

WOMEN IN WORLD WAR 1

The Women's Archive is planning a new project with the aim of securing the place of women in the history of the First World War in Wales, and, hopefully, increasing our collections of WWI materials.

The initial stage of the project will be providing participating groups with a package of materials, including a set of 6 to 8 A4 'posters' of archetypical women of the war period: a teacher, a munitions worker, a girl guide, a bus conductress, an agricultural worker, a nurse, a member of the forces and the mother of a soldier. We know the identity of some of the women, others can be discovered by research, and in some cases we have no actual images of such women or girls in the collections of the Archive. The aim of the posters is to promote discussion and jog memories, and possibly to lead to further research on the part of individuals or groups, and to the identification of archive material which could be deposited through the Archive or scanned for a digital archive.

There already exists a project hosted by the National Library and funded by JISC and the Welsh Government to 'bring together primary resources relating to World War One from the Libraries, Special Collections and Archives of Wales'. The website is www.cymru1914.org. A quick check through the 500-odd items currently in the collection reveals that there are fewer than 25 photographs that include women – as partners or mothers – and none of an individual woman. There is clearly a huge gap to be filled here. We hope the culmination of the project would be an exhibition celebrating the role of women during the War to coincide with the centenary of the partial enfranchisement of women in 1918.

We are looking for volunteer members of the Women's Archive who would be interested in trialling the materials with a group with whom they are already involved, for example U3A, local history groups, WI or even book groups. This is a project initially for older people (we hope that the second phase will include schools), as they have memories of older relatives who were alive during WWI, and may have photographs and documents belonging to grandparents or great aunts. If you are interested or would like to know more, please contact Caroline Fairclough caroline.fairclough@yahoo.co.uk.



A young teacher at St Martin's School, Haverfordwest, 1915.

Celebrating 20 years of Women's Studies at Bangor University

The Women's Studies MA is the only one of its kind in Wales, offering a unique opportunity to study gender theory, Welsh women's history, literature by women and issues around health, education and work as they relate to women today and in the past. The first cohort of students on the programme began in January 1994. For women in particular it provided a unique chance to combine personal development with work and family commitments. The programme was set up through the vision and energy of Sandra Sherwood in Lifelong Learning, with the support of individual colleagues from other departments.

Conference 2014

This is being held at Bangor University, as part of the birthday celebrations, on 4th and 5th October. The detailed programme and booking forms will be available soon. Watch the website and your email.

Obituary : Margery Lewis

I first met Margery Lewis in 1996 when I was working with the late Ursula Masson on research into the Women's Liberation Movement (and Women's Peace Movement) in South Wales during the 1970s and 80s. Her name had been given to me as a major figure in the women's peace movement, including taking part in the march from Cardiff to Greenham Common, which led to the Women's Peace Camp, in August 1981 when she was 61.



I visited her in her home in Roath, Cardiff where she talked about her interesting life before she came to Cardiff in the 1960s. We then focused particularly on her involvement in the women's peace movement in Wales. After taking part in the Cardiff to Greenham march, she continued to visit the camp regularly including driving from Cardiff with other women for the 'night watch' so that women staying at the camp could get some much needed sleep. She also talked about

other actions, including the women's march from Cardiff to Brawdy (Pembrokeshire), demonstrations at the Royal Ordnance Factory, Llanishen, Cardiff, and the extraordinary 'peace camp' set up by a small group of women in the middle of Porth, Rhondda in November 1981. Her stories were both thought-provoking and at times hilarious and I found it a very enjoyable interview.

I left with several carrier bags of material, including newsletters, newspaper cuttings, photographs and more. These, together with several other collections which I acquired as a result of this project, led to the meeting in December 1997 which resulted in the formation of AMC / WAW. Margery's papers were deposited in Glamorgan Archives where they are one of several important AMC/WAW collections relating to the women's peace movement in Wales.

She apparently remained active until well into her 90s, and died in August 2013 at the age of 97.

Avril Rolph, May 2014

Narberth Day School, May 17th

The Archive and Llafur have been discussing the possibility of holding joint event for some time, and it was good to be at the



Beth Jenkins, Rosemary Scadden, Katherine Holden, Martin Wright, Penny Jones, Deirdre Beddow, Jenny Sabine and Catrin Edwards

Bloomfield Centre in Narberth, and make a dream a reality in the month of May! We had an excellent day together, looking at a number of different aspects of women's work during the twentieth century, with Martin Wright, Llafur's Chair, proving a very skilful chair of this joint event.

It was good to learn about the development of the Archive's latest Heritage Lottery funded project, Voices from the Factory Floor. This was introduced by the Archive's President, Emeritus Professor Deirdre Beddow, in her own inimitable style. Catrin Edwards, one of the project's field officers, then went on to lead us through some of the stories collected so far, drawing our attention to the variety of experiences and the wealth of evidence being gathered about the life and work of women in the 1950s, which would have been lost to the historical record if the Archive had not started to collect it. The audience clearly appreciated this, and also appreciated Catrin's friendly and professional way of presenting the work.

Katherine Holden looked at another 'hidden' aspect of women's history, that of the 'nanny': girls from working class homes who looked after the children of the better off. The influence these women had, and their ambiguous status within the family was very evident, and, once again, this was – and is – 'invisible' work by ordinary women.

The video, Lavender Ladies, made by a women's group in Newport, Pembrokeshire, and presented to us by Penny Jones, was another example, and a very powerful one, of the need to collect oral evidence before the passage of time robs us of the opportunity to do so.

These were the highlights of the day for me, but I wouldn't want to downplay the persuasive and engaging presentations made by Rosemary Scadden on Welsh women's experience of domestic service, and by Beth Jenkins on women's work during the Great War. I'm sure some of you who attended would have chosen them, but I am also sure that the Editor would be very happy to include your comments in the next issue!

Yes, it was very good to get together in Narberth on a lovely day in May, to meet old friends, and to make new friends too, since a number of local people also attended the event. This is one of the advantages of holding our meetings in different venues across Wales, and we very much hope that many of those new friends will become 'old' ones in the future.

Elin Jones

'Voices from the Factory Floor'

It's hard to believe that we are about three quarters of the way through this project. When we started in October 2013 we had many targets to reach: 140 interviews of women who worked in the manufacturing industries between 1945 and 1975 to be conducted by the three Field Officers covering north, south-west and south-east Wales; c. 30-60 interviews by volunteer trained interviewers around Wales; all these interviews transcribed and detailed metadata kept of all aspects of the project.

And what have we achieved to date? We're proud to announce that the Field Officers between them have interviewed c. 120 speakers, including a few men and some temporary holiday workers; and the volunteers have completed c. 37 interviews. This means that we have reached the original target, agreed with the Heritage Lottery Fund, to interview between 150 and 200 speakers altogether. These speakers have described working in c.150 different factories and about one third of these interviews have been in Welsh.

We have also collected a great archive of photographs and the Field Officers are busy now preparing exhibitions of these photographs, documents and quotes from the interviews to illustrate the project and to show at certain venues across Wales. One of the most satisfying aspects of the project has been the involvement of enthusiastic and supportive volunteers, who have helped with financial matters, administration, creating exhibitions and especially with the interviewing. The three training courses have run smoothly and we as an Archive are greatly indebted to all the volunteers who attended them.

It seems that the interviewing itself has been a pleasant and educational experience for all. Certainly, as a volunteer myself, I have felt humbled by, and much more appreciative of, these women's stories and the realisation that they contributed so unstintingly to the Welsh economy during this period.

Kate Sullivan (Field Officer for north Wales) showing our volunteer interviewers in north Wales how to master the recording equipment. From left to right: Kate, Wena Grant, Val Wakefield, Shan Robinson and Sue Trevelyan-Jones.



Catrin Steven (Project Co-ordinator)

National Eisteddfod of Wales: Carmarthenshire

Don't miss the talk on the 'Voices from the Factory Floor' project which will take place at the Societies' Unit 2, on Friday August 8th at 12.30 on the Eisteddfod field in Llanelli. Susan Roberts, the project's Field Officer in the south west will discuss her experiences of recording some of the local women who worked in the manufacturing industries in Carmarthenshire and interviewees and volunteers will be present to share their memories with us. Simultaneous translation facilities will be provided.

Women's History Walk in Swansea

A new addition to the programme of the annual Open House weekend, 13th and 14th September, this year will be a walk highlighting the stories of women from the past. A small group of local WAW members are planning this as a bit of an experiment. It will be a walk-and-talk within the city centre over two hours, taking in sites where interesting women have lived and worked and influenced the community. Some are fairly well known, like Adelina Patti and Amy Dillwyn. Others merit wider recognition.

Included are the stories of two women munitions workers killed in WW1, a slavery abolitionist, a princess, cockle women, suffragettes, trade unionists, a conscientious objector, and more. The time span covered is from the birth of Ann of Swansea (a prolific writer who ran the Bathing House) in 1764, to the death of Val Feld, Assembly Member, in 2001.

Our aim is to highlight some of the contributions women have made to our city in the past, and to inspire the general public to find out more for themselves. In the longer term we hope to devise a self-led trail that covers a wider local area, as has already been done in Barry.

Gail Allen

... and more Swansea news

A second blue plaque to a Swansea woman was unveiled on the Civic Centre, Swansea on 2nd June. Ann Julia Hatton, known as 'Ann of Swansea' ran the Swansea Bathing House with her husband William on the site from 1799 to 1806. She wrote poetry, libretti (her opera Tammany: the Indian Chief, written in New York before her move to Swansea was the first major libretto written in America on an America theme, and possibly the first written by a woman), poetry, and very popular 'gothic' novels.

Swansea Councillor Sybil Crouch unveiling the plaque.



War Memorials project

A brief mention of this appeared in March's Newsletter, but with members travelling the length and breadth of Wales this summer, we would ask you to look out for more women recorded on War Memorials. We currently have over twenty names recorded on graves or memorials from WWI, ranging from Ethel Thomas who died 'on active service' in Mesopotamia, to Dorothy Mary Watson and Mildred

Owen, munitions workers killed in an explosion at Pembrey and recorded on the Swansea Cenotaph, to a mysterious Amy Prosser on the tiny war memorial on a gatepost in Govilon, Monmouthshire and Mrs JE Howdle who drowned in the sinking of the Lusitania, 1915 and who is remembered on the Benllech War Memorial in Ynys Mon. Catrin Stevens is a most enthusiastic tracker of monuments, and has added about 15 entries to the list.

We are collecting names and photographs from WW2 as well as WWI.

We would be delighted if you could send a photograph of any inscriptions that you may come across, together with details of location to catrin@stevens2760.freeserve.co.uk or caroline_fairclough@yahoo.co.uk so that we can record them on a database, as well as putting pictures onto our Flickr account accessible via the member's section of the website.

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

**Copy date for next issue
Friday 16th May 2014**

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 was edited by Caroline Fairclough, and translated by Catrin Stevens and Elin Jones.