

# **ARCHIF MENYWOD CYMRU WOMEN'S ARCHIVE OF WALES**

**NEWSLETTER - APRIL 2001**

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## **Thanks!**

First, some good news. The Archive has recently received an anonymous donation of £500. Many thanks to our generous benefactress.

## **Oral History Project : Women in Wales 1920-60**

In September 2000 Merched y Wawr (the Welsh-language women's movement), in partnership with Trinity College, Carmarthen, received a substantial grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund to record the life stories of a thousand Welsh-speaking women in Wales, for the period 1920-60. With six months of the two year project now gone, it is becoming increasingly obvious that there is immense interest in and enthusiasm for this method of recording the past. The two full-time Field Officers, Sharon Owen in north Wales and Ruth Morgan in the south, have been concentrating on recording in the districts of Dwyfor, Arfon and Carmarthenshire; but the most exciting and innovative aspect of the work has been the training of local branch members to become historians themselves, and giving them the opportunity to record the life stories of their older fellow-members in West Glamorgan, the South-east, Alun-Deeside and Merionethshire. They are beginning to understand and appreciate the immense contribution women have made to the history of Wales in the twentieth century, and they have helped to create new social and educational networks, which will enrich the lives of both interviewers and interviewees.

Every woman has her own story to tell; every recording is unique. Yet, certain significant themes are beginning to emerge : how family size affected a girl's hopes and aspirations; how

passing or failing the scholarship governed one's future destiny; the formative influence of the chapel, especially in social and recreational terms; the effect of the Second World War – destroying some lives, providing new opportunities for others; the lottery of pregnancy and child-birth before the National Health Service; how restricted the choice of career – as nurse, teacher, shop-worker and carer – was; and women's invaluable contribution to voluntary work on behalf of the Welsh language.

Three hundred tapes have been recorded already and about half of them have been summarized in detail. The originals and all the paper work will be stored safely in the sound archive of the Museum of Welsh Life and pictures and photographs are also being collected to accompany the proposed exhibitions, educational packs and book(s) which will form part of the complete packet. The project will be given an Archif Menywod Cymru archive number and through a web-site it will be accessible to all researchers and interested parties. This has been an immensely exciting and rewarding project to work on; it will encompass the whole of Wales and ensure that Welsh-speaking women who lived between 1920-60 will not be the forgotten Cinderellas of Welsh history.

Catrin Stevens (Director)

## **Becoming a Charity**

Those members who attended the last AGM will recall that it was agreed that the Archif should pursue registration with the Charity Commission. Our application is currently being prepared and will hopefully be submitted to the Commission in the not-too-distant future. Watch this space...

**New Research in Women's History:  
A Study Day for Post-Graduate and  
Independent Researchers**

This event, held on 31<sup>st</sup> March at the University of Glamorgan, was one of a regular series held by the West of England and South Wales Women's History Network. There was an interesting mix of papers, both from researchers in Wales and from London, Leeds and Coventry.

Various aspects of women's history in Wales were covered. Lisa Snook, (Swansea) spoke on *Women and Communism in the Rhondda*, Deborah James (Glamorgan), who took over organising the event at short notice owing to Ursula Masson's illness, also presented a piece on *Women in the Police Courts in 19<sup>th</sup> century coalfield society*. Teaching and nursing, the two major professions for women in Wales in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were covered by Sian Rhiannon Williams (UWIC) (teaching) and Sarah Brady (nursing).

For more information on the Women's History Network, contact Avril Rolph. Tel. 01792 233482 or email [avril@rolph24.freemove.co.uk](mailto:avril@rolph24.freemove.co.uk)

**Deposit of Equal Opportunities  
Commission in Wales materials in  
the National Library of Wales.**

We are pleased to be able to report that arrangements have been made to deposit a wide variety of materials produced both by and for the EOC in

Wales in The National Library in Aberystwyth.

Thanks to the co-operation of both EOC and NLW staff, we feel that this very important resource has been placed in long term safekeeping and will shortly be easily accessible to those with an interest in women's history in Wales from the 1970s onwards.

Since its establishment in 1975, the EOC has had a very important role to play in overseeing the workings of anti-discrimination legislation, notably the Equal Pay Act (1970) and the Sex Discrimination Act (1975), as well as facing the often uphill task of promoting equal opportunities in Wales.

Fortunately for historians, the EOC in Wales has generated a wide-ranging array of valuable materials. These include publications, specially commissioned reports, posters and pamphlets. Another immensely useful resource, is the collection of press cuttings on women's issues which the EOC has assiduously collected over the years. These are arranged thematically covering such topics as women's work, industrial disputes, women police, women as carers, women priests as the role played by women in agriculture.

The first batch of materials from the EOC was deposited in the Library in Aberystwyth in February 2001. There is much more to follow and our newsletter will keep members posted on progress.

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Translation by Catrin Stevens.