Women's Liberation Movement? It's less than 40 years old but already a part of history in danger of being lost, like so much in women's history.

The research project being run from The Women's Library in London has attempted to document the experiences of women involved in Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland & England by holding a series of workshops in which 'witnesses' could speak of their experiences, and other women present could add to the picture. The workshops have all been filmed, and women have been encouraged to deposit material in relevant archives.

We'd already started this process in Wales when Ursula Masson & I carried out research into the WLM in Wales during 1995/6, interviewing activists and collecting source materials which gave a great impetus to the formation of AMC / WAW, and it is good to revisit it now and put the movement in Wales into a wider context.

Deirdre Beddoe, Susan Edwards (Glamorgan Record Office) and I put our heads together to find witnesses, chairs, topics, a date and a venue, greatly helped by Rachel Cohen, the co-ordinator of the project at The Women's Library. Inevitably there were compromises – the date had to fit in with the Women's History Roadshow schedule since we were also involved in those, a location in Cardiff (The Old Library) was easiest for us to organise, we couldn't contact some potential witnesses, or they

weren't available on 16th May, and I know that in spite of our best efforts, some women who would like to have been involved just didn't hear about it.

Nevertheless a lot did, and around 40 women came along. Most were women who had been involved in the WLM themselves, but a few younger women also came out of general interest. The day was organised around topic areas – ways of organising; campaigns; violence against women, 'spreading the word' (meetings, conferences...) with a final 'open' session "Sisterhood is powerful" – personal recollections of the WLM" introduced by Deirdre, where someone had the inspired idea that we should move our seats into an open circle and speak directly to each other.

There isn't space here to describe the day in any detail but we laughed, we remembered, and at times we cried with the witnesses. Women added their own recollections of events, of groups (including ones in different parts of Wales, some Welsh speaking), of fun times and the disagreements weren't left out either, but I think that most of us who were there were reminded of the excitement and the sense of making change which made the movement so important.

Rachel and I received a number of emails afterwards from women who had attended –here are some of the comments :

"Thanks for a great day in Cardiff last month; that was the most stimulating and inspiring day I've had for a long time!"

"Such a rich variety of experiences and histories. A few of the old stalwarts are definitely planning to rejoin forces and see where it takes us this time."

"...thank you for all your hard work brining together such an amazing event in Cardiff - still can't stop thinking about it and a group of us who 're-met' are meeting up again soon"

"I had a thoroughly enjoyable and somewhat emotional day on Saturday as I recalled people and events from so long ago. The legacy of those years has undoubtedly had a major impact upon the lives of today's young women in so many ways. I was 16 in 1975 so came in on the tail end of events but I can still remember the profound effect that being even a peripheral part of that movement had upon my life.

It was a great way to take stock. We spend so much time still thinking about how far we still have to go that we forget how far we have come.

If I could have spoken without crying I would have thanked those wonderful women for their courage and commitment to a movement that has affected so many women's lives for the better over the past 30 years."

The programme of the day, including the names of women acting as chairs and witnesses, can be seen on the AMC / WAW Blog

<http://womensarchivewales.wordpress.com/> More information on the video record of the day will be available in due course – keep an eye on the Blog or email me at avril@rolph24.freeserve.co.uk and I'll keep you up to date with progress.

Avril Rolph

TWO WELSH WOMEN JOURNALISTS

In December 2008 and January of this year, the *Dictionary of Nineteenth Century Journalists* was published in hardback and digital form. The *DNCJ* contained information about two remarkable Welsh women whose lives crave further research.

Sarah Jane Rees (1839-1916)

Sarah Rees, poet, musician, preacher, temperance activist, marine navigation teacher, and editor, Sarah Rees was born in Cardiganshire. Daughter of a master mariner, as a girl she learned an amount of Latin and astronomy, and after taking a navigation course in London, established her own school to teach navigation to seamen. Rees was the founder and the first woman to edit (1878-1889) a Welsh language women's magazine, *Y Frythones* (the *British Woman*), a monthly magazine (1878-1891) 'devoted to the women of Wales'. Modelled on the *Englishwoman's Domestic Magazine* with Hannah More and Elizabeth Fry represented as ideals, it aimed to promote women's secular and religious education. Intended for working-class women, the magazine was illustrated, and contained features, fiction, poetry, an advice page as well as articles on women's suffrage and women's employment. Rees was a primary contributor, and provided opportunities for other Welsh women writers such as Alice Gray Jones. Cheryl Law/Aled Jones

Sources: Beddoe 2004, Jones 1932, Welsh Biography Online.



Sarah Jane Rees (Cranogwen)

Alice Gray Jones (1852-1943)

Editor, temperance activist, children's author and headmistress, Alice Jones (nee Jones) became headmistress of her old school before marrying in 1881. However, her marriage did not restrict her public activity as a lecturer and organizer of the North Wales Women's Temperance Union (UDMGC). Using the pseudonym of 'Ceridwen Peris', she began her writing career in 1874 by

publishing her poetry, but by 1880 her work had appeared in several secular and religious Welsh periodicals for adults and children, including Sarah Rees's *Y Frythones*.

From October 1896, Jones became the editor of a new magazine, *Y Gymraes* (the *Welshwoman*), an illustrated non-denominational monthly which by 1901 she had opportunely negotiated into becoming the official magazine for the UDMGC, ensuring a circulation of 2,400 for Union branches. But Jones also ran features on biographies of Welsh women past and present, advocated public roles for women, encouraged women's education, supported women's suffrage, and largely encouraged women to contribute to the magazine. Jones was succeeded as editor by Mair Ogwen and *Y Gymraes* continued publication until 1934. Cheryl Law/ Aled Jones

Sources: Lloyd-Morgan 2004, Welsh Biography Online, *Y Goleuad* 1943.

Cheryl Law

WELSH HERITAGE SCHOOLS INITIATIVE

For the second year running the generosity of a member has enabled AMC/WAW to sponsor a prize of £200 in the WHSI competition. This competition is open to infant, primary and secondary schools and colleges for projects exploring their Welsh heritage. The AMC/WAW prize is offered for a project featuring a woman or women in Welsh history.

This year an entry by Ysgol Penisarwaun, in Gwynedd, was selected for our prize. Their project was called *Cynefin/Our Locality*. In studying many aspects of their locality the students included the folk story of Marged uch Ifan, and the Celts, Branwen and Siwan. The pupils demonstrated that they had learnt a great deal about their locality and were proud of their heritage.

The judges of this competition find it difficult to encourage schools to bring women's history into their lessons, which highlights the importance of the work of AMC/WAW in increasing and promoting the resources for studying women in Welsh history.

Jenny Sabine.

BOOK REVIEW:

***Up The Dove! The History of the DOVE Workshop in Banwen.* Mair Francis. VIEW/DOVE Ltd., 2008.**

The DOVE Workshop is many things to many people. Mair Francis's account of the Dulais Opportunities for Voluntary Enterprise encompasses its birth at the Onllwyn Billiard Hall in 1984 to its current wide-ranging activities at their state-of-the-art centre. It details the life and times of the women who were inspired to provide a centre for community learning through their own learning experiences gained during the 1984/5 miners' strike. Although the miners' strike threw great hardship at the mining communities of South Wales, the determination of the women involved in the South Wales Women's Support Group to provide a better future for themselves, their families and community, ensured that the DOVE Workshop

would indeed survive. Mair charts its history from the first



Plant sale at the beautiful Brangwyn Hall, Swansea, in April.

conference in 1985 entitled 'Welsh Women Make History', to its future Development Plans for 2009. Multi-level education courses are offered up to part-time degrees, with a healthy eating café and a pleasant garden providing sustenance for the brain's endeavour. Many local women took advantages of the options on offer and changed their own lives in the process, gaining degrees, becoming MPs and returning to DOVE to teach and support others. As well as providing for educational and community needs, the DOVE has been the centre for much cultural exchange and provision. Film courses and screenings, e.g. Valley Pictures, West Glam Video & Film Workshop, and Swansea Women's History Group, all provided opportunities to view, discuss and to make films and videos. The cultural activities attracted international groups such as Chilean dancers, with visiting poets and musicians from Europe and USA. These activities, in turn, attract international students, like those from West Virginia who visited in 2008, eager to find out how an ex-colliery building became such a vibrant centre of excellence.

There is an apt quote in the book from Derek Vaughan, Leader of Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council: "It has been said that DOVE was conceived in strife and born of necessity - it has certainly grown up to be a fine example of what I call active citizenship - people and communities taking a hand in, and helping to, shape their own futures". I second that. *Jen Wilson*

ERRATA

Please note that Angela V. John's book *Evelyn Sharp* is published by Manchester University Press, NOT Faber as printed in the notice in the March Newsletter. Apologies for this confusion. *Editor.*

REMEMBER TO USE OUR BLOG!

<http://womensarchivewales.wordpress.com/>

