

www.womansarchivewales.org

Eisteddfod 2016

The WAW lecture at the Eisteddfod this year was full of the usual attendees as well as new faces from all over Wales and from Abergavenny itself. The theme was 'The Suffragettes, the 'Steddfod and more ...' and the lecturers were Dr Ryland Wallace and Dr Elin Jones. Ryland's learned and witty talk was received with enthusiasm. He described how the 1912 National Eisteddfod held in Wrexham was the object of Suffragette demonstrations, especially directed at Lloyd George. The 1913 Eisteddfod, the last one held in Abergavenny, was not going to be caught out, and the Pavilion was protected with fencing and a guard dog.

Then, Elin Jones presented a lively and comprehensive lecture, based on the research and book by Professor Angela John, on Margaret Haig Thomas, Lady Rhondda, a business woman and noted Suffragette. The session was chaired by Dr Siân Rhiannon Williams. The tent was packed, and it was a lovely day.



Women in the *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*

National biographies are a way of making a nation by creating its memory and recording the lives of those people who have shaped it. Therefore, who is included in this repository and resource is very important. Women are still under-represented in the *Dictionary of Welsh Biography*, which was launched in 1937 and for which the Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies and the National Library of Wales have been responsible since January 2014. Although the *DWB*'s statistics look no worse than those of most other national biographies, we have to concede that even in 2016, only about 10% of authors contributing entries to the *DWB* were women. Entries on women constituted less than 5% of the content published between 1937 and 1971, and still come to less than 10%. It is not only the statistics that need revising. Some entries written early on, like that on Betsi Cadwaladr, are very much of their time and urgently need thorough revision. Other women like the pioneering industrialist and feminist novelist Amy Dillwyn, are not there at all. Some, like the influential cultural patron Lady Augusta Hall (Lady Llanover) are hidden away in their husbands' or fathers' entries.

As Assistant Editor of the *DWB*, I want to ensure a fairer representation of women in our national biography, and we are making progress. Since 2014, we have added 25 women to the *DWB* page at the National Library of Wales website, among them the Egyptologist Kate Bosse-Griffiths, the politician Val Feld, and one of our best-known authors, Kate Roberts. Hers is one of the first entries in the *DWB* to be equipped with images, thanks to our Digital Editor Morfudd Nia Jones and the advances of technology. We have commissioned entries on a further 15 of the women on the 1971–2013 list, among them Laura Ashley, the artist Brenda Chamberlain, the novelist Menna Gallie, the environmentalist Cecily Williams-Ellis and the mathematician Mary Warner. With a view to revising older content, I am glad to report that Amy Dillwyn will soon claim her place, and who better to contribute her entry than Kirsti Bohata. Lady Charlotte Guest's entry was recently brought into the twenty-first century by Angela John, and Lady Llanover has now left her husband Benjamin's entry with her own, thoroughly updated article. The women of Wales are moving out of the shadows!

However, in the light of the fact that we are attempting to revise all that has been written since 1937 and to commission, edit and make available new entries, ours remains a formidable task, for which I would ask for your help. Very aware of the gaps in our knowledge, we need contributors to write entries on women 1971–2013 who deserve a place in our *DWB*. We also need authors willing to revise entries that reflect attitudes which are long out of date and at times offensive. Last, but not least, in order to raise the percentage of female contributors to


our nation's biography, we need women to write entries, on the women and on the men who shaped our national history.

I would ask you, therefore, to take a minute to look through the *DWB* page on the National Library of Wales website and see if you find the women who interest you, and whether you like what you are reading about them. If not, why not offer to write or revise an entry? Below is the most up-to-date list of women on which we urgently need articles. The full list of recently commissioned and included entries will be available on the Women's Archive of Wales website soon. Have a look and send me an email: marion.loeffler@cymru.ac.uk

Marion Löffler

<http://yba.llgc.org.uk/en/index.html>

Aberystwyth

 @WelshBiography

A full list of names seeking an author can be found on the Research page of the Women's Archive website <http://www.womensarchivewales.org/research.html>.

The names include

Eileen Beasley (2012, Welsh language campaigner), Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies (1891-1992, actress), Marged Lloyd Jones (2009, novelist and president of Merched y Wawr), Elaine Morgan (1920-2013, author), Annie Powell (1986, Communist Mayor of Rhondda,)Rosalind Rusbridge (1915-2004, teacher, author and pacifist), and Sarah Minwel Tibbott (1998, author and curator at Sain Ffagan)

Ffatri Vox

Voices from the Factory Floor continues to develop! Inge Thomson premiered her new work, *Ffatri Vox*, at the Festival of Voice / Gŵl y Llais in Cardiff, on the 10th June.

Here is part of a review of this performance written by Cath Barton, herself a singer, for the Wales Art Review:

'In the second half of the concert, Thomson and Fifield were joined onstage by singer Julie Murphy from the Welsh folk band Fernhill and Brighton-based musician Tom Cook on guitar for the commissioned piece *Ffatri Vox*. In this Inge Thomson has incorporated and built upon extracts from the eponymous *Voices from the Factory Floor*, recordings of women speaking about their experiences of working in the manufacturing industries of Wales between 1945 and 1975, collected by Women's Archive of Wales. Snatches of speech are included verbatim, turned into song in English and Welsh and, like Thomson's other work, enhanced by use of electronics by all the performers. Some of the extracts used relate directly to sound – the noise in factories which meant women had to learn to lip-read, for example.

The blend of Thomson and Murphy's voices was a rich one and the piece packed full of fascinating historical facts. Sounds of breaking glass heralded a woman talking about workers in the Corona factory in the Rhondda wearing clogs to protect them from broken glass bottles. And those sounds generated others in the piece, with Julie Murphy singing in Welsh about the women being recognised in the streets of Porth from the sounds of their clogs...

This was a performance full of delights and signposts to further ones, some connected with voice in ways well beyond what I expected. I grew up with the Corona man coming to call, but never knew that those glass bottles of pop came from Wales. For me it's been an eye-opener to go to the website for *Voices from the Factory Floor* and read more of the experiences of some of the women who worked there at that time.'

Many thanks to Cath for allowing us to use this extract. To read the whole review, go to

<http://www.walesartsreview.org/festival-of-voice-inge-thomson/>

And further Voices news ...

Catrin Edwards, an extremely talented producer, director, documentary maker and composer was South-east Wales Field Officer for the *Voices* project. She has just successfully applied for funding to finance the writing and composing a musical show based on *Voices from the Factory Floor*. Research is about to start, so watch this space! Many congratulations to Catrin.

Contributions to the Newsletter, in Welsh or English, are welcome from all members. Email them to caroline.fairclough@yahoo.co.uk.
Copy date for the next issue is Friday 18th November. Contact her too for a large print edition.
This edition was edited by Caroline Fairclough and translated by Catrin Stevens.

19th AMC/WAW ANNUAL CONFERENCE

This year's Conference is to be held in Bangor, on the 8th & 9th October 2016. It will take place in the Cledwyn Rooms, Terrace Conference, Bangor University.

The topics to be covered by speakers range from early mediaeval to mid twentieth century, and papers will be delivered in English or Welsh. There will be simultaneous translation of papers in Welsh.

The Conference Dinner will be held in the Teras Lounge Restaurant, and there will also be an Afternoon Tea on the Saturday officially launching the HLF Women in WWI website <http://www.womenandwar.wales/> . Join us for tea and Welsh cakes, and some explanation of the future of the project.

For a full programme and booking details, go to <http://www.womensarchivewales.org/events.html>

Women in WWI - Solving the mystery of Ethel Thomas

One of our new members has helped to solve a mystery which has been troubling the officers of the 'Women in Wales during the First World War: the Welsh experience' for some time. Perhaps you can remember the article in the September 2014 issue of the Newsletter where mention was made of the gravestone in Dan-y-graig Cemetery, Swansea to Ethel Thomas and which suggested that she died 'on active service' in Mesopotamia in December 1917? Furthermore, the quote at the bottom of the stone was rather incongruous, 'Greater love hath no man ...'. However, now, through Diana Morgan of Swansea's meticulous research we find that this stone does not commemorate Ethel at all, but her husband, Thomas Rhys Thomas, who did die of fever far away in Mesopotamia. Diana searched the National Library's Newspapers Online website to obtain this information. Poor Ethel – she was left a widow at 25 years old and unfortunately her name has had to be deleted from our website and she returns to obscurity once more. This is exactly the kind of research which can benefit the project. We have recorded the names of c. 200 women who served in WW1 from all over Wales but we have only skeletal information about so many of them. We would be extremely grateful for similar contributions from other members. Thanks Diana and welcome to Women's Archive of Wales.

Catrin Stevens

Marking the lives of women 1914 – 1919

We hope to be able to involve members in a Wales-wide remembrance during November. This will be part of the Women in WWI project, and is intended to highlight the parts played by women during the War. The plan is to place flowers, and remember specific women, at their graves or memorials in Swansea (south west Wales), Newport (south east Wales); Bodelwyddan (north east Wales) and Holyhead (north west Wales). Details are still to be finalised but all four events will take place simultaneously on a date between 1st and 18th November 2016.

Further information should be available soon; if you have any questions or suggestions please contact Catrin Stevens catrinstevens@outlook.com .

Congratulations to Ton-du Primary School, Bridgend Ton-du Primary School, Bridgend were this year's very worthy winners of the Women's Archive of Wales prize in the Welsh Heritage Schools' Initiative annual competition. The Awards Ceremony was held in the Waterfront Museum, Swansea on July 8th. The pupils had submitted a project about 'Our Local Women' and they showed a solid understanding of the lives of working class women in their locality before the Second World War and also the roles women played during that war. They engaged their community in the project by interviewing family members, local pensioners and members of the local history society. They also participated in 'Women in History Month'. It was gratifying to see that this year more entries included aspects of women's history. Welsh Heritage Schools' Initiative is very grateful for WAW's kind support of its heritage competition.



Representatives from Ton-du Primary School receive their £300 Women's Archive of Wales prize from the Chair, Jenny Sabine and Lord Rhys ap Gruffudd, sponsor of the first Eisteddfod.

Two reviews of books by members, and a forthcoming one!

Swansea's 'Bad Girls': Crime and Prostitution 1870s-1914, by Elizabeth F. Belcham.

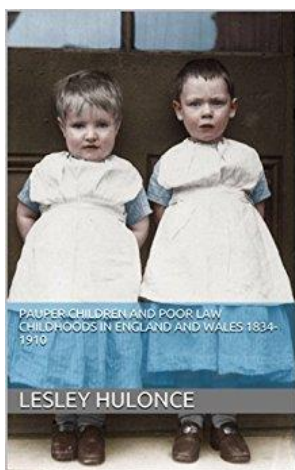
ISBN 978-0-95775974-2-6, £20.

This is a well-researched and informative, thoughtful and sympathetic account of the lives of girls and women living in the poorest areas of Swansea at the turn of the last century. These were women to whom prostitution and petty crime were the only means of survival – a far cry from the men and few women who people the pages of most books on Swansea history. This very readable analysis of their stories gives a much needed insight to the way so many women were forced to exist. When Elizabeth first encountered the photographs and police records of women prisoners deposited in the West Glamorgan Archives, she says, 'our eyes met, and I was compelled to know their stories'. These women lived in Swansea although many came from across south Wales, but their sisters could be found in any large port or industrial town in Britain.



Lizzie O'Brien Police photograph

Pauper Children and Poor Law Childhoods in England and Wales 1834-1910 by Lesley Hulonce



Lesley Hulonce took the increasingly common step of self-publishing her book on pauper children, and a good decision she made. Though not a book of women's history, many girls and women find themselves in its pages – the children themselves, matrons, teachers, visitors; their presence is everywhere.

The subject allies well with Elizabeth Belcham's book (above); it too is based very largely on Swansea records, though is set in a much wider British context. The children of Swansea's bad girls may well have ended as 'children 'who belong to the state'. Some of them may have been raised in the workhouse too. Commentators in the mid-19th century saw workhouses as 'promiscuous environments' where girls faced the threat of 'the deepest degradation of all'.

One way to avoid this fate was education for respectable employment. The curriculum for workhouse girls was intended to prepare the majority for domestic service, and was very limited. One commentator remarked 'the inevitably dull routine of such a life'

deprived 'their histories of that varied romantic character which often distinguishes the life of a boy pushing his way in the world, and hence their biographies are never so interesting or quotable'.

Later in the 19th century more children were housed in 'cottage homes', under the care of a matron. The first such homes in Wales were Swansea Cottage Homes established 1877. One matron, Letitia Lloyd, began her employment at Swansea cottage homes in the mid-1880s and died there in 1909 at the age of 68. Normally firm, she would relax 'act the nurse to a child in pain'. Hulonce also tells of the granddaughter of a pupil (at Pontypridd Homes and school) who remarked that her grandmother had described the homes 'so warmly', she was shocked when after her death she realised they were 'a branch of the workhouse'.

Many children were 'boarded out', under the supervision of the Boards of Guardians. John Dillwyn Llewelyn, a Swansea guardian since the 1830s, took his wife on nearly all his visits of inspection as she 'knew what to look for and what to ask', but 'female Visitors' were not formally adopted by Swansea until June 1910.

This is a thoroughly useful addition to the history of women in Wales and in England too.

[Pauper Children and Poor Law Childhoods in England and Wales 1834-1910 \(Kindle Edition\)](#)

Jen Wilson, founder of Jazz Heritage Wales (formerly Women in Jazz) and a founder member of AMC/WAW, has recently been appointed Honorary Professor of Practice in University of Wales Trinity St Davids, Swansea. Jen was invited to take the Women's Jazz Archive to the university some years ago. Her latest book, *Jazz – the Devil's Music in Wales, Feminists, Fascists, Fashion and some o' that Old Time Religion*, will be published later this year.

