

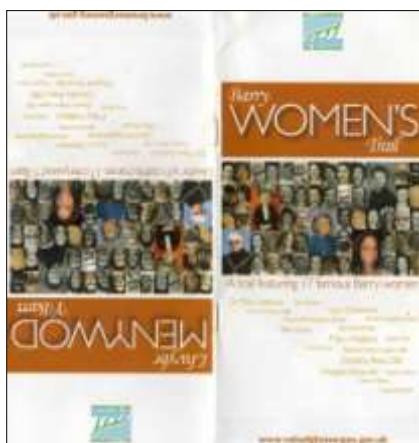
www.womansarchivewales.org

International Women's Day Events

Swansea

On International Women's Day this year I attended a new venture by Academi Hywel Teifi, Swansea University, and sponsored by the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol at the luxurious Morgans Hotel, Swansea. I enjoyed the session on 'Pioneers from the Past' very much. Dr Kirsti Bohata discussed Amy Dillwyn as a female industrialist and pioneer; Peter Lord explained the contribution Winifred Coombe Tennant made to the cultural life of Wales and Professor Emeritus Gareth Ffowc Roberts enlightened us about the amazing career of brilliant mathematician, Mary Wynne Warner. Two of these lectures were in Welsh and the simultaneous translation for non-Welsh speakers was most effective. In the other session I attended a panel of young women discussed Women and Enterprise with Elin Rhys of Telescop in the Chair. Bethan Darwin is a lawyer with her own law firm; Heledd Bebb lectures in entrepreneurship at Glamorgan University and Dr Anwen Rees is a noted athlete and expert on health issues such as obesity. What was particularly gratifying about this session was that the audience of young women were ready to question and challenge the speakers. Many thanks to Non Vaughan Williams of Academi Hywel Teifi for organising the event and I look forward to being able to attend a similar event in full next year.

Catrin Stevens



Barry

Barry's annual celebration was held at Barry Memorial Hall, with a range of invited guests. Many women's organizations were represented, and there were a range of speakers, including that well-known daughter of Barry, Deirdre Beddoe, and Jane Hutt.

The climax of the event was the launch of the Barry Women's Trail, a walk around the town celebrating women who had made an outstanding contribution to public life. The women celebrated range from the internationally known, like Grace Williams (1906 – 77) the composer to WPCI Elsie Joan Baldwin, one of the first two women to join the Glamorgan Constabulary in 1948. The leaflet can be downloaded from

http://www.valeofglamorgan.gov.uk/enjoying/visit_the_vale/see_and_do/walking_holidays_in_the_vale/barry_womens_trail.aspx

Bangor

Leah Edge organised an exhibition at Bangor Museum and Art Gallery as part of her MA course. She writes:

Last year I began an MA in Medieval and Early Modern Literature and was funded by the ATM project run by Bangor University. As part of my MA I completed a project for the Bangor Museum and Art Gallery. The main area of my research was focused on Lady Maria Reade, Dorothea Pughe-Jones and Dorothy Drage who were strong, inspirational women, born in the middle to latter part of the 19th century. All three women contributed several objects to the museum and were highly influential in their communities.

Lady Reade made significant changes to her community of Llanfaethlu. She commissioned five Coffee Houses as an alternative to the Public Houses that encouraged drinking. She was part of an



Merched Rhyfeddol Remarkable Women

Dorothy Drage - Dorothea Pughe Jones - Lady Maria Reade

enthusiastic group of collectors, led by the Museum Curator who searched out artefacts that celebrated ordinary working life.

Dorothea Pughe-Jones was the last in line to the Ynysgain Estate near Criccieth. Following her wishes, a significant collection of furniture and artifacts dating from the 17th to the 20th century from her home at Ynysgain Uchaf were bequeathed to the museum.

Dorothy Drage wrote an autobiography of her life, detailing her contributions to the foundations of the Women's Institute and the Associated Country Women of the World. She left the museum an exquisite collection of lace dating from the 15th century.

Although my project with the museum came to an end in September of last year I felt that the inspirational lives of these women needed to be further celebrated by creating an exhibition of their objects. I was fortunate enough to have the exhibition opened by Tom Carpenter, a relative of Lady Reade and the current owner of Carreglwyd. The exhibition was a great success and was a fantastic celebratory end to my MA year.

Leah Edge

The exhibition runs until 22nd June 2013, so you may still catch it.

Sisterhood and After: an oral history of the Women's Liberation Movement



This website is part of a Leverhulme funded project to create an oral history archive of feminist change-makers of the 1970s and 80s. It builds on the results of a previous project on the Women's Liberation Movement carried out by the Women's Library during 2008-9, which archived the results of six witness workshops across the UK, including one in Cardiff in May 2009, in which a number of WAW members took part (see WAW Newsletter July 2009,

www.womensarchivewales.org/2009%20july%20newsletter%20english.pdf

The website is part of the British Library's excellent learning pages, and includes detailed summaries, transcripts and audio clips from sixty in-depth interviews with women who had been involved in the WLM, including WAW President Deirdre Beddoe, Jane Hutt, Jenny Lynn, Audrey Jones and Michele Ryan who all spoke about their experiences of the movement in Wales (and who are all WAW members). Other interviewees include Beatrix Campbell, Amrit Wilson, Jenni Murray, Michelene Wandor, Una Kroll and Susie Orbach amongst many others. Clips are also included from a few men interviewed for another oral history project, 'Becoming Men: masculinities and the WLM, 1970-85'. A link from each entry leads to the British Library catalogue which gives a detailed record of the content of the interview, and the full interviews and transcripts can be accessed at the British Library, subject to any restrictions placed on the material by the interviewees.

The site includes ten themes, including education (one of the clips is of Deirdre Beddoe describing organising the first Welsh Women's History Conference in 1983); activism; equality and work; and who we were, who we are; which incorporate audio clips and transcripts from relevant interviews to illustrate different aspects of a very diverse and vibrant movement which took place across the UK. A timeline approaches the material from another angle and includes, for example, clips of Jane Hutt talking about the 1974 Welsh National Women's Liberation Conference which took place in Aberystwyth.

There is also a series of teachers' notes, with suggestions for further work, and links to a wide variety of other oral history projects.

As a member of the Advisory Board for the project, I know how difficult it was to try to ensure that the complexity of the movement was covered and there are of course many more women who could have been interviewed. However, hopefully the website gives a good idea of an important movement in which women from across the UK, not just the major English cities, were involved.

www.bl.uk/learning/histcitizen/sisterhood/index.html

Avril Rolph, May 2013.

Women's Archive of Wales at the Denbigh and District National Eisteddfod, 9th August 2013

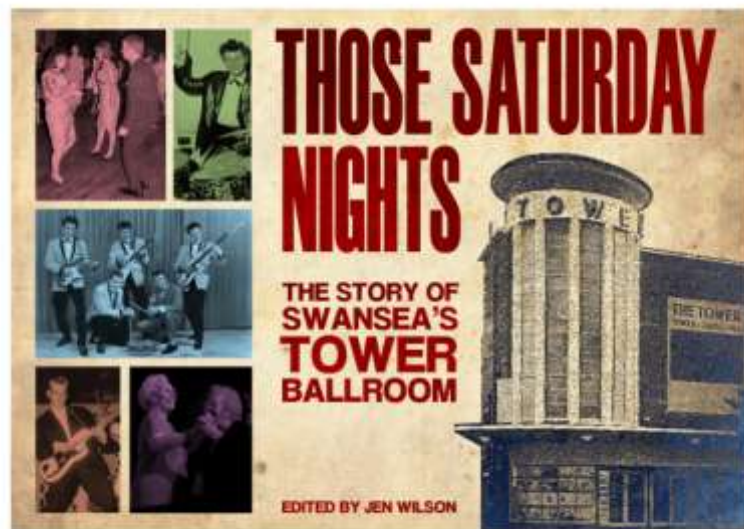


Following our very popular and successful meeting at the Vale of Glamorgan Eisteddfod last year, Women's Archive of Wales has decided to venture on to the Eisteddfod field once again this year. And it will be a very interesting session as Dr Pamela Michael from Bangor University will give a talk about 'Women as staff and patients at Denbigh Mental Hospital' – a controversial and timely topic. After the talk, we shall have an opportunity to share the reminiscences of some of the former staff and patients. Denbigh Archives is also preparing an exhibition of the hospital's documents and photographs for the session.

Denbigh Mental Hospital was first opened in 1848 because there was concern that monoglot Welsh-speaking patients in north Wales, who suffered from mental illnesses, were not receiving appropriate care in similar institutions in England. The impressive Gothic building was intended for between 60 and 200 patients but it was extended and in its heyday there were 1,500 patients and 1000 staff. The hospital features in the works of some of our most eminent writers, including Caradog Prichard and Kate Roberts. It was closed in the late 1990s and the building is empty at present.

This is obviously a challenging and relevant topic. So please come to Societies' Tent 1 on the Eisteddfod field at 11 o'clock on Friday, the 9th of August to support us and to learn more about this important topic.

"Those Saturday Nights - the Story of Swansea's Tower Ballroom" was published on 15th May. An Oral History community project funded by the Arts Council of Wales in conjunction with Swansea Metropolitan University and the Phoenix Centre Townhill, the book tells the story of this iconic building 1937-1993 from its days as a cinema to its highlife as a ballroom dancing and rock n' roll venue. Built in the middle of the largest council estate in Wales, The Tower had its own captive audience with cinema goers, dancers, jivers, boppers, rockers flooding in from the locality. Girls were able to walk home dangling their crippling stiletto heels as they didn't have far to go. The Tower became a sanctuary for those blitzed out of their homes during 1941, couples met and married, Teddy Boys and Girls became hippies, and rockers washed their greased DA's (ducks ass hairdo's) in order to shake their hair about. The eldest contributor was Eva Jones aged 101 who remembered the field before The Tower was built. The original owner and Manager was Oscar Dennis, a Russian who escaped the pogroms and had his name changed by the authorities from Askair Baddennis. The Tower attracted all the big names in music, Cherry Wainer on rock organ, the Johnny Dankworth Orchestra, Ivy Benson and Her All Girl Orchestra, Frankie



Vaughan, and Wee Willie Harris in his shocking pink suit and matching hair from BBC TV's 6.5 Special. The building became derelict and burnt down in 1993. 58 people contributed their stories and 110 came to the Remembering The Tower Ballroom Vintage Dance with music by the Women in Jazz Allstars Swing Band. The book is bi-lingual and crammed with photos, and costs £8.99 from bookshops."

Jen Wilson

Celebrating Sheila Parry

This year the Women's Archive of Wales will be celebrating Sheila Parry (née Davies) and her campaign sixty years ago for women's rights and gender equality.

In the academic year 1952-3, an attempt was made to set up a representative committee in the women's halls of residence in Bangor Normal College, on the lines of the representative committee in the men's halls of residence. Sheila Davies led the campaign, which had the support of the National Union of Students. At the end of the Christmas Term 1952, the College authorities warned Sheila that her activities were endangering her place there. She was in her last year of training at the time, and therefore her entire future was in jeopardy.

When Sheila Davies returned to the College in the New Year, she continued to campaign, still with the support of the NUJ, and also with her parents' agreement. The College kept its promise. In March 1953 Sheila Davies was expelled, and she had to return home to the Rhondda. This was the beginning of campaigning on her behalf by the NUS, the NUT, and also Iorrie Thomas and George Thomas, the M.P.s for the Rhondda.

With their support, the case received considerable public attention, and eventually Ms Davies was allowed to finish her training – but at Cardiff Training College. She was not allowed to return to Bangor. She went on to teach, and today lives in Chorley, Lancashire.

Sheila will be speaking at this year's Women's Archive of Wales' Conference on October 12-3, at the Soar Centre, Merthyr Tudful, when there will also be an exhibition based on her archive, which will outline her work for women's rights in 1952-3.

Facebook and Twitter

If you are a regular or even occasional user of the social media sites, please find us and 'like' or 'follow' us. We do try to keep you up to date with current matters of interest in the media, as well as our own events. We currently have 49 people liking us on Facebook and 67 followers on Twitter. Surely we can do better than this; it's a great way to spread the word about AMC/WAW and to reach younger women. If you come across anything that you think we should be drawing attention to, please contact us at newsletter@womensarchivewales.org.

Conference 12th and 13th October 2013



A reminder that this year's Conference will be held at Canolfan Soar, Merthyr Tydfil on the weekend of 12th and 13th October. Canolfan Soar. Formally one of the largest chapel complexes in Wales, Canolfan Soar was converted into a theatre and community arts space, opening in 2011. It is also Merthyr's Welsh

Centre, with an excellent Welsh language bookshop.

Speakers already confirmed for the Conference include Angela John and Sheila Davies (see above). However the programme is still not finalised.

The Call for Papers remains open; if you would like to offer a paper please contact Papers are invited on any aspect of the history of women in Wales for inclusion in the conference programme. Proposals from new researchers and postgraduate students will be especially welcome. Presentations can be of any duration from 15 to 45 minutes. Abstracts of 150-200 words should be sent to caroline_fairclough@yahoo.co.uk by 28th June 2013

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 16 August 2013**

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 on line at www.womensarchivewales.org, in the Members Section.

This edition was edited by Caroline Fairclough, and translated by Catrin Stevens.