

www.womansarchivewales.org

Canrif Gobaith Century of Hope

When I wrote my report about our current HLF project **Century of Hope: Celebrating a centenary of Women's Heritage in Wales**, for the March newsletter, I included a list of twelve exciting events, which would be held in 2018. By the time you read this number of the newsletter, we will have completed six of the events – and each one, though different in nature and locations, has been successful. We are greatly indebted to those members of the Archive who have been so willing to shoulder the responsibility for organising the events all over Wales and for all your support. Our film-makers – Catrin and Tash – worked with Pen-boyr school to record their project on that polymath, Cranogwen in February, and hopefully the pupils will be rewarded for their industry and interest in women's history during the Welsh Heritage School's Initiative Awards' Ceremony in July. Good luck!

We were fortunate in March to be able to work in partnership with the University of South Wales and sponsored by Ann Jones, the Deputy Presiding Officer of the Welsh Assembly to celebrate International Women's Day in style at the Pierhead building and Senedd in Cardiff Bay. It was a memorable occasion with capacity audiences for all the sessions. During the morning there were talks about the twentieth anniversary of the founding of Women's Archive



Wales and, at short notice, by Dr Elin Jones on the background of the women's suffrage movement. This theme was continued in our annual Ursula Masson Memorial Lecture in the evening, delivered this year by Dr Ryland Wallace, the leading authority on 'The Women's Suffrage Movement in Wales'. This was a very fitting tribute to the memory of Dr Ursula Masson, who died ten year ago. The evening closed with a reception of wine and canapes, based upon Suffragette recipes!



In April we held two events: a Peace banner workshop with local schoolchildren at Abergavenny; the banners will feature in our Peace Walk in August, and a Roadshow in Llandudno. The schoolchildren enjoyed discussing and planning their banners, solving problems before bringing the individual pieces together to form the final designs. The Llandudno Roadshow, held at Llandudno Central Library, was opened by former MP and first female MP for Conwy, Betty Williams, who brought documents and photographs to be



scanned. Altogether nineteen items were recorded on the day. A very interesting feature was the competition for local schoolchildren to devise a suffrage poster.

During May, the Archive was invited to participate in the International Volvo Ocean Race event in Cardiff Bay. This is a mark of how the Archive has succeeded in raising its profile and we were delighted to invite Manon Eames, actor and playwright to give a talk about 'Women at Sea', based upon the pioneering research of her father Dr Aled Eames and historian Robin Evans. She took us on a sea-journeys around the world and back to north Wales. To open the evening, Elin Haf Davies, Visit Wales' inspiring ambassador for the 'Year of the Sea', described not only her feats of rowing and sailing but her fund-raising to improve children's health.



As I write plans are well advanced for a special event at Llanystumdwy in Gwynedd on Saturday 23rd June, when the drama of the fracas between suffragettes and Lloyd George and his local henchmen will be re-enacted on the bridge in the village and in Criccieth station. A vintage bus will carry people to Criccieth and members of the public are invited to wear emblems of the period. This is organised in collaboration with the Lloyd George Museum. It promises to be a full and exciting day with lectures, a roadshow and an exhibition.

But what of the future 2018 events?

July Two women's heritage walks will be held in Aberystwyth on July 7th event will be held in Aberystwyth. One is in Welsh (at 10.00 a.m.) and one in English (at 14.00 p.m.; they will feature) eleven interesting women and one man who lived in the town during the last two centuries will take place and commence from Ceredigion Museum. It is an eclectic mix of women, including an artist, poet, botanist, actress, barrister, sailor, sculptor, business woman and the vice-chair of CND Cymru. A free digital app version of the walk will be launched as part of the event, in partnership with Advancing Aberystwyth. Participants should register through heulwendavies@icloud.com



August The Archive has participated at the National Eisteddfod for several years; this year in Cardiff we have a very special session on Friday 10th August at 1.00. pm. in the Societies' Unit 1 in the Senedd itself. The lack of statues to honour women in Wales has been a contentious issue recently. During our session five eminent historians and scholars will champion five women whom they feel deserve to be publicly commemorated. Sara Huws of the National Museum will provide context for the session, then Professor Jane Aaron will introduce novelist Kathleen Freeman; Dr Elin Jones: suffragist and first female professor in Wales, Millicent Mackenzie; Dr Sian Rhiannon Williams presents Betty Campbell, the first black head teacher; Non Vaughan Williams champions pioneer broadcaster Nan Davies and Helen Mary Jones, of the Morgan Academy: fellow activist and former AM Val Feld. It promises to be a lively debate. Join us – simultaneous translation will be provided.



Image courtesy Karmen Thomas

Late August On 27th August 1981 a group of women in Wales, together with some men and children, set off from Cardiff City Hall to walk 120 miles to protest against the siting of cruise missiles at the Greenham Common US airbase. They called themselves Women for Life on Earth. We are remembering the anger, courage, commitment and imagination of those women - and all other women who went to Greenham Common. Several of the women on the original march will be taking part in our event on Bank Holiday Monday 27th August. Everyone is welcome to join us for all or part of this commemoration. A coach will leave Swansea at 8.30 am, seats are free but booking is essential at gailmall@aol.com

The first part of the event will be outside Cardiff City Hall 10 am to 12 noon. There will be short speeches, banners, maybe singing, and a short walk around the square. Thalia Campbell is making a new banner for this event.

The second part of the event will be in the Drill Hall in Chepstow, 12.30 – 5 pm. There will be refreshments, more short speeches and then for those who wish, there will be a commemorative walk following the route of the original marchers on to the old Severn Bridge.

If you have any queries, or want to book a seat on the coach, please contact me on gailmall@aol.com

October International Conference October 6th and 7th at the School of Management, Bay Campus, Swansea University in collaboration with the School of Management, the Morgan Academy and the History Department. Speakers on Saturday include international scholars such as Diane Atkinson, author of the well-reviewed book on suffrage 'Rise Up Women!' and anchor speaker in the Processions' programme on BBC 1 on June 10th; Sue John, one of the founders of the Glasgow Women's Library – a finalist in the Museum of the Year 2018; Dr Margaret Ward, Honorary Senior Lecturer at Queen's University Belfast and an expert on women's suffrage in Ireland, and two speakers from Denmark: Merete Ipsen, co-founder and curator of Kvindemuseet, one of the few Women's museums in Europe and Dr Helle Sigh an expert on early women's history and the dynamics of Danish motherhood.

The Sunday will bring us back to Wales (in the world) and we have a fascinating variety of papers organised. They will take us from the Rhondda to China and Spain and to many other places and the session will conclude with a Panel presentation showcasing work on race, gender, law and disability and ask how contemporary identity politics can help to shape questions for the archive for the future. On Saturday evening there will be a Conference Dinner at the Towers Hotel nearby – with entertainment by Jen Wilson, Jazz Heritage Wales and the Suffrage Choir. It should prove to be a lively and friendly event. Please join us for the Conference and the Dinner. See further www.womensarchivewales.org. for booking forms. Book YOUR place now!

Catrin Stevens

If you want to be part of the Suffrage Choir, please contact me for further details. We hope to add a verse *yn Gymraeg* to Ethel Smyth's March of the Women! I know some members have contacted me already ... caroline_fairclough@yahoo.co.uk.

Women and War.

The number of names on the website of women who lived and died 1914 - 1919 continues to grow; there are now over 350 women recorded. Excitingly, we are now acquiring new material because of the website. In February we received an email from Australia with photographs and information about Edith Tonkin, a VAD ward maid who served and died in France, probably of Spanish Influenza. Her name, on Llandaff War Memorial, was collected very early in the project, but we now have an image of her and her story can be fleshed out. Many thanks to Maureen Roberts of Western Australia.



'A Celebration of Monmouthshire Women in Agriculture'

A remarkable and historic gathering occurred at the Abergavenny Community Centre on 28th April". This was a quote from someone attending a 'Celebration of Monmouthshire Women in Agriculture'. The 'Celebration' was a day event coordinated by member Katrina Gass who was assisted by a group of women with strong connections within the county's rural community. It was inspired by and linked to the Abergavenny Museum exhibition entitled "Monmouthshire Women Making Change" which was joint winner of the WHN's 2017 Community History Prize.

A century of Monmouthshire women's experiences of working on the land and in agriculture was laid out before a packed, largely female, audience. Throughout the day 21 women recounted their individual experiences. The day



started with a concise historical backdrop of images of women in agriculture in the period leading up to the Great War, presented by local historian Peter Strong. The women's stories continued right through the decades of the 20th Century, World War 2, post-war agricultural and horticultural education and training at Usk College, and eventually right up to the present-day realities of women farmers and food activists.

Nonagenarians, octogenarians and women from all subsequent decades spoke of their experiences of growing up on farms, working from a young age and coping with the numerous changes in farming practices.

A panel of women spoke of their involvement in agricultural associations and shows, Farm Women's Clubs, the NFU, Young Farmer's Clubs and agricultural charities. Three women - two students and a lecturer – related their experiences of the local agricultural training college from the 1960s onwards. Women farmers spoke of their work - rearing sheep, cattle or pigs plus a market gardener/ market stall holder. These contributions demonstrated a range of scale and methods of working, and also a commitment to responsible stock and produce rearing whilst earning a living. The event was supported by WAW, the Women's History Network and Abergavenny Museum.

Women's Suffrage and Processions



June 10th's UK-wide artwork, Processions, organised by the art charity Artichoke to celebrate the partial suffrage of women in 1918, was not the first women's mass artistic event. The suffragettes in particular created some splendid spectacles, the most dramatic of which was the Women's Coronation procession of 1911. This was designed by Marion Dunlop Wallace and Edith Downing.



Edith Downing *Music*
National Museum of
Wales

Edith Downing was born in Cardiff in 1857, a doctor's daughter, and studied at the Cardiff School of Art before moving to London and Paris.

She became involved with the suffrage movement early in her time in London and joined the WSPU in 1908. She and her sister Caroline were both imprisoned for direct action, and both received a WSPU hunger strike medal.

Edith Downing was a talented sculptor, working in bronze and her work was widely exhibited, also producing small statuettes and sketches to be sold to raise funds for the cause. But the most public exhibition of her joined interests came in designing the great pageants put on by the WSPU. The most spectacular of these was the Women's Coronation Pageant of 1911. Edith died in 1931.

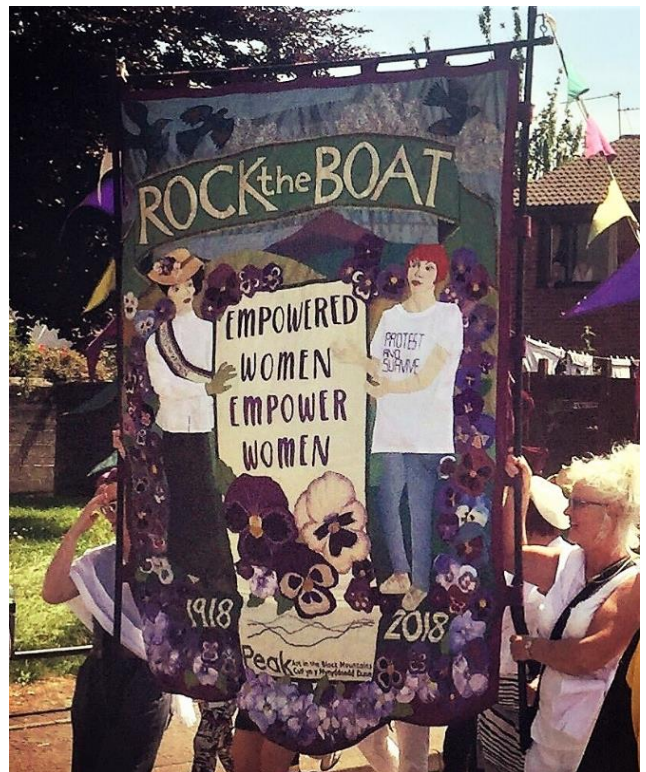


A Cardiff member's view of Processions

A perfect day for a procession, blue skies and a gentle breeze. My daughter and I joined the thousands of women gathered in the car park of Cardiff City Football Stadium. A lovely choir, *Only Menopause Aloud* lead the singing, some songs especially written for the day. There was quite a party atmosphere. We discovered that women had come from the West of England, as Cardiff was the nearest venue. We also spotted some banners from Wrexham and Llanberis. We felt rather inadequate when asked how far we had travelled – 'a mile or so', we answered!

We were given pieces of cloth, in one of the suffragette colours. I wore mine as a scarf, some became turbans or sashes. They made us feel united. We set off at 2.15. The nearer we got to the centre of the city the more spectators were cheering us on.

Once in the park the whole event fizzled out. I felt really let down. No speeches, no rally, no band to welcome us all. Why? We could at least have had a grand parade of the banners. My daughter and I came away feeling rather flat. Such a shame and we had only come a very short distance, just for a few hours. I felt really sorry for those who got up at the crack of dawn and travelled hundreds of miles with their beautiful banners.



Banner designed by Bettina Reeves of Peak Cymru, leading the Procession

Rosemary Scaddon