SIR WYN’S FIFTEEN YEARS

This year saw the Annual Lecture of the Welsh Political Archive delivered for the first time by a serving member of the British Parliament.

Moreover, the lecturer, Sir Wyn Roberts PC, MP, possesses the unique distinction of having served in the same government department continuously for fifteen years.

Four Secretaries

At the Welsh Office, firstly as Under Secretary of State for Wales, 1979-87, and then as Minister of State for Wales, 1987-94, Sir Wyn rendered sterling service to four successive Secretaries of State for Wales.

A history graduate of Oxford University, Sir Wyn worked in journalism and the media prior to his election as MP for Conway in 1970 and acted as Opposition Spokesman on Welsh Affairs from 1974 to 1979. He is a prominent figure in Welsh cultural and national life.

Reflections

A large and expectant audience gathered at the Old College, Aberystwyth, on 3 November to hear Sir Wyn reflect on the increasingly influential role of the Welsh Office since 1979.

He paid much attention to the establishment of S4C, the changes in educational provision, the establishment of the Welsh Language Board, and the origins and passage of the Welsh Language Act of 1993.

Bilingual text

The text of Sir Wyn’s lecture has been published as a bilingual booklet, copies of which may be purchased from the National Library of Wales.

Putting the history of Wales in the Curriculum

Professor R R Davies, chairman of the influential National Curriculum History Committee for Wales, has given the Library a large group of the committee’s papers. It includes material relating to the National Curriculum History Working Group.

Deriving mainly from the years 1988-90, the papers comprise agenda and minutes of meetings, memos, reports and programmes of study.

96 and 97 Lecturers

Next year’s Annual Lecture of the Welsh Political Archive will be given by Dr John Davies, author of the highly acclaimed The History of Wales. Dr Davies will speak on the growth of the national movement since 1960. Professor Angela John of the University of Greenwich will lecture in 1997.
The Plaid Cymru Archives Project

The ambitious project to produce a definitive list of the extensive Plaid Cymru archives held at the Library, begun in the autumn of 1992, recently came to fruition.

The work, initiated by Dafydd Pritchard of Nant Peris, was completed by Nia Mai Williams of Llanddarog. Nia left the service of the Library in May of this year to take up a post as an archivist at the Bodleian Library, Oxford, where she is to catalogue the papers of Harold Macmillan.

Classification

During the course of the project the various deposits of papers have been completely re-organized and re-arranged and a new archival order created with eighteen classes of papers ranging from Class A (Executive Committee) to Class R (Circular letters). A typescript catalogue running to 461 pages (and including an index) is now available for consultation in the Department of Manuscripts and Records.

Plaid Cymru MPs

In addition to the extensive party archives, NLW is home to the papers of almost all the party’s parliamentary representatives. Large and important archives of the papers of Dr Gwynfor Evans, Lord Elis-Thomas, and Mr Dafydd Wigley have come to hand as well as a small preliminary group of the papers of Mr Gwynog Davies, MP for Ceredigion and Pembroke North, who is a member of the WPA’s Advisory Committee.

TED STONELAKE, SOCIALIST PIONEER

Edmund Stonelake (1873-1960) spent most of his long life in the heart of the south Wales coalfield in the culturally rich and politically vibrant industrial community of Aberdare.

Forging ahead

A working-class product of Pontypridd, he left school at the age of eleven, forging a birth certificate to begin working underground a year earlier than was legally allowed.

During his youth and early manhood, Edmund Stonelake involved himself in the embryonic Labour movement, local politics and trade unionism.

Keir Hardie

Having played his part in helping Keir Hardie to be returned to Parliament in 1900 as one of the MPs for Merthyr Boroughs, Stonelake became in 1904 one of the first Labour members of Aberdare Urban District Council.

After a brief period at Ruskin College, Oxford, he served as secretary firstly of the Aberdare TLC from 1902 to 1929, and then of the Constituency Labour Party until he retired in 1945 at the age of 72. He was also for 40 years a JP.

Councillor Edmund Stonelake as portrayed in a Local Election Bulletin, 1910

Memoirs

His fascinating memoirs were published by Mid Glamorgan County Council in 1981 as The Autobiography of Edmund Stonelake, edited and introduced by Anthony McKiernan.

Recently, through the kindness of his great-grandson, Mr Neil Stonelake, Mount Pleasant, Porth, the Archive has been privileged to receive the original manuscript of the memoirs which Edmund Stonelake wrote when in his seventies and completed in 1951. The manuscript is now NLWMS 23380D.

Member for Ynys Môn since 1987.

Some of the files relate specifically to the media, health and Gwynedd County Council.

Individualistic

Mr Jones’s papers complement other groups of papers held by WPA from this individualistic constituency which has been represented in turn by each of the political parties: Lady Megan Lloyd-George, Liberal (1929-51), Cledwyn Hughes, Labour (1951-79), Keith Best, Conservative (1979-87) and Ieuan Wyn Jones.

Mr Ieuan Wyn Jones MP

First instalment

In July 1995 the Archive received the first instalment of papers accumulated by Mr Ieuan Wyn Jones as Plaid Cymru
TREASON OF THE BLUE BOOKS AND VISIONS OF A NEW WALES

Robert Jones Derfel (1824-1905), travelling salesman and one-time lay preacher, was one of the leaders of the national movement in the 19th century.

He was a prolific poet and a fearless propagandist. It was his 8,000-line verse drama which satirised the notorious 1847 report on the state of education in Wales and branded it forever with the drama's title, 'The Treason of the Blue Books'.

His vision for the regeneration of the Welsh nation is set out in his Tracthegau ar Arefthiaw published in 1864. It is based firmly on reviving the people's self-esteem, and on establishing a thoroughly Welsh education system for all, together with institutions for the protection and promotion of the Welsh heritage.

In later life he became a disciple of Robert Owen, espousing socialism and rationalism. Between 1892 and 1903, he published a series of letters and articles on socialism in Y Cymro and Llais Llafur which were the first works on socialism to appear in Welsh. In them he made a determined effort to reconcile socialism with Christianity and nationalism.

Archival material on Derfel is relatively scarce. NLW was, therefore, especially pleased to receive recently a substantial group of his correspondence and papers (now NLW MSS 23440-62).

Among the 97 letters and cards, 1853-1905, are some from Isaac Foulkes, Daniel Owen, Joseph Parry, and John Thomas ('Eifionydd').

There are sermons, poetry, and scrapbooks of articles by and about Derfel accompanied by a catalogue of their contents.

There is also a large group of research notes and papers, 1942-55, of T J Roberts of Hampstead, assembled during many years' study of Derfel's life and work. These include letters from E R Pease, Dr R T Jenkins, and D Gwennailt Jones.

Numerous books and pamphlets belonging to this group are now in the Library's Department of Printed Books.

R J Derfel

SOME RECENT ACQUISITIONS

Additional papers of Mr Nicholas Bennett, former Welsh Office minister and Conservative MP for Pembroke, 1987-92, including constituency correspondence, parliamentary papers and a large group of presscuttings.

Further papers, 1987-95, of Mr Ron Davies MP, the Shadow Secretary of State for Wales, including files relating to a number of pressure groups and trade unions such as the Child Poverty Action Group, CND and NUPE.

Further papers, 1912-70, of the late Mr D T Guy, secretary of the WEA's South Wales District.

Further papers of Mr Ivan Monckton of Presteigne, connected with his work as a TGWU activist.

An additional group of papers of the Rt Hon John Morris, MP for Aberavon, who was the Secretary of State for Wales, 1974-79.

Rhondda Labour Party
The Rhondda valleys have long been considered bedrock Labour territory, the very heartland of British Socialism. It was, therefore, something of a surprise when the minute books, 1971-86, of the Rhondda Conservative and Unionist Association came to hand nine years ago (see Newsletter no. 3).

Now the balance has been redressed with the donation by Mr Ken Hopkins of Porth, Rhondda, of a large group of minute books of both the Rhondda East and Rhondda West Labour Parties, 1925-71, and of the Rhondda Labour Party, 1971-86.

A copy of Traethodau ac Arefthiaw inscribed 'David Aubrey Presented by the Author Aug 17 1864'
TWO LETTERS FROM MARGARET THATCHER

Miss Beata Brookes, Conservative MEP for the North Wales constituency, 1979-89, donated to the Library a substantial group of her political papers in 1989 (see Newsletter no. 8).

More recently Miss Brookes has added two letters written to her by Margaret Thatcher.

The first, dated 16 October 1984, was written in response to a message from Miss Brookes following the Brighton bomb outrage. The second, dated 21 January 1987, relates to the proposed acquisition of Pilkington by BTR.

Miss Brookes has also donated to the Archive a magnificent brooch made of Welsh gold presented to her as an MEP.

THE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE FOR CARDIFF CASE

Attention has focussed recently on the fortieth anniversary of Cardiff becoming the capital of Wales in 1955 when it defeated the vigorous claims of other towns such as Aberystwyth, Caernarfon and Machynlleth. More than seventy years earlier, following the recommendation of the famous Aberdare Report of 1881 that university colleges should be set up in north and south Wales, much rivalry ensued between Cardiff and Swansea (and to some extent Newport) as the potential venue of the south Wales college.

Recently the Library acquired a fascinating group of papers arguing the case for Cardiff. Now designated NLW MS 23432D, they comprise memorials, reports of deputations, many press cuttings and miscellaneous manuscript and printed items.

CRICCIETH CONSERVATIVES

The minute book, 1960-92, of the Criccieth and District Branch of the Caernarfon Division Conservative and Unionist Association, which has come to hand per Mr D. Elwyn Jones, is the latest addition to the extensive Conservative Party (North Wales) Papers.

NOLAN SUBMITS

The Library has received copies of the written submissions made to the Nolan Committee on Standards in Public Life. The first report of the Committee, which deals with Members of Parliament, Ministers and Civil Servants, and Quangos, was published in May 1995. The submissions, from both individuals and organizations, run to thirty-five volumes, while volume 1 includes an index to all those who contributed written evidence.

WARRING LETTERS

NLW has acquired a group of some sixty letters (NLW MS 23384D) from Lieutenant Thomas Lewis Frichard (1889-1914), Ist Battalion Royal Welsh Fusiliers, to his family at Llanbadrig, Caernarfon, Anglesey, 1901-2 and 1914. Most describe his experiences on active service during the Boer War and World War I.

NLW SET-UP

Over the years the National Library has built up a collection of surrogate copies of records of Welsh interest held at the Public Record Office. A recent accession is a photocopy of PRO ED39/974, being letters and memoranda, 1904-11, relating to the establishment of a National Library and National Museum in Wales (NLW F06 836).

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