Westminster Revisited

Ten years on from its first visit to Westminster, the Welsh Political Archive is getting ready for another.

On 18 May 1994 the WPA is arranging a reception for Welsh Parliamentarians at the House of Commons. The purpose of the exercise is twofold: to acknowledge with gratitude the immense contribution which has been made by members of both Houses to the growth and development of the Archive over the last ten years; and to prepare the ground for further advances during the next ten.

The Welsh Political Archive was set up by the National Library of Wales in 1983 in response to the realisation that many records and papers important to the political history of Wales had been lost forever; and its main aim is simply stated: to co-ordinate the collection of all materials, manuscript, printed, and audio-visual, concerning politics in Wales.

The previous visit to the Houses of Parliament occurred on 23 May 1984 as part of the WPA’s first year of operation. It proved to be a very successful event, setting off a steady flow of papers to the Archive.

As a result, the Welsh Political Archive now includes the papers of many contemporary public figures; records pertaining to all the major political parties active in Wales; records of quasi-political organisations and records and papers of campaigns and pressure groups; complete sets of ephemeral literature produced during general election campaigns since 1983 and other printed matter including books, newspapers, periodicals, pamphlets, leaflets, posters, and photographs; and video and audio tapes of news and current affairs programmes.

Wales and Europe since 1848

This year’s Welsh Political Archive Lecture is to be given by Christopher Harvie, Professor of British Studies at the University of Tübingen in Baden-Württemberg, Germany.


The theme Professor Harvie has chosen to explore in November’s WPA Lecture is ‘Europe and the Welsh Nation 1848-1994’.

Emlyn Hooson on Liberalism

Emlyn Hooson QC (Lord Hooson), who was MP for Montgomeryshire 1962-79, gave the Political Archive’s Lecture for 1993. At the Old College on 5 November he chose to discuss the fortunes of the Liberal Party in Wales since the Second World War under the provocative title, ‘Rebirth or Death?’

Having begun his political career by campaigning on behalf of Garmon Evans in the West Denbighshire constituency at the 1945 general election, Mr Hooson became very prominent in the efforts to reorganise the Liberal Party in Wales and to give it some leadership.

He considers that the period 1945-61 saw the laying of new foundations: changing the party’s organisation; launching a series of weekend schools; making a key contribution to the development of political ideas and policies.

The text of Lord Hooson’s lecture has been published and may be obtained from the National Library of Wales.
The Welsh Political Archive, National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth, Dyfed, Wales SY23 3BU. Tel: 0970 623816 Fax: 0970 612590. Please ask for John Watts-Williams or Lowri Jones

Publications
WPA Annual Lectures
1987 John Grigg on Lloyd George
1988 K O Morgan on Jim Griffiths & Nye Bevan
1989 David Marquand on the 1979 Referendum
1990 Lord Cledwyn on Wales in Both Houses
1991 Lord Blake on Lloyd George & Bonar Law
1992 Patrick Hannan on Journalism and History
1993 Lord Hooe on Welsh Liberalism

Sir Zachry Briedley
Among the latest group of North Wales Conservatives’ papers to be transferred to the WPA by Mr Elwyn Jones is an autobiography of Sir Zachry Briedley and some press cuttings connected with him. Sir Zachry (1920-59), a successful Llandudno businessman, was a leading Conservative in the Conway constituency and beyond; he was Wales Area Conservative Council chairman 1982-6. He made a great contribution to the growth of industry in Wales and served on both the Welsh Industrial Development Board and the WDA.

Another Crawshay
William Crawshay, the great ironmaster of Merthyr Tydfil, had a younger brother, George, who, after an uncomfortable period of trying to collaborate with William, eventually migrated from south Wales to be an ironmaster on Tyneside.

George married a French girl and their eldest son, George Crawshay Jr (1821-96) of Haughton Castle, Northumberland, took an active interest in politics, especially foreign affairs. Although he never stood for Parliament, George Jr was in touch with some leading political figures of the day and was a friend and follower of David Urquhart MP, the diplomatist.

A small group of George Crawshay Jr’s papers were recently acquired by the Library. Among them are over thirty letters from notable Victorians from Britain and abroad including Cobden, Emerson, Carlyle, Gladstone, Kossuth, JS Mill, and Peel.

They make an interesting addition to the Library’s main Crawshay archive, the Cyfarthfa Papers.

Clement in Africa
Mr Stanley Clement-Davies, London, has kindly added to the substantial archive of the papers of his father, Rt Hon E Clement Davies, MP for Montgomeryshire 1929-62, and leader of the Liberal Party 1945-55, during 1988-9 Clement Davies spent four months in West Africa conducting, on behalf of the Leverhulme Trust, a survey into racial and industrial problems. The most recent deposit comprises typescript copies of a large group of detailed letters penned by Davies to his wife and family during this period giving a most vivid account of his travels and experiences and of conditions in colonial West Africa.

The permission of the depositor is required to consult the Clement Davies Papers.

James the News
On the eve of the War he migrated to London, spending the remainder of his career at the hub of political life and becoming the first Welsh speaker to serve as chairman of the Commons Press Gallery and the second to be chosen Lobby chairman. News scoops, it was said, fell like manna on to his desk in Fleet Street, while his ‘London letter’ in the Western Mail was consistently widely read and hard-hitting in its impact.

David Lloyd George and the Prince of Wales in 1911
Having qualified as a barrister in 1922, he subsequently served as a magistrate and an active Tory member of the Holborn Borough Council, 1934-59, rising to be an alderman. Yet he remained, as Lloyd George put it in 1944, ‘truly a worthy son of Wales’, retaining his Porthcawl home, and taking an absorbing interest in local politics, esisted fold reform and the activities of the Honourable Society of Cymruadorion.

Recently, through the good offices of Mr John Coslett, currently Executive Editor of the Western Mail, the Library was fortunate to receive three substantial scrapbooks of press cuttings and papers reflecting Edward James’s career and influence. Now designated NLW ex 1543-9, they are an enduring tribute to the career of a master journalist and patriotic Welshman.
Non-violence and the Welsh Language Society

A new, more militant kind of nationalism exploded onto the political scene in Wales in the 1960s. The formation of Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gynraeg, the Welsh Language Society, heralded the use for the first time of such tactics as mass demonstrations and sit-ins in the battle to save the language from imminent extinction.

The WPA has been fortunate to acquire on deposit recently a small group of papers belonging to Geraint Jones, one of the Society’s founder members. The papers relate mainly to the years 1965–6 when Geraint Jones was the Society’s secretary.

Scrapbooks

They include two scrapbooks of press cuttings concerning the campaign against the Post Office for refusing to allow Welsh signs and forms to be used; and correspondence with the Magistrates Court in Swansea.

There is also evidence of internal rifts between the Society’s moderate wing and its more radical elements over several issues including the use of non-violent force.

Geraint Jones, in 1966, was one of the first to be imprisoned in the campaign for Welsh car tax and driving licence forms. On 8 October of that year the Society organised a march through the streets of Cardiff in support of another member who went to jail during that campaign, Neil Jenkins.

Past the prison

The crowd marched past the prison and convened outside the Welsh Office where three of the Society’s members were arrested for fighting with the police.

When the Society’s executive committee refused the three members’ application for aid, the dissension over the use of non-violent force finally came to the surface. An emergency meeting of the Society was held at the Belle Vue Hotel, Aberystwyth, on 22 October 1956, at which a policy of non-violent force, à la Martin Luther King, was officially adopted.

Plaid Cymru

Birmingham

Among an interesting miscellany of material donated to the Library by Mr Delwyn Phillips of Aberystwyth are a few items deriving from the activities of the enterprising Birmingham branch of Plaid Cymru, namely a minute book 1931-68, and correspondence and papers 1948-76. Also in the collection are papers relating to Undeb y Brythoniaid 1931-74, and the meetings of the Celtic Congress 1956-93.

More CND

After the report in the last Newsletter about the archives of CND Cymru, the WPA has been fortunate to receive a recent addition to them. The small collection of papers donated by Fiona Hayes relate mainly to the campaign led by the Swansea CND and CND Cymru, 1985-90, to resist the establishment of a nuclear submarine base in Swansea.

The Liberal Democrats

A further group of papers relating to the Liberal Party and the Social and Liberal Democratic Party accumulated by Gwyn Griffiths has been donated to the WPA. It includes papers concerning the merger between the Liberals and the Social Democratic Party and the launch of the Liberal Democrats.
Ivon the Estimable

This April sees the first free elections held in South Africa after a long and bitter struggle to secure democratic rights for all South Africans. Over eighty years ago a remarkable man from Aberystwyth, David Ivon Jones, was one of the first white men to champion the rights of black people in South Africa and the WPA is pleased to be involved in the arrangements to put up a plaque in his home town in commemoration of his brief but extraordinary life.

David Ivon Jones was born at Waungrug farm near Aberystwyth on 18 October 1883. Orphaned at an early age, he was brought up by his grandfather John Jones (Ivon's) shopkeeper, poet, temperance campaigner and raconteur. Educated at the local Board School, he went at the age of 14 to work as a delivery boy for M H Davies the ironmongers in Great Darkgate Street. In 1901 he moved to Lampeter where he was employed at the emporium.

In 1902 David Ivon contracted tuberculosis and, in the hope of recovering his health, he emigrated to New Zealand. Three years later he joined other members of his family in South Africa and embarked upon a period of intense political activity in the Labour Movement in the Transvaal.

He studied accountancy and was employed by the Victoria Falls Power Company until he was sacked for becoming involved in a strike against the South African government's anti-Labour policies. His life thereafter was devoted to political activism.

He was taken on as an assistant to the general secretary of the Mine Workers' Association and in 1913 was elected secretary to the South African Labour Party.

With the advent of World War I, the Labour Party was split. David Ivon helped to form the War on War League whose propaganda was socialist and revolutionary in content. He left the Labour Party and in September 1913 helped to set up the International Socialist League of South Africa, becoming its secretary and editor of its newspaper, The International. The International Socialist League founded the Industrial Workers of Africa which was supported by the African National Congress.

David Ivon campaigned for the rights of black people, proclaiming that 'while the black worker cannot be free'.

In 1919 illness forced him to return to Europe to recuperate. He visited his home town but stayed for one night only before travelling on via Norway to Moscow. Here, in the dramatic period following the Russian Revolution, he attended the Third Congress of the Communist International as 'the Delegate from Africa'. He came to know many of the Bolshevik leaders, including Lenin, and he was the first to translate Lenin's writings into English.

David Ivon Jones died in a Yalta sanatorium on 31 May 1924 at the age of forty and was buried at the Novodevichye Cemetery, Moscow, alongside other prominent Communists.

Through Lenin's Lens

Thanks to the generosity of Professor John Williams the Library has received a collection of Soviet photographs of the early 1960s distributed by the Ukrainian Society of Friendship and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries.

The photographs depict many aspects of life in the Ukraine from fruitful harvest to industrial construction and political congress.

Following the 1917 revolution, many photographers fled Russia or abandoned their occupation. Lenin, wishing to reach a largely his revolutionary message, placed great emphasis on photography and within a few years around 100,000 worker and peasant photographers had been trained.

From this beginning emerged the tradition of Soviet documentary photography, with its ever optimistic interpretation of the achievements of the worker, the peasant and the State.

This collection fits neatly into this tradition with many images showing a direct line of stylistic descent from the photographs of Alexander Rodchenko, Georgy Petrusov and others.