

The Story behind the Welsh Women's Peace Petition 1923 - 24

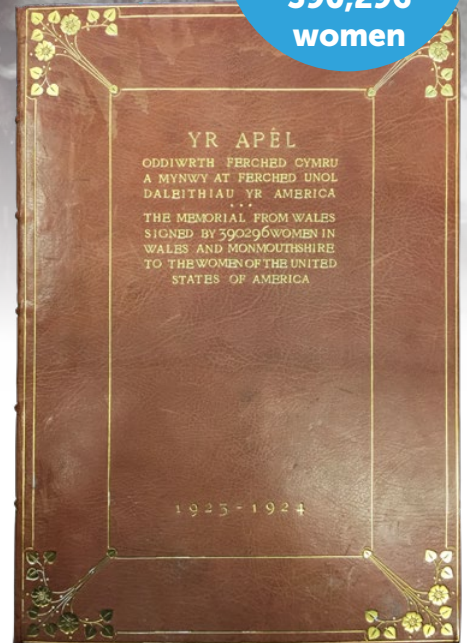
To read as part of an Assembly or when introducing the petition as part of a lesson





Welsh Women's Peace Petition (1923 - 4)

Imagine you are living in Wales in the 1920s. **40,000 men and women from Wales died during WWI**. Hardly a town or village across the country was without losses, and most people would have known someone – friend, relative, neighbour who had died. Imagine the effect this would have had on your family and community.



Because of these losses there was a determination, in the 1920s and 30s that war on such a scale shouldn't happen again. One organisation that campaigned for peace and international understanding was the Welsh League of Nations Union, and it had 1,014 community groups across Wales with 61,262 active members.

It was women who belonged to the Welsh League of Nations Union that organised a campaign to produce a petition from the women of Wales, asking the women of America to put pressure on their president for the USA to join the League of Nations. Why was this important? America's presence was felt to be important if this new international body were to be effective in its mission of establishing world peace. The petition must have caught people's imagination. It was launched at a national conference in Aberystwyth in May 1923, and between June and November of the same year 390,296 signatures were gathered by women knocking on doors and holding stalls at local and national events. **When it was complete, the petition was 7 miles long!**

This wasn't the end of the story, however. In January 1924 the petition was packed into a specially made oak chest and in February of the same year a women's delegation led by Annie Hughes Griffiths, Chair of the Welsh League of Nations Union, set off for America aboard the RMS Cedric and toured that vast country for 2 months, visiting women's groups, giving talks and meeting President Coolidge. [Annie kept a diary](#) during the trip, providing us with a fascinating insight into their experiences.

Although the petition didn't perhaps achieve its immediate aim (WWII broke out in 1939), it must have had a huge effect on thousands of women in Wales and America. As a response to the Welsh Women's visit, women in America came together to form the '**Conference on the Cause and Cure of War**'. The United Nations, created after WWII, built upon the vision of the League of Nations and lessons learnt from it. The women's petition inspires us still today.

What will you do to make your school, community, the world a more peaceful place?