

2019 Annual Conference

Abstracts of papers delivered at the Conference:

Wil Aaron

Abstract: 'Martha Hughes Cannon: 'Seneddwraig Gyntaf UDA' (The first female Senator in the USA)'

Martha Hughes from Llandudno was the first female senator in the history of the USA. She was elected to the Utah senate in 1896. She was remarkably successful there, campaigning mainly on public health issues. She presented a number of laws to improve sewerage, to ensure clean water and to promote cleanliness etc. In 1899 an attempt was made to nominate her for a seat at the USA Senate, twenty years before the first woman was elected but her plans were thwarted by her Mormon beliefs and her support for polygamous marriage.

Helen Atkinson

Abstract: 'A Space for Violence: How the impact of masculine and nationalist spaces affected the violence the Suffragists received in Wales'

The violence against women at suffrage demonstrations and the disruption of public events in Wales have both been well-analysed areas of Welsh Suffrage historiography.

The clashes between the Suffragists and the public assist in providing a detailed narrative of the tumultuous years that women sought to gain the vote. However, historical analysis often fails to take into account the significance of the spaces in which these violent scenes occurred.

Public political spaces such as town hall meetings or rallies were deemed masculine spaces, spaces in which women rarely had access. Thus, when Suffragists would disrupt these events or hold their own meetings they were 'invading' the masculine sphere, a sphere where violence and counterdemonstration was a norm.

Public spaces and events that had nationalist or patriotic importance can also account for outbursts of violence towards the Suffragettes, who often were seen as an invading group from England, especially when they disrupted cultural and political events specific to Wales.

In this paper, I examine the significance of spatial history when analysing these violent events and argue that women making themselves visible and interacting with these political and nationalist spaces caused many members of the public to resort to violent outbursts.

Dr Melanie Bigold

Abstract: 'Women's Book Ownership and Libraries in Wales in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries'

In *A Nation and its Books*, Jones and Rees included seven chapters detailing the role of libraries and emphasising the cultural impact of book collecting; however, apart from a few paragraphs from Thomas Lloyd, a history of women's book ownership is absent from the volume. They are not alone in their oversight; as David Pearson remarked in his 2018 Lyell Lectures, 'book ownership amongst women [still] awaits its historian'.

My current research on women's libraries and book ownership (1660-1820) seeks to redress this imbalance. In particular, revisiting Welsh women's book ownership will offer an important corrective in our understanding of women's intellectual and cultural legacies. To trace that impact my paper will offer a picture of the available material, particularly the scope and variety of the sources. It will also detail what we do know about some significant female collections in the late eighteenth century, including those of Eliza Giffard, Lady Elizabeth Greenly, Hester Thrale Piozzi, and the 'Ladies of Llangollen' (and I hope to add many more to this list by October!). These libraries enable a comparative discussion not only of the Welsh scene, but also of the emerging trends, differences, and issues across Wales and England.

Dr Sam Blaxland

Abstract: 'Why not put more women in power?' Female Conservative activists in Wales, 1945-1979.

In the popular imagination, the Conservative Party has little or no roots in Wales, and a weak and chequered history. This is misleading. For the majority of the period after 1945, the party has been Wales' second political force (behind Labour, but ahead of Plaid Cymru and the various incarnations of the Liberals), both in terms of vote share and number of votes received at general elections, as well as the number of Parliamentary constituencies it won. In 1983, for example, the party won fourteen seats in Wales, including in places like Bridgend and Newport West. In an era where political parties still relied on their local grass-roots machines to 'spread the word' and get their message across to voters, the Conservatives had a strong group of activists in large parts of Wales. Most of these were women. This paper will explore, based on extensive research for my PhD, who some of these key women were, what they stood for, and how they saw their politics and political identity. It will argue that, contrary to popular stereotypes, they were neither 'pawns in a patriarchy', nor 'savage matrons dressed in mink baying for blood', as the Daily Telegraph once jokingly called them – although their social conservatism was sometimes a feature of their politics. The paper will draw upon sources and material found both in the National Library of Wales, various record offices, and the Conservative Party Archive in Oxford's Bodleian Library.

Molly Caenwyn

Abstract: 'Who is Mary Dillwyn? Issues in Women's Studies in Early Photographic History'

Mary Dillwyn is considered to be one of Britain's most notable early female photographers, yet she is continuously overlooked in the study of women in the early years of photography. This paper is a study into Women's photographic history and heritage in Wales using Mary Dillwyn, the first Welsh female photographer, as a case study. This will explore the issues of women's studies in early photographic history. Although a great deal has been written about women in contemporary practises, writings on female practitioners in the 19th century are still sparse and repeatedly dominated by a select few women. The main aims of this study is to highlight the gaps in photographic historical scholarship, the gender imbalance in Welsh photographic history and what issues arise in current women's studies in early photographic history.

Nigel Callaghan

Abstract: 'Hallelujah Lasses - Female officers in the early Welsh Salvation Army'

The Salvation Army started to expand into Wales in 1879. Unusually for the time, a majority of the local leaders were young, single women. Typically, a Captain & a Lieutenant would arrive in a town with the task of declaring war on the Devil! By 1891 there were over 100 female officers in Wales, and only 60 male.

These were women placed in positions of authority within the Salvation Army and society, at a time when such authority was rare. Many decades passed before other churches ordained women. Particularly in the cities the women led much of the Army's practical & pastoral work - including establishing the Moira Street Hostel in Cardiff. These women gave up everything for their calling. Some went to jail. Others became ill and died.

The paper will consider how the movement developed, will present case studies of a few of these women, will consider how they were received by Welsh society and how attitudes to them changed over the next 20 years.

Professor Cathryn A. Charnell-White

Abstract: 'Marged Dafydd (1700–85): barddoniaeth gaeth a diwylliant llenyddol Cymru'r ddeunawfed ganrif' ('Marged Dafydd (1700–85): Welsh-language strict-metre poetry and literary culture in eighteenth-century Wales')

Wales's eighteenth-century women writers and poets have received significant attention in the wake of second wave feminist scholarship, yet women's agency as readers, subscribers and collectors remains an under-researched strand in the history of the book and reading in Wales. With twenty-five or more surviving poems to her name, Marged Dafydd's canon is the largest of a Welsh-language woman poet before 1800; it includes verse in the strict-metres of Wales's medieval bardic guild, as well as the popular free-metres that dominated Wales's early modern poetic landscape. Marged Dafydd also transcribed and collected manuscripts, and in this she demonstrates an allegiance to manuscript culture in a world in which other Welsh women poets (notably balladeers and hymnists) were exploiting the creative and commercial opportunities of a thriving indigenous print culture. None of Marged Dafydd's poems were published during her lifetime, but she did subscribe to a number of printed anthologies and religious works, and corresponded with the entrepreneurial poet, printer, and anthologist, Dafydd Jones of Trefriw. Marged Dafydd's interactions with books and manuscripts offer valuable insight into a range of topics: the importance of local, national, and female networks in fostering poetic skills; canon formation; the transcription and preservation of historical and contemporary poetic texts; subscription and book ownership.

Kate Cleaver

Abstract: 'The Victorian Asylum; how the first investigative journalist brings light to forgotten Welsh voices'

Nellie Bly wrote *Ten Days in a Madhouse* in 1887; she was an American female investigative journalist who was given the task of finding out what happened behind the white-clad nurses; exposing the horrifying world of the lunatic asylum. One year later in Wales a forty-seven-year-old woman, EM, was committed to the Briton Ferry Lunatic Asylum due to chronic mania caused by a property dispute. Within months of her sister committing her, she had been registered as insane. FJ was admitted to Vernon House in 1874 with depression caused by money matters, again her uncle waited only months before legally declaring her insane. MW was also sent to the asylum in 1874 and again was declared insane in months. In each case the women were ghosts on a page. This paper will look at how Nellie Bly and historical records can bring to life the forgotten voices of women who were put away. The industrial revolution tossed family and work life into a blender. Anyone unable to keep up became cast out to the peripheries of society. Family networks fell apart and the 'disability' label came into being. By rediscovering these voices and letting them speak, stories that have been lost can be heard.

Emelye Clifford

Abstract: The History of the Cardiff New Synagogue Ladies' Guild 1950 – 1986

This paper draws on the archives of the Cardiff New Synagogue Ladies' Guild (the "Guild") to reveal its purpose and operation across four decades, from formation to ultimate decline. As fundraisers, caterers, organisers and educators, the Guild was the "backbone" of the Cardiff New Synagogue, now Cardiff Reform Synagogue, and the only progressive Jewish community in Wales. The Guild's meticulous minutes tell the stories of religious, organisational and social activities as forces that shaped the Synagogue's identity and social fabric –from hugely successful garden parties, to talks held in members' homes, to the food of festivals and the many acts of tzedakah (charity). Through the lens of this communal service, the archives also highlight women's status and roles within the Synagogue and the wider public sphere. Finally, this paper explores some of the historical and societal reasons which may have led to the Guild's demise as a women-only group and the potential implications of this change for Synagogue community life.

Vanessa Cole

Abstract: 'Leaving violent men': Twelve years of Welsh Women's Aid, 1978-1990'

This paper will focus on the setting up and development of Welsh Women's Aid from 1978 to 1990. The organisation was established as a national umbrella to co-ordinate refuge provisions within Wales. Moreover, it acted as a vehicle for women's voices and transformation in the battle for change against traditional ideas and attitudes surrounding domestic violence.

This paper will investigate three central research questions. Firstly, what were the circumstances which lead to the establishment and continuation of WWA in Wales? Secondly, how did the organisation respond to these circumstances? And thirdly, what impact did the organisation have on the lives of women in Wales? This paper aims to challenge who and what are considered important to the Women's Liberation Movement. This research on WWA highlights both that Violence Against Women was a key campaign and debate within the movement and that the leaders of change during the second wave of feminism in Britain were not just based in the cities of England.

The paper will incorporate a selection of primary sources from the West Glamorgan Archives in Swansea and the Glamorgan Archives in Cardiff. Additionally, online collections such as People's Collection Wales and *Spare Rib* will also be incorporated.

Dr Rhian Davies

Abstract: 'Communicating loveliness to others': The musical patronage of Gwendoline and Margaret Davies'

Gwendoline and Margaret Davies of Gregynog are Wales' most famous art patronesses who bequeathed their iconic paintings and sculpture by Monet, Cézanne and Rodin to transform our national collection. But the sisters were also significant patronesses of music whose vision of 'communicating loveliness to others' included the first Welsh Conservatoire (1914); a mission to rescue Belgian refugee musicians during the First World War (1914-16); the appointment of Walford Davies as first Gregynog Professor and first Director of the National Council of Music for Wales (1919-41); the first resident chamber ensemble at any University in the world (1919-86), and the Gregynog Festival (1933-). They commissioned Ralph Vaughan Williams and Gustav Holst, saved Montgomeryshire folksongs with a phonograph, and took violin, organ and harp lessons as well as performing and broadcasting alongside their estate employees in the Gregynog Choir conducted by Adrian Boult.

This presentation reconstructs a remarkable lost narrative that has re-emerged through my programming of the Gregynog Festival since 2007. Drawing on additional current research, it will also broaden out to consider Gwendoline and Margaret Davies as part of a long tradition of musical patronage by women at Welsh country houses such as Brynbella, Erddig, Glansevern, Hafod and Nerquis Hall.

Alison Elliott

Abstract: 'A Woman's Work Is Never Done: Images of Mam - Working Women in Wales in the years following the Second World War'

The research focuses on a selection of works of art from 1945 and prior to the rise of feminism, that include images of working women in Wales. I have begun to draw together:

- what those works of art represent
- the reception of the works at the time, drawing some conclusions about impact on culture
- examples of contemporaneous Anglo-Welsh literature that enhance the emerging picture
- national and international events
- art movements

The period in question places this research within living memory. Enriching this research by stimulating a discussion lies at the heart of this study.

I interpret and reflect on what the selected artworks tell us about society, whilst treasuring those images of working women. The research is nationally important as mam, a Welsh icon, has yet to be explored through art history. This is the starting point for a much larger academic study of images of working women across Wales, spanning the whole of the twentieth century, to highlight the images, in works of art, of neglected Welsh working women.

Georgina Gittins

Abstract: 'Keeping the ball rolling: 100 Years of Women's Football in Wrexham'

The Football Association of Wales (FAW) was founded in Wrexham and our Racecourse is the oldest football stadium in Britain; we're bidding to host the National Football Museum of Wales.

The history of women's football in Wrexham links past and present in many surprising ways.

Young munitions workers played the first women's match at the Racecourse in 1917, raising the equivalent of £12,604 for the Hospitals; they were accused of misappropriating funds – one of the reasons given by the FA for banning women's football in 1921.

The second and final women's match was in February 1921 between the most successful team in Britain – the Dick, Kerr Ladies – and St Helens. Despite a gate of 10,000 with many more unable to get in, the local press coverage demonstrates blatant sexism.

The Welsh FA banned the same team from playing in North Wales during their Charity Tour of Britain in 1938.

Almost a century later, the FAW has produced determined, ambitious targets to ensure the growth of women's football in Wales. Wrexham AFC Women have just completed their first season; women's history is being made again.

Eleanor Hill

Abstract: 'With Her Bare Hands: Welsh women in STEM history and their place in the curriculum.'

Women's work has always been practical, back-breaking, base, elemental. But our abilities to harness the elements have never been acknowledged. From craft in the home to skill on the shop floor, maximum skills have been paid minimum wage and scant attention.

Where women are celebrated in education too often the focus is on overseas celebrities such as Amelia Earhart. Within STEM it can make a topic already associated with masculinity seem even more distant from the reality of women's lives. Welsh industrial history is dominated by coal and steel - yet the experiences of female technicians, working across the industrial landscape from blacksmiths to bridge builders, have shaped modern Wales.

Working with research for the Women's Engineering Society, and in archives in Wales, this paper will focus on Welsh women's stories that I have located to accompany existing 'big story' narratives of well known figures within the 'Women in STEM' curriculum, building links to the global picture of women's place in our industrial heritage and enabling children to encounter a wider understanding of what it is to be an engineer in Wales.

David Johnston-Smith

Abstract: 'An introduction to the photographic career and archive of Raissa Page, 1932- 2011'

My talk will introduce the archive of Raissa Page (born in Canada to English and Greek parents, moved to the UK at 18) who had two successful careers, firstly as a Social Worker, and then, from c.1977-1993, as a documentary photographer. Her work was widely published, and she had lengthy relationships with Social Work Today, the Observer Magazine, and Spare Rib amongst many other publications. She retired to Wales towards the end of her life, and her archive was donated to the Richard Burton Archives, Swansea University in 2014 where it is currently being catalogued during a 12-month Wellcome Trust funded project, completing in Nov 2019. Raissa was a founder member of the all-female photographic agency collective, Format, and her work often reflected her feminism and left of centre political beliefs. Some of her most widely known images were taken during the Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp protests, and the Miners' Strike of 1984-5. She also

specialised in institutional work – of children in care, the elderly, and those struggling with poor mental health. The talk will be illustrated by many of Raissa's photographs, including some taken within Wales.

Dr Marion Löffler

Abstract: 'Cynyddu amrywiaeth a throsgynnu tabŵ yn Y Bywgraffiadur' (Increasing diversity and transcending taboo in Y Bywgraffiadur' (Dictionary of Welsh Biography)

The topic of this paper (to be delivered in Welsh) will be to discuss the latest developments in 'Y Bywgraffiadur' (*Dictionary of Welsh Biography*) and its website and the editors' efforts to add to the diversity of the content, transcending taboo topics of past times.

Revising *Y Bywgraffiadur* gives us an opportunity to get to grips with traditional taboo attitudes in the lives and deaths of individuals, such as suicide, mental illness, illegitimate births, and being gay. The life and records of Maria Jane Williams (Llinos) will be used as the main example to explain the challenges of our new research policies to including taboo subjects, but other examples will also be mentioned.

I will be sharing the latest information regarding the status of women in *Y Bywgraffiadur*, and asking for contributions to it.

Christopher Parry

Abstract: 'Vocalist, Philanthropist and Scientist: Mrs Watts Hughes (1847-1907)'

"I should tell you that from my earliest childhood I have always been particularly sensitive to sound. At Dowlais, in Glamorganshire, where I lived when a child, I heard the roar of the great ironworks day and night in my ears, and I heard the music in the deep thunder of the steam engines and hammers. It was perhaps this which made me interested in, and sensitive to, every kind of sound, and this interest intensified..." (*Pall Mall Gazette*, February 12, 1890). These words were spoken by one of the true forgotten figures in Welsh history, Margaret (Megan) Watts Hughes. Born in Dowlais in 1847, she was renowned locally for her exceptional vocal talents. When she reached adulthood, she would amaze audiences all over Britain with her vocal performances, but it was her scientific skills which were impressing readers of the *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1890. Such was her interest in sound she made the first in-depth experiments into visualising the human voice. Her experiments led her to create 'Voice Figures'; physical images of the human voice. She became the first woman to display scientific instruments and findings at the Royal Society.

A full collection of her 'Voice Figures' have just been restored at Cyfarthfa Castle and for the first time in centuries we can see this forgotten history in full colour.

Dr Sarah Prendergast

Abstract: 'Allen Raine: Rediscovering a woman's critique of the 1904-05 Welsh Revival'

Allen Raine, pseudonym of Anne Adaliza Puddicombe, was a best-selling Welsh author. Following her death in 1908, Raine's work fell into obscurity as her novels were dismissed as sentimental and incapable of depicting the bleak reality of Welsh life. However, Raine did explore darker themes, including mental health, sexual expectations of women, domestic abuse and the hypocrisy of Welsh Nonconformity.

Queen of the Rushes, Raine's eighth novel, examined the 1904-05 Welsh Revival. Through the narrative, Raine voiced her criticisms of this religious movement and the emotional Revival meetings. Raine believed that the Revival was of God but that much of the religious enthusiasm was a product of the natural exuberance of the Welsh temperament. Queen of the Rushes expressed the concerns that Raine had previously written in a letter, published by the *Western Mail*. Her letter, signed Mrs Puddicombe, went unheeded. A month later, Revd Peter Price published a similar letter which became central to the Revival's scholarship. Arguably, Raine was the Revival's most influential critic, yet her voice was silenced, and her work marginalised because she was a woman. This paper

establishes Raine as an important critic of the 1904-5 Welsh Revival, addressing the themes of gender, identity, and the importance of finding the lost voices of women in Welsh history.

Ruth E. Richardson

Abstract: 'The Priceless Bacton Altar Cloth.'

Blanche Parry was the closest companion of Queen Elizabeth I for the longest time - indeed, for 56 years, from Elizabeth's birth until the year after the Spanish Armada. Blanche went to the Royal Court with her aunt, Lady Troy, who with her husband had previously entertained King Henry VII and his Queen at Troy House near Monmouth. It was Lady Troy who brought up Elizabeth. These details, and more, are in my biography of these Welsh ladies: 'Mistress Blanche, Queen Elizabeth I's Confidante', new edition 2018 (published Logaston Press (info@firconebooks.com)). Blanche Parry died in February 1590, a gracious lady mourned by the Queen and the Court. In the 1590s a cloth, cut to cover an altar arrived at Bacton Church, where Blanche had worshipped as a child and where her family were buried. This beautiful cloth is the only known surviving piece of material from any dress worn by Queen Elizabeth I, who is recorded as having 1,900 when she died. Thanks to its association with the memory of Blanche Parry it remained in the Church until taken to Hampton Court Palace for conservation in 2015. My talk is the story of this incredible and unique cloth.

Dr Jean Silvan-Evans

Abstract: 'Audrey Jones, an influential and energetic campaigner for women's rights'

Audrey Jones (1929-2014) was an influential and energetic campaigner for women's rights who travelled the world to take part in key United Nations conferences promoting gender equality. She was included in the 100 Welsh Women nominated for their impact on Welsh life in the Welsh Government initiative to celebrate the centenary of the first Votes for Women. Wales Assembly of Women established the Audrey Jones Awards for Research by Women in her honour. There is an account of her life and times in the *Dictionary of Welsh Biography* and her papers have been deposited with the Glamorgan Archives. She lived in the Vale of Glamorgan, down the road from St Fagan's in Dinas Powis.

Sophie Thompson

Abstract: 'An Investigation into the Aberystwyth Women's Liberal Association using the Minute Book of 1894-1899'

This paper aims to present an investigation into the Aberystwyth Women's Liberal Association, in an attempt to graciously follow the work of Ursula Masson, and the studies she provided on the Aberdare and Cardiff Women's Liberal Associations.

Ursula Masson piloted the studies of Women's Liberal Associations, providing us with detailed and constructive studies of the Aberdare and Cardiff groups, highlighting the activities of Welsh Liberal women, and demonstrating the significance of female participation in politics. This paper aims to present a continuation of this type of study with an in-depth investigation into the Aberystwyth Women's Liberal Association (AWLA). Through examining the Minute Book kept by the Association, I hope to ascertain valuable information about this group that will contribute to wider historical narratives surrounding women's political history in Wales. This paper will examine the women of the AWLA, the issues they discussed, the motions they passed, and indeed their influence and presence in Aberystwyth and wider Wales. Furthermore, this paper also aims to provide the beginnings of a comparative study to the Aberdare and Cardiff associations, seeking to ascertain the similarities and differences of the groups as a collective.

Mary Thorley

Abstract: 'Women and the Arts in Carmarthen'

This paper explores the role of the arts in the lives of middle-class women in Carmarthen in the second half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. Initially, it discusses the nature of education available to them and its particular emphasis on literature and the arts.

Through case studies of several women it will also demonstrate how this form of education, as well as the women's individual talents, contributed, often unexpectedly, to their future lives. These case studies will consider how these women used their musical, artistic and other talents not only for their own personal development, but also to contribute to many aspects of the society in which they lived.

The paper will conclude with a consideration of the importance of the arts to the women's movement and how their engagement with the arts was a liberating factor in their lives and contributed to their entry into public and professional life.

Ryland Wallace

Abstract: 'Kate Williams Evans: Suffragette Window Smasher and Hunger Striker'

In the summer of 2018, the National Museum of Wales purchased the memorabilia of a hitherto unknown Welsh suffragette - Kate Williams Evans of Llansantffraid, Montgomeryshire. In this paper, I intend to look at the various items in this collection and try to place them in the context of the women's suffrage movement and also to shed light on Kate Williams Evans herself and on the nature and extent of her involvement in the campaign.

Sioned Williams ac Elen Phillips

Abstract: 'Menywod a Chreffft yng Nghymru yn ystod y Dirwasgiad' (Women and Craft in Wales during the Depression)

This paper will explore the craft activities carried out by women in south-east Wales during the 1920-30s Depression. Drawing on objects, archives and oral testimony from the Museum's collection, the paper will focus on two initiatives established with the aim of alleviating poverty in the industrial communities of south-east Wales: one established by the Rural Industries Bureau and the other by the activist, Elisabeth Williams, from Gwaelod-y-garth.

The first 20 minutes of the paper will be delivered in the Lecture Theatre and then there will be 20 minutes to study related objects from our collection.