A draught of history

We think we know that Winston Churchill sent troops to Tonypandy, that Harold Macmillan assured us we never had it so good, and that Norman Tebbit told us to get on our bikes. But how do we know what we think we know?

This is just one of the intriguing questions tackled by Patrick Hannan in delivering the sixth Annual Lecture of the WPA at Aberystwyth on 6 November 1992.

Mr Hannan, a native of Aberystad, who studied history at Aberystwyth under David Williams before embarking on a distinguished career in journalism, has viewed the Welsh political scene over the last thirty years from a variety of vantage points: as an associate editor of the Western Mail; as the BBC's Welsh political correspondent; as a regular contributor to and presenter of radio programmes; as the producer of television features and documentaries including two films in the series Wales! Wales! written by historian, David Smith; as the editor of two notable anthologies, Wales on the wireless (1988) and Wales in vision (1990); and, most recently, as a columnist for Wales on Sunday and the Western Mail.

In his lecture Mr Hannan was keen to examine the close relationship he sees between history and journalism, and to show how the historian and the journalist share the same motivation, the pursuit of that elusive quarry, the truth.

Mr Hannan fashioned the title of his lecture from a phrase which is used by the American journalist, Benjamin C Bradlee, in the introduction to his Conversations with Kennedy (London: Quartet Books, 1976):

'Journalism is just the first rough draft of history, the late Philip Graham (1915-1963), publisher of the Washington Post once said to emphasise the reality that journalists never could know the whole truth right away.'

Historians would endorse that view. As Dr Aled Gruffydd Jones puts it in the preface to his new book, Press, Politics and Society: a history of journalism in Wales (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1993), 'Journalists in the past [...] wrote for the moment, with little time for reflection or revision, yet [...] old newspapers are [...] constantly being referred to by historians and other scholars who are drawn to their pages by the breadth and comprehensiveness of the primary evidence that they provide.'

The text of the lecture, The First Rough Draft: History and Journalism, by Patrick Hannan is now in print and may be obtained directly from the National Library of Wales for £2.25 (£2.75 by post).

Political archives in Gwynedd

The Newsletter is pleased to publish short notes on the political holdings of other repositories. In this number we feature the holdings of the Gwynedd Archives Service. The Caernarfon Record Office holds material relating to David Lloyd George, 1907-47, including some of his speech notes and a small group of letters, 1912-16; a minute book of the Liberal members of Caernarvonshire County Council, 1932-52; records of the North Wales Liberal Federation; miscellaneous material relating to the history of the Labour Party and Plaid Cymru in the area; and sound recordings, which include Lloyd George's speeches, and interviews with Lady Olwen Carey-Evans and Lord Cledwyn.

The Dolgellau Record Office has among its political holdings the minute books of Merioneth Nant Conwy Conservative Association, and a small group of papers of Lord Ellis-Thomas, 1974-92, which complements the large archive recently deposited at the WPA.

Huw T's century

To mark the centenary of Huw T Edwards's birth, a small exhibition of memorabilia was arranged in NLW's main hall last November.

Huw Thomas Edwards (1892-1970) dedicated his long career as union leader, politician, and administrator to improving the lot of the worker and promoting Welsh life and culture. Amongst the items he held was the first chairmanship of the Council for Wales & Monmouthshire, 1949-57.

A large collection of Huw T's papers was deposited at NLW in 1974. Permission is required to see the correspondence.

Anserin Bevan receiving a gift from Huw T. Edwards at Conwy, March 1951.

North Wales Conservatives

Further papers relating to the Conservative Party in north Wales, particularly the Conwy Constituency Conservative and Unionist Association, 1966-80, have been donated by Mr Elwyn Jones. They also include papers of the National Society of Conservative and Unionist Agents.
A real handful of vintage Peate

The Graham F Thomas Papers (see Newsletter 14) include nearly thirty letters addressed to Mr Thomas by Iorwerth Peate. The letters date mainly from the period 1942-53 and deal for the most part with Peate's efforts to free the Welsh Folk Museum from the inhibitory control of the National Museum. To achieve that goal, he needed the approval of the NMW's governing body. Welsh MPs were members of the Court of Governors, and Peate placed his hopes on their support. Mindful, no doubt, of one MP's backing in an earlier dispute with Museum authorities, he wrote on 12 August 1948:

"If only Jim Griffiths & Co. took the initiative in these matters! As things are everyone is apathetic."

The following 5 November, he asked:

'Did you hear of the fiasco at the Museum Court? Coronwy Roberts's bid for our independence was defeated by 49 to 4! It was a sad spectacle [...] Not a single MP turned up to support GOR'.

By 19 March 1950, Peate's frustration was really showing:

"If they wished, the Welsh Labour MPs, or indeed the Welsh Cabinet Ministers, could set the Folk Museum on its feet tomorrow. Surely they do not have to acquiesce to the policy of the reactionaries who haven't the vision of the great possibilities here?"

Peate battled on and his final letter on the subject, dated 28 December 1952, strikes a more optimistic note:

'The Court of Governors, through H T Edwards, Coronwy Roberts, George Thomas and Tudor Watkins plus Cliff Prothero, gave a real impetus to the movement to secure administrative independence for the Folk Museum. Prothero, I am told, made the best speech of the lot. If only eight or nine other MPs had turned up they would have settled the matter.'

RECENT ACQUISITIONS

Lord Cledwyn Papers
A further group of the papers of Lord Cledwyn has come to hand (see Newsletter 10 & 12), comprising material which accumulated in his office as Leader of the Opposition in the House of Lords.

This group consists of files of correspondence and papers, 1938-92, many of them discussing Welsh affairs, including the Working Party on the Welsh Language and the administration of the University of Wales, and topics of Anglesey interest.

Lord Cledwyn's permission is required to see the papers.

D Caradog Jones Papers
The small archive of D Caradog Jones (1910-79), parliamentary candidate for Montgomeryshire from 1951 to 1959, provides an interesting portrayal of the work of a Labour activist in rural Wales.

Thomas Jones
Lady White has generously donated to the Archive four bound addresses which once belonged to her father, Dr Thomas Jones, CH (1870-1955). One of them, inscribed 'To Tom Jones with all good wishes' is an untitled address given by Andrew Bonar Law at Glasgow University in 1921. There are two addresses by Stanley Baldwin: 'The Classics and the Plain Man' (1926) and 'The New World' [inscribed T.J. from S.B.1] (1930); and the remaining one, entitled 'Of Prime Ministers and Cabinets' (1938), is by Thomas Jones himself.

Women at war 1939-45
Accounts of wartime experiences written by women in response to an appeal by the publishing company, Hono, have been donated to WPA per Prof. Deirdre Beddoe, who, with Leigh Verrill-Rhys, recently edited a selection of them for publication under the title Parachutes and Petticoats. Welsh Women Writing on the Second World War (Dinas Powys: Hono, 1992).

Liberals and Liberal Democrats in Wales
A group of papers relating to the Welsh Liberal Democrats, and additions to both the Welsh Liberal Party Archive and to his own personal collection of political papers have been received from Mr Gwyn Griffiths. They range in date from the early 1970s to the early 1990s.

Plaid Cymru Papers
Further papers concerning Plaid Cymru in Ceredigion have been received. They include correspondence and papers of the Rhanbarth Committee, 1974-84, as well as material relating to the Aberystwyth branch and Ceredigion Women's Section.

Printed at the National Library of Wales