

ARCHIF MENYWOD CYMRU WOMEN'S ARCHIVE OF WALES

NEWSLETTER - JULY 1999

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Since the first newsletter appeared in April, work has continued on creating the Archif. We have been pleased to discover that the newsletter has obviously been widely circulated, and we have had many positive responses to it.

PROGRESS REPORT

- Finalising details of the Deposit Scheme so that donations can be made to the Archif and housed in existing archives on our behalf has been a priority. More information on this later...
- We have contacted all the female members of the National Assembly asking for their support and inviting them to join; some have done so.
- We were approached by the producer of the S4C Digital Programme *Wedi Cinio* (approximate translation *After Lunch*) who had seen our newsletter. She wanted someone to talk about the Archif, ideally in Welsh. Unfortunately we could not find a fluent Welsh speaker in the time available but Deirdre Beddoe agreed to appear on the programme, speaking mainly in English. The programme is due to be transmitted on 11th August at 1.30pm - so if you have access to digital TV, try to catch it.
- Publicity - we have received mentions in a variety of places, from the Meic

Stephens column in the Western Mail, to the Women's Studies Network Newsletter, our details now appear on the web site of the Feminist Archive, Bristol, and we have been promised links from a number of relevant web-sites once our own site is created.

BUILDING THE WOMEN'S ARCHIVE OF WALES

Key aims of the Archif Menywod Cymru/Women's Archive of Wales are

- Identifying, rescuing and preserving materials relevant to women's lives, past, present and future.
- Making this resource available to present and future generations.

The work of rescue and preservation is urgent. As a practical step towards creation of the AMC/WAW, the working group is developing a 'deposit scheme'. We hope to gain the agreement of keepers of archives and records offices all over Wales, to begin to create the Archif Menywod Cymru as distinct collections within those existing

institutions. Already several archivists around the country are supportive of the idea.

The next step will be, through publicity and outreach, to encourage women and men who hold relevant material to donate that to the AMC/WAW, to be deposited in these existing archives. The idea is to place items in the most appropriate place - which may be the local Record Office, or a specialised collection.

This is a good practical measure which will serve several purposes. It begins the immediate work of rescue and preservation, with precious papers and other materials safely placed in professional hands, in the right conditions. It will facilitate research into women's history by making material available. It will establish the idea of the Archif as a collaborative and all-Wales project. And it will avoid the centralisation of resources, which can be an obstacle to research.

What will happen to papers donated to the AMC/WAW?

In most cases, once a collection of papers has been listed by the archivist, it will be made available to researchers.

In some cases, donors may want to place restrictions on who can look at the papers, or how they may be used. They might want to say that the papers should not be consulted until a certain amount of time has elapsed. Donors will be able to draw up with the record repository concerned conditions they are happy with. Archivists are quite used to dealing with requests like this, and in all cases, the wishes of the donor are honoured.

What kind of material should we preserve?

The answer is - almost anything which tells us about the lives of women as individuals, as workers, and as members of families, communities, groups and movements.

Most archives have at least some records of political groups or organisations - minute books, correspondence, leaflets, badges, membership cards and lists, accounts. Many different women's organisations have deposited their records with their local archive - the Women's Institute, the Mothers' Union, Merched y Wawr, the Suffrage Societies and Women's Cooperative Guilds, local residents' or tenants' associations, and in recent years the Women's Liberation Movement, the Peace Movement, and workplace and community actions. All of these produce valuable materials for the historians of the future, and should be preserved. Not only documents, but photographs, film and video, badges, banners and posters are all extremely valuable.

But it is not only political material which is wanted. More personal material is also invaluable to our understanding of past and present - letters, diaries, household accounts, family photographs, and all the material of work and community, education and religion, in all periods.

Other strategies

The deposit scheme is only one of the strategies being developed to create the AMC/WAW. The other important strand will be the research project, a proposal for which is being developed by a group of members. We are also working on creating

a website with the potential to develop into a useful aid to research - the results of the research project available on-line, for example. More information about these will follow in future newsletters.

Please let us have your comments and suggestions.

NOTICEBOARD

This will be a regular column for you to give information on anything you think might be of interest, such as

- research - your own or other peoples
- information on relevant events and activities
- reviews/comments about archives, useful collections, exhibitions, books, journals, conferences...
- news of all kinds

So to start it off -

The current issue of *New Welsh Review* has an article, by Deirdre Beddoe on one of the leading feminists of the interwar years, Margaret Haig, Lady Rhondda. Neither she nor *Time and Tide*, the journal she was closely involved with for much of her life are well remembered today, a situation which needs to be remedied.

THE SOUTH WEST OF ENGLAND AND SOUTH WALES WOMEN'S HISTORY NETWORK

A Network for all those interested in the history of Women and Gender

For some time, a small number of us from South Wales have been members of the South West Women's History Network,

which is affiliated to the national Women's History Network, the major organisation of feminist historians and people interested in women's history in Britain. In addition to regional English networks, there is a Scottish Women's History Network, also affiliated. Until recently, there has been no Welsh network.

At the annual conference of the SWWHN, at the University of the West of England, in June, it was decided to change the name of the regional group to the South West of England and South Wales Women's History Network. Two members from Wales, Ursula Masson and Avril Rolph joined the committee. It is hoped that in this way, a Wales network can start from a basis of some strength and support, while maintaining the fruitful relationship with the network across the bridge. There are strong historical links between South Wales and the West of England, and even- or especially - in these devolutionary times, it is good to reaffirm those links in this way.

The network is open to anyone with an interest in women's history and gender history. It has a regular programme of seminars and day schools, which are always very invigorating for those of us researching women's history, and members from Wales have made a contribution to these in the past. It is now hoped that there will be enough support to organise seminars and day-schools in South Wales, with the West of England women joining us for those.

This year's annual conference, on 'Personal Narratives: Women's History, Women's Lives', had keynote lectures from Professor Angela John and Dr. Kath Holden, and a panel which also included the Irish feminist historian Margaret Ward, and the historian of women in the Labour movement, Dr. June Hannam. A variety of workshop papers were presented in the afternoon session. It was a very successful conference and a very enjoyable day.

Don't be left out - join now to be kept in touch with news and developments, and to help build the network in Wales.

Membership is a mere £5 a year (waged) or £2 (unwaged.) Contact:

Kath Holden
30, Charlcombe Lane
Larkhall
Bath
BA1 6NS.

ADVANCE NOTICE OF AGM

The AGM, which we again hope to combine with an event of some kind, will be held in Aberystwyth on Saturday 6th November 1999. Full details in the next newsletter but make a note of it in your diary now.

CAN YOU HELP?

Many thanks to those of you who have offered and/or given help to the Archif. We need a lot of woman-power to make the Archif a reality and anyone who can offer help, even if only on a very occasional basis, will make a difference. We are hoping to build up 'core groups' of Archif members throughout Wales, who can work together in their particular area

so we will be pleased to hear from members everywhere.

As well as women who may be able to help with fund-raising, publicity, newsletter production etc., we urgently need more fluent Welsh speakers who would be willing to speak to the media about the Archif and/or who would be able to undertake translation work (including the Newsletter), sometimes at relatively short notice - please get in touch if you can help.

RENEWAL OF SUBSCRIPTIONS

Unless you have joined the Archif very recently, you will receive a renewal form with this newsletter. From now on, subscriptions are will be due in July each year. Please rejoin (and encourage others to join too) - the Archif needs your continuing support as it begins to become a reality.

CONTACTS

The official address is: Archif Menywod Cymru/Women's Archive of Wales, c/o Ursula Masson, School of Humanities, University of Glamorgan, Pontypridd CF37 1DL email umasson@glam.ac.uk

Other contacts are:

Deirdre Beddoe, Tel: 01446 730205

Jenny Sabine, Tel: 01792 874143 (after 6 p.m.)

Avril Rolph, email:

avril@rolph24.freeserve.co.uk

This newsletter was produced by Ursula Masson and Avril Rolph
Welsh translation by