The Welsh Political Archive was especially delighted to receive from Lady Marian Goronwy-Roberts during February 2003 a large group of the political and personal papers of her husband Goronwy O. Roberts, Lord Goronwy-Roberts (1913-81), Labour MP for Caernarfonshire from 1945 until 1974.

A native of Bethesda, Goronwy Roberts enjoyed a brilliant academic career at the University College of North Wales, Bangor, where he was one of the founder members of the patriotic Gwerin movement. Standing on a notably nationalistic platform, he captured Caernarfonshire in 1945, defeating long serving Liberal MP Major Goronwy Owen. A fervent patriotic Welshman throughout his life, he consistently advocated devolutionary solutions during the post-war Attlee administrations.

Goronwy Roberts was one of the most prominent leaders of the Parliament for Wales campaign of the early 1950s and was indeed personally responsible for presenting the petition to parliament in May 1956. When the embryonic Welsh Office was established in 1964, he was appointed one of the first ministers of state. Subsequently he also served at the Department of Education and Science, the Foreign and Colonial Office and the Board of Trade.

Following his defeat at Caernarfonshire in February 1974, Goronwy Roberts was immediately awarded a peerage and served with some distinction at the Foreign Office under George Brown during the Wilson and Callaghan governments. He was also Deputy Leader of the House of Lords from 1975 until 1979. He died prematurely aged 67 in July 1981.

The sorting and listing of the papers are nearing completion. They have been divided into four series whilst cataloguing: Class C (Correspondence), Class S (Subject files), Class P (Personalia) and Class Z (Printed and typescript material). They complement many other political archives held at the Library and will undoubtedly prove a quarry of enduring significance for political historians.
Welsh Political Archive

The Welsh Political Archive was set up in 1983 to co-ordinate the collection of documentary evidence of all kinds about politics in Wales. It collects the records and papers of political parties, politicians, quasi-political organisations, campaigns and pressure groups; leaflets, pamphlets, ephemera, posters, photographs, and tapes of radio and television programmes.

Advisory committee members:
Mr Andrew Green (Librarian),
Dr Denis Balsom, Mr Ian Barton,
Emeritus Professor Deirdre Beddoe,
Miss Beata Brookes, Mr Alun Burge,
Mr Cynog Dafis, Mr Darron Dupré,
Mr Aled Eirug, Mr Tom Ellis,
Mr Rhys Evans, Mr Gwyn Griffiths,
Mr Adam Higgitt, Professor Deian Hopkin,
Professor Aled G Jones,
Mr D Elwyn Jones, Mr D L Jones,
Dr Richard Wyn Jones, Mr David Melding AM, Lord Morgan of Aberdyfi, Mrs Julie Morgan MP,
Emeritus Professor D Hywel E Roberts, Professor Duncan Tanner,
Dr Guto Thomas and four members of the NLW staff.

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Mrs Beti Jones

October 2003 sees the retirement of one of the longest serving members of staff at the National Library, Mrs Beti Jones. A native of Brynaman, Beti joined the former Department of Printed Books back in 1963. She studied for her B. Lib. honours degree at the College of Librarianship Wales and the Politics Department of the University College of Wales between 1978 and 1981. She has lived at Bow Street for many years and has travelled widely abroad.


The idea that a Welsh Political Archive should be set up at the NLW was very much Beti’s brainchild back in the early 1980s. She has served as an active member of the WPA advisory committee since its foundation in 1985 and has always been ready to share her specialist knowledge with her colleagues responsible for the Archive. Her vision, commitment and enthusiasm have always underpinned the work of the Archive, and her presence will be much missed. All those associated with the WPA wish her a long, fruitful and happy retirement.

D. Elwyn Jones

The Welsh Political Archive was extremely sorry to hear the sad news of the sudden death this spring at his home in Deganwy of Mr D. Elwyn Jones aged only 57 years of age. For many years Mr Jones was the Conservative Party agent for North Wales and was also political agent to Sir Wyn Roberts. He had served as a member of the WPA advisory committee ever since its inception in the spring of 1985.

A native of Blaenau Ffestiniog who had become involved in local Conservative politics during his schooldays, Elwyn’s early ambitions to enter the nonconformist ministry were soon jettisoned in favour of a career in political life. Although he never yielded to repeated demands to stand for parliament, he was probably the most well-known face and voice of Conservatism in north Wales. His pungent volume of reminiscences Y Rebel Mwyaf, published in 1991, was very well received. In February of this year he joined the UK Independence Party.

Elwyn Jones was the only person to attend all 34 meetings to be held to date of the WPA advisory committee. He always arrived early and contributed richly to its proceedings, a ready source of advice and encouragement to the WPA staff. He also donated a steady stream of accessions; rarely did he come to the Library empty handed, and he approached many individuals on behalf of the Archive. His lively, genial presence will be much missed in future meetings. It is gratifying to note that Elwyn has bequeathed his political papers to the Library.
2003 Assembly Elections

Thanks to our network of contacts in all constituencies throughout Wales, we have accumulated a near complete set of the election addresses, leaflets, posters, flyers and stickers circulated by the political parties in Wales in connection with the second National Assembly elections held on 1 May 2003. A descriptive list of this material is in active preparation. Such material has come to hand from 37 of the Welsh constituencies. We would much welcome papers from the remaining three – Islwyn, Newport West and Swansea West – so that our holdings might be complete.

The Welsh headquarters of the political parties have also readily co-operated with us so that manifestos and national and regional addresses and circulars have also been received from that source. All this material makes fascinating reading and contrasts with the election literature acquired at the time of the 1999 National Assembly elections and that circulated in Wales during the general election campaigns.

Thanks to the efforts of the staff of the Systems Section, the party websites at the time of the 2003 Assembly election campaign have been archived. These too are freely available for consultation and include details of the party campaigns which would otherwise simply have vanished without trace. Relevant television and radio broadcasts and documentaries are of course available in the National Sound and Screen Archive.

A start has been made on compiling a composite list of election addresses and leaflets etc already held by the Library before the foundation of the WPA in the spring of 1983. We would always welcome donations of further pre-1983 election literature in order to fill the numerous gaps in our holdings.

Political Archives on Microform

Over the years the National Library has purchased a large number of published microforms of political and government archives held at other libraries and repositories. These include the Complete State Papers Domestic, 1509-1782, and the unpublished State Papers of the Civil War and Interregnum, 1641-60. We also have copies of Cabinet Papers for the periods 1880-1916 and 1945-1974.

Also among our holdings are microform copies of the central archives of the Labour Party, 1900-67, the Independent Labour Party, 1856-1975, the Conservative Party, 1868-1983, the Liberal Party, 1877-1963, and Plaid Cymru, 1926-90. We also have microfilm copies of the archives of the Trades Union Congress, 1888-1950. Microfilm copies have been acquired, too, of the extensive collection of parliamentary election addresses in the custody of the Special Collections Department at Bristol University Library (originally held at the National Liberal Club) for the years 1892 to 1931.

Copies have also been purchased of the records of the following local Labour Parties and trades councils: Wrexham, 1885-1952; Pontypridd, 1897-1951; Swansea, 1902-1984; and Newport, 1912-77. Available, too, are microfilms of the extensive papers of the Liberal Prime Minister William Ewart Gladstone (1809-98), the originals of which are held at the British Library and St Deiniol’s Library, Hawarden.

Other published microforms include those of Pamphlets relating to Scottish Nationalism, 1844-1973, the archives of the Fabian Society, 1884-1952, the records of the Trades Union Congress, 1887-1972, Women and the Labour Movement, 1906-77, Conflict and Consensus in British Industrial Relations, 1916-48, and a documentary record of the Mining Crisis and the General Strike, 1925-26.

We would be delighted to see increased use of these important resources by researchers and would happily tender advice on promising research topics.
Bert Pearce Papers
Amongst the most recent additions to the papers of the late Bert Pearce (Welsh Communist Party Records) which came to the Library in March 2003 were papers relating to three colourful individuals in the labour movement in Wales: Edgar Evans, Idris Cox and Dai Dan Evans.

Councillor Edgar Evans (1900-1993) or ‘Edgar the Ironmonger’ as he was known, served a prison sentence of nine months in 1936 for his part in the fight to establish a lodge of the South Wales Miners’ Federation at Taff Merthyr Colliery. The archive contains photographs of the demonstration from Bedlinog to Treharris against the harsh imprisonment of Evans and others, as well as a telegram from Harry Pollitt welcoming Evans home from prison.

The archive also contains two unpublished typescript autobiographies which recount the story of Communism in Wales from an unique angle. Idris Cox (1899-1989) is the author of ‘Story of a Welsh Rebel’ and Dai Dan Evans (1898-1974) is the author of ‘The University of Hard Knocks’.

The listing of the Bert Pearce Papers, which run to no fewer than 120 boxes, is now complete.

1859 Election
The WPA was delighted that the Library was able to purchase recently an election poster circulated in support of the candidature of David Williams, Castell Deudraeth, in the Merioneth constituency in the general election of 1859. Other papers relating to David Williams are already in the custody of the Library.

Gwynfor to Pennar
The latest addition to the extensive papers concerning Dr Gwynfor Evans (b. 1912) held by the NLW is a group of interesting letters addressed by him to the distinguished theologian Dr W. T. Pennar Davies (1911-96).

Welsh Committee against Racialism
The Library has received from Mr John Davies, Talsarnau, its secretary, the records, 1976-80, of the Welsh Committee against Racialism set up by the Wales TUC at Cardiff during July 1976. They include administrative papers, circulars, newsletters and leaflets, and a group of press cuttings.

Mudiad Cymod
Ms Nia Rhosier, Meifod, has kindly donated to the Library the extensive records, 1939-2001, of the influential Fellowship of Reconciliation (Cymdeithas y Cymod yng Nghymru) founded by George M. Ll. Davies and Revd Richard Roberts. They include correspondence, minutes of meetings, financial records, newsletters, periodicals and press cuttings.

Additions to Collections
During recent months additions have been received to the extensive papers of Mr Cynog Dafis, Mr Ron Davies and Mr Sain Ley Berry already in the custody of the WPA.

We advise readers to enquire about the conditions placed on the papers before visiting the Library. Many recent WPA acquisitions have restrictions on access or photocopying.