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### Voices from the Factory Floor in Bangalore

In 2006, workers at the Burberry factory in Treorchy, led by their union, the GMB, and supported by their local AM, Leighton Andrews and their MP, Chris Bryant, began a six month Campaign to prevent the closure of their plant. Jean Jenkins, of Cardiff Business School, was given access to study the Campaign and since then has followed the garment supply chain to India and other parts of Asia, studying labour conditions and industrial



Jean Jenkins with trade unionists in Bangalore

relations in new locations. The Burberry factory, formerly Polikoff's, has remained an abiding interest and the history of the Treorchy factory and the history of the garment sector itself is important for the struggles being waged by today's trade unionists in distant places. Today, while still writing about the British garment sector, Jean also has a strong research relationship with the Garment Labour Union in Bangalore, a small grass roots union led by women, and the picture shows a recent meeting, where she presented Catrin Stevens's book 'Voices from the Factory Floor' as a gift to the women leaders. The past and present of an industry, and its workers, are thus united in this photograph.



Have you booked your place at  
The 20<sup>th</sup> Annual AMC/WAW  
Conference?

It will be held at the  
Morlan Centre, Aberystwyth SY23  
2HH

7<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> October 2017

Contact [conference@womensarchivewales.org](mailto:conference@womensarchivewales.org)

## My Aunt Nancy, An Outstanding Head Teacher

I am seven years old. I am going from Aberystwyth to Machynlleth on the bus to see my granny and grandpa and Bobo, the name in the family of my aunt Nancy, who live in Pennal. The bus conductor asks my mother, 'Where are you going to?'

'We are going to Pennal' she says.

'Do you know Miss Burton, the head teacher of Darowen school?' he asks.

'Of course,' says my mother, 'She is my sister.'

'Well, it's a small world!' he says. 'I was a pupil in your sister's school. She is an outstanding teacher. Goodness, we learnt a lot of things in primary school with Miss Burton, in Welsh and in English.'



Aunt Nancy Burton

Annie Elizabeth Burton (June 1913 – December 1960) was an exceptional woman. She was always very definite in her actions and her words. When she was a little girl, she was given a doll's house. She turned it upside down and pretended it was a car. From her teenage years, she cut her hair short and as an adult she used to dress as a male.

She was a pupil at Pennal primary school and then at Tywyn grammar school. After leaving Tywyn, she came back to the school in Pennal as a pupil teacher. Later, she went to Saint Mary's College in Bangor to train as a teacher.

In September 1944, when she was just thirty-one years old, she became head teacher of Darowen primary school, about ten miles from Pennal. She continued to live with her father and mother, in their two-up two-down cottage in Pennal, and she used to drive to Darowen every day in her little black car, an Austin A30. In the fifties, we often used to meet her in Aberystwyth or Pennal, sometimes with her latest girl-friend, who was always very feminine. On one occasion, my sister and I went to Darowen school with our aunt. The children were very friendly. We could not speak Welsh, so they spoke to us in English. Unfortunately, my strongest memory of the school is the toilets. There was no running water, so they were no more than a hole with a bucket under the ground.

The reputation of the school and of its head teacher soon began to spread. An entry in the school log book for the 4<sup>th</sup> July 1950 says: 'Visit by Art HMI Mr W Pickles who took specimens of the children's art for showing to other schools.'

There is also an HMI report in the school log book, in Welsh. The inspection took place on the 28<sup>th</sup> March 1952, when there were twenty-five children in the school with two teachers. The report says:

'In the older class, experiments are often made with materials and work plans, and the lessons are carefully prepared, with the result that the learning is for living and is extremely effective. The children are encouraged to gather information about their environment: they have been immersed in their own cultural background, and are therefore well prepared to appreciate wider studies. Although the area is rather remote, the pupils have a broad knowledge of issues well beyond their personal experiences. Purposeful displays of drawings and charts, as well as suitable books, draw them into investigating for themselves. It is a pleasure to see the enthusiasm that the children show for their work: help and encouragement is given to the slow pupil, as well as to the fastest, to develop to the best of their ability.'

Despite the inconvenience and shortcomings of the building, the overall standard of work is consistently high. There is a close correlation between the different sections of the work, which are woven together to feature the best aspects of Welsh culture. The relationships between the children and the teachers are extremely happy.'

Darowen was a church school. My aunt used to go to the church in Pennal every week with her parents. Both her father and her mother came from Anglican families. Her grandfather had been church warden of Llanwrin and she was herself the church warden of Pennal.

The diocesan inspector came to Darowen as well and wrote in his report, after a visit in July 1951: 'This is a first-class country school (Welsh medium) with a very talented headmistress. The opening service was excellently done, with a right mixture of the traditional and the inspirational. It was obvious that the teacher had a real interest in her subject and also great insight. The expression work was excellent.'

One evening, in December 1956, her father went to the pub to drink a pint or three. He walked home, sat down in his chair and died. His widow, my grandmother, never recovered from the shock. In the following year, my aunt was promoted to be head of Machynlleth Infant School. Never a patient person, it was hard for her to combine her

new job with looking after her frail and confused mother. So my grandmother came to Aberystwyth to live with us, where she died on April 1<sup>st</sup> 1960.

This was the beginning of a new chapter in my aunt's life. After many years living with her parents, she set up home in the family cottage with her partner, Evelyn Vaughan Davies, an elegant woman from North Wales. Sadly, it did not last. In December of the same year, my aunt herself died suddenly from a cerebral haemorrhage in Aberystwyth Hospital.

The Bishop of Bangor officiated at her funeral in Pennal church assisted by six of the local clergy. Later, the bishop wrote her obituary in Y Llan, the newspaper of the Church in Wales:

'No one was more unlike the conventional picture of a religious woman than Nancy Burton. In her normal attire, trousers, shirt, tie and sports jacket, she faced the world with a poise that belonged only to herself. Fun, broad humour without poison, plain honesty in thought and speech, tremendous kindness in her dealings - these are some of her characteristics: but no one catalogue can adequately sum up a personality so unique.

Here are some memories of her showing her as she was. First in the church school in Darowen where she was head teacher before she moved to Machynlleth. I remember her especially one afternoon when she was there supervising the children as they collected their own accounts of the life and work of the district. Under her direction, one boy of nine had catalogued the stock of all the farms and the names of all the fields. All children kept their own note-books with their sketches and drafts of poetry. I know of strong men for whom the experience of being in Darowen School under Miss Burton has left an indelible mark in their character.

Next, the Diocesan Board of Education, for which she had left Pennal very early in order to attend. The tendency of committees, even the most responsible, is to wander from the point in many words. She would listen astonished before breaking in pointedly to hit the nail on the head and settle the matter. She could not discuss education without remembering the schools, nor talk about schools without remembering the children, nor remember the children without knowing that each one of them is a special person.'

Christopher Schenk

*Christopher Schenk, born in Machynlleth in 1949, is a Welsh learner, and a former Primary School headteacher and HMI. He wrote this piece in Welsh. His work was supported and corrected by his (and my) Welsh teacher, Rosie Godfrey Davies, to whom he wishes to express many thanks. Thanks too to his daughter Tabitha. CF.*

## Women, War and Peace, Senedd, 8<sup>th</sup> August – 30<sup>th</sup> September 2017



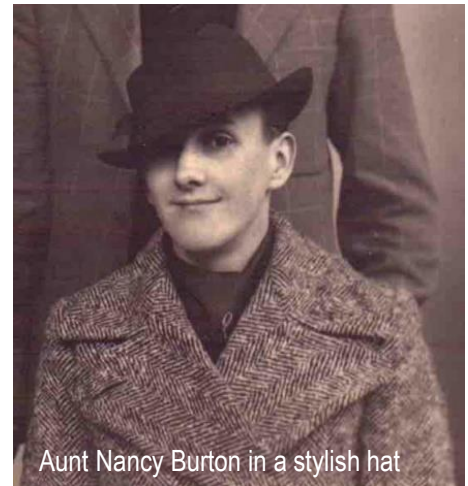
There should still be time for you to catch this excellent exhibition at the Senedd in Cardiff. It combines an exhibition by the photographer Lee Karen Stow who has been recording women affected by war since a visit to Sierra Leone in 2007, with stories of Welsh women and their involvement with war and peace during the last 100 years. The Welsh National Book of Remembrance is also on display, open at the page giving names of nurses and QMAACs who died during World War 1. WAW were able to provide information on these women from the project Women, Wales and War.

The Weeping Window of poppies is also on display until the end of September.

The opening of the exhibition can be seen here.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bkjmSBAZqEs&feature=youtu.be>

Ann Jones, Deputy Presiding Officer, opening the exhibition, the Weeping Window outside.



Aunt Nancy Burton in a stylish hat

## 'Women, Anglesey and the Sea' – the annual lecture at the Anglesey National Eisteddfod, 2017

It was a pleasure to join the capacity audience which flocked to hear scriptwriter and actor, Manon Eames' talk at this year's National Eisteddfod. Her aim was to pay tribute to the pioneering work of two maritime historians: her father, Aled Eames, and Robin Evans, who explored, through their research and publications, the contribution women made to the colourful maritime history of Wales, and of Anglesey, in particular. We were very glad indeed that members of both families were present and a special thanks to Janet Evans for sponsoring the talk in memory of Robin.

Manon took us on a journey with sea captain's wives as they sailed round Cape Horn, with vivid descriptions of the dangers and loneliness (giving birth on the high seas), but also enjoying the occasional tea party in the doldrums! At home, seamen's wives had to be 'both mother and father' to their children, as Robin Evans has shown, living in constant fear of losses at sea. It was sobering to learn that, in 1900, more Welshmen were lost at sea than died in coalmining accidents.

The talk encompassed a wealth of maritime history, including Anglesey's fishing and marram grass industries, and it was pleasing that two forgotten but important pioneers: Ann Edwards, Caernarfon, who rivalled Cranogwen as a teacher of navigation in north Wales and Frances Williams, founder of the lifeboat service in Anglesey, also featured in the talk.

The lecture resonated with vivid examples and was presented with the passion and understanding of a true historian. The enthusiastic applause at the end of the session testified to our enjoyment and appreciation. 2018 is the 'Year of the Sea' and the Archive, by choosing this topic was on the crest of a wave. We can but hope it will inspire others to research the fascinating stories of women, Wales and the sea.

Catrin Stevens

## Purple Plaques

The campaign to improve the recognition of Wales' most remarkable women will be called Purple Plaque. Did you know there are no named statues of women in Wales, and hardly any blue plaques?



The Purple plaque scheme aims to start to redress this imbalance, and was launched by Jane Hutt AM, on International Women's Day 2017. She was representing the newly formed Assembly Labour Women's group which is in the process of commissioning the first Purple Plaque, to remember Val Feld, first AM for Swansea East, Champion of Equality! After that, the organisers are keen for the scheme to be developed to highlight women throughout Wales.

The first Plaque will be placed on the Welsh assembly government estate in Cardiff, where, at the time, Wales had the only majority women's Cabinet. It is to be unveiled sometime in the Autumn this year. We are now fundraising, for more details

contact [meryl.james@assembly.wales](mailto:meryl.james@assembly.wales)

Updates can be found on <https://www.facebook.com/Val-Feld-283487169716/>