

West of England and South Wales
Women's History Network

NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2017

Co - Chairs: Kath Holden and June Hannam **Membership Secretary:** Elaine Titcombe
Treasurer: June Hannam **Publicity:** Lucienne Boyce **Newsletter editor:** Jane Howells

COMMEMORATING THE CENTENARY OF THE FRANCHISE FOR WOMEN 2018

BREAKING NEWS

It was announced on 26 November that Bristol have won their bid to the Government Equality Office's 'Centenary Cities: 100 years of votes for women' fund. The West of England and South Wales Women's History Network worked in partnership with several other groups in Bristol in the creation of the bid, and the grant awarded will enable an incredibly exciting programme of events to go ahead in the city over the next year. Congratulations and a huge thank you to everyone involved for all their hard work!

Full press release: <https://www.bristolwomensvoice.org.uk/100-years-of-votes-for-women/> Finalised details of all the individual events will be circulated as they become available. All West of England and South Wales WHN events can also be found on our **NEW** website at:

www.weswwomenshistorynetwork.co.uk

2018 Events Programme:

Please put the following dates in your diary.

Thursday 15 February 2018, 6pm: Professor June Hannam and author Lucienne Boyce will be talking about the suffrage movement, as part of the Regional History Centre UWE's research seminar series at MShed.

Saturday 19 May 2018: WESWWHN day of activities for everyone, at MShed. The programme will include talks, walks, gallery tours, film, performance, craft activities,

a chance to 'meet the experts' and find out about researching the suffrage movement, and much more!

Saturday 7 July 2018: The West of England and South Wales Women's History Network 25th Annual Conference and AGM.

The West of England and South Wales Women's History Network 25th Annual Conference

Saturday 7 July 2018

Royal Literary and Scientific Institute, Queen Square, Bath, BA1 2HN
10am – 5pm

Women's Networks

Keynote Speakers: Caitriona Beaumont, June Hannam and Katherine Holden

CALL FOR PAPERS

On our 25th anniversary year we will be exploring the importance of networks in women's lives over time and space, whether local, national or international. Networks can empower and support women as individuals as well as effecting political and social change. We invite papers on any aspects of women's networks in their historical context.

Networks could be formal such as political organisations, trade, professional, philanthropic and religious associations or informal, including family, friendship, community and neighbourhood groupings.

Speakers might want to consider questions such as:

- Why were women-only groups set up?
- What forms did they take?
- What were the processes in networks' formation?
- The significance of leadership
- Relationships between central and local organisations
- Writing letters as a form of networking
- The role of newspapers, journals and newsletters in networks
- Inclusion and exclusion in networks

Paper proposals of not more than 300 words should be sent to June Hannam June.Hannam@uwe.ac.uk **by 28th February 2018**

Advance notice

The Heritage of Women in Exploration

21st June 2018 at the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG) London.

This is a special one-day event discovering and celebrating historical explorers and pioneering travellers. A call for presentation proposals will be made in December 2017.

There is also a voluntary position available on a small event committee to assess and select proposals. For further information, please contact: Dr Tania John FRGS, co-founder and director, Women's Adventure Expo CIC.

Email: tania@womensadventureexpo.co.uk

Women's Adventure Expo CIC is a Bristol-based social enterprise celebrating, inspiring and empowering women in adventure. Through our events, online platform, partner-projects and growing international network, we promote the achievements of leading female explorers and adventurers, inspire others to take their first or next step, and connect people and organisations to facilitate adventure with purpose. Be that health and wellbeing, personal development, challenge and endeavour, cross-cultural relationship building, scientific research or conservation.

<https://womensadventureexpo.co.uk>

How Women Won the Vote

Devon History Society are organising a day conference on Saturday 21 April 2018, at the University of Plymouth. June Hannam will be the keynote speaker, and there will be presentations from local historians who are researching suffrage activists in Devon. Further details will be available as the programme is finalised. See Devon History Society website at:

<http://www.devonhistorysociety.org.uk>

What have our Network members been doing?

As part of making the Network newsletter more than just a space to advertise forthcoming events, we want to include short pieces about the activities of our Network members. Articles can be anything from a report covering an attendance or participation in a relevant conference, to a short abstract from a newly published journal article, book or blog covering any period of women's history. It can also

include short extracts about research in progress and requests for information on topics that members of the Network may be able to help each other with.

Exploring the Archives

Elaine Titcombe

Ever wondered how archives are put together? It was a question I wanted to explore further so I took the fantastic opportunity offered to me this year to join the **Women's Royal Voluntary Service** archives, based in Devizes, as a volunteer. The result of *My Archive Journey* can be seen on the Royal Voluntary Service Heritage Bulletin blog (7th August & 11th September), where I document the process by which I helped in the accession of the records of a WRVS over 60s club into the collection.

<https://www.royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk/about-us/our-history/archive-and-heritage-collection/heritage-bulletin-blog/2017/august>

<https://www.royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk/about-us/our-history/archive-and-heritage-collection/heritage-bulletin-blog/2017/september>

Aside from my own adventures into the archive the blog contains a wealth of information about the work of the organisation since its formation in 1938 by Lady Reading. From aiding civilians during WWII to helping to develop the modern welfare state in the post war years, the website and catalogue are well worth a look!

<http://catalogue.royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk/calmview/>

And if you are on Twitter you can also follow @RVS Archives for regular postings.

Events we have been involved with this year ...

Women and Peace: Activities in South Wales and the South West 1914 - 2017

Katrina Gass

A day school jointly organised by Monmouthshire Museum Service, the Women's Archive of Wales and The West of England & South Wales Women's History Network was held in May as an off-site event of the Museum Service's Exhibition 'Monmouthshire Women Making Change'. Refreshingly this day school concentrated on women who opposed war and war work, or protested against nuclear war and some contributors who are still involved with initiatives for peace for the future.

The format of the day was in date order starting with WW1, which gave us a feel of the time span of women's protest against war. We heard from researchers including Lucienne Boyce speaking on 'Women's objection to war work in WW1', Caroline Fairclough on 'Women in Wales, WWI and beyond', and Elaine Titcombe's account of her trawl through the archives for the Greenham protests. We subsequently heard



testimony from several of the protesters themselves as they reflected on their experiences of Greenham (pictured above). There were peace banners all around the venue, and mementoes of Greenham on display.

There was also an opportunity to share one's own photos and stories with the 'Wales for Peace' project (Ffion Fielding pictured right), for a montage 'Women, War and Peace' that was exhibited in the Senedd, Cardiff in August. Several speakers also spoke on the efforts to get the subject of peace and appropriate materials into schools now, and the Hedd Wen Peace Garden in Llanfoist, etc.



Gail Allen, a member of the Women's Archive of Wales Executive Committee, commented, *'The highlight for me was Jean Silvan Evans' talk (pictured left) about Rosalind Rusbridge (nee Bevan) who was a conscientious objector in Swansea. She refused to sign the Council's loyalty oath and was sacked from her post as a teacher. I have to declare an interest as the film 'Swansea Conchie Controversy 1940' was then shown; this video was made by Ursula Masson, Jen Wilson and myself in 1988, Rosalind's personality just shone out to us all.'*

As co-coordinator of the day I have to say that it was a very exciting, lively day and very well supported with over 60 people attending. [With thanks to Gail Allen for her notes]

2017 - 24th Annual Conference and AGM

Katrina Gass



The 24th Annual Conference this year was held on a sunny Saturday in July in Aberdare, South Wales in conjunction with Llafur, The Welsh People's History Society. A fascinating range of papers was presented by members of both organisations. Karen Hunt's key note talk 'Labour and the Housewife' introduced us, through the columns of *The Labour Woman* journal, to the changing priorities of the editors if not the readership. Set up as a journal for working women, and particularly for members of the Women's Labour League, its initial role was to encourage recruitment among working women and members to become more active. From the 1920s the 'Housewife' column was added addressing domestic issues. In the mid-twenties the column changed to 'Food Problems', a topical issue which affected many working women. Municipal innovations such as milk depots, laundries and wash houses were often featured alongside recipes and dress patterns.

The panel session on 'Women and Socialism 1880 -1918' included Martin Wright speaking on 'Socialist women in Wales 1880 – 1914', and June Hannam giving us insight into the work of 'Mabel Tothill - from peace activism to local councillor'. The programme also an introduction and showing of the film *The Women's Peace Crusade 1917-1918* by Alison Ronan from Manchester Metropolitan University.

Stephanie Ward's key note talk was 'Political activism and the political self in interwar working-class women's politics', looking at a time when the Labour Party had women organisers working in nine regions sending reports to the Chief Women's Officer and contributing articles to *Labour Woman*. She examined what attracted women to the Party and what kept them in membership in spite of barriers such as male domination, the pressure of childcare and domestic work, often whilst holding down their own jobs. Meeting places were often in Men's Clubs or bars and Labour women were often gossiped about by their neighbours as having different morals and values that challenged tradition feminine ideals.

The panel session on 'Women and political activism in the interwar years' was two interesting papers: Daryl Leeworthy speaking on 'Democracy in the Nursery' examining Labour women's activism to develop early years education in Bristol and South Wales. This was followed by Lucienne Boyce paper on Olive Beamish 1890-1978 who's life included a Girton education, suffragette activism and arrest, the setting up of a secretarial training school, together with trade union activism campaigning for better pay and conditions for all women.

The conference was followed by the AGM which saw the re-election of officers and two new recruits to the steering committee – Karen Hunt from Dorset and Katrina Gass from South Wales.

Bristol Radical History Festival

Elaine Titcombe



On Sunday the 17th September 2017 the West of England and South Wales Women's History Network held a bookstall at the Bristol Radical History Festival at M Shed. The event brought together historians, history groups, publishers and the public for



a day of talks, walks, puppet shows and poetry readings, films, bookstalls and displays uncovering radical histories in Bristol, the South West and beyond. The day was spent publicising the Network, promoting women's history and forging links with other groups in the area – as well as attending some of the fascinating talks on offer! Some of the papers pertinent to women's history included those by June Hannam and Bernadette Hyland.

A Tour around Bristol Archives

Lucienne Boyce

I had a fantastic afternoon at the West of England and South Wales Women's History Network behind-the-scenes tour of Bristol Archives on 17 October 2017. Bristol has been keeping archives since 1381, and its earliest item dates back to 1191. The Bristol Archives Office was established in 1924, and was only the second Archives Office to be established.

Initially, the Archives Office mainly looked after Bristol corporation records, but its collections have greatly expanded since then. They include Diocesan records (including probate and parish records), the records of the Bristol Commonwealth and Empire Museum which closed in 2008, court records, and records for public institutions such as the police and hospitals. In addition they hold business records, amongst them records for well-known Bristol firms Fry's, Wills's, and Elizabeth Shaw.

We had asked if we could see examples of records of particular relevance to women's history, and an exciting collection of items was displayed for us. They included records for the Red Lodge girls' reformatory school and Glenside Hospital, a contract to build a new house in the High Street for fifteenth-century Bristol merchant Alice Chester, and correspondence of Arabella Astrey of Henbury House, as well as an inventory for Henbury House. Scipio Africanus, an African enslaved by the Astreys who is buried in Henbury churchyard, was in the service of Arabella Astrey. We saw material from the archive of Fem FM, the country's first all-woman radio station which broadcast in 1992; the archive includes digitised sound recordings. One item of particular interest was the First World War scrapbook of Maud Boucher, which included newspaper cuttings about women's war work.

We also learned about two interesting exhibitions in Bristol which are based on records from the archives:-

'Empire Through the Lens, Bristol Museum and Art Gallery – photographs and film from the now closed British Empire and Commonwealth Museum collection'
<https://www.bristolmuseums.org.uk/bristol-museum-and-art-gallery/whats-on/empire-through-lens/>

'Brave Poor Things: Reclaiming Bristol's Disability History', Bristol MShed – the story of the Guild of the Brave Poor Things, founded in 1894, which provided social and training facilities for disabled children and adults.
<https://www.bristolmuseums.org.uk/m-shed/whats-on/brave-poor-things/>

As the records we looked at show, Bristol Archives holds a rich and varied collection of material relating to women's history. This varied and fascinating material was a reminder of how much there is yet to discover about the women of the past.

Find out more about Bristol Archives at <https://www.bristolmuseums.org.uk/bristol-archives/>

NB This visit proved so interesting we are planning another to enable more people to discover the fascinations of the Bristol Archives collections. If you would like to take part please contact Lucienne by email at lucienne@lucienneboyce.com to express your interest and we will get in touch when possible dates are being explored.

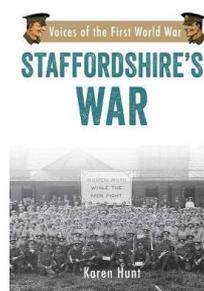
PUBLICATIONS

Staffordshire's War

Karen Hunt

Amberley Publishing 2017 £14.99

ISBN 978 1 44565785 1



This is the story of Staffordshire's First World War. Using a wide range of sources, including the newly-discovered Mid Staffordshire Military Appeal Tribunal papers, letters, diaries and local newspapers, the book draws together the experiences of the men, women and children who made up the Staffordshire home front. It explores how the county responded to these unpredictable times, though far away from the guns and battlefields.

The Account Books and Papers of Everard and Ann Arundell of Ashcombe and Salisbury 1745 – 1798

Edited by Barry Williamson

Wiltshire Record Society Vol 70, 2017 www.wiltshirerecordsociety.org.uk

ISBN 978 0 90133347 6

The latest volume published by Wiltshire Record Society is a rich collection of documents from a wealthy West Country family in the second half of the C18th.

Ann Wyndham (1731 – 1796) and her husband James Everard Arundell (1721 – 1803) were married in 1751, and kept a detailed record of their household and estate accounts. Ann, whose mother died when she was 17, took over housekeeping for her father, and quickly realised the importance of meticulous account keeping. The Arundells were not known for thrift, and it was Ann's influence that kept her household away from debt.

Unusually James came from one of the most prominent Catholic families in England, and Ann from a staunch Protestant Whig family. She brought to the marriage large estates in Wiltshire, Somerset, Dorset and Oxfordshire; these were largely inherited from her mother and grandfather, 'for her own and absolute power'.

Ann and Everard's life together revolved round two houses: 59 The Close in Salisbury (now known as 'Arundells' and formerly the home of the late PM Sir Edward Heath) and Ashcombe to the west, where they built a new mansion alongside the old house.

All the building accounts survive for this new house (which itself stood for only 70 years). We learn of the purchase of bricks, tiles, flints, timber, lime, sand, nails, plaster – and more – for the construction; payments for carrying same, and to all the workers needed. Two further accounts cover the painting of the house, from £5.8.0 in the Library to 5s for 'dog boxes'; and all the furnishings. This list gives us an

intimate picture room by room, of wallpaper, curtains, bedding, as well as upholstery and details such as '42 yards lace' and '9 Dozen brass Oes'. An inventory compiled when 59 The Close was let after Ann's death gives a similar level of detail for the contents there in 1798.

Barry Williamson has selected two years for transcribing the household and estate accounts – 1765 and 1790. From these we discover regular payments to all the servants, charitable donations, horses bought and sold, leisure activities such as concert subscriptions and attendance at benefit theatrical performances; medical provision; and travel. Ann and Everard had agreed that their sons would be raised as Catholic and daughters as Protestant. Expenditure on schooling for the boys (at the Jesuit school St Omer) totalled £ 1,012 1s 7^{1/2}d and for the girls at home with £265 7s 2d.

Seed lists for each house (1797 for the Close and 1753 for Ashcombe) are reproduced, demonstrating how important the gardens were, confirmed by the dimensions illustrated in pictures of both places. Imagine putting in 3,000 asparagus plants, or sowing a pound of carrot seeds!

Another section of the documents contains correspondence relating to the debts of Everard's nephew. Despite promises to reform he could not detach himself from a life of dissipation, and died aged only 40 'sodden and in jail'. At the end of the century Henry lord Arundell, Everard's older brother incurred the largest bankruptcy of any individual in the 18th century.

It is clear to see from this volume how important Ann's direct and indirect influence was in keeping her own family secure. She brought all the income through land and houses, she kept the accounts, she held status as a prominent landowner in the community. Despite the uneven foundations the marriage appears to have been happy and fulfilling. *JH*

The Accomplished Lady: a history of genteel pursuits c 1660 -1860

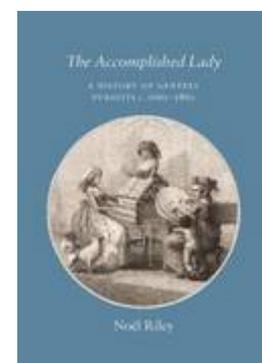
Noel Riley

Oblong 2017 £47.50

ISBN 978 0 95759929 1

At first sight the life of a privileged woman in the 200 years from the mid seventeenth to the mid nineteenth centuries was a simple one: there were few acceptable options open to her, either as a destiny in life or as day-to-day activities. But as this book demonstrates, underlying the apparent restrictions was a

broad and complex range of possibilities, with social, commercial and local implications. The author, art historian Noel Riley, explores in great detail the many skills and pastimes undertaken by women with time and other resources at their



disposal. Many of course are predictable – reading, painting, embroidery, music – while others are more unexpected – sports, photography, metalwork.

A wide variety of sources are exploited – from private letters and diaries, periodicals and autobiographies, to published manuals, to throw light of the many facets of these pursuits.

In addition to the exquisitely detailed descriptions of techniques, materials and products for all these pursuits, there are a number of fascinating broader issues for readers to consider. Many of these women demonstrated high degrees of skill, and under different circumstances could have made successful professional careers in, for example, music or art. What activities were thought of as appropriate and ‘ladylike’ – was it permissible for them to involve getting dirty or expressing a competitive instinct? There were necessary commercial relationships with people from other social classes, to obtain supplies or receive instruction or training. Domestic servants were sometimes involved in support roles to their employers. Some pursuits had charitable outcomes, such as products to be sold at bazaars, so formed part of the broader social responsibilities of such women. Links between London and the provinces are revealed in many examples. Their own family and social networks often encouraged women in one direction or another. Although this is an expensive and weighty volume it provides a unique source of reference. *JH*

MUSEUM CRUSH

Do you know ‘Museum Crush’ from Culture 24? Signup for their weekly digest of news from the world of museums (very broadly defined). For example currently there is a link to a new visual archive telling the story of trouser-wearing women via an online gallery of digital images spanning more than a century. ‘Women in Trousers: A Visual Archive’ has been developed by Cardiff University’s Special Collections and Archives to show the complex and sometimes contradictory meanings represented by women ‘wearing the trousers’ from the 1850s to the 1960s. www.museumcrush.org

YOUR IDEAS WANTED!

The regional network exists for its members. Do let us know if you have any particular interests for topics and /or suggestions of potential contributors (and venues) for Study Days, or any alternative ideas for different events or activities.

NEW WEBSITE

www.weswwomenshistorynetwork.co.uk

Here you will find all the current and historic information about the network, including programmes and abstracts from previous conferences, papers from study days, links to other relevant organisations and much more. It will continue to develop as a valuable resource for members and friends. It's the first place to go for details about all our forthcoming events! Contributions are welcomed; please contact Kath Holden in the first instance
katherineuna.holden@gmail.com

TWITTER

The West of England and South Wales Women's History Network has its own **Twitter** account so you can keep up to date with events, resources and member news. It's at @WHNWestSWales and if you're on Twitter do follow and retweet.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Membership subscriptions are the regional network's income. Please make sure you are paying the correct amount: the rates are £10 full or £5 unwaged/student. Subscriptions are renewable annually on 1 October – please check your payments are up to date! It helps us if you can pay direct by banker's order.

MEMBERSHIP ENQUIRIES: *elaine.titcombe@hotmail.co.uk*

NEWSLETTER

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