

## A 15th Successful Conference



The title for this year's conference, held in the Priory Centre in Abergavenny on 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> October 2012, was **The History We Made: Welsh Women from 1500 to 2012**.

Several speakers on the Saturday drew specifically on archive collections. Gary Tuson introduced the new Gwent Archives building, and outlined its resources for women's history. Nikki Bosworth

(Pembrokeshire) and Elizabeth Belcham (West Glamorgan) both presented papers based on the collections that they were professionally associated with. The topic *Welsh Women Home and Abroad* was further developed by Mary Jane Stevenson's account of girls growing up in 19<sup>th</sup> century Ceredigion and Colin Thomas's selections from his forthcoming video book, or 'vook' *The Dragon and the Eagle*, about Welsh settlers in America. Sadly the conference technology could not do it justice, but we could see and hear enough to realise what an interesting experience it would be. Gwyneth Tyson Roberts spoke eruditely and elegantly, as ever. Earlier aspects of women's history were covered by Cathryn Charnell-White paper on women's friendship poetry from 1500 and Ruth Richardson's account of Blanche Parry, Elizabeth's I's confidante. Sunday morning was devoted to post-war history, with Deirdre Beddoe giving a keynote lecture on women in the post-war industries of Wales, an important foundation for the Archive's new major project to collect memories and experiences of women working in industry from the 1940s to the 1970s. Catrin Stevens spoke on the foundation and early history of Merched y Wawr, and the morning concluded with a panel, Jane Hutt AM, Alison Scouller and Jennifer Cole talking about how they first became involved in the Women's Movement. Perhaps related to this was the final Saturday session, where Di Setch and Dilys Jackson described their motivation in setting up the Cardiff-based Women's Arts Association, and some of their early struggles and successes. Thirty works by members of the WAA were displayed in a small exhibition around the hall.

As well as the exhibition there were two bookstalls to occupy delegates during the breaks; one with Honno's customary excellent range of publications, and a second-hand fundraising stall of members duplicate and cast-off women's books (which raised £61). Catrin Stevens organised a raffle (which raised £81). Both these sums helped to keep the Conference finance in credit, so many thanks to those who supplied time and books, and who bought.

As usual, we could have done with more time, but though packed, it was a satisfactorily stimulating day and a half.



Caroline Fairclough

### Impressions of the 2012 conference

It's always good when the WAW conference is held in an historic building; even better when the building is both historic and beautiful; and best of all when the conference papers are interesting and the company engaging. And it all came together in this year's conference. It was held in the **Priory building of St Mary's church** in Abergavenny, and we had the opportunity to visit the church itself, with its amazing collection of 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century tombs, the last resting places of some of the kings - and queens - of the March in Tudor times.

I also very much enjoyed hearing about another influential woman of that period, **Blanche Parry**, the governess of Elizabeth I's household and her close friend and companion throughout her life. We all seem to know a lot about her male advisors and councillors, but it was good to know more about this woman who had such great influence on the queen and her court. Ruth Richardson's account of the close relationship between the queen and Blanche was all the more interesting because it followed Cathryn Charnell-White's paper on friendship in Welsh women's poetry, 1500-1800.

But one of the highlights of the conference for me was actually the dinner on the Saturday night: an excellent meal in yet another beautiful and historic building (but a pub this time); more entertaining company (and a chance to hear the true version of a well known story about a university professor), and then – surprise! A small and very tuneful choir arose from amongst us, and sang us some of the songs of women's past campaigns for their rights. So we went out into Abergavenny's quiet (and historic) streets, with the songs of past struggles in our ears, and their inspiration in our hearts. Onwards and upwards! And towards the 2013 conference!!



*The Abergavenny and District New Suffrage Singers!*

Dr Elin Jones

### Visit to Gwent Archives

For those who enjoyed Gary Tuson's virtual tour of the new Gwent Archives at this year's Conference, and for those who were unable to be there, there is an opportunity to see the real thing.

A visit has been organised on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> January between 11am and 1pm. The research room is open that afternoon, so there would be an opportunity to make a day of it and do some work on the records there.

You should have received a flier, either electronically or by mail, from Sue Thomas. Could you please book with her, Numbers are not limited, but we need to know how many people are coming.



**The Lady Llanover Society** This bilingual society was set up almost ten years ago in order to celebrate and spread information about the part played by Lady Llanover in preserving Welsh culture. The society supports all aspects of Welsh culture especially the language, customs, traditions, costume, music (in particular when performed on the harp), dance, eisteddfodau, folk tales and myths. Over the last few years the society has held concerts, twmpathau, lectures, 'Hands-on-Harp' days and a one-day school. It supports local and national eisteddfodau and is proud also to support various local young musicians. Even though the majority of events take place in Gwent, there are members from all parts of Wales, from England and even a couple from abroad.

A one-day school celebrating her life and work is planned for the spring (date not yet fixed) to take place in Llanover Village Hall. More information [www.ladyllanover.org.uk](http://www.ladyllanover.org.uk); or e-mail [info@ladyllanover.org.uk](mailto:info@ladyllanover.org.uk)

### From The Chair

It has been great to welcome several new members in the last few months, and to meet some of them at the Conference. Once again, our Annual Conference was a great success and most enjoyable, but others are writing about that so I will just record here my thanks to Caroline, Katrina and their team of helpers for their hard work and superb organisation.

In September AMC/WAW was well represented at the Women's History Network National Conference in Cardiff. We took our pop-up banner, leaflets and gave a short presentation about our organisation. I represented the Archive at the Maritime Heritage & Economic Development conference in Cardiff last month, when the business was to consider the potential of Wales's maritime history in encouraging tourism and development. The Archive was also invited to the National Library of Wales President's Evening, when we were told about some of the ways the Library works with local communities. On the social front, I was delighted to be invited to a celebration of the life of Olwen Davies, in Aberystwyth. Those who attended our Website Launch at the National Library in May will remember the colourful exhibition of Olwen's clothes and memorabilia displayed, and Olwen's family are generously donating her collections of paper and artefacts via AMC/WAW.

At the end of my first year in the chair, I hope I have got a little way to achieving some of the things I set out to do for the Women's Archive. We do seem to be getting more widely known, and it's wonderful that such progress has been made towards our next major project - on women in post-war industries. It is so important to catch the memories of that significant development in women's work and the effects it had on their lives. My thanks to Catrin, Rosemary and Caroline for completing a pilot project in preparation for our application for grant aid. Progress is being made in other areas too, and I'm very grateful to all members of the Committee for their hard work and enthusiasm.

Jenny Sabine.

**Phone:** The Archive has a new phone number **0758 1001 139 0758 1001 139**

Please leave your name and number on the voicemail. We aim to respond to calls within one week.

### **Important reminder**

It was agreed at the Conference that the Newsletter will now be emailed rather than posted. The printing costs are still very reasonable, but the rise in the price of second-class stamps means that our postage bill is approaching £100 per issue.

You can still choose to have a paper copy of the Newsletter by contacting me at [newsletter@womensarchivewales.org](mailto:newsletter@womensarchivewales.org).

We have a list of members who do not have email addresses, and they will continue to receive their Newsletters by post. Others will need to contact me to opt into this system.

### **Women's History Study Day, Bangor**



In association with the WAW, a successful half day women's history conference was held at Bangor University at the end of September. Over twenty people attended and the feedback given was extremely positive. The main speaker, Marian Gwyn, spoke on the topic, 'Britain's Enslaved Women – The Struggle for Identity

and Independence in Eighteenth Century Jamaica'. Marian is currently writing up her PhD thesis and gave a fascinating and deeply moving account of the conditions faced by women slaves and the extent to which many well known British institutions have been built on profits gained from slavery.

Annie Williams gave a paper on, 'Unending Labour: Women Domestic Servants in Nineteenth Century Anglesey', and showed how popular images taken from 'Downton Abbey' and 'Upstairs Downstairs' are far removed from the reality of life in service for women and young girls from Anglesey.

Shan Robinson showed a selection of interesting rare books that are held in the University's collection. The session was extremely informative and the audience was clearly delighted to discover that these gems were available to them – on their doorstep.



*Shan Robinson and Annie Williams*

Shan and Annie, who had organised the conference, were very pleased with the event and it is their intention to build on its success. They are hoping to establish an on-going forum for established historians and students from the University, particularly MA Women's Studies students working on their dissertations, to share their research in a supportive and informal environment.

### **Commemorating Our Heroines**

How often do you see a blue plaque (or any other commemoration) honouring a woman? And think how many there are for men! LET'S DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT!

Swansea City Council has decided to mark buildings in the city with blue plaques commemorating a significant person who has some connection with the building. A few local Archive members are determined that some of them should be women, and have submitted the names of writer Ann Hatton ('Ann of Swansea') and headteacher and suffrage campaigner Emily Phipps for this year's selection (which is likely to be no more than 5 in all).

Hearing of this, another member suggested that the Archive might widen the campaign right across Wales. Not necessarily blue plaques, but some kind of public acknowledgement or commemoration of what women have done, individually and as groups.

If you have any suggestions, comments or would like to get involved with either of these projects, please email [info@womensarchivewales.org](mailto:info@womensarchivewales.org) or write to the Archive c/o the Miners Library (address at bottom of page).

### **Women in Industry Project**

This autumn has seen the launch of a pilot programme to record the memories of women who worked in light industry from the 1940s to the 1970s. Catrin Stevens, Rosemary Scadden and Caroline Fairclough each recorded detailed interviews with three women who had worked in a range of industries, from toys to gloves, cigars, stockings and bayonets. Interviews were all carried out in South Wales, in areas ranging from Fforest Fach to Merthyr Tydfil to Cardiff, and the age of the interviewees ranged from 70s to 90s. Two were Welsh speakers.

It is clear from this limited start that there is a wealth of material waiting to be uncovered, and large areas of Wales waiting to be covered. It is now intended to apply for a grant to enable this work to begin.

There will be more information in the next Newsletter and on the website soon.

## Donations: New Ways to Help Us

WAW has always been very grateful for cash donations which help to further the work of the archive. Your subscription covers the basic running costs, including producing and sending out the newsletter, but there is little money left over for 'extras'. Many of you will remember the very successful fundraising stalls and other events organised by Angela Brunt at the time of the Roadshows which raised a considerable amount for WAW. These have helped to fund the new publicity pop-ups and the revamped website amongst other things; look out for raffles and other fundraising at future events and give them your support.

### New! Donate On-Line

We are of course still very grateful for postal donations but we've looked into alternative ways of encouraging donations, and have now signed up to thebiggive ([www.thebiggive.org.uk](http://www.thebiggive.org.uk)) which makes it very easy for you to donate to WAW directly online or via our website. Go to <http://new.thebiggive.org.uk/charity/view/10835>. This takes you to the WAW page on the biggive site (English only at present) which gives information about the archive and offers you the chance to donate via their website. If you are eligible for Gift Aid, this will be included in the donation. Just 4% of your donation is taken by thebiggive in administrative costs; the rest comes directly to us.

### New! Donate by Text. Quick and Easy Donations on the Move!

Justtextgiving ([www.justtextgiving.com](http://www.justtextgiving.com)) is run as a free service for charities by Vodafone. Text messages are free – to donate just send a text message to 70070 giving the code J1TL18 + the amount you want to donate e.g. J1TL18 £5>. Your donation will either be deducted from your mobile phone credit or added to your mobile phone bill.

### Why Donate?

If you have ever sat through a talk struggling to hear what the speaker is saying or found it frustrating not to hear the questions, you'll appreciate having a PA system which overcomes these problems. WAW events happen in many different venues. Sometimes there is a PA system, including microphones, which we can use but often there is not. Even when one is available there is often a charge for us to use it. Consequently, the committee have been looking at the possibility of buying a portable system, including microphones, which we can transport to different venues. This is likely to cost us about £300-£400 and that's why we're asking YOU to help us raise the money to buy it.

All donations, whether by cheque, by text or on-line will be very much appreciated.

To donate by post, please send a cheque to Archif Menywod Cymru / Women's Archive of Wales, Treasurer (Donations), Archif Menywod Cymru / Women's Archive of Wales, South Wales Miners' Library, Hendrefoelan Campus, Gower Road, Swansea SA2 7NB

Avril Rolph

## Committee Report Nov 2012

We were pleased to welcome Elin Jones onto the committee, although she has been working for AMC/WAW for many years as our education advisor and will continue to do so. CF and her team were thanked and congratulated for producing the 2012 Conference so successfully. Plans are already afoot for next year's which we hope will be held in Merthyr Tydfil.

It was good to see AR back in harness and she reminded us that we need to publicise our presence more widely. With this in mind we are planning a new brochure which will include a larger membership form with plenty of room for email addresses.

After a lively discussion it was unanimously agreed to abandon the idea of having a Directory of Members' Interest. Technology means that with one email we can make a specific appeal, at any time.

CS and her group are already planning an Eisteddfod event in Denbigh. It is hoped that local members will give practical support. She was also able to report that the pilot for our next large piece of research had been successfully completed.

The memories of nine women who had worked in manufacturing in Wales, post war, had been achieved. The next stage will be to make an approach to the heritage Lottery Fund for a project covering the whole of Wales.

CH reminded us that archives only took original documents but would be accepting the whole of the exhibition of Barry Training College photographs that CS mounted to accompany the WAW event at this year's Eisteddfod.

Rosemary Scadden, Minutes Secretary.

### Committee 2012 - 2013

Deirdre Beddoe	<i>President</i>
Jenny Sabine	<i>Chair and Vice President</i>
Avril Rolph	<i>Administrative Secretary and Vice President</i>
Gail Allen	<i>Treasurer</i>
Sue Thomas	<i>Membership Secretary</i>
Rosemary Scadden	<i>Minutes Secretary</i>
Caroline Fairclough	<i>Editor</i>
Elin Jones	
Shan Robinson	
Catrin Stevens	
Sue Trevelyan-Jones	

### Co-opted Members

Susan Edwards	<i>Archives Advisor &amp; Collections Officer</i>
Charlotte Hodgson	<i>Collections Advisor</i>
Yvonne Jardine	<i>Minority Ethnic Women's Network</i>
Jen Wilson	<i>Jazz Heritage Wales</i>

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 your contributions to: [newsletter@womensarchivewales.org](mailto:newsletter@womensarchivewales.org)

**Copy date for next issue  
Friday 15<sup>th</sup> February 2012**

If you would like a large print copy of this Newsletter, in either Welsh or English, please contact Caroline at the email address above, or phone 01873 890540.

This Newsletter is also available to members online at [www.womensarchivewales.org](http://www.womensarchivewales.org), in the Members Section.

This Newsletter was edited by Caroline Fairclough, and translated by Catrin Stevens, Elin Jones and Sue James.