

VOLUNTEER'S VOICE



The 20th Issue!

This quarter's volunteer newsletter is truly a special one – celebrating the 20th issue! We owe this to the dedication of volunteers, who have continued to show support and enthusiasm for participating in our projects. Now, as the year nears its end, we want to celebrate not only the work that the volunteers do, but also their unique stories, skills, and passion they bring with them.

Back in September, volunteers were asked to complete a wellbeing and satisfaction survey. The community shared their thoughts and feelings on how we could improve the scheme – from seeking additional training to experiencing more opportunities to socialise with one another.

Written by: Kate Stepanova

Volunteer insights help shape the future of this scheme. As plans begin to take shape, the continued feedback and ideas from the volunteer community remain at the heart of creating a supportive environment.

Last month...

A new permanent exhibition called Peacemakers is now open. To celebrate the contribution of volunteers who transcribed The Welsh Women's Peace Petition they were invited to join the official opening ceremony. During the ceremony Elined Prys's grandchildren's – Michele Gautret and Mark Kotschnig – donated family letters to the Library's collection.

To learn more about the exhibition and project head on over to page 4!

What's been happening in the volunteer community?

- * Recently, the **Sharing & Support Programme**, funded by WCVA, was launched to allow more experienced volunteers to assist and guide others within their roles and tasks. We would especially like to thank **Matt, Virginia, Rhys, and Mike** for enrolling in this scheme and supporting their fellow volunteers!
- * Library staff have been busy working on the new **People's Collection Wales** website, with volunteers testing out features such as uploading and citing various collections of photography, videos and more! The website is now live, and people all around Wales or with Welsh relatives and descendants are now able to upload photos and videos to this archival site. <https://www.peoplescollection.wales/>
- * The **Gorsedd** 'beta' website has also launched thanks to all those who have supported the development of the project. The website contains information about bardic names, locations, type of membership, and their contribution to Welsh culture. And has been developed for researchers, students and members of the public interested in the history of the Eisteddfod and Welsh culture. <https://gorsedd.llyfrgell.cymru/en/about/>

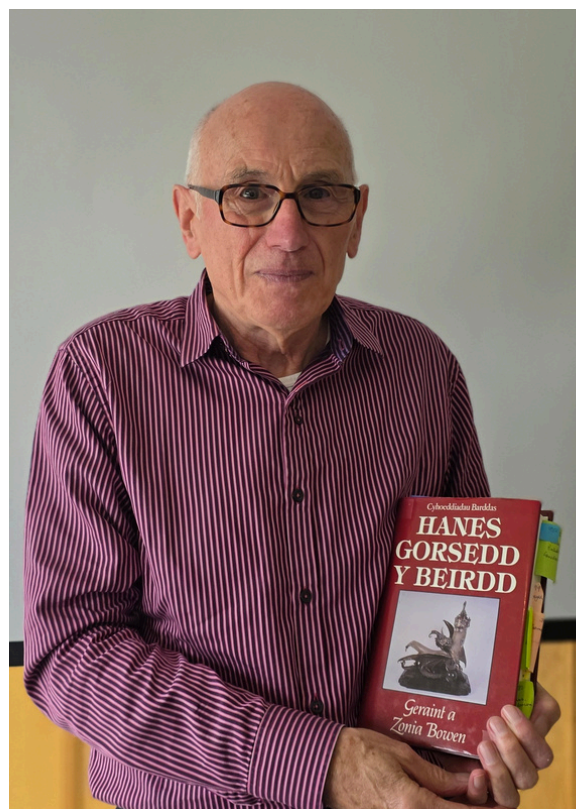
A very special thanks to volunteers **Nonna, Christine, Ian** and **Owen Watkin** especially for having been indispensable to the research and progression of the project. Here are a few words from volunteer Owen Watkin, who has carried out extensive research on the Gorsedd project:

🗨️ Gorsedd of Wales List -

Work is underway to create a complete list of members of the Gorsedd of Wales. The list is now complete up to the Anglesey Gorsedd (2017) and includes the Wrexham Gorsedd (2025). From the first Gorsedd in 1792 through to 2025, the names of 7,400 members have been recorded.

Members joined by winning major competitions at the National Eisteddfod and the Urdd, passing Gorsedd examinations, holding an appropriate degree, or through their contribution to the nation. Work continues to add information up to 2016 and will carry on into the future. 🗨️

- Owen Watkin



Clwb Sgwrsio

If you are a Welsh learner, there is still the opportunity to practice the language in a friendly and informal setting.

The club gathers every Monday from 11:00 – 11:45 at the Pen Dinas Café.

Contact Eilir for more info on joining:
eilir.evans@llyfrgell.cymru

Current Stats

Total volunteers:

81 over the last quarter

Volunteer hours:

Sept: 773, Oct: 853, Nov: 789

Projects and tasks in progress:

16 projects and tasks are being worked on, with The Welsh Women's Peace Petition nearing completion!

Coming Soon...

* Annual Volunteer Celebration on the Thursday 11th of December, at 2pm in The Drwm.

There will be presentations by staff, followed by afternoon tea to close the event. This year's guest speakers are **Dafydd Tudur** and **Owen Watkin** sharing insights into the Peace Petition Project, Peacemakers Exhibit and the Gorsedd. It is guaranteed to be a fantastic time, join us to celebrate!

* Portraits & Power Exhibition will be facilitating **CELF sessions** during the day for both Library staff and volunteers. A great opportunity to have fun together and a chance to engage with the exhibit.

* Artist **Bethan Hughes** will be hosting a talk and creative session in honour of The Welsh Women's Peace Petition and Peacemakers Exhibition for volunteers on the **12th of February 9:30 - 12:30.**

For more information on these events contact the volunteer team at volunteering@library.wales or pop into the office for a chat.

Welcome!

We would like to extend a warm welcome to our new volunteers: **Barbara, Jose, Robert, Oliver, Sara, Emma RS, Emma J, Megan, Esme, Moelwen, Pheobe Lydia, Joy, Ffion, Mirain, and, Gwilym.**



New Exhibitions



PORTRAITS & POWER

01.11.2025 | 30.05.2026

📍 Gregynog Gallery

Portrait and Power, as an exhibit, rethinks the meaning of portraiture as an art form, exploring who is portrayed and how they are presented, what it says about their own identity.

Art critic John Berger was the first to discuss the fact that portraiture is inherently concerned with power, and how it often reflects the power our gaze holds. This was then expanded upon by feminist and post-colonial critics who analysed who got to be represented in portraits, as well as how and why.

The exhibition combines both historic and contemporary works, inviting us to question tradition, challenge convention, and explore how portraits write and rewrite the stories we tell about identity, gender, race, class and belonging.

PEACEMAKERS

Permanent exhibit

📍 Lower ground floor

Peacemakers exhibition is devoted to The Welsh Women's Peace Petition. It was signed by nearly 390,296 women in 1923. As one in three women in Wales signed the petition, an element of the exhibition is the ability to search a database in order to see if your relatives have signed it!

The petition was presented to the women of the United States of America by a delegation led by Annie Jane Hughes-Griffiths as an act of international solidarity and hope. It called for a world without war, a message that stays relevant to this day. The Smithsonian made the honourable decision to gift the petition papers and the oak chest that stored them to the National Library Of Wales.

Hundreds of volunteers, remotely and in house, participated in working on this project in order to preserve the voices of women from a century ago.



Meet a member of staff!

For the interview segment of this newsletter - this quarters volunteer writer in resident, Kate, connected with the Assistant Curator of Maps.

I spoke with Ellie King who works as an Assistant Curator of Maps in the Graphic and Audiovisual Department, which used to go by the catchy nickname of *"maps and snaps."* The position Ellie occupies is primarily focused on cataloguing what various areas of the world used to look like in different times, including identifying what the map depicts.

Ellie began working at NLW in September of 2019 in a trainee position that facilitated her attaining a second master's degree, in Information and Library Studies. Only working at the Library for a few months before lockdown began, Ellie didn't have access to the map collections, during this unusual time she worked on coordinates and focused on practicing her Welsh. When asked to describe a typical day at work post lockdown, Ellie replied...



Ellie King
Assistant Curator of Maps



The work I do is very varied, and often the same thing all day but not the same thing every day.

Mainly cataloguing, and then working out what the map is of, what purpose it was meant to serve and other information; sort of like detective work in a way. Old estate maps often look like fields with gaps between them, so I often need to figure out what was between these fields, that the estate didn't own – it will often be a church, or another public property of the sort. I work on Welsh maps but the Library's collections cover the whole world.



At the time of this interview, Ellie was working on re-cataloguing maps of Asia, which were in one of the boxes full of random maps that the library occasionally receives from the Defense Department.

Specifically working on a map of Papua New Guinea from the WWII period. This prompted me to ask what it was like to be so deeply immersed in history, especially of a country as historically influential as the United Kingdom. I was then told that a lot of the older maps in particular have an imperialist perspective to them, which means that although the maps cover the entire world, they are often limited in the perspective they take towards it.

For Ellie, her favourite aspect of the job is the variety of things she gets to do – there's something new to do every day. To her, the job feels like solving a puzzle or tidying up, a process that brings her genuine joy as she turns disorder into structure.

Her favourite aspect of working at the National Library is the tight knit community who have welcomed her instantly. Having grown up in London, Ellie appreciated the family-like atmosphere in comparison to general anonymity. It took her some time to get used to almost always being recognised in Aberystwyth, but she now finds it comforting.

When asked to give some advice to people wanting to become professionals in the Library and Archive sphere, Ellie stated that...



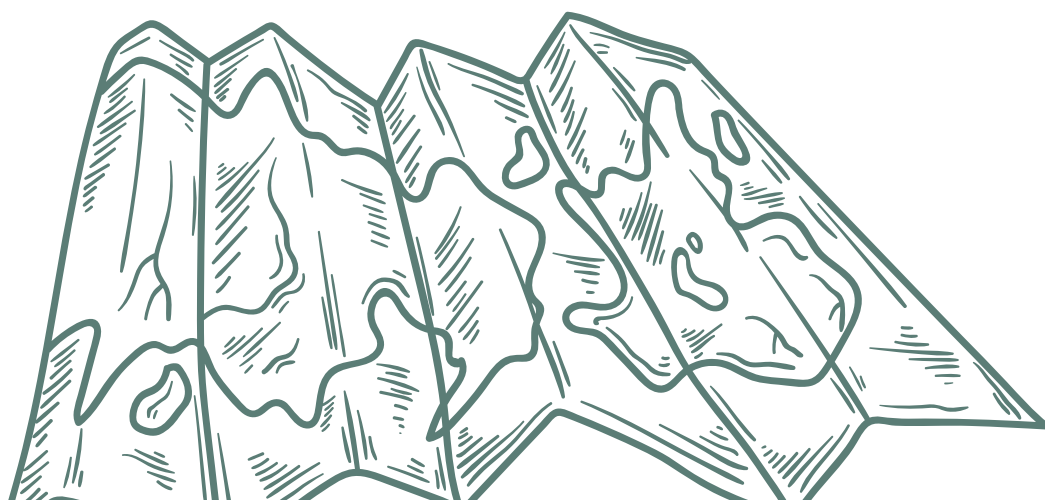
The thing is to find what you are excited about. I have always really liked maps and spent lots of time looking at Atlases. So when I was asked about my favourite map during the interview for the NLW, I immediately felt at home. You must like solving puzzles, for this job.

Use your libraries and archives – you will find something you want to know more about and then you are in a good place to help people learn more. Being passionate about the material is great, but you also need to want to share it with people.



The most interesting book Ellie has encountered thought out her career thus far has been the texts of the Silos Apocalypse, which is a medieval text that drew together all the apocalyptic prophecies cited in the Bible. For reading purposes, her most recent favourite book has been 'A Memory Called Empire' by Arkady Martine, a science fiction novel focused on the political aspects of colonization. Her hobbies include cycling, as it is a wonderful way to exist in nature as well as a great means of transport, and various arts & crafts such as lino-printing.

It was fascinating to get to know more about the internal functions of the Library, and as someone deeply fascinated with libraries, I cannot thank Ellie enough for this opportunity. Ellie has frequently worked alongside the volunteers on projects that involve maps - her guidance and support has been invaluable throughout the duration of all of these tasks.





Get to know Kate, this issue's Writer in Residence!

I arrived in the UK in September of 2023. It had been a long journey – over 24 hours of travel from Yangon, Myanmar to Aberystwyth, Wales. When I had chosen Aberystwyth University as the place to pursue my English Literature and Creative Writing degree, one of the main attractions for me had been the campus's proximity to the National Library of Wales.

I have always felt safest in libraries. One of my earliest childhood memories is seeing the library at my school for the first time - marveling at the fact that so many stories could be housed under one roof.

Throughout the duration of my secondary school education, I frequently volunteered at my school's library. For the most part, I worked on the front desk, keeping track of books going in and out of the library while the librarian attended meetings or took her breaks. I worked there everyday on my lunch break and for an hour afterschool. No one had asked that of me; there was just nowhere I would rather be than in the library.

After reading that, I'm sure you won't be surprised to find out that one of the first things I did when I arrived in Aberystwyth was get a NLW Reader's Ticket. It took a little longer for me to feel settled enough to register as a volunteer, but I sent in my application as soon as I felt used to my new surroundings. By this time, I had also joined Aberystwyth's Student Newspaper, *Mouth Of The Ystwyth*.

Whenever I walk into the National Library, I am awestruck the same way I was when I stepped into the building for the first time and felt the history and knowledge surround me. I have come to see the hours I spend volunteering at the Library as a kind of sanctuary from the demands of the outside world.





I am currently in my third year at university and serve as the Editor-in-Chief of *Mouth Of The Ystwyth*. This role, with its many responsibilities and fast-paced nature, inspired me to share my story here.

Being part of the student newspaper has allowed me to play an integral role in its growth and collaborate with Aberystwyth's Student Union on initiatives such as making the publication available both in print and online.

I'd like to acknowledge that without these opportunities, I wouldn't have been able to stay involved with the newspaper or connect with incredible people like our Head Photographer, Tathan Williams, who generously provided the photos for this newsletter segment.



One of the careers I hope to pursue is librarianship, and I greatly value the experience I've gained through volunteering at the National Library. I believe I've developed a range of transferable skills, particularly in maintaining accuracy and attention to detail while transcribing information from typewritten index cards and inputting the data digitally.

Like many students approaching graduation, I'm uncertain about what the future holds. However, I hope others can find a sanctuary like the National Library has been for me - a place that offers clarity, peace, and access to centuries of knowledge and history.