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Living Memory Ceremonies to Commemorate Women who died in WWI

On Thursday 10th November WAW held four commemorative ceremonies in different parts of Wales to mark the culmination of our Heritage Lottery Fund project on 'Women in the First World War: the Welsh experience' and to remind people of the part women played during the War.

Holyhead War Memorial: to commemorate four women, three of whom had drowned when their ships were torpedoed. Shan Robinson led the ceremony in Holyhead ably helped by Val Wakefield. There was excellent attendance, c.80 including WAW members, two relatives of the women on the war memorial, representatives from three schools: Ysgol Gymraeg Morswyn who sang Calon Lan to the accompaniment of a violin to end the ceremony; St Mary's Primary and Ysgol Uwchradd Caergybi (Headgirl and Deputy Headgirl); members of Holyhead Maritime Museum, Merched y Wawr and WI members and other members of the public.



Colwyn Bay War Memorial: to commemorate a nurse, Catherine Williams, on the memorial, symbolising the contribution of nurses during the war. Dinah Evans led the ceremony and there was a good attendance —c. 15-20, including the Deputy Mayor; pupils of St Josephs Primary School who read a poem; WAW members; Merched y Wawr and WI and other members of the public.

Christchurch Cemetery Newport: to commemorate the contributions of Gertrude Dyer QMAAC, Dulcie Llewellyn Jones WRAF and May Selwood, a war widow. Caroline Fairclough and Dr Elin Jones led this ceremony and around 25 people attended; including WAW members, representatives of two schools: Eveswell



Primary and Ysgol Gymraeg Ifor Hael, who read out a poem, Members of Merched y Wawr and the WI and other members of the public. Catrin Edwards filmed this ceremony on our behalf. [You can see it here.](#)



Swansea Cenotaph:

To commemorate the sacrifice of ten munition workers. The ceremony was led by Jenny Sabine and Catrin Stevens and there were around 45 present, including WAW members, WRNS, a recorder party from Ysgol Gymraeg Bryn-y-mor, members of Merched y Wawr and the WI and other members of the public. This ceremony was filmed for Heno (S4C) and was screened on Friday 11th November as part of a longer item on WW1. Living Memory sponsored the flowers for each ceremony.

Catrin Stevens

National Conference 2016

It was the north's turn to host the Conference this year, and, as always, it was a pleasure and a privilege to be in Bangor. The hardworking committee members there prepare carefully, with the ready help of the College staff, to ensure that the essential arrangements are in place – the rooms suitable, the audio-visual equipment working properly, the chairs comfortable, the food good – and plenty of tea and coffee available. Don't laugh – these are the necessities. If they aren't in place, the most brilliant contribution is unlikely to stay in your memory: you will remember the uncomfortable chairs or how difficult it was to hear the speakers.

And this year again a very successful conference was built on these secure foundations. We heard fascinating presentations on a variety of topics from all historical periods, including a fascinating discussion of the work of Elsi Eldridge, the artist (and wife of R.S.Thomas) by Emeritus Professor Tony Brown and a fresh look at the work of that challenging mediaeval poet, Gwerfyl Mechain, by Dr Gwen Saunders Jones. We heard too of Miss Jane Walters of Glanmedenni's opposition to the Rebecca Riots, Venus figurines from the Stone Age, and about the two wives of 'Hughes the Congo' in Colwyn Bay, to name only a few of the contributions to the conference.

Two full and memorable days! Thank you to all who contributed to the success of the conference – we look forward now to the feast that awaits us in Aberystwyth in 2017.

Elin Jones



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 26th February**

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,

Mary Davies VAD – a Miscellany

VAD, Voluntary Aid Detachments, were set up in 1909 to fill gaps in the Territorial army medical services. By early 1914 there were about 74000 VAD members, two thirds of them women. Initially their work was confined to domestic and



Ebbw Vale Red Cross Detachment Nov 8th 1914

simple nursing task in voluntary hospitals, releasing trained nurses for other war duties. After negotiation with the army medical authorities some VADs, as they became known, were allowed to work overseas, if they were over the age of twenty-three and had more than three months' hospital experience. Each VAD had a record index card, sometimes two. Some have been lost over the last century, but around 24400 survive. The British Red Cross has undertaken the mammoth task of digitising and transcribing the surviving index cards. The archive is searchable at <http://www.redcross.org.uk/en/About-us/Who-we-are/History-and-origin/First-World-War>.

Very many Welsh women and girls joined detachments. A trawl through the cards brought up 15 with the name Mary Davies, from all over Wales, and it is interesting to compare their details. Many worked locally, living at home. These include the Mary Davieses from Barry, Kenfig, Lampeter, Llanharan, Treharris and Welshpool, all of whom were unpaid. The number of hours they worked is recorded. Mary from Treharris's card reads 'Detachment does 14 days duty at Caerphilly Hospital every 3-4 months; members go in turns, 80 hours'. Possibly they lodged in Caerphilly while on duty. The greatest number of hours was worked by Mary from Neath, who clocked up 3822 hours between January 1915 and March 1918. She was a full time 'quartermaster, linen etc.' for a year of that time, and is described as 'a most consistent worker'. The longest serving 'Nurse Ward and pantry' was Mary from Kenfig, a VAD from 31st August 1914 to 28 February 1919.

The card of one of the sample, Mary from Newbridge, was marked TN for trained nurse, but has no other details. Some VADs who were sent to military Hospitals in England may also have been trained. Mary from Blaina was 33 when she joined in February 1917 was stationed at Plymouth Military Hospital and was still serving in June 1919. Mary from Newtown, aged 29, was there too, 'still doing satisfactory work' in 1919. Mary from Llanberis, 31, was in Birmingham from June 1916 to January 1919.

Not all our Marys were nurses. Mary from Aberayron (sic), was a part-time cook at Aberayron Red Cross Hospital while still working for the family at Llanon House. The Marys from Llandudno Junction and Newport were assistant cooks, in Rugeley Military Camp Hospital (paid), and the VAD Hospital in Park Lane, London (no pay) respectively. One Mary Davies, of Griffithstown, was rather grander: 'Commandant and Lady Superintendent of Brigade. Organising and supplying VAD staff for local hospital' from 1916 to 1919.'

Surname	Davies	REC'D 7 APR 1919	b.a.d. 1400/22
Christian Names	Mary. M.		Commandant & Lady Superintendent of Royal (Mrs. G. Davies)
Permanent Address:	Ynys Place		Griffithstown
Date of Engagement	June 1916	Rank	Comm: sc
			Pay No.
Date of Termination	Present time	Rank	" "
			Pay "
Particulars of Duties	Organising & supplying b.a.d. Staff for local		
Whether, whole or part time, and if latter No. of hours served	about 600 hrs Hospital		
Previous Engagements under Joint War Committee, if any, and where			
Honours awarded			

None of our sample were posted overseas, though many Welsh VADs worked in France, and some in Egypt or Salonika. The ages we have suggest a more mature set of women than is popularly imagined, then and now, though none was as old as Jennie Williams of Llanberis who volunteered in June 1915, and served and died of flu in France at the age of 49. You can find her and other VADs by searching for VAD on the <http://www.womenandwar.wales/> website.

Caroline Fairclough

Audrey Jones Memorial Awards

Many members will remember Audrey Jones, a founder member of the Archive, and also in 1984 of the Wales Assembly of Women. She died in 2014.

The Wales Assembly of Women has set up a new annual research award in Audrey's name to enable emerging women scholars to share their research findings rather than have them hidden in dissertations in university libraries. Three women presented their work at the Assembly's Annual Conference, and were presented with awards by Jane Hutt AM. She said that their work would be shared with the Welsh Government.

For more information on the Audrey Jones Memorial Awards for Feminist Scholarship email: Dr Jane Salisbury: SalisburyJ@cardiff.ac.uk



Alis daughter of Gruffudd ap Llywelyn ap Ieuan Fychan



Gwen Saunders Jones who spoke at the Bangor Conference has published an interesting study that looks at the works of a female poet in the sixteenth century, Alis daughter of Gruffudd ap Llywelyn ap Ieuan Fychan. She is one of the few women who has her poems in manuscripts and this is the first thorough study of her. The book discusses all her poems, as well as other female poets from the same period, focusing on the context of the period and the female poetic tradition. This book is a useful companion for anyone studying the field. To purchase a copy for £6, please contact gwen Saunders Jones@hotmail.com / Twitter: @gwen Saunders Jones85



Birkenhead Eisteddfod 1917: Who is the Harpist?

This photograph (left) was found about 15 years ago in a box outside a print dealer in Cecil Court, London, the remains of a photographic agency's archive. The caption on the reverse reads
A SCENE AT THE EISTEDDFOD ... various

recitations were given from the Gorsedd stones, one of which is here depicted. Today Mr Lloyd George attends the Eisteddfod and delivers an oration in Welsh.

As the centenary of this Eisteddfod takes place in Anglesey in 2017 it would be fascinating to trace the identity of the harpist. Can you help?

