

West of England and South Wales

## Women's History Network

NEWSLETTER  
FEBRUARY 2021

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**Co - Chairs:** Kath Holden and June Hannam    **Membership Secretary:** Elaine Titcombe  
**Treasurer:** June Hannam    **Publicity:** Lucienne Boyce    **Newsletter Editor:** Jane Howells  
**Committee:** Karen Hunt, Linda Henderson, Julia Neville, Diana Russell.

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### Still I Rise

*You may write me down in history  
With your bitter, twisted lies,  
You may trod me in the very dirt  
But still, like dust, I'll rise.*

– Maya Angelou (1928-2014)<sup>1</sup>



### Grant of £500 for Research into Ethnic Minority Women's History Deadline extended

The West of England and South Wales Women's History Network is offering a grant of £500 to support the costs of research in Ethnic Minority Women's History. Deadline for applications is now February 28th, 2021. Further details and an application form can be found on our website <http://weswwomenshistorynetwork.co.uk/>

### EVENTS 2021

**West of England and South Wales Women's History Network  
and  
Devon History Society**

### A Symposium on Women in the 1920s

**Saturday 18 September 2021, 10.30 - 16.00**

Exeter, venue to be confirmed

*The event will take place by Zoom if restrictions on meetings are still in place*

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<sup>1</sup> Extract from "Still I Rise" by Maya Angelou, *The Complete Collected Poems of Maya Angelou* (1994)

The 1920s were heavily overshadowed by the Great War. Women's experience of the war, in employment, in public and voluntary service, in bereavement and in the upheavals to family life meant that life would never be the same again. At the same time there was a positive sense of progress and change. Women had achieved – at least partially – the goal of parliamentary votes. They had begun to be active in local government. Legislation had opened up new opportunities – to be a member of parliament, a magistrate, a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons. Once-experimental technologies such as those concerned with electricity or the petrol engine came to be available to a wider group of the population. We would like to explore the impact of these changes on women's lives in the West of England and South Wales.

### **Call for Expressions of Interest**

The convenors would be interested in hearing from anyone undertaking research on aspects of women's lives – whether on an individual or a group of women – during the 1920s in the West of England or South Wales. We hope to create an event which will have a mix of presentations in different formats, including posters, readings, and short papers.

If you are interested in participating, please email Julia Neville, [j.neville@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:j.neville@exeter.ac.uk) by Friday 5<sup>th</sup> of March 2021 with details about your work and the woman/women whom you could feature at this event.

## **West of England and South Wales Women's History Network**

28<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference

### **Gender and Commemoration**

**Saturday 16th October 2021, 10.00 - 16.30**

Venue to be confirmed

*The event will take place by Zoom if restrictions on meetings are still in place*

### **Call for Papers**

We invite papers on any aspect of women's or gender history and commemoration. The conference will explore the gendering of commemoration- verbally, visually and in terms of processes of formal and informal commemoration.

Topics could include (but are not limited to):

- Commemoration of specific events e.g. war, revolution and protest, suffrage
- Commemoration of writers and artists and their work
- Different types of memorialization e.g. statues, blue plaques, place names
- The making/ creation of memorials e.g. artists, sculptors
- Questions of inclusion and exclusion
- Public history and commemoration
- Commemoration of specific people, either individuals or groups
- Anniversaries



- Funerary memorials e.g. epitaphs, tombs, monuments

Papers should be of not more than 20 minutes in length. Suggestions for presentations in film or other non-standard formats will be considered.

Proposals of not more than 300 words should be sent to [june.hannam@uwe.ac.uk](mailto:june.hannam@uwe.ac.uk) by Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2021.

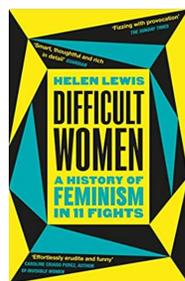
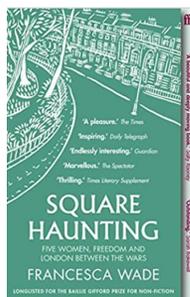
## WESWWHN BOOK GROUP

The inaugural meeting of the Book Group was held via Zoom on 4 February 2021. Ten members, who had all read *The Five* by Hallie Rubenhold, took part in a lively discussion chaired by Lucienne Boyce.



The lives of the five women who were murdered by 'Jack the Ripper' have up until now been either completely neglected or seriously misinterpreted. Rubenhold's detailed research follows Polly, Annie, Elizabeth, Kate and Mary Jane from birth to the point of death, tracing their families and the diverse forces which influenced their lives in different areas of the country, and in Sweden (in the case of Elizabeth). She places them within the social and economic context of the time, demonstrating, for example how it was almost impossible for a working-class woman to live on her own, and how the system of poor relief failed to provide any safety net to poor women and their children. Inevitably there are parts of their lives for which evidence cannot be found; the skill with which the author deals with this problem provided one of the debates of the meeting. Hallie Rubenhold can be seen on film discussing the book: <https://www.londonlibrary.co.uk/about-us/latest-news/1973-new-podcast-series-from-the-london-library>

The books selected for the next two meetings of the group are:



**18 March 2021 6-7pm** – *Square Haunting: Five Women, Freedom and London Between the Wars*, by Francesca Wade. [ISBN: 978-0571330669]

**29 April 2021 6-7pm** - *Difficult Women: A History of Feminism in 11 Fights*, by Helen Lewis. [ISBN: 978-1784709730]

If you are interested in joining the book group, please email us to receive the zoom link: [WHNWESTSWALES@outlook.com](mailto:WHNWESTSWALES@outlook.com)

## **OTHER EVENTS:**

*(Please note these are not WE&SW WHN events and a fee may be payable to attend)*

The Friends of the Women's Library has a series of upcoming talks:

Wednesday 17 February 2021, 2.30pm

Amy Kaufman, **Women Writing Women's Rights: The Beginnings of Women's Law Books in England, from Married Women's Property Reform to Suffrage**

Wednesday 17 March 2021, 2.30 pm

Eleanor Reed, **Making Homemakers: how Woman's Weekly shaped lower-middle-class domestic culture in Britain, 1918-1958.**

Wednesday 14 April 2021, 2.30 pm

Anne Logan, **'I grumbled a little at the absolutely endless catechism about Elizabeth Fry': Margery Fry and Quakerism.**

For further details visit <http://friendsofthewomenslibrary.org.uk/whats-on/>

Zoom links published on Royal Historical Society website <https://royalhistoc.org/events/>

## BRISTOL FOLK HOUSE

### **Activism, Arts and Culture in 20th Century Feminist Social Movements**

*Five-week online evening course, starts 23 February 2021, Tuesday evenings 7-8.30pm*

Culture and the arts have had a central role furthering feminist causes in the 20th century. In this five-week course you will learn about the fascinating and dynamic history of how feminists mobilised culture to claim social space, communicate political messages and build international networks.

Our main focus is the feminist movements of the 70s and 80s. You will also learn about the cultural activism in Suffrage movements of the Edwardian era, inter-war international peace and decolonial organisations, and post-war Afro-Asian networks. Participants will have the opportunity to learn from digital archival sources, oral histories, music and video, guided by a knowledgeable instructor with expertise in the cultural histories of feminist movements. Students will be encouraged to conduct independent research about an organisation, song, book, film, etc discussed in the course.

Week 1: Introduction: Cultural Production, Ideas and Practices

Week 2: Feminist Publishing and Print Culture

Week 3: Internationalism

Week 4: Music

Week 5: Moving Images and Political Aesthetics

D-M Withers has written widely about the cultural activism of post-war feminist social movements, especially in relation to music and publishing. They are the co-author of *The Feminist Revolution: The Struggle for Women's Liberation* (Smithsonian/Virago) and *Virago*

*Reprints and Modern Classics: The Timely Business of Feminist Publishing* will be published in 2021.

Full fee: £57.50 | Over 65s: £51.75 | Benefit: £46.00 Book online at Bristol Folk House, <https://www.bristolfolkhouse.co.uk/courses/social-history-activism-arts-and-culture-in-20th-century-feminist-social-movements-online-course-om3-13334>

No previous experience or knowledge necessary. Any questions about the course please email [d-m-withers@protonmail.com](mailto:d-m-withers@protonmail.com)



### **In Conversation....**

In her historical novel, *Hild*, based on the early life of Saint Hilda of Whitby, award-winning novelist Nicola Griffith chose to make her heroine bisexual.



In this UWE sponsored M-Shed event, on Tuesday 16 February at 7pm, Griffith will be in conversation with historian, Cheryl Morgan. They will talk about the research underpinning the novel, and how we understand ideas of sexuality and gender in the ancient and early medieval world.

For further details visit <https://www.bristolmuseums.org.uk/m-shed/whats-on/lgbtq-history-month-nicola-griffith-in-conversation/>

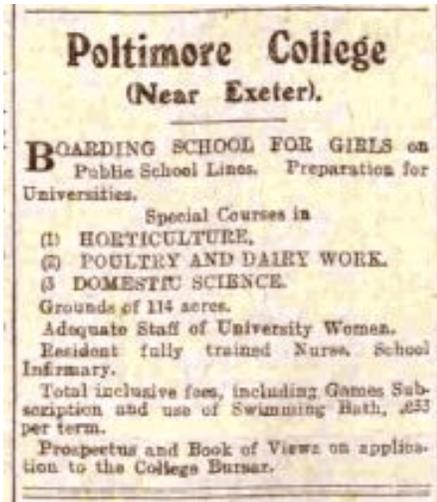
Bookings close at 2pm on Tuesday 16 February.

## **RESEARCH, ARTICLES & PUBLICATIONS**

### **Poltimore College: a 1920s experiment in education for girls**

In August 1923 a series of advertisements appeared in the scholastic columns of Devon newspapers (see Figure 1). They announced the opening of a new boarding school for girls. The advertisement stood out at once from those for other girls' schools featured in the column, unlike them it did not refer to being 'high class' or for 'the daughters of gentlemen', nor did it mention music and drawing. Its emphasis was on preparing girls to earn their own living, either by qualifying them to take university degrees or in the more practical disciplines of horticulture, animal husbandry and domestic science.

Figure 1: Poltimore College advertisement, 1923



Miss Wontner, the Principal, explained to a reporter that the girls she was looking for were ‘the children of professional men – Navy and Army officers, clergymen and doctors – many of whom are unable to pay very high fees, and who desire their girls to leave school, say at the age of 18, with knowledge that will enable them to earn their own living.’

Her assessment of the appeal of such a school was probably a shrewd one. Inflation had eaten away at the incomes of professional men, but many were reluctant to allow their girls to go to state-supported schools. There was a new spirit abroad too, as legislation opened up new opportunities to women to fulfil their potential and to serve the Empire. This school was intended not only to provide for academic study but also to prepare girls for practical occupations.

Wontner had taken a lease on Poltimore Park, the mansion and grounds formerly home to the Bampfylde family. She had been running her school in Somerset since 1919, and its success had led her to venture on this more ambitious project. The estate around the house offered scope for horticulture, with a walled kitchen garden and extensive greenhouses. The large aviaries where exotic birds had been kept were perfect for poultry-keeping, and, though the original Home Farm and dairy had been sold off, the spacious former stables accommodated a small herd of cows. In addition to the advertised Special Courses Wontner added motor driving, recruiting first a woman chauffeur and then a former army officer to teach the girls.

Teaching of the special courses seems to have been undertaken by a mixture of those specially recruited, like the chauffeur, and some ‘lady gardeners’ who occupied the bothy that once Lord Poltimore’s young gardeners had used, and men who had been on the estate staff before the house was let such as the clerk of works, a cowman and one of the gardeners. Instruction in poultry-keeping was given by Miss Wontner’s factotum who had moved with her from Somerset.

**Figure 2: Girls at Work in the Early Peach House**



It is hard to tell how successful this venture in practical education proved to be. The school records do not appear to have survived. Academic successes are traceable, as the newspapers reported the results of public examinations, and a small number of girls were successful in these endeavours, one or two going on to university. Some old girls and staff have contributed their memories to a record held at Poltimore House, but these mostly relate to the school's spartan regime (run along 'public school lines') with drill, ice in the washbasins in the winter and generally poor food. Individual staff members, particularly the flamboyant Miss Wontner, are also remembered. Rosemary Manning, the novelist, who was an early pupil at the school has left a record both in her autobiography, *Corridor of Mirrors*, and in a novel, *The Chinese Garden*, about the school but she was part of the group of girls being prepared for university and thus not part of the special courses.

Warner was good at attracting parents to send their girls to the College, though numbers never seem to have exceeded 100. She was, however, hopeless at financial management and apparently never saw the need to employ a bursar to take on those responsibilities. Recklessly mixing her personal finances with those of the College, and borrowing from friends and from commercial organisations, she was declared bankrupt in 1926. The College was thenceforth run as a limited liability company with Wontner as a salaried principal.

This change does not seem to have made a significant difference in the way the school operated. A copy of the prospectus (together with the 'book of views') survives from 1930 and makes it clear that the special courses continued. Five courses were offered as an extension of tuition beyond the age of 16, singly or in combination. They comprised the original Horticulture (now expanded to cover Market Gardening), Poultry-keeping and Dairy Work, and Domestic Science (cooking, housewifery, laundry and needlework). together with the short course in motor driving, and a new course called Commercial Training.

By 1933, however, the range of courses seems to have been reduced. The single advertisement for the College in local papers that year refers only to commercial and domestic science courses in addition to the school certificate, university entrance and music examinations. Horticulture, dairying and poultry-keeping have given way to a reference to 'Scientifically balanced menus ... Fruit, vegetables, butter, milk and eggs from College Farm',

suggesting that the emphasis is now on what can be produced rather than on training and education. The school no longer offered a curriculum of a radically different nature from others in the neighbourhood.

The 1920s was a decade full of educational experimentation. Some of these ventures are well-known – Dartington School in Devon, for example. Less is known, probably because of the paucity of records, about smaller ventures and, in particular, how women were taking the initiative to identify the needs of girls in the modern world and to explore how these could be met.

If readers have any examples of new initiatives in schooling for girls in the 1920s, I'd love to hear from you.

*Julia Neville*  
*Devon History Society*

### **Berkshire Local History Association**

*Berkshire Old and New* No 37 2020 published by the Berkshire Local History Association contains a substantial article by Margaret Simons on 'Women's Suffrage in Berkshire'. In due course this should be available on their website <http://www.blha.org.uk/journals-full-content/>

### **British Association for Local History**

Roger Ottewill's article 'Campaigning for and against women's suffrage in Edwardian Basingstoke 1809-1914' appears in the January 2021 issue of *The Local Historian*. This is currently available in full online to members or hard copies can be purchased. <https://www.balh.org.uk/thelocalhistorian>

Under normal circumstances issues of *TLH* published within the last three years can be purchased for £5.00 each (subject to availability). Members have access to downloadable copies of these issues. Issues older than three years are available for download free of charge. But BALH have a temporary suspension of the paywall which means that all back issues (excluding the latest issue) are available free to view during the pandemic crisis.

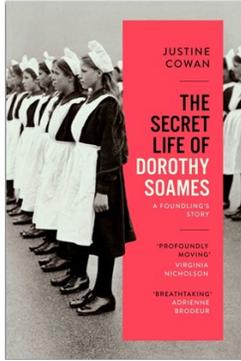
Also, from BALH is a growing programme of digital events, activities and other material. One of the 'Ten-Minute Talks' is presented by WESWWHN's Lucienne Boyce 'Miss Browne's Pluck: A Suffragette in North Wales'. <https://www.balh.org.uk/ten-minute-talks>

### **Victoria County History**

Following from Roger Ottewill's article in *TLH*, there is another piece by him available via VCH Hampshire, read online or as downloadable pdf:

<https://www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk/explore/items/housekeeper-public-servant-and-suffragist-productive-life-mrs-isabella-raynbird-nee-webb>

## THE SECRET LIFE OF DOROTHY SOAMES: A Foundling's Story



by Justine Cowan

[ISBN: 9780349013169 £20]

“Growing up in a wealthy enclave outside San Francisco, Justine Cowan’s life seems idyllic. But her mother’s unpredictable temper drives Justine from home the moment she is old enough to escape. It is only after her mother dies that she finds herself pulling at the threads of a story half-told – her mother’s upbringing in London’s Foundling Hospital. Haunted by this secret history, Justine travels across the sea and deep into the past to discover the girl her mother once was.

Here, with the vividness of a true storyteller, she pieces together her mother’s childhood alongside the history of the Foundling Hospital: from its idealistic beginnings in the eighteenth century, how it influenced some of England’s greatest creative minds – from Handel to Dickens, it’s shocking approach to childcare and how it survived the Blitz only to close after the Second World War.

This was the environment that shaped a young girl then known as Dorothy Soames, who was left behind by a mother forced by stigma and shame to give up her child, who withstood years of physical and emotional abuse, dreaming of escape as German bombers circled the skies, unaware all along that her own mother was fighting to get her back.”

[Source: <https://www.virago.co.uk/titles/justine-cowan/the-secret-life-of-dorothy-soames/9780349013169/>]

## WHITE FEMINISM: From Suffragettes to Influencers and who they leave behind



by Koa Beck

[ISBN: 9781398501966 £16.99]

“Join the important conversation about race, empowerment, and inclusion with this powerful new feminist classic and rousing call for change. Koa Beck, writer and former editor-in-chief of Jezebel, boldly examines the history of feminism, from the true mission of the suffragettes to the rise of corporate feminism with clear-eyed scrutiny and meticulous detail. She also examines overlooked communities, including Native American, Muslim, transgender, and more - and their difficult and ongoing struggles for social change.

In these pages she meticulously documents how elitism and racial prejudice has driven the narrative of feminist discourse. She blends pop culture, primary historical research, and first-hand storytelling to show us how we have shut women out of the movement, and what we can do to change things for a new generation.

Combining a scholar’s understanding with hard data and razor-sharp cultural commentary, White Feminism is a witty, intelligent and profoundly eye-opening book that will challenge long-accepted conventions and completely upend the way we understand the struggle for women’s equality.”

[Source: <https://www.simonandschuster.co.uk/books/White-Feminism/Koa-Beck/9781398501966> ]

## 2020 – Looking back

### Conference

#### Women and Transport: historical perspectives

On Saturday 3 October 2020, the 27th annual conference of the regional network was held on Zoom. There was an excellent attendance of members and friends from a wide international geographical area. Dr Susan Major gave a stimulating plenary lecture on ‘Women on the move: working class railway excursions in the early Victorian period’ which, amongst much else of interest, demonstrated the challenges of researching subjects for which there is little direct evidence. Six papers from other contributors ranged from ancient Rome to railway advertising in the 1970s, via the Suffragettes, First World War railway magazines, the female project manager behind the Sydney Harbour Bridge and women in the Science Museum transport collections. Please see our website for further details of the papers presented on the day.



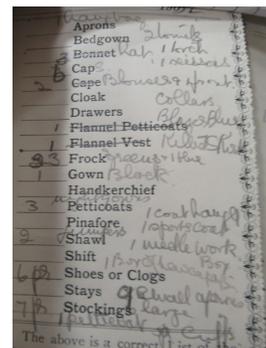
*Photo: A woman railway worker operating the signals in a siding on the Great Central Railway in Birmingham during 1918. © IWM (Q 28148)*

### Study Workshop & Annual General Meeting 2020

The 2020 AGM was held on Saturday 13 November, also by online video conferencing. Minutes, Chair’s Report and Accounts follow here. The business meeting was preceded by two stimulating papers.

**Linda Henderson** spoke on ‘**The clothing of poor, rural women in the inter-war period: challenging the stereotype through the material culture of the Workhouse**’.

She examined a unique set of records from Torrington Poor Law Institutions to analyse the variety of clothing owned by poor, rural women on admittance to the workhouse. The commentaries about the clothing reflected changing attitudes to the poor, the types of work they did and the realisation of the physical and mental importance of clothing.



**June Hannam’s** subject was **Helen Cordiner: Bath Labour Party activist and social reformer between the wars.**

Helen Cordiner, the wife of a cabinet maker, was active in the Bath Labour Party and in the Women’s Co-operative Guild in the 1920s and 1930s and campaigned for better housing, education and welfare services for working class people in the city. She stood many times for election to the Bath City Council without success but that did not mean that she was left without a voice. At various times she was a member of the Board of Guardians, a co-opted member of the Education Committee and the

Maternity and Child Welfare Committee and a member of the Bath Infant Welfare Association. The talk explored the importance of one woman's political activism in a small provincial city in a period in which the electorate had increased significantly both at a national and at a local level.

*Photo: 'Lady candidate in the three-cornered contest in West Twerton' Bath Chronicle 15 January 1921.*

## **ANNUAL REPORTS**

### **West of England and South Wales Women's History Network Chair's Report to 2020 AGM**

It has been 18 months since our last AGM. The reason for the delay is that after several conferences in very hot weather in late June or early July, we decided to hold the 2020 conference later in the year. In the end COVID restrictions made it impossible to have a face-to-face event so we decided to try out a virtual conference on ZOOM in early October. We delayed the AGM further because we felt that a whole day of talks was enough and that it would be better to hold a separate AGM. In order to encourage more members to attend we have combined this year's AGM with a morning ZOOM workshop.

COVID has inevitably restricted the number of events held over the last year. We did however manage to organise two events in the autumn and winter before lockdown. The first was a visit to Bath Record Office in November 2019 at which committee members were joined by several other local members. The Bath archivist was extremely helpful, showing us a number of documents and online databases with material useful for women's history.

The second event was an evening talk by Professor Penny Summerfield on 'Self and Society on the British Home Front: some women's diaries of the Second World War' at the Museum of Bath at Work. This was much enjoyed by the 40 people who attended and has encouraged us to hold more evening talks when possible again in the future. Since COVID restrictions have been in operation we have also sent out an excellent newsletter in the spring put together by committee members Jane and Elaine which gave details of upcoming women's history events both locally and nationally.

Our 2020 conference on the theme of Women and Transport Historical Perspectives was intended to take place in Swindon but had to be moved online and took place on October 3<sup>rd</sup> on ZOOM. We had a range of good speakers and feedback from attendees suggested that we had the timings right and that they enjoyed the day. It was sad that people had limited opportunities to chat and network with one another but enabled people to attend from further afield including one delegate from Canada.

Another important initiative has been the decision to allocate £500 of our funds to a grant to support the costs of research in Ethnic Minority Women's History. The deadline for applications is Feb 28th, 2021. We also decided to run a book group for members with the first meeting to be held on Zoom on Thursday January 14<sup>th</sup> from 6pm to 7pm.\* The first book is *Five: The Untold Stories of the Women Killed by Jack the Ripper* by Hallie Rubenhold. Future books will be decided by group members.

*\*Date was subsequently changed to 4 February 2021.*

The committee meetings have been held on Zoom since March and this has worked well and avoids travel expenses. Thanks are due as always to all the committee especially to Elaine and Jane for the newsletter and for organising the conference.

*Kath Holden, Co-Chair*

## **West of England and South Wales Women's History Network Annual Accounts**

### **19 May 2019- 19 September 2020**

<b>Balance as at 19.05 .19</b>	<b>2,757.83</b>
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#### **Income**

Membership	226.00
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Conference 2019	717.00
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BRO visit	25.00
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Conference 2020	79.00
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<b>Total</b>	<b>1,047.00</b>
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#### **Expenditure**

Committee expenses	85.70
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Conference 2019	550.39
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Web rent x2	99.51
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BALH subs	75.00
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Summerfield talk	225.45
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Rad Hist stall	15.00
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BRO visit	50.00
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<b>Total</b>	<b>1,101.05</b>
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<b>Balance 19.09.20</b>	<b>2,703.78</b>
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*June Hannam, Treasurer*

## West of England and South Wales Women's History Network Minutes Annual General Meeting 2020

1. **Apologies** – none received.
2. **Minutes** of the 2019 AGM held on Saturday June 29th, 2019 were agreed.
3. **Matters arising:** None.
4. **Chair's Report.** Katherine Holden presented her report on the Network's activity during the year from November 2019 to December 2020.

The full report is to be published and circulated after the AGM.

Kath also confirmed that the reason for the delay to this year's AGM was due to the change from a summer to an autumn conference (a move documented in the minutes of the 2019 AGM). It was also delayed further when the 2020 conference had to be moved online as it would have meant too long a day (on-screen) for members if held immediately after the conference. It is likely that when meeting face to face is again possible, we will return to holding the AGM after the conference as usual and this will be in the October of each year. This also ties in with the publication of the annual accounts as the membership year runs from October to September.

Following the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic all the Network activity took place online. This was viewed positively as a way of keeping the Network in touch in difficult circumstances. It also enabled the participation of people from further afield than would normally be possible. The Network may therefore continue to use the online method in future for some events if they are considered suitable.

New initiatives in the year were the launch of the £500 bursary for ethnic minority research, and a book group.

Thanks were given to the Committee for their work over the year and in particular the work done to keep things going despite the circumstances.

5. **Treasurer's Report:** June Hannam presented the accounts to 19.09.2020. They therefore cover almost 18 months. This longer timespan than usual is intended to bring the accounts in line with the new timing for the AGM. It is also to bring the accounts in line with the annual membership period. The date of the 19<sup>th</sup> is the period covered by the relevant bank statement.

The full report is to be published and circulated after the AGM.

Key points of note were raised by June, to include:

- Membership confirmed as stable
- 2019 Conference – this resulted in an overall income to the Network of £167 as the Regional History Centre supported the event with some funding which covered the cost of the catering at UWE.
- 2020 Conference – the income and expenditure recorded in this set of accounts is not the complete picture as it crosses over the bank statements. The final position on this will be reported in the next annual accounts. Costs not included which are anticipated include the subscriptions to Zoom and a small fee paid to the plenary speaker. But it is expected to break even.
- Going forward the paid Zoom subscriptions will reduce to one which is £15 per month and this will be shared with the Larkhall History Society so the cost to the Network in future will be half.
- Committee expenses have been reduced in 2020 as meetings have been held online.
- The expenditure for the talk by Penny Summerfield is shown on these accounts (to include speaker expenses, drinks/nibbles, and the venue costs) but the income will be reflected in the next set of accounts. The income was £240 so overall there was an income of £15 to the Network from this event. This includes a small additional donation of £20 to the Bath Museum of Work in recognition of the assistance given to us, and to help support them as a small organisation.
- Overall, the accounts do show that the Network spent more than the income received in the period, but this gap is reduced significantly once the £240 income from the Bath talk is included. Therefore, outgoings and income were in balance.
- The balance in the bank remains healthy.

**6. Secretary's Report:** Elaine Titcombe confirmed that membership levels have remained consistent.

Over the past five years the levels have fluctuated from between 35 and 45 members. The paid memberships for the year from October 2019 to September 2020 was 32. This was a mix of student / concession memberships combined with full membership. The difference being £5 between the two membership levels. Overall, there was a small decrease in membership numbers, but there have been some new members join following the conference or in response to the publicity for the forthcoming book group.

The next audit of the membership is due to be carried out following the renewals in October 2020 to produce an updated 'Current Membership List'. As in prior years any potential lapsed members will receive a reminder email to ensure those who wish to stay connected to the Network are able to do so.

The last AGM minutes recorded that the membership leaflet was in the process of being updated to remove outdated information. This was done and a new printing company was found in Swindon to produce these at a reasonable cost in future. While it is not currently possible to distribute these, it is anticipated we will do so again

when events and venues begin re-opening. These costs will then appear in the appropriate year's accounts.

Newsletters have continued to be circulated electronically and members are reminded to ensure that the contact detail registered is correct or they may not receive information.

- 7. Publicity:** Lucienne Boyce has continued to actively promote the Network and the events taking place throughout the year.

The grant of £500 for research into ethnic minority women's history has been widely publicised. The Twitter account continues to be used to promote the Network. It was reported that there are 1,099 followers and we follow 864. It was agreed that this works well for publicity, and Lucienne was thanked for her work to keep this channel active.

It was noted that a list of potential sources of new members was compiled by Lucienne last year, and in the 2019 AGM minutes it was anticipated that these would be actively pursued in 2020. However, despite these intentions it was not actually possible as it became apparent that it is a rather large task and time could not be found to do this due to the other commitments of the Committee members. Unfortunately, the list will now be out of date, so if another similar membership / publicity drive is proposed again in the future the list will need to be re-visited and updated.

Kath confirmed that information is also added to the website regularly.

- 8. Election of Steering Committee:** The Committee members all offered to continue in post for another year. In addition to the proposal to re-elect all, Kath also proposed the election of Linda Henderson. This was seconded by Katrina and June. The proposal was carried.

Karen Hunt and Julia Neville were associate Committee members in 2019. However, now that meetings can be held online both agreed to become full Committee members as they will be able to attend meetings if on Zoom. The proposal was carried.

It was proposed that Committee meetings will continue to take place on Zoom for the foreseeable future and people will attend as often as they are able. An annual 'in person' Committee meeting will also be held for those who can attend. This will make the business of the Committee more efficient and reduce expenses. This proposal was also agreed.

It was discussed and agreed that whilst there is no limit to the number of Committee members specified within the Network Constitution, this would be reviewed if deemed necessary.

## 9. Any Other Business:

Proposed activities in 2021:

- Book Group from February.
- Devon History Society joint event with WE&SW WHN in September.
- Conference in October on the theme of commemoration.
- Possible event in Swindon when in person events are permitted. This will likely be a study day.

It was raised that the National Women's History Network has increased their publicity and the number of events now that activities are increasingly online. There was a suggestion that we make contact with the national Network to try and build from the work they have done.

There was a suggestion that WE&SW WHN could look to launch a Blog in 2021. This could be guest writers and the membership should be actively invited to submit items for the Network to publish.

The first meeting of the Steering Committee in 2021 was scheduled to take place on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> of January. Details of the next organised event to be published soon after. The next newsletter to be published in January or early February.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

For more information please email: [WHNWESTSWALES@outlook.com](mailto:WHNWESTSWALES@outlook.com)

Web site: <http://weswwomenshistorynetwork.co.uk/>

### IT IS YOUR NETWORK!

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.

### OUR WEBSITE

[www.weswwomenshistorynetwork.co.uk](http://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 is 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](mailto:katherineuna.holden@gmail.com)

## TWITTER



The West of England and South Wales Women's History Network now has its own **Twitter** account so you can keep up to date with events, resources and member news. It is at [@WHNWestSWales](https://twitter.com/WHNWestSWales) and if you are on Twitter do follow and retweet. We currently have 1,134 followers!

## NEWSLETTER

Please send contributions, to include notice of events, book reviews and suggestions to Jane Howells, [mail@sarum-editorial.co.uk](mailto:mail@sarum-editorial.co.uk)

## SUBSCRIPTIONS

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