

Covid-19 Edition. There has been such an excellent response to my appeal for papers that this is an extra-long edition of the Newsletter. Many thanks for all your contributions; please keep them coming. The print edition is still the standard (6 page) length. CF

Archive News

In this strange time, it's pleasing to report that the restrictions imposed by the virus are not hindering the work of Women's Archive Wales unduly. We are battling on and producing this newsletter is a special testimony to this. Many thanks to you, our members and our tenacious editor, Caroline Fairclough, for ensuring that there is a variety of interesting articles on women's history in it.

The **Setting the Record Straight** project to safeguard the papers and voices of women in Welsh politics is still running, although we have had to postpone face to face interviews for the time being. Undaunted, however, the film-makers have succeeded in starting to interview online and this seems to work very well [See Catrin Edwards's piece later in this Newsletter]. We have also been preparing clips of the interviews to be put on our website – they are inspiring and varied. Go to the Project section on the website to view short quotes from the interviews. And the work of reminding former Assembly Members and Members of the Senedd that they have important political papers which should be deposited and safeguarded for the future in the relevant Archives is ongoing. Many thanks to the officers, Catrin, Kate and Heledd for all their hard work.

Our **Annual Conference** due to be held in Bangor University in October has had to be postponed for the time being. Instead, we intend holding a one-day Symposium online and we hope we will be able to offer some of the interesting and varied papers which have been submitted for the Conference. Therefore, please keep Saturday, October 3rd free so that you can join us and learn more about the history of women in Wales. You will receive more details soon. We will re-assemble to network properly in Bangor in 2021. In view of these changes we intend holding this year's AGM online in October. Keep an eye on your emails for further information about both events.

The **Ceredigion National Eisteddfod** has also been postponed and our intention of delivering a session on Notable Ceredigion Women has been transferred to 2021. But an Alternative Eisteddfod is being planned and we intend delivering a session on other notable Welsh women. Various presentations are taking place during July and August, and WAW's will be one of them. Look out for further information. .

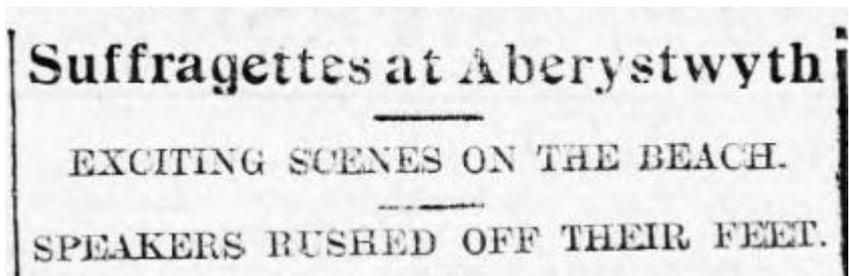
The Archive's Committee is still active and the Zoom Meetings going from strength to strength. Gail Allen's period as Treasurer ended after 15 years looking after our budget at the end of March and we are very grateful to Gail for her enthusiastic commitment to the Archive's work in all kinds of ways throughout the years. It has always been a pleasure working with Gail. We welcome Jane Davidson to the post and she has already organised our finances online – a huge boost during this difficult time. Because of work and family commitments Joy Foster has decided to step down from the Committee but we are grateful to her for her generous contributions to our work.

We look forward therefore, with to your support to another year of promoting the history of women in Wales – there is still much to be done and the need for research and dissemination is a great now as ever. Keep at it and we'll meet again in various activities to celebrate women's history soon.

Catrin Stevens (Chair)

Incident on the Beach

The early August Bank Holiday of 1909 had drawn visitors in their thousands to Aberystwyth. Large contingents had arrived, by train, from the Midlands and South Wales despite the somewhat unpunctual and erratic rail service. Many others



Welsh Gazette and West Wales Advertiser 5th August 1909

had arrived by motorcar although 'not so numerous as [the previous] year owing to unfounded allegations concerning motor traps in the district and the undue interference with motorists by the police'. The weather was variable in the town on the Saturday and Sunday and the weekend was described in English papers as one of 'Scotch mist, weeping skies and armies of umbrellas'. Despite this, the usual range of holiday activities had taken place including walks on the Prom and Pier, a cycling festival and trips up Constitution Hill. The churches and chapels were full to overflowing on the Sunday, cricket was played and 'a dog was used for advertising purposes on the Promenade'. By the Monday, the weather had improved, the crowds had increased and the scene had been set for the 'Incident on the Beach'.

Mary Emerson Marles Thomas was a well-known educationalist and proprietor of the High School for Girls (also known as Somerville School) in South Marine Terrace. A gifted graduate, she had lived in Aberystwyth since the late eighteen hundreds when, she, her mother and sisters had moved to the town to establish the school which prided itself on gaining university and college entrance for women. Her mother, Mary Marles Thomas was a headteacher, prominent Liberal and advocate of women's rights. Mary Emerson's father, Gwilym Marles Thomas had been the Unitarian Minister who had come to national fame during the 'lock out' at Llwynrhydowen in the 1876. By 1909, Mary Emerson was principal of the school and committed to the suffrage movement. On the Saturday of the 1909 Bank Holiday she had attempted to organise a public meeting in Aberystwyth in order that two suffragettes, 'Miss Phillips of London and Miss Young of Birmingham' could promote the cause of 'votes for Women'. She had failed in this intention but, following consultation with the Town Clerk, had gained permission to hold a meeting on the beach on the Monday afternoon.

There had been visits to many towns in Wales by leading suffragettes during the summer of 1909. The reception they had been given, by and large, was extremely hostile following the women's suffrage protests held at the National Eisteddfod in June of that year. The venue for the Eisteddfod had been the Albert Hall in London and, on consecutive days, suffragettes had disrupted proceedings, on one occasion when David Lloyd George was speaking and also at the appearance of the Prime Minister, Herbert Asquith. For their efforts, the protesters were greeted with uproar, their banners torn to shreds and they were forcibly ejected from the hall.

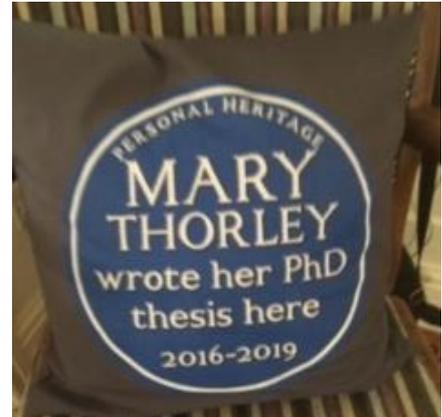
It was within this hostile context that, at three o'clock on Monday 2nd. August 1909, Mary Emerson and two other women, carrying a white, green and purple flag approached Aberystwyth beach via the lifeboat slip. A crowd of visitors and residents that was several hundred strong immediately surrounded them and Mary opened the meeting to catcalls and laughter and the throwing of sand. Miss Phillips (who realised that their position below the Prom 'left them helpless to attacks from the crowd above') moved the meeting closer to the sea and began speaking while standing on a wicker chair near to the sea. She was greeted by 'derisive cheering' and by youngsters throwing pebbles at her. Not a woman to be easily quelled, she carried on speaking in support of her 'righteous and just cause'. The crowd were having none of it, calling for three cheers for Lloyd George and berating the disturbances at the Eisteddfod. All attempts by the women to speak were drowned out as Asquith, and even the Liberal Government's budget, was cheered. This was followed by the usual taunts levelled at supporters of women's suffrage: 'Get married' and 'Go home'.

Miss Phillips continued by attempting to draw the crowd's attention to the low pay and appalling employment conditions of working women which kept them in extreme poverty. The crowd were not to be cowed singing '*Hen Wlad fy Nhadau*' while vowing to pay the suffragettes back for their conduct at the Eisteddfod. As Miss Young mounted the chair to speak, the noise increased and with a cry of 'duck them' the crowd surged forward with the intention of forcing the speakers into the water. Fortunately the police present, led by one Inspector Phillips, succeeded in 'dissuading the rushers' from throwing the women into the sea. In the ensuing melee, the banner, which the suffragettes were carrying, was torn although Miss Young rescued the pole as she was escorted from the scene surrounded by hundreds of people. Miss Phillips 'remained at her post', continuing to argue with the now much smaller crowd.

Not to be dissuaded, the same women returned to the promenade at eight o'clock in the evening, only to be quickly surrounded by a large crowd who 'rendered any further progress impossible'. The women were penned in but stood on one of the beachside seats and, once again, attempted to address the gathering. 'Each moment the crowd became denser and the horseplay more pronounced' and it once more fell to Inspector Phillips to return the women to the rooms where they were lodging with Mary Emerson and one of her neighbours. As he escorted them along Pier Street and down towards South Marine Terrace they were followed by a 'mass of struggling humanity' that ran, pushed and jostled behind them. As the women entered their accommodation they were booed while 'Lloyd George was loudly cheered'. An attempt by the women to hold a meeting under the pier on the following Wednesday also ended in failure when it was 'rushed' by a party of 'South Walians' who stole the speaker's chair and threw it into a boat, from whence it was thrown into the sea.

Postscript.

On Saturday 7th August, this same group of women, now joined by Miss Gladice Keevil, the organising secretary of the Midland Suffragettes, held a meeting on the beach at Borth. The meeting had been advertised by a large notice written on the sand itself and was characterized by the same 'lively debate' and support for Lloyd George as had been shown at Aberystwyth. However, there is no indication that the physical violence threatened earlier in the week was repeated. The meeting ended with the distribution of literature and significant sales of the 'Votes for Women' periodical. The women received a 'hearty send-off' when they left Borth on the 7.30 train. Undeterred by these events, the same group of women returned to Aberystwyth later in the month, where they held a meeting in the relative safety of the quarry at the back of Victoria Terrace.



Mary Thorley (whose very fine personal cushion/ plaque can be seen above)

Sources :

Western Mail, 19th June 1909.

The Cambrian News and Merionethsire Standard. 6th. August 1909.

The Cambrian News and Merionethsire Standard. 8th. August 1909.

Welsh Gazette and West Wales Advertiser, 5th, 12th. 19th. August 1909.

The Cardiff Times, 7th August 1909.

The Aberystwyth Observer, 12 August 1909

'When war pitched women against each other'

Researching what happened to the 40 people arrested during the bread riots at Merthyr Tydfil of 22nd to 24th September 1800, I realised how the British war against the French Republic pitted women against each other. In my *Welsh Reactions to the French Revolution. Press and Public Discourse, 1789–1802*, I had focused on the execution of two rioters reported in the *Derby Mercury* on 28 May 1801, but my attention was now drawn to the fate of a woman scheduled to suffer with them:

Two men named Hill and Williams convicted at the late Cardiff Sessions of being concerned in the recent Merthyr riots were, some days since executed on Cardiff Heath. They admitted the justice of their sentence and expressed a hope that their fate would deter others from the commission of like offences. A woman named Watkins [sic] was to have suffered with them for sheep-stealing, but on the preceding evening she hung herself in her cell by fastening her neckhandkerchief and a small piece of cord to the bars of her window.

According to the court records, Gwenllian Watkin was a sixty-year old woman accused of 'feloniously stealing, taking, and carrying away, two ewe Sheep' owned by Catherine Mathew, a wealthy 'singlewoman' of Llangynwyd. Having pleaded 'Not Guilty', Gwenllian had taken her own life, no doubt in order to escape the shame of public execution by hanging at the Little Heath in Cardiff (close to what is now known as 'death junction'). She is only one of the women who lived through that war and who I remember in the next issue of *Morgannwg*, which will be dedicated to women.

Marion Loeffler

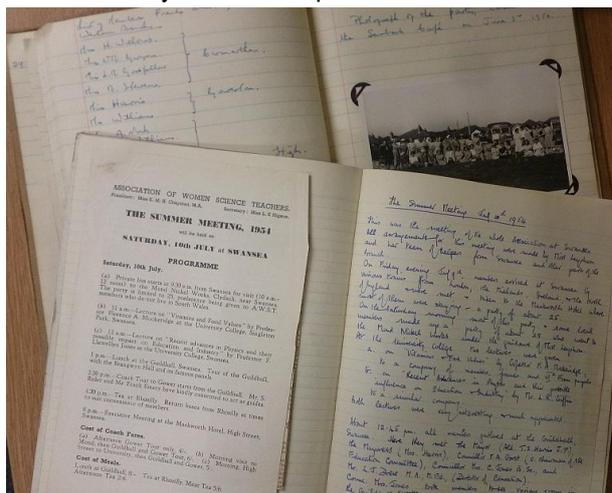
Sisters doing it for Science

In the centenary year of Swansea University, looking back at the role of women students and staff has been of great interest. One such area is reflected in current debates and activity to raise the profile of women in Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Medicine (STEM) subjects and encourage young women to pursue careers in areas traditionally seen as male dominated. The work of generations of women have opened up the field and captured the imaginations of girls making these career decisions. In the Richard Burton Archives, Swansea University, we are pleased to hold the records for The Association of Women Science Teachers: Welsh branch. This branch was formed in the 1920s by a group of women science teachers who recognised the importance of their role. The records make for fascinating reading.

Amongst the records is the first minute book of the Association. Although the initial planning meeting was held in Cardiff, the inaugural meeting took place at University College Swansea (now Swansea University) on 7th May 1921. The Principal, Professor Sibly, emphasised at that meeting the vital importance of nurturing relationships between schools and science colleges – an emphasis that is still very much acted upon by the University today. The minute books also show the respect that the Association received from local industry and the interest shown by the members in the ways in which science contributes to contemporary business success. In June 1923, for example “eight members visited Vivian’s Copper works, Hafod, and were shown the electro-deposition process and the sulphuric acid works” and they “saw a leaden chamber in construction”.

A more traditional interpretation of women in science was taken by another speaker. In the summer term of 1924, following a tour of the Science Laboratories at the College, the members were addressed by a Mr Wakefield. The subject “Agricultural Research as an opening for girls with Science degrees” sounded hopeful. However, his main point noted in the minutes is that “girls who could combine both Art and Botany might take posts as Botanical Artists at Kew or similar institutions.” Perhaps not quite the impact and range of careers the teachers were hoping to inspire their girls to take up!

An outline of the collection can be found here: <https://archiveshub.jisc.ac.uk/data/gb217-swcc:mna/tug/12>. Due to the current situation the Richard Burton Archives are closed, however if anyone is interested in taking a look at the collection, we will be pleased to welcome you when our reading room re-opens.



Sue Thomas Richard Burton Archives

Email: archives@swansea.ac.uk

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@SwanUniArchives

Clara Neal mosaic at Terrace Road School

Carol Shepard of women4resources writes:

‘You are probably aware that at the WAW conference in October 2018 we showcased our work with Terrace Road Primary school about their suffragist head teacher Clara Neal. As part of this project we fought for a Blue Plaque in her honour and this was unveiled on 14th December 2018. The plaque is on the school wall on Norfolk Street in Mount Pleasant Swansea. It was near to some unattractive doors in the wall so we commissioned an artist, Pam Mayford, to work with the children to make a mosaic to be displayed on this old door.’



Does anyone remember watching 1941's *How Green Was My Valley*?



Rhys Peregrine writes I am currently writing a PhD thesis on perhaps the most famous Welsh film of all time, John Ford's 1941 epic, *How Green Was My Valley*. As part of that research, I would love to speak with anyone who saw the film, either upon its initial release in 1941 or at any other point between then and the mid-1970s. I am researching all aspects of the film but I am particularly interested in how it was received within Wales. Can you recall your own experiences with the film? What do you remember thinking about its portrayal of Wales and the Welsh? I would also be interested in your recollections of the actual act of cinema going: where did you see the film, in what kind of cinema was it shown and who did you go with? More

broadly, can you still recall the film's wider impact? How much of a stir did it cause in Welsh society and what kind of conversations did it inspire? I would be fascinated to hear your thoughts on the above questions – or on anything else that you would like to say about the film. If you are interested in taking part in an interview please email me at peregriner@cardiff.ac.uk.

Tales from an unfunded Special Collection.

What could possibly go wrong?

There we were, the Trustees, the volunteers, the Estates Department of the Uni had moved mountains, we'd done the too-ing and fro-ing, it was all agreed. We would have a lovely corner office, right on the waterfront, with windows, and enough room to display some of our Collection. And storage space for our instruments, our music players, our precious stage gowns, the fragile 78s, Jen's jazz recordings over so many years, the library. We even knew what was there, thanks to Mike and the spreadsheet, and Sandra and the photos.

Finally, (well for a couple of years), we'd be safe. It wasn't perfect, but would give us time to spread out and delve further into the oldest Jazz Collection in the UK, and time to do the prep to be the 4th and last UK host for 'Documenting Jazz 2021', the International Jazz Conference focusing on this niche research area, of which we are even more niche.

It was turning out that Women's Jazz, and how jazz came to Wales with its links to slavery, and black culture were quite au courant, with the new analyses of the impact of colonialism, and an increasing emphasis on our missing cultural history. The National Library of Wales had digitized our trials and tribulations, the ups and downs over the last 40 years, of minimal project funding and maximum cutting edge action research the final one of which was the Tower ballroom book, documenting the glorious heyday of this Communities First area for grandkids to admire.

Jen had even published, and we had launched '*Freedom Music*' Wales, *Emancipation and Jazz 1850-1950*, reclaiming for Wales the history and culture of a music that eventually emerged as jazz in the 1920s, its tendrils and roots extending back to slave songs and abolition campaigns, of which Swansea was a leader.

So we were all there, crowded in the Mezzanine of the Dylan Thomas Centre, measuring tapes and diagrams in hand, talking about what should go where, being offered volunteers by the Council co-ordinator, when the news came. Lockdown. All stop. And who knows where we will be when the doors finally open again?

Deb Checkland, Chair, Jazz Heritage Wales.



**Remote interviewing on Gwir Gofnod o Gyfnod / Setting the Record Straight
(AMC / WAW Senedd Cymru & National Heritage Lottery funded project to celebrate 20 years of the
National Assembly Wales) © Catrin Edwards May 2020 Photo: Geraint Davies**

“There’s this massive thing happening in China” I said to a friend back in January. Why is nobody talking about it? Why is nobody worried?” After an unsurprisingly slow start in December by February we, the Women’s Archive film crew, were picking up speed and making good progress in interviewing present and past women Assembly Members for our latest project. However Wuhan was nagging somewhere at the back of my mind and the reports from China, Korea, Italy and Spain a worrying undertone. Then on the penultimate day of that month, the first Covid-19 case in Wales was confirmed.

The project and interviews continued into March. But in the depths of Tŷ Hywel, as we were exploring y Llywydd Elin Jones’ political beginnings, a man in the glass office next door took her attention. She placed her pen on the coffee table and stood up to leave:”I have to go to Parc Cathays to sort out this Covid-19... we’ll have to finish this interview again”. And that was that. On March 16th 2020, all interviewing was suspended.

As the Covid-19 dust settled, it became apparent that circumstances would not improve in the short term and we had to find a way to carry on with our work. It was suggested that we could use Skype or Zoom to interview. But despite the usefulness and connectivity wonders of these platforms, I was reluctant to follow this path because of their very bad picture and sound quality coupled by inevitable broadband dropout. After all, we were



shooting these interviews for posterity - with one eye on the possibility that they might be used in the future for broadcast and in documentaries. So I felt strongly that our production values should not be compromised.

There must be another way. I watched items on TV and online, spoke to media colleagues, read articles by producers, Directors UK newsletter and the Oral History Society website - all trying to tackle the problems of recording and filming at a distance. The lightbulb moment for me was a suggestion that we used Zoom to conduct the interview remotely but actually filmed and recorded sound locally, in the interviewee’s house. Why not! Lots of people could wield a camera or mobile phone

and frame some kind of shot these days. So let’s see if this was possible.

I decided to ‘experiment’ with a younger Member, who might not be technophobic and might even have some technical ability. Nerys Evans, who’d left the Assembly in 2011, had already agreed to be interviewed and would possibly fit that bill! I was apprehensive when I rang her – it’s a big ask - but not only did she enthusiastically agree, but also revealed that her locked down husband Geraint is a professional freelance sound recordist who of course is currently unable to work. Well - that’s the sound sorted – I thought to myself!

Both of them were up for it. We would have although to record late evening in order to make sure that their two small boisterous children were asleep. The ‘shot’ would therefore have to be properly lit. I delivered some soft video lights to their doorstep and Geraint who has a DSLR camera capable of recording video, put a lot of thought into creating a ‘set’ for Nerys, framing a decent shot and lighting it.

The idea was that Nerys talked to me on Zoom: there I am on the laptop placed on top of the red box, it’s height making sure that Nerys’ eye line makes it look as if she’s talking to another person in the room.

In the photograph, the camera is to the left of the laptop and the soft video key light is on the right. Geraint used some practical house lights to create background interest and complete the set up. As you can see the visual result was superb. And the sound is pretty good too!

During the ‘new normal’ we hope that we can film a few more interviews like this. A huge thanks to Nerys and Geraint for their time, thought and help – and for entering into the spirit of our remote interview experiment.



Beatrice Lewis 1877 – 1929

Beatrice Lewis is one of the forgotten women of Welsh political life. She was the first woman ever elected to local government in Barry, and challenged the comfortable male establishment relentlessly. There are no plaques to mark her contribution to public life, and she is rarely mentioned as someone who made a difference – but she did.

Beatrice was one of a large family, born in Ely, Cardiff, in 1877. Her father and husband were both coal trimmers, which was dirty, dangerous and poorly paid work. She married Joseph Jenkin Lewis when she was 20, and they moved to Barry. In the late 1800s Barry grew very rapidly, increasing from a few hundred to 30,000 people in less than ten years. This sudden growth was driven by coal - the industrialist David Davies couldn't export his coal fast enough through Cardiff, so he built his own dock and railway, nearby. Nowhere in Wales, and possibly the whole UK, developed as rapidly as Barry did in such a short space of time.

But for many people Barry was poverty stricken and fairly lawless. Street violence, illegal drinking and

gambling, child cruelty and prostitution were reported in salacious detail in the local press. Beatrice lived in the area next to the docks, where serious accidents, pollution from coal dust and constant noise were the norm.

Beatrice was the only woman on the ballot paper in the 1919 local election, and she won the Castleland ward seat for Labour comfortably. Before Beatrice entered political life, working class women in Barry had had no voice. The council chamber had been dominated by prosperous local businessmen who lived in the suburbs, well away from the docks area. They had never been challenged by a woman sitting as their equal.

Press reports of often stormy council meetings show that she was unafraid to speak up. The health reports presented to the council were horrifying – in one month 22 babies under a year old had died, and infant mortality had risen to 125.7 per 1,000 births. Measles, diphtheria and other infectious diseases were rife. These shocking statistics were the outcome of poor housing, overcrowding, lack of basic health care, and Beatrice was determined to change this. She campaigned tirelessly for improved maternity provision in the town. She spoke up against what she called creeping militarism in primary schools, defending a young boy who had been 'court martialled' by the headmaster for not wearing the Boy Scout logo on his jersey. She questioned why children under 12 years were selling newspapers in the street, for up to 39 hours a week, in all weathers, without winter coat or even a cap, calling this 'positively cruel'. Beatrice protested against the way that nursing mothers were questioned when they applied for help, telling colleagues that some mothers turned up at her door at midday, asking for food and drink, having had nothing all morning. 'Their names should have been on that list - but owing to investigation – cruel investigation in many cases – some of them would rather starve than be subjected to it. Why should we starve the child?'. At one meeting Beatrice burst out at the continued deferment of a decision on a child welfare and maternity centre, stating that it was a 'sheer waste of time to defer this matter from one committee to another – it only meant insult to injury'.

Beatrice served as a councillor for 10 years. She died in 1929 at age 52, leaving 5 children. Her obituary referred to her as 'one of the leading women of the Socialist party of Wales, who almost single handedly championed the establishment of a maternity clinic in Barry. She was progressive in thought and action and forceful in debate, and commanded the respect of her fellow councillors during the years she served.'

She lies in an unmarked grave in Barry Cemetery. There are plans to recognise this extraordinary woman – plans which are on hold at the time of writing, for obvious reasons, but we'll keep you informed.



This is an edited part of a paper given by Mary MacGregor in 2013. It shows how the Welsh education system enabled a miner's daughter from a large family to become a teacher in the early years of the 20th century. Mary has deposited her mother's documents in Glamorgan Archives, Ref DAWW 12/2 – 6.

My mother Blodwen Davies was born on 14th July 1900 in a miner's cottage, 4 Windsor St. Troedyrhiw. She was one of 13 children, coming fourth from the end. She went to Troedyrhiw Infants' and Junior schools after which she and her friend, also called Blodwen Davies were among the first entrants to Cyfarthfa Castle Municipal School which celebrated its centenary in 2013. It remained a source of wonder all her life that she should have gone to a school in a castle surrounded by parkland with a lake and needlework classes in a round room in a turret. One of the movers in setting up the school was Councillor Enoch Morrell who declared that miners' children deserved the best and that secondary education should be free including free travel to school and text books paid for. I still have some of these books. She was learning French (French was exotic. Welsh was the language of home and taken for granted) and Latin and all about the properties of coal tar in chemistry and there was Palgrave's Golden Treasury and the glories of English literature. Her battered copy of Palgrave is heavily annotated, especially Milton. She could recite reams by heart. I can see her at the stove and quoting L'Allegro : 'Quips and cranks and wanton wiles / Nods and becks and wreathed smiles / such as hang on Hebe's cheek.' 'Fat danced and sang in the pan: the gas was too high / 'Arglwydd Mawr', my mother said. / The words sprang from deep caverns of her brain / and flowed through the courses of her blood, / the words of hearth and home and chapel involuntarily came out. And then / the voice of her blessed education. / She quoted Milton and turned down the gas.'



Mam, my grandmother had little education. She always had difficulty with English and she marked her marriage certificate with a cross. Yet she knew that education was a key to a fuller life. When Sir Frank Benson and his travelling Shakespeare Players came to Merthyr, she encouraged my mother to go to see them. I was shocked when my mother said that if her father had been alive, she would not have allowed her to go. Actors were of dubious reputation. Her father had been strict chapel. Strange that he was the educated one but his outlook was limited. My mother and aunt used to say that he could read and write fluently in Welsh and English. However, the census for 1901 shows that he had Welsh only. Whatever the truth, the family had the perception of his having two languages.

For 5 years, my mother learned her craft [in Troedyrhiw Infants School, as a Pupil Teacher]. She was a natural teacher. The headmistress, Kate Jones urged her to go to college. This seemed impossible. My mother's father had been killed in an accident in Nixon's colliery Merthyr Vale when she was 6 years old. She remembered their bringing his body back on a gambo. Her brother's spine had been shattered in the same accident. There was no insurance. The only income came sporadically from a farm my grandfather had owned in Mydroilyn in Cardiganshire. My grandmother decided to sell the farm so that my mother could go to college. I now see that it was a remarkable thing to do. The sale was handled by a solicitor but my aunt Ellen supervised the sale. She taught herself conveyancing, getting books from Merthyr Library on the subject. The letter addressed to her shows a balance of £354 for the sale of The Spite farm. Spite is a corruption of 'ysbyty'.

In 1921 my mother went to Sheffield Training College for the 2 years of the course. She never applied to a Welsh college. Although happy with her Welsh identity, she wanted to see what was beyond Wales. It was important to have testimonials from someone of standing in the community. The testimonial she had from the Minister of her chapel says that he had 'known Miss Blodwen Davies from the cradle. She is of respectable parents.'

Mary MacGregor

The Presence of Women in the Underground Music Scene of South Wales.

The underground music scene in South Wales has been a space reserved for a community of like-minded individuals to express their creativity. But how did women participate in this community and was there an element of inclusivity regardless of gender? The Museum of Hidden Histories is exploring these questions by using oral history and sources such as photographs and artefacts from the women who were there as part of their



Obey Cobra, 2019, O Buzz Mag,
[<https://www.buzzmag.co.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2019/12/clwb1-scaled->

impending pop-up exhibition, 'The Underground Music Scene of South Wales'. This exhibit, however, only focuses on unknown hidden bands rather than the bands that rose to fame, such as *Catatonia*. So far, The Museum of Hidden Histories has found that in the early days of the underground scenes, ranging from Pontypridd to Cardiff, Newport and Swansea, that women were onlookers and in rare cases participants in bands, suggesting a gender inequality. However, a participant from the 1980s underground scene in Pontypridd, Judith Leetch, remarked that 'it was fabulous to be part of the scene and it didn't matter if you were a girl. I didn't even consider it. Just felt a part of the movement. It was something different something new.' Judith does go on to state that 'I don't recall any female bands in Ponty.' (Oral history taken from MHH003 The Museum of Hidden Histories). Judith's oral history indicates that gender and identity were secondary to 'the music' meaning that the underground scene for her, was perhaps far more inclusive regardless of gender, than is previously assumed.

Today, we see a shift where women are now much more involved in the underground scene by capturing a crowd through their performances. An example, at present in Cardiff, we see bands such as *Obey Cobra*, (2017 to present), a five-piece with two strong female presences within the band: Rosie and Kate.

Another five-piece band, *Mammoth Weed Wizard Bastard* (2014 to present), from Wrexham, has a very active



O gasgliad y The Museum of Hidden Histories, Mammoth Weed Wizard Bastard, Y Clwb Cymreig, Caerdydd: 2017.

female frontwoman, Jessica Ball. The band has played numerous times around South Wales and are huge within the underground scene. These female musicians without knowing it are shaping the future and paving the path towards gender equality within the scene and in turn, are contributing towards female history in Wales. On the surface, the scene still feels male-dominated, but this project seeks to dig deeper and identify, capture and explore the stories and history of women involved within the underground scene past and present: whether through musical artistic performances or as a participant in the underground scene.

The Museum of Hidden Histories (www.themuseumofhiddenhistories.co.uk), is calling for the public and members of WAW to share their stories to The Museum, to add to its collection and capture an inclusive hidden history of South Wales that may otherwise be overlooked.

Rachael Lee

The Museum of Hidden Histories



The Museum of Hidden Histories



Women in Street Names Project

Last summer I launched a Women in Street Names Project at a lunchtime talk at the LSE. Not an original idea but most projects to date only take in a single city (London, New York, etc.). I want entries from all over Great Britain and the island of Ireland. Having done little on the project for some months I thought this might be a good time for people to trawl their memories of current haunts, past homes and travels for hidden gems. Some will be the well known - the Pankhursts, Curies and Cavells of this world. Others will be obscure local councillors or whatever who, in their lives and locations, made a huge difference, or wives or daughters of land owners/deveopers, but often with much of interest to tell.

Initial output will be a booklet of entries with brief biographical notes. I also intend to work it up into a paper on unconscious bias, culturalisation/socialisation, and the possible or actual or perceived impact on how women place themselves with particular regard to the impact on senior career positions.

I don't really want royals unless obscure or pre 16th century and, again, only saints if obscure (there are many thousands of St Anne's, etc. although I do have a penchant for some of the Anglo-Saxon saints).

So far, my favourite entry is Maude Heath's Causeway, Chippenham. The saddest is Lisa Head Way in Huddersfield, named for the first woman bomb disposal officer to be killed on active duty (in 2011). All entries to Carrie de Silva, cdesilva@harper-adams.ac.uk



A Good War - a student film project by Millie Nichol

Gail Allen and Jen Wilson, WAW originals, were interviewed for this student film about the women who supported the miners' strike in 1984. It includes a number of long clips from their Swansea Women's History Group film 'Splendid and Smiling Women' It also includes an interesting interview with Sian James, the former Swansea East MP

<https://youtu.be/U0A89dUdIoY>

Lockdown Ramblings

I am very interested in the history of clothing, not fashion, but clothing, and have recently been reading more about the subject. Thinking about Medieval dress has brought me to my own. Since lockdown I no longer go out, I wear the same old casual garb, day in and day out. I do change it regularly for clean items, but nothing smart. The recent beautiful weather motivated me to rearrange my wardrobe. The winter woollies replaced the summer tops in the drawers under my bed. The latter now put in the wardrobe. I did keep one or two cardigans to hand, just in case we have cooler days. I am really shocked at how many clothes I have. About 70% have come from charity shops, 20% from sales and only 10% bought new, this includes underwear and sleepwear. I need never ever buy, from whatever source, a single stich more clothing! I am ashamed of the quantity I have accumulated over the past 20 years, for some is that old, maybe even older. I get fond of certain items and since my body shape is fairly constant I can still wear them. I look on some garments as 'friends', finding clothes and materials very nostalgic. There is no need to make new 'friends' to hang in my cupboard.

I am certain that when the charity shops reopen they will be donated bags and bags of clothes as people will have had the time for that long promised clear out. When lockdown ends the nation will do either one of two things – either rush out and buy something new to get that 'fix' of pleasure it brings, or do, what I hope I will have the will power to do, never buy another single item of apparel. That includes shoes too!

...or Ramplings, as she spelled it in the Subject of her email, of Rosemary Scadden