

Peace of Writing:
Creative works inspired by
The Welsh women's peace petition 1923/24

Geiriau Heddwch:
Gwaith creadigol a ysbrydolwyd gan
ddeiseb heddwch merched Cymru 1923/24



Academi
Heddwch
Cymru



Cyflwyniad

Yn ystod 2023-24, fe wnaeth Canolfan Materion Rhyngwladol Cymru - Welsh Centre for International Affairs (wcia.org.uk), Academi Heddwch Cymru - Welsh Centre for International Affairs (wcia.org.uk)- ochr yn ochr ag Archif Menywod Cymru Hafan (womensarchivewales.org), Smithsonian Institution (si.edu), Heddwch Nain/Mamgu , Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru - The National Library of Wales, Hafan Amgueddfa Cymru Ar-lein, Senedd Cymru | Welsh Parliament a Hafan | LLYW.CYMRU, Prifysgolion a phartneriaid eraill - ymuno â 'grymoedd heddwch' ar gyfer prosiect i ddathlu canmlwyddiant Apêl Heddwch ryfeddol Menywod Cymru 1923-24, a drefnwyd trwy ragflaenydd Canolfan Materion Rhyngwladol Cymru; Undeb Cynghrai'r y Cenhedloedd Cymru (WLNU), 1918-1946 - Welsh Centre for International Affairs (wcia.org.uk).

Trwy gydol yr 1920au-30au, arweiniodd Pwyllgor Menywod yr WLNU ymgyrchoedd 'byd-eang ysbrydoledig' dros Heddwch. Yn wyneb erchyllterau'r Rhyfel Byd Cyntaf, ysgogwyd cenhedlaeth i sefyll yn erbyn gwrthdaro; yn 1923 trefnodd menywod Cymru apêl na welwyd ei thebyg o'r blaen. Arwyddodd 390,296 o ferched ddeiseb goffa, drwy'r WLNU, gan apelio ar fenywod America 'o gartref i gartref' ac 'aelwyd i aelwyd', i ymuno â nhw yn yr alwad 'CYFRAITH NID RHYFEL': i'r Unol Daleithiau ymuno ag ac arwain corff newydd Cynghrai'r y Cenhedloedd. Bu'r ymgyrch heddwch hon yn 1923 yn ymdrech wirioneddol ryfeddol ar draws Cymru gyfan a gyffyrddai pob aelwyd bron, gydag ymgyrchwyr heddwch yn mynd o ddrws i ddrws, a thrwy gefnogaeth trefnwyr sirol a chymunedol 'y Gynghrai'r'.

Ym mis Chwefror 1924, o dan arweiniad Cadeirydd yr WLNU, HUGHES GRIFFITHS, ANNIE JANE (1873 - 1942), ymgyrchwraig heddwch | Y Bywgraffiadur Cymreig, teithiodd ddirprwyaeth o Gymru ar gyfer 'Taith Heddwch' i'r Unol Daleithiau am ddau fis, gan adeiladu cefnogaeth trwy fudiadau menywod America a gynhwysai dros 60 miliwn o bobl.

Bu Annie, ynghyd â'i chyd-gynrychiolwyr, Mary Ellis, Elined Prys a Gladys Thomas, yn westeion mewn cinio mawr a drefnwyd gan y League of Women Voters ochr yn ochr â 9 mudiad (a gynrychiolai 15 miliwn o fenywod America). Yn ystod y digwyddiad hwn, cyflwynwyd i ferched America y gist dderw a gynhwysai 390,296 llofnod. Mae Datganiad y Ddeiseb Goffa yn cyfeirio at y cysylltiadau hanesyddol rhwng Cymru ac America - ac fe leisir apêl oddi wrth ferched un genedl falch i'r llall, i "drosglwyddo i'r oesau a ddêl fyd di-ryfel yn dreftadaeth dragywydd." Fe wnaeth y ddirprwyaeth hefyd gwrdd ag Arlywydd yr Unol Daleithiau, Calvin Coolidge, a anrhyddodd eu cais i'r ddeiseb gael ei gosod yn Sefydliad y Smithsonian am byth.

Ar hyn o bryd, mae gwirfoddolwyr yn trawsgrifio'r holl enwau a chyfeiriadau a geir ar y ddeiseb - a wnaeth eich perthynas ei llofnodi? Chwiliwch y gronfa ddata: Deiseb Heddwch Menywod Cymru - Adref (llyfrgell.cymru).

Hawlio Heddwch: Prosiect Deiseb Heddwch Merched Cymru
Siân Howys, Lowri Kirkham a Jennifer Evans
Swyddogion Allgymorth Cymunedol
Apêl Merched dros Heddwch, 1923-24 - Welsh Centre for International Affairs (wcia.org.uk).

Introduction

Over 2023-24, Welsh Centre for International Affairs [WCIA] and Academi Heddwch – alongside Women's Archive Wales, the Smithsonian Institute, Heddwch Nain/Mamgu (Our Grandmothers' Peace), Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru / National Library of Wales and Amgueddfa Cymru, the Senedd and Welsh Government, Universities and other partners – joined 'peace forces' for a project to mark the centenary of Wales' remarkable Women's Peace Appeal of 1923-24, organised through WCIA's predecessor the Welsh League of Nations Union (WLNU).

Throughout the 1920s-30s, the Women's Committee of the WLNU led 'world-inspiring' campaigns for Peace. The horrors of World War I galvanised a generation against conflict; in 1923, the women of Wales organised an unprecedented appeal. 390,296 women signed a Memorial petition, through the WLNU, appealing to the women of America 'from home to home' and 'hearth to hearth', to join them in a call for 'LAW NOT WAR': for the United States to join and lead the new League of Nations. This peace campaign of 1923 was a truly remarkable Wales-wide effort involving almost every household, through peace activists going door-to-door, supported through county and community organisers of 'the League'.

A delegation, led by WLNU Chair, Annie Hughes Griffiths , travelled from Wales to America in March 1924 for a 2 month 'Peace Tour' of the States, building support through American women's organisations involving over 60 million people.

Annie, along with her fellow delegates, Mary Ellis, Elined Prys and Gladys Thomas, were guests at a large luncheon organised by the League of Women Voters alongside 9 organisations (representing 5 million American women). During this event, the oak chest containing the 390,296 signatures, was presented to the women of America. The Declaration contained within the Memorial Petition, recounts the historic ties between Wales and America - and appeals from the women of one proud nation to another, to "hand down to the generations which come after us, the proud heritage of a warless world." They also met with the US President, Calvin Coolidge who honoured their request that the petition be placed in the Smithsonian Institute for all time.

Volunteers are currently transcribing every name and address on the petition - might your relative have signed? Search the database [here](#).

Hawlio Heddwch: Women's Peace Petition Project

Community Outreach Officers: Sian Howys, Lowri Kirkham & Jennifer Evans

1923-2023, 'Hawlio Heddwch': Welsh Women's Peace Appeal Centenary Campaign - Welsh Centre for International Affairs
(wcia.org.uk)

The Workshops

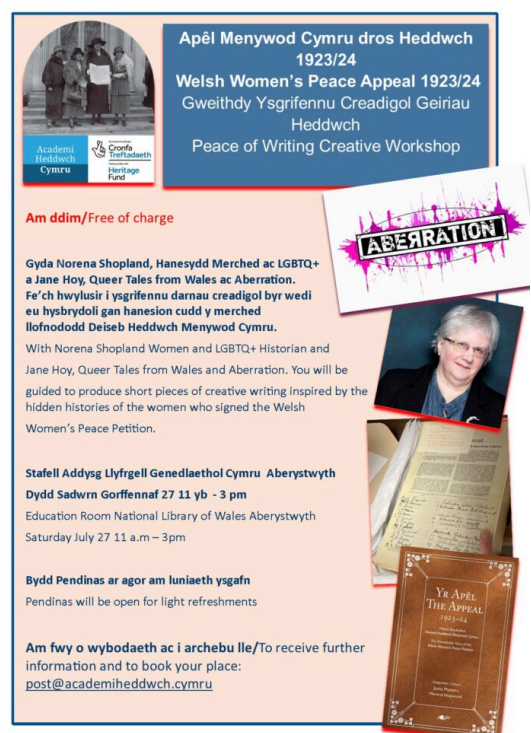
by Norena Shopland, Welsh author/historian

In 2023/2024, in association with Amgueddfa Cymru, I ran a series of writing workshops entitle *Proud Writing*, the aim being to creatively interpret stories from the past. The eBook can be found on LGBTQ Cymru, under the 'Book Club' tab.

In discussion with Jen Evens, it was decided to run a similar workshop, entitled *Peace of Writing* in order to bring alive some of the women who signed the Peace Petition.

Three workshops were held: Amgueddfa Cymru/St Fagans; Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru / National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth in association with Aberration; and online with participants joining us from Wales and America.

Our thanks to all those who came along, and those who didn't but also submitted works. We loved each and every one of your stories, poems and art.



Apêl Menywod Cymru dros Heddwch 1923/24
Welsh Women's Peace Appeal 1923/24
Gweithdy Ysgrifennu Creadigol Geiriau Heddwch
Peace of Writing Creative Workshop

Am ddim/Free of charge

Gyda Norena Shopland, Hanesydd Merched ac LGBTQ+ a Jane Hoy, Queer Tales from Wales ac Aberration. Fe'ch hwylusir i ysgrifennu darnau creadigol byr wedi eu hysbrydoli gan hanesion cudd y merched llofnododd Deiseb Heddwch Menywod Cymru.

With Norena Shopland Women and LGBTQ+ Historian and Jane Hoy, Queer Tales from Wales and Aberration. You will be guided to produce short pieces of creative writing inspired by the hidden histories of the women who signed the Welsh Women's Peace Petition.

Stafell Addysg Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru Aberystwyth
Dydd Sadwrn Gorffennaf 27 11 yb - 3 pm
Education Room National Library of Wales Aberystwyth
Saturday July 27 11 a.m - 3pm

Bydd Pendinas ar agor am luniaeth ysgafn
Pendinas will be open for light refreshments

Am fwy o wybodaeth ac i archebu lle/To receive further information and to book your place:
post@academiheddwch.cymru

Cydnabyddiaethau

Diolch yn fawr i'r rhai sydd wedi helpu i roi'r llyfr hwn at ei gilydd:
Amgueddfa Cymru/Sain Ffagan; Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru;
Aberration; Archifau Conwy; Amgueddfa Llangollen a Heather
Aspinwall; Ffion Fielding.

Mae'r hawlfraint yn perthyn i'r awduron/artistiaid unigol ac ni ddylid
ei ddefnyddio heb eu caniatâd.

Celf y clawr ©Jennifer Evans

Acknowledgements

Our grateful thanks to those who have helped put this book
together:

Amgueddfa Cymru/St Fagans; Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru /
National Library of Wales; Aberration; Conwy Archives; Llangollen
Museum and Heather Aspinwall; Ffion Fielding.

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Yr Apêl

Oddiwrth Ferched Cymru a Mynwyr at Ferched Unol Daleithiau'r America.

Hyfrydwch mawr i ni, Ferched Cymru, yw cofio i'r gorffennol weled ein Tywysogaeth fechan ni yn cerdded fraich ym mraich â gwlad fawr Unol Daleithiau'r America mewn ymchwil daer am Heddwch i Fyd Cyfan.

Elihu Burritt, dinesydd Americanaidd, a roddes ysbrydiaeth i'n cydwladwr, Henry Richard, i drefnu cyfres o Gynadleddau Heddwch rhwng gwlad a gwlad, ym mlynnyddoedd canol y bedwaredd ganrif ar bymtheg.

Bwriad Elihu Burritt oedd cynnal y Gynhadledd Heddwch gyntaf ym Mharis yn ystod haf 1848, a chymaint oedd ei bryder am yr achos da fel yr aeth i Baris wrtho'i hunan i baratoi'r maes. Wedi methu ohono ym Mharis, aeth Henry Richard ac yntau i Frussels, lle y cynhaliwyd Cynhadledd gofiadwy Medi, 1848, ag ynddi ddau gant o gynrychiolwyr o'r America ac o Brydain Fawr. Felly y cychwynwyd y gwaith o adeiladu Theml Heddwch drwy gyd-ymdrech yr Americanwr o Connecticut a'r Cymro o Dregaron.

Yn 1914, chwe blynedd a thriugain yn ddiweddarach, a Theml Heddwch yn crynnu i'w seiliau, edrychem yn ddibaid i gyfeiriad America, a phan benderfynodd hithau uno yn y frwydr fawr a chydaberthu â ninnau, nid gormod dweyd i'n calonnau ddychlumu gan lawenydd. Atgof o'r cydymchwil rhwng dinesydd Americanaidd a gŵr o Gymro, ynghyd â'r cyd-ddioddef ya ingoedd cād sydd yn ein cymell i osod yr apêl yma ger eich bron.

Nid amcasion gwleidyddol sydd wrth wraidd ein hymdrech. Siarad yr ydym fel Merched Cymru—plant i genedl na fydd gadw dig tuagat na gwlad na phobl, eithr sydd â'i dyhead am ddyfod dydd cydweithrediad ac ewyllys da. Hiraethwn am y bore pan na throir at y cleddyf am ddedfryd yn helyntion y cenhedloedd; a theimlwn y prysurir gwawr yr Heddwch a bery pe bai'n bosibl i'r America gymeryd ei lle yng Nghyngor Cynghrair y Cenhedloedd.

Ni wyddom pa fodd i sicrhau hyn, ond gwyddom mai'r ddwy genedl a wnaeth gymaint i ennill y Rhyfel a all hefyd ennill yr Heddwch parhaol hwnnw a fedr yn unig gadw popeth sydd yn annwyl i ni rhag mynd i ddiifancoll. Ymhyfrydwn yn y mesur o gydweithio a fu eisoes rhwng Prydain a'r America gyda cenhedloedd eraill yng Nghynhadledd Washington er cyfyngu môr-arfau, yn y trefniadau dyngarol yn Geneva i roi terfyn ar warth y marchnata mewn menywod a phlant, ac yn yr ymdrech i ymladd y fasnach mewn opium a chyffyrâu peryglus eraill. A llonder i'n hysbryd yw'r cyffro sydd yn y gwersyll i fynnu i'r America, a'i thraddodiadau ardderchog, lais pendant yng ngweithrediadau Llys Cyfiawnder Cydwladol.

Mae'r dyfodol yn llawn gobaith os y gwnawn ni, ferched y genhedlaeth hon, ein rhan. I ni y rhoddwyd cyfle ac y mae y cyfle yn gyfrifoldeb. Apeliwn, felly atoch chi, Ferched Unol Daleithiau'r America, "heb falais at ungwr, gan garu pawb, yn gadarn yn y gwirionedd, fel y rhoddo Duw i ni weld y gwirionedd," i gynorthwyo yn yr ymdrech i dros-glywddo i'r oesau a ddél fyd di-ryfel yn dreftadaeth dragywydd.

ENW.

CYFEIRIAD.

Louisa Mitchell
Nancy Hopley
Ethel Hopley
E. Hopley
M. a James
B. Mainwaring
Margaret Davies
M. B. Smith
L. Thomas

E. Llwyelyn X C.D.

No 3 Incline Terrace
2 Incline Terrace
"
"
"
Llwyn yr Eo. Vicarage Road
"
"
Penbryn Vicarage Road
Penbryn Vicarage Rd.
The Vicarage -
Maesyrhaf Vicarage Rd

Annie

Catrin Mari

No more, never again,
She brandished her pen: the opposite of a weapon:
a tool ploughing wet soil for peace.

Inkblot stains salt names with tears
or sweat,
or rain: seven miles an inch
compared to the cobbled lanes and roads and fields and
scribbled hills that they trod: their arms full to bursting
gathering up hay bale bouquets of proud Welsh women's
wishes

Then, sunny cool
blooms held baby
breath, snug in a ship's bobbing container. Excitement
welling waves.

A strong-willed stance gracing
the international stage. Suitcases bursting with
promise...

Never again.
Never again.

Underneath, they don't see her
Fragile like paper
leadgrey
grief carved
deep:

a love heart slicing ribbons into tree bark.
Annie, He calls out to her.

And she still wishes for a warless world.

Annie's Menu

Catrin Mari

(Biltmore Luncheon, February 20th 1924)

Entrée

Steaming morning-sharp
coffee brought by Mr. Fairman.
Quiet clouds of splashed
Milk.

Wide
whistling acres of barren
flat, detached
houses. Two rivers.

To start

The curious stares of
One hundred
as-yet-unmet
guests

Clubhouse boiling with excitement, despite outside snow.

Main

Maybe fish,
Boxed memorial
given by Mrs. Morgan, preserved
like sliced lemons

For all time.

Dessert

Tall Baltimore
marble
buildings, stately and grand and
fancy as cakes. Finally-

Drinks

A cordial, pleasant
presidential

Welcome.



O'r chwith I'r dde: M.G. (Gladys) Thom; Mary Elizabeth Ellis; Annie Jane Hughes Griffiths; Eluned Prys. Y merched aeth â'r ddeiseb i America.

From left to right: M.G. (Gladys) Thomas; Mary Elizabeth Ellis; Annie Jane Hughes Griffiths; Eluned Prys. The women who took the petition to America.

Deutschland 1923

Rita Singer

Harvest was over. Three months Johanne had lived with her eye trained towards the horizon in fearful anticipation of rain that might spell the difference between a fat or a meagre winter. She had helped bring in the corn. Walking the rows with the women, young and old. Raking, bending, gathering. Following the men swinging their scythes in unity like a row of tired, sunburnt, dusty soldiers. When it wasn't the corn, the hay demanded attention. Walking the rows with the women. Raking, bending, gathering. Pflanzen hat seine Zeit, ausreißen, was gepflanzt ist, hat seine Zeit. No matter how much her back ached to stoop, she forced it back straight.

When Johanne wasn't out in the field, the farmyard held her captive with its ceaseless tasks. The pig had to be killed in anticipation of the winter months. Feeding the family. Generating an additional, if meagre income from trading the skin, the bones, anything else that could not be processed right then and there. This was not the only pig for slaughter in the village. Skins were cheap. The men fulfilled their part in this event. The women theirs, catching the blood in a bucket, grinding, salting and spicing the meat, washing intestines, boiling trotters and ears. This pig would become sustenance. Töten hat seine Zeit. She hated every filthy moment of it.

Harvest was a time for gossip. Anticipation of news arriving in the village. No matter the long hours in the fields or the yard or the disapproving looks des Bauern und seiner Frau, the young people would migrate like swallows to the Schenke at the end of each week. Congregating, chattering, making a show each according to their natural temperament. Someone might strike up a song of the vaning summer or de Haamit on a badly tuned guitar. Sometimes Johanne might fall in, but only quietly in the full knowledge that she could not carry a tune. Then Paul with the crooked ear would smile into his weekly small glass of beer. Lachen hat seine Zeit. As the summer and harvest wore on, new songs birthed an uneasy mood. They used big, bold words that sounded outlandish, shrill and fearsome, looking for blame where there was none, but finding open ears no matter.

It had not been the first summer in Johanne's young life that she had spent harvesting with the relations. It was expected from the moment children were old enough to glean potatoes and stones from the Acker or hold a rake. But it was the first summer where she was not actively encouraged to return home. After the death of the Tante earlier this year, Paul had claimed his right as the future Bauer and moved into her now vacant rooms. He'd had plans. They included a wife. Herzen hat seine Zeit. But like most everyone Johanne knew, there was nothing left to live on except for what the family grew and harvested. Money had become so cheap, it was used to light the fire in the stove. Bundles of worthless paper to build toy houses instead of feeding a family.

Late summer, news had dashed through the village like a rabid dog. The government had called an end to the general strike. Eventually, they reached the distant corner of the field she was working in. Sweat gathered into an occasional, thin stream between her shoulder blades. Man mühe sich ab, wie man will. Johanne was too busy loading the Garben onto the cart to feel ambivalent towards a national struggle against foreign occupation half a world away.



('An Herrn Paul S.' My great grandmother who inspired this story)

Four-hundred kilometres to the west. And yet. Wasn't it demonic how a vengeful man's decision in another country strangled her and her family's future happiness? Hassen hat seine Zeit; Streit hat seine Zeit. Four years ago, the seeds of discontent had blown across the country upon the signing of a humiliating peace treaty. They had found fertile ground and sprouted like an abundance of Ackerwinden. Soon the only thing that would contain their suffocating choke hold would be a combined effort of cutting down and torching.

Harvest was over. Johanne gathered her few clothes she had brought along for the summer into her brother's old and battered suitcase. It would be a short, purposeful return to the parental flat. The future life of Bäuerin on a leasehold would consist of gruelling hours of work, of hardship and few resources beyond the ones she grew. At least, she would share it with the soft, quiet man who smiled into his weekly glass of beer. The time had come to close the door on her youth and enter this next part of her life.

Llofnod

Shelagh Fishlock

Sawl Mrs. Jones sydd ar y stryd hon?

Yn y dre?

Yn y wlad i gyd?

Wn i ddim.

Dim ond un o filoedd ydw i –

Menyw ddi-nod, ddibwys,

Mewn dre ddi-nod y Cymoedd.

Pa ots fydd stori fi

I foneddigesau America?

Ond y fi oedd y wraig wrth gefn ei gwr

Pan oedd y pyllau dan glo.

Y fi yw'r fam a fagodd bump o blant-

Dau fachgen mawr a thair merch fach.

Anfonais y cyntaf i'r fyddin –

Ac wedyn yr ail.

Daeth llythyr pan laddwyd y cyntaf –

A hefyd yr ail.

Dim ond dau o filoedd o Joneses,

Bechgyn di-nod, dibwys,

O dre ddi-nod y Cymoedd –

Eneidiau i'w taflu ar y domen.

Dim ond Mrs. Jones ydw i,

Ond mae fy enw yna,

Ar waelod tudalen llawn enwau.

Fydd unrhyw un yn sylwi arno, tybed?

Just one name

Shelagh Fishlock

So many Mrs Jones on our street.

In our town,

Across our nation –

Too many to count.

I'm just one of thousands,

An ordinary woman

In a dismal Valleys town.

To those smart American ladies

My story means nothing.

But I was the wife and the mainstay
When the gates of the pit were locked down.

The mother who raised a whole family–

Two fine sons and then three little girls.

I sent the first lad to the army.

The second one too.

When the first died they sent me a letter.

The second one too.

Just two of the thousands of Joneses,

Two ordinary lads

From a dismal Valleys town.

Worthless souls to be tossed on the scrapheap.

I'm only Mrs Jones.

But I've added my name

Below a whole page full of names.

One name amongst so many, but it's mine.

Looking for a Bit of Peace

Nina

She had just taken off her hat when she heard the knock.

There were two of them on her doorstep; young women in their young fashion. She had seen them in the streets and wondered if they felt no shame, with their tights waists, and the looks of men.

One was talking, her excited voice telling of a peace petition and wanting her to sign.

She had heard of it; in the grocer, the women of the chapel holding forth. She didn't go now; and they looked down on her godlessness - but where was god when her only boy was killed? Her husband left good for nothing? All left to her now, and she so tired and worn out.

They stood looking at her, those young things with bright faces, looking to her.

'I'm too tired,' she ached to say, to make them go away but the young thing's smile slipped and the outstretched pen dipped. Then, there were no words, nothing said, and all that was left was a thin pencil line that looked like her name.

Love, not War

By David Dobson

Bethan, returning home from Cathays Library, was surprised to see two fashionably dressed ladies holding ornate umbrellas at her front door on Llantrisant Street. Since one of them carried a white cane, she assumed they were fundraising for the Cardiff Institute for the Blind. She had visited their premises off Newport Road and painted some of the blind men weaving baskets for coal ships. She smiled warmly at the pair. "It's not a very nice day. Would you like to come in? I can make tea." "That would be lovely," said the blind one.

Leaving their umbrellas in the hall stand, the three ladies stood in the front parlour and shook hands. "I'm Dorothea, from Poland," said the blind woman. "But please call me Dottie. My companion is Rosa, from Italy. She cannot hear or speak, but she knows English and if you face her, she can read your lips. We have a little pamphlet for you to read, which explains that we're campaigning for the Welsh Women's Peace Appeal." "Oh dear," said Bethan. "Pamphlets are no use to me. I can't read or write. I was deemed mentally deficient in school, too stupid to learn anything." Rosa's expressive brown eyes widened, and she pointed at several paintings adorning the walls, then pointed directly at Bethan and traced a question mark with her forefinger. Bethan nodded. "Yes," she said. "I draw and paint every chance I can get. I volunteer at Gladstone Primary School and also at Cathays Library, where I try to help children understand the value of expressing themselves through art. Please make yourselves comfortable while I put the kettle on."

Rosa and Dottie sat together on the ornate Victorian-style settee and stretched their legs. Rosa loosened one of her shoes and grimaced. She guided Dottie's hand to feel the blister. Dottie sighed in sympathy and mouthed the words, "Fashion, A-plus; Comfort, D-minus." Rosa laughed and wrote with her finger on Dottie's palm, spelling out, "P-I-T B-O-O-T-S B-E-T-T-E-R." Dottie smiled.

They had met a year ago, 1922, at the opening of a new parish hall built at the rear of St Joseph's Catholic Church on New Zealand Road in Cathays. It was a new church built on land gifted by the Marquess of Bute, and Rosa favoured it because of its Italian Romanesque architecture. Dottie had been brought by her Catholic neighbour. Dottie was not religious, but she never declined an offer of assistance to get out. She lost her sight in a road accident a year after her husband was killed two years after the war had begun, five years after they had come to the U.K., so her visual memory and imagination filled in a lot of what she could not actually see. Her neighbour introduced her to Rosa and said, "Here's a challenge for you. You can't see and Rosa can't hear or speak. I bet you'll get along like a house on fire." He was right. A year later, they moved in together, sharing a flat above a tobacconist and newsagent shop on Whitchurch Road. Their Greek landlord thought they were lesbian.

It was Rosa who brought home a leaflet about the Peace Appeal from Cathays Library, a place where she spent a lot of time, because she was an intelligent and avid reader. She had notebooks filled with ideas and thoughts. If not for her sensory shortcomings she could have been an academic, but *La vita è quel che è* she wasn't unhappy, although of course she missed her husband, who had died in the war in 1917, seven years after he had brought her to Wales, two years after he had returned to Europe to fight when Italy joined the war.

Given their circumstances, the Peace Appeal sang to Rosa and Dottie. They contacted their local county organiser, Huw Evans, and arranged to meet him at Cathays Library. The meeting did not go well at first. Huw just couldn't endorse the idea of two attractive women with their disabilities going door to door collecting signatures. But then Dottie asked, "Who could refuse us?" She had a point. And really, this whole endeavour was about numbers. Annie Griffiths and her colleagues were hoping for half-a-million signatures to take across the Atlantic, because America was a country that dealt in millions. Rosa and Dottie left with a ream of signature sheets.

Bethan came in with the tea tray. Rosa rose to help her place it on the sideboard. With their cups and saucers in hand, Dottie asked about Bethan's circumstances. "I'm married," said Bethan, "and I'm one of the lucky ones because my husband's a firefighter at the station on Crwys Road, or at least until it closes and he's transferred to the new Central Station. I volunteer there, a bit of cleaning, helping in the kitchen. I wanted to become a firefighter but I couldn't even read the required forms, let alone fill them out. So I draw and paint the crew members. They love that. At least, most of them do; there's always the odd shy one. The fire chief plans to auction off my art for charity when the station closes. Maybe I'll become famous, although I don't really care about that. I look at you two and thank the Lord for my gift, which compensates for my illiteracy."

They paused to reflect, then Bethan continued, "We're a right threesome, eh? Deaf, mute, blind, and illiterate, except I can do you a signature. I'm an artist; I can do you any number of signatures. How many would you like?" Rosa, lip-reading, had caught most of what Dottie had said, and she burst out laughing and held up ten fingers. Then she stood, put her rose-patterned cup and saucer on the tray, came over to Bethan and embraced her. She reached over to Dottie and pulled her to her feet and into the hug. This simple action epitomised the Peace Movement: tolerance and shared understanding and love as an antidote to the all-too-easy male-dominant alternative of war.

The Lone voice

Dana McCoy Anderson

Transcribing the Women's Peace Petition is something I enjoy doing every day. Since last December, I have heard the individual voices of almost 25,000 women, expressing their opinion in their own handwriting, the echo of their hearts and minds over 100 years later. Some names are difficult to decipher, others are bold strokes of letters making their names evident and readable. Some are married, some single, some write with the difficulty of old age or low vision, others with the careful penmanship of a young woman eager to participate in the new world where women have a vote. However variable their handwriting, or whether their names were scribed by a local canvasser, their signatures form column after column, page after page, document after document of a tightly woven fabric fashioned for a single purpose: finding peace.

What brought them to the point of pen or pencil touching paper surely is as unique as each signature. For some it was personal or familial sorrow or loss, for others vicarious loss of friends and neighbors. For others perhaps a more general malaise was the motivation, for post war Wales suffered great economic pains as traditional industries closed. In an era of both economic and great social change, an angst or hiraeth for calm and peace and yes, hope for reconciliation and healing, signing a peace petition with your neighbors was a way to link arms symbolically with a larger sisterhood.

To my great surprise, one day recently, I typed in the name of "Mrs Sutton" of 16 Chepstow Road in Newport. Quite boldly, she did sign her name and quite boldly, in parenthesis, wrote "(Not Willing)". My typing came to a sudden stop – did I misread this entry? No, surely she was "not

willing". The instructions for transcribers is to include all notations. Should I leave her out? – Wait, no, she she did SIGN the petition. And 100 years later, I look at Mrs Sutton, trying to work out her message for posterity. Is this a "yes" or a "no"?

Why would Mrs Enid Sutton use this device to advertise her opposition? Despondency? Fear? Anger? Who was she? I did a bit of research on Mrs. Sutton. She was born in Cork Ireland in 1882, claiming British citizenship. She was married to Dr Joseph William Sutton , physician (b 1874) also born Cork, Ireland (1911 Census). She appears to have been in a well educated, upper class home. At least on the surface, she had no cultural ties to Wales, so perhaps social distance created her dissent? Ireland, their home, was engaged in considerable civil unrest coincidental with the peace petition, and no doubt engaged their political attention.

Maybe Enid's interests lay in other paths to peace. Did she feel the petition was too intrusive or perhaps, conversely, insufficient or too focused on leaning on stronger world governments for cooperation? Perhaps, and with some prescience, she thought the task was futile. I recently mentioned the petition to my friends in a local history reading club and the Americans were amazed that the Welsh would ever think that American women would have such influence over their government in the 1920s. The era of the suffragette was one of optimism and energetic vision on both sides of the Atlantic. While many caught the vision, in both countries many women did not follow international affairs.

Of course there were many women in Wales who did not sign the Petition due to lack of interest, working schedules, and a multitude of other reasons, perhaps for such petty reasons as dislike of the canvasser or organizers. Those missing voices, and what they might have contributed, are just as important as we lean into peace.

My question to Enid is: what would it take to convince you to join your sisters in the search for peace? Perhaps Enid is a voice from the past calling us to re-examine the need to strengthen the message of peace. What would have made the message have broader appeal? What were the most convincing elements of the campaign – and which ones failed to appeal to women like Mrs Sutton? What made the story of the Petition fade over the years – was it the work of women like Mrs Sutton who disapproved?

While we will never know why Mrs. Sutton insisted on her refusal being documented for posterity, yet her voice can give us a nudge to engage in evaluative dialogue and search for constructive feedback. Then we will be able to conceive of a future where, as Arch Druid Mererid Hopkins calls for in her Eisteddfod 2024 speech, Welsh women, and women everywhere, can send out an effective call to “Prepare for Peace.”

NAME.	ADDRESS.
M. A. Comerford	1 Bhepstown Road Newport,
Mrs Sutton (not willing)	- 16 Bhepstown Rd
E. A. Hall	22 Bhepstown Road

Petition – 22/175 – Newport



If it takes the very life
out of my heart cut to a core

Faithfully, I have served
my God and country
in war and peace

Hoping I have contributed to
the cause of all wars to cease

May there never be another
war in our time

390,296

Girls OF good Character

EMPLOYMENT BUREAU.

OPENED BY GIRLS' FRIENDLY
SOCIETY AT NEWPORT.

The Girls' Friendly Society, Stow Hill, Newport, is enlarging its province, and will find employment of any kind for girls of good character, not necessarily members of the society. The office is open always to girls, and from ten to six for employers. This valuable work, in view of the danger there is in girls answering and taking situation

MEMBER'S CARD.

GIRLS' FRIENDLY SOCIETY.

OBJECT.

TO UNITE FOR THE GLORY OF GOD, IN
ONE FELLOWSHIP OF PRAYER AND SERVICE,
THE GIRLS AND WOMEN OF THE EMPIRE,
TO UPHOLD PURITY IN THOUGHT, WORD
AND DEED.

The Society offers friendly comradeship and opportunities of service for others, through introductions from Branch to Branch, and from one country to another. It also encourages loyalty and faithfulness in work and home life, and self-control in all things.

PEACE of Writing

Collage submissions from Jen Evans

These collages have been inspired by the Girl's Friendly Society [GFS] signatures on the Newport, South Wales petitions. These signatures were brought to light as one of a series of "stories" told at the Peace of Writing Workshop held at St Fagans Museum of National History on 29 May 2024.

I chose the GFS story as I live in Newport so the location is very familiar to me. The society was established in 1875 as a pioneer youth organisation to protect working-class country girls who left home to take up urban employment. During the workshop we learnt about the society and were shown newspaper clippings, one of them was an advertisement from 1910 [Weekly Mail, 8 January] stating that the Newport GFS was enlarging its province to find employment "of any kind for girls of good character...", stressing the danger to girls taking situations away from home by themselves.

Supportive as this sounds, it made me wonder what the GFS considered girls of good character? What if they were already unmarried mothers, destitution enforced prostitutes or secretly gay? Would they be considered a girl of good character? This led to reflection on how life circumstances back then could swiftly become a damning condemnation impossible to escape.

This brought to mind a maternal aunt of mine [b. 1928], petit with a cloud of flaming red hair, she was notorious in our family for always having been difficult and, at times, blatantly unpleasant. It was only when I was old enough, that I discovered she had lost an 11-year-old sister when she herself was only 9. Being one of three close sisters, I can't imagine how awful this must have been and how it might go on to shape her life choices. She married [according to my mother] a "wonderfully gentle and kind" man but after only a few years the marriage ended and even though she tried to make things right, it is rumoured that it was all "too little and too late". One or two unsuccessful

relationships followed but she passed away, prematurely, in 1990 at only 62. My sisters and I remember her as cold and disinterested when we were little but just a few years before she died, now young adults, we had begun to understand her more and became close.

My first collage is titled "390,296 Girls of Good Character" – the photograph is a favourite image of my aunt when she was most likely still a teenager. She wasn't even born when the petition was sent out for signatures but I love the image and her determined [angry?] expression. The pink text in the top right is taken from a letter written to my maternal grandmother from an American G.I. after WWII – again, long after the petition but, the words intimately echo the petition's peace appeal. The colourful numbers refer to the number of signatures collected on the petition. At the base of the collage are two of the newspaper cuttings concerning the GFS; the one on the left has the "girls of good character" statement that began this thought process.

My second collage is titled "What can a little girl do?" and comprises of an altered version of the well-known poem by John Oxenham, What, can a little boy do? [1915]. Oxenham's poems expressed courage, hope, faith, and optimism during times of war and hardship, frequently exploring themes of patriotism, duty, and perseverance*.

This collage uses photocopies of hand-writing by my aunt's sister, the one who passed away at 11 years old in 1937. She wrote this poem on May 30, 1935, in her school exercise book, two years before she died. The amendment from the original [most likely something her teacher devised] changes the subject of the poem from a little boy to a little girl.

* John Oxenham - Poems by the Famous Poet - All Poetry

*What can a little girl do?
What can a little girl do for her country and for you?
What can a little girl do?
She can fight like a knight for the Truth and Right,
That's one good thing she can do.
She can shun all that's mean, she can keep herself clean,
Both without and within.
That's another good thing she can do.
Her soul she can brace against everything base,
And the trace will be seen all her life in her face.
Though her years be but few, she can march in the queue
Of the Good and the Great, who battled with fate and won through.
Those are excellent things she can do.*

I've added images of the women along with flowers cut from magazines. I chose daffodils, as they were the flower the Welsh League of Nations Union sold on 'daffodil days' to raise funds during the 1920s and 30s, and also roses. I like the way these flowers epitomise opposite arcs of a spectrum, the rose, traditionally associated with the cult of female beauty that has, at times, confined women to two-dimensional, doe-eyed damsels of art and literature while the plucky daffodil represents hope, persistence and pragmatism. Bobbing flower heads of gold, leading the way through the darkness [of war] in to the light [of peace].

In my opinion, this poem exemplifies the courage and tenacity shown by Annie Hughes Griffiths, Mary Ellis, Elined Prys, and Gladys Thomas when they travelled to America with that great oak chest carrying those 390, 296 signatures and then toured the states on a peace tour.

Thursday May 30th 1935
 What can a little girl do?
 What can a little girl do?



Annie
 Hughes Griffiths



For her country and for you?
 What can a little girl do?



Mary Ellis

~~She can~~ she can fight like a
 knight
 For the Truth and the Right
 That's one good thing she can do



Elined Prys

~~She~~ ^{she} can shun all that's mean,
 She can keep herself clean
 Both without and within
 That's another good thing she
 can do.



Gladys Thomas

Her soul she can brace,
 Against everything base,
 And the trace will be seen
 All her life in her face



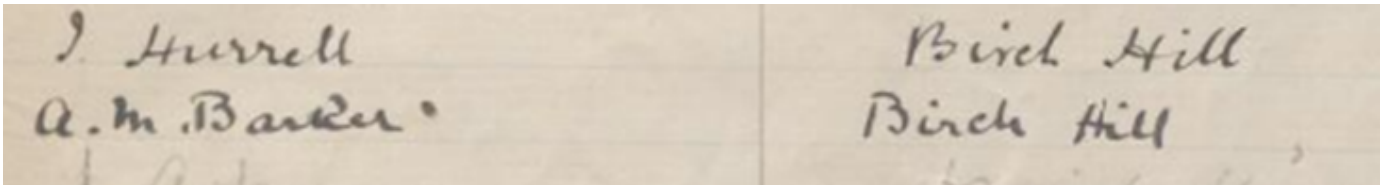
Though her years be but few,

She can march in the queue,
 Of the good and the great,
 Who battled with fate,
 And won through.
 Those are excellent things she can
 do



Amy Barker and Jessie Hurrell
Heather Aspinwall

More than 1200 women in Llangollen signed the Welsh Women's Peace Petition in 1923. Amongst them were Amy and Jessie. In 1923 they lived together on Birch Hill.



Birch Hill was posh and a little romantic. Some Georgian Villas, some cottages with gothic windows, reminiscent of Plas Newydd, The Ladies of Llangollen's House. The Hill was populated by the middle classes, plenty of widows, several ladies of independent means, a few boarding houses. On the genteel side, a stone's throw from The Ladies house. I struggled to find Amy and Jessie living there in 1921 Census, but by accident bumped into them on seafront at Aberdyfi, on holiday, just the two of them, in Penhelig Cottage.

One of my favourite stories about Amy and Jessie, is from the description of "Llangollen's Rejoicings" at the end of the First World War. The grounds at Plas Newydd were thrown open for dancing and a concert. Thousands of people attended and according to the Llangollen Advertiser, "the most striking feature during the evening was the representation of The Ladies".

They already had form for dressing up as The Ladies. At Llangollen May Day celebrations 1914, Miss Hurrell and her sister Miss C W Richards won 2nd prize for their fancy dress costumes. This event was apparently filmed by Pathe Gazette – something worth hunting down!

During the War, Amy and Jessie continued their membership of the Llangollen National Union of Women's Suffrage Society, campaigning still for Women's Suffrage and raising funds for hospital's in Wales, France and Serbia. From 11 Sep 1914, they were both serving on the town's War Relief Committee. By October, they were already raising funds and housing Belgian Refugees in their own home. At that time, they were living at Islwyn/ Denton House at 64 Berwyn Street*.

Accounts of the Red Cross Festival in November 1915, give a glimpse of one of their successes:

"Under the capable guidance of the Misses Cross, Miss A. M. Barker and Miss Hurrell, who commanded the services of a host of willing helpers to hold a Red Cross Festivalthe three day festival commenced on Thursday with a café chante, cake sale and competitions of various kinds"

"Splendid Financial Result Acknowledged – Miss Barker and Miss Hurrell have received a letter from the Chair of the Red Cross Collections acknowledging receipt of a cheque for £90 19s 06d" [eq. to c£8,000 in 2024]

Added to all this, both were busy working for the Women's Land Army, producing food, managing dairy herds and felling timber for the War effort. Jessie was one of 63 local women decorated after the War for her achievements.



©Langollen Museum Archive. Landworkers Llangollen. WWI.

Sadly, in 1918, Amy suffered a very personal loss. Her sister Edith, a Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) Nurse who served in both Malta and France died on 3rd April 1918 at St Omer, France. She is honoured on Llangollen War Memorial and in St Collen's Church.

©Langollen Museum Archive.



After the War, the National Union of Women's Suffrage Society in Llangollen dissolved and handed the baton to the National Council of Women Llangollen Branch. The NCW branch created its own League of Nations Branch and was instrumental in collecting those 1,225 names from Llangollen for the Women's Peace Petition. Unsurprisingly, Amy and Jessie were active members.

Almost every time I have looked for Amy or Jessie in the historical records – I have found them **together**, on lists of subscribers, serving on committees, making donations to the Cottage Hospital, collecting eggs for wounded soldiers, saving dogs in peril, and attending weddings and funerals. They were together in the Newspapers, the Census, the National Union of Women's Suffrage, the National Council of Women, the Belgian Refugee Committee, the Women's Land Army, and of course the Welsh Women's Peace Petition. "Miss Barker and Miss Hurrell" were certainly a twosome in the public records.

Nobody, except Amy and Jessie themselves, knows what their relationship was really like. What I have learnt, was that their relationship was long term, it was close, they were like minded, they worked for the same causes, they shared at least two homes (from 1908 on), they went on holiday together – oh and they liked to dress up as the Ladies of Llangollen, along with Jessie's sister.

I've left them in 1923, when they signed the Peace Petition. I will return to them and the rest of the Llangollen sisterhoods of the early 20th Century – just as soon as I've tamed my obsession with the Welsh Women's Peace Petition. I wonder what they got up to next?

*Postscript – Their first home together 64 Berwyn Street, is at the time of writing up for sale. It is the only house in the terrace with a fine gothic front door and arched glass windows to the tiny gothic gallery on the first floor, complete with a pair of just vacated chairs.



©Llangollen Museum Archive. Dated in catalogue c1930.

Photo outside Plas Newydd. Probably not Jessie, Amy and Martha – maybe the next generation of fans?

Names of the World

Norena Shopland

With so many names on the Petition, it is impossible to state anyone's ethnicity without more research – but the variety of names is dazzling and deserves a book or dissertation.

Thanks to the hard work of the volunteers transcribing the names, many are now searchable on [The Welsh Women's Peace Petition](#) and the final data set will be available by the end of 2025.

The Welsh Women's Peace Petition

Search 61,000+ of 390,296 women who signed the 1923 Peace Petition.

Join the [project to transcribe the rest of the Petition](#) as we continue to add and refine the names and addresses available here. The final data set will be available by the end of 2025.

NAME SEARCH TIPS

Search for a person's name

some records only show a surname

ADDRESS SEARCH TIPS

Search for an address



The data is searchable by name or address and can be used not just for genealogy, but looking at the ethnicity of names – and there are different ways to do this.

If you have a name in mind, you can use the 'search for a person's name' box, for example Mohamed or Ahmed (bear in mind 19th century spelling may be different) and using these, we find seven women in Butetown, Cardiff. Now, armed with a name and an address, the researcher can turn to genealogical records, newspapers, and other sources to find out more about these women.

Mrs Mohamed

1 South Church Street



COMMUNITY WARD: Butetown

COUNTY: Cardiff

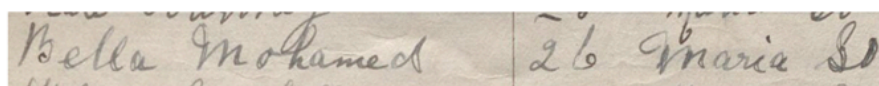
BOX NUMBER: 4

PETITION NUMBER: 1

PAGE NUMBER: 2

Bella Mohamed

26 Maria Street



COMMUNITY WARD: Butetown

COUNTY: Cardiff

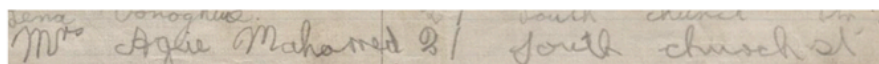
BOX NUMBER: 4

PETITION NUMBER: 1

PAGE NUMBER: 3

Mrs Agie Mohamed

31 South Church Street



COMMUNITY WARD: Butetown

COUNTY: Cardiff

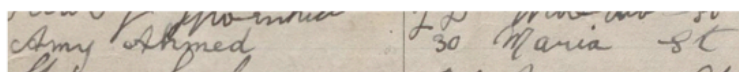
BOX NUMBER: 4

PETITION NUMBER: 2

PAGE NUMBER: 2

Amy Ahmed

30 Maria Street



COMMUNITY WARD: Butetown

COUNTY: Cardiff

BOX NUMBER: 4

PETITION NUMBER: 1

PAGE NUMBER: 3

A Ahmed

14 Maria Street



COMMUNITY WARD: Butetown

COUNTY: Cardiff

BOX NUMBER: 4

PETITION NUMBER: 1

PAGE NUMBER: 3

Maria Ahmed

1 Maria Street



COMMUNITY WARD: Butetown

COUNTY: Cardiff

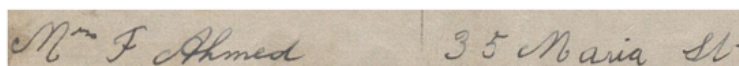
BOX NUMBER: 4

PETITION NUMBER: 1

PAGE NUMBER: 3

Mrs F Ahmed

35 Maria Street



COMMUNITY WARD: Butetown

COUNTY: Cardiff

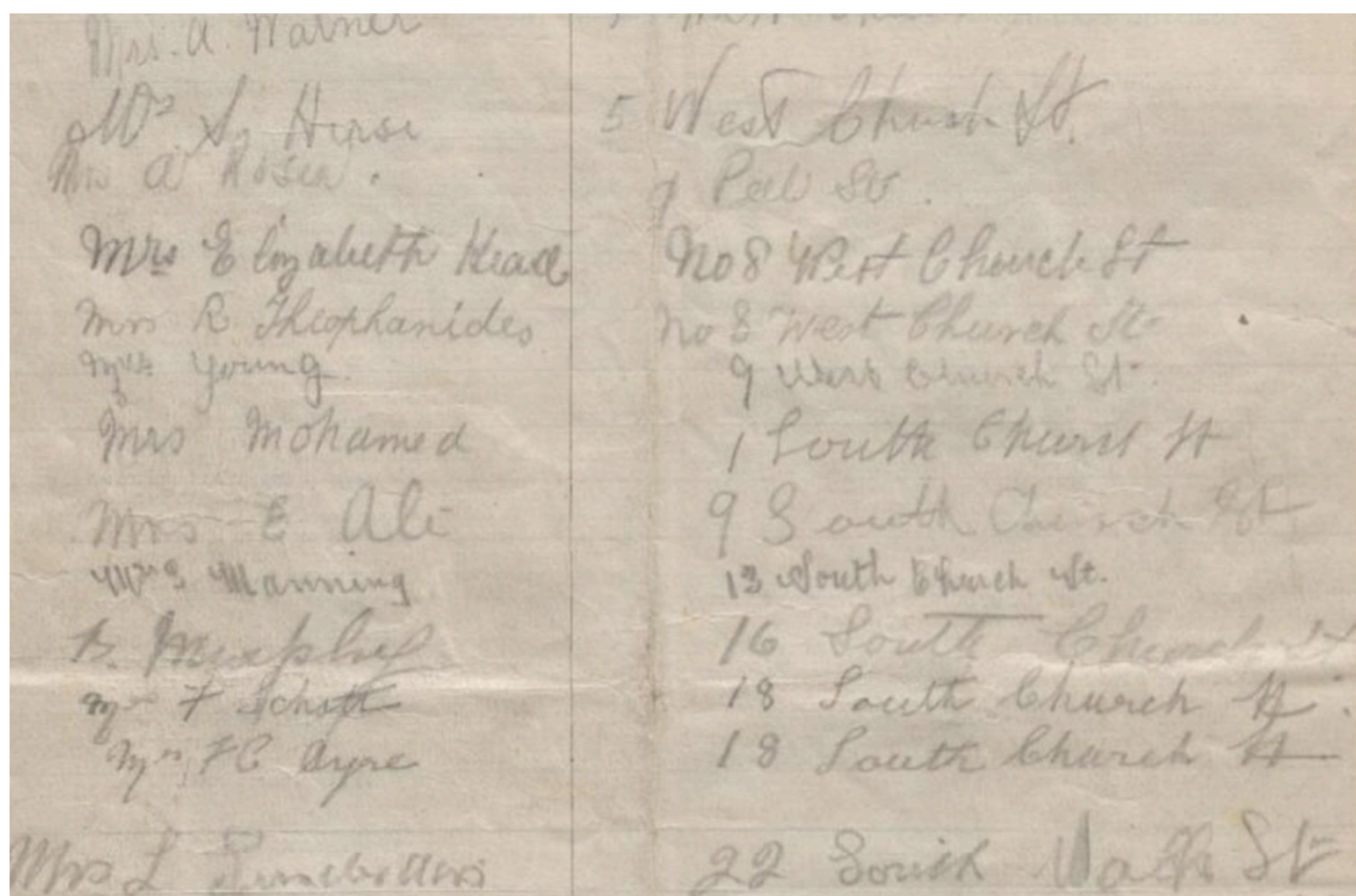
BOX NUMBER: 4

PETITION NUMBER: 1

PAGE NUMBER: 3

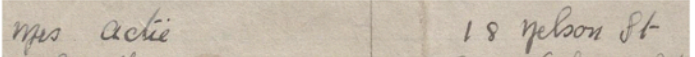
The search engine is very precise, so spelling must be accurate; and it does not do fuzzy searches so will only look for exactly what you have put in. Short name may have to be put in inverted commas, or it will return every word with those letters.

Alternatively, the box for a known multi-ethnic area, such as Butetown, can be open and the names read through:



Petition - 4/1 - Butetown

Similarly, in the search engine, select a county and then a 'community ward' i.e. Cardiff, Butetown, and read through the names:

Mrs R Theophanides 8 West Church Street		COMMUNITY WARD: Butetown COUNTY: Cardiff BOX NUMBER: 4 PETITION NUMBER: 1 PAGE NUMBER: 2
Mrs E. Jarakinos 16 Nelson Street		COMMUNITY WARD: Butetown COUNTY: Cardiff BOX NUMBER: 4 PETITION NUMBER: 1 PAGE NUMBER: 2
Mrs Actie 18 Nelson Street		COMMUNITY WARD: Butetown COUNTY: Cardiff BOX NUMBER: 4 PETITION NUMBER: 1 PAGE NUMBER: 2
Mrs Legall 20 Nelson Street		COMMUNITY WARD: Butetown COUNTY: Cardiff BOX NUMBER: 4 PETITION NUMBER: 1 PAGE NUMBER: 2
Mrs L Linchbellas 22 South Walk Street		COMMUNITY WARD: Butetown COUNTY: Cardiff BOX NUMBER: 4 PETITION NUMBER: 1 PAGE NUMBER: 2
Elizabeth Pacheco 15 Maria Street		COMMUNITY WARD: Butetown COUNTY: Cardiff BOX NUMBER: 4 PETITION NUMBER: 1 PAGE NUMBER: 3
Mrs S Hassan 16 Maria Street		COMMUNITY WARD: Butetown COUNTY: Cardiff BOX NUMBER: 4 PETITION NUMBER: 1 PAGE NUMBER: 3

Alternatively, you can search all petition pages by visiting:
<https://www.library.wales/peacepetition>.

So, any volunteers to do a dissertation?

Ringling the Changes

Nina

Ceri paused, her fingers curled around the rope, hating to do it, hating to have to violently jerk it back and forth to send the men running. Before, she had loved it; sending the women running. But now she had to just stand there, watching.

The men ran, struggling into their uniforms, leaping into the engine, and speeding off onto the streets as pedestrians stood and stared.

How she had loved that.

When she was a fire-fighter.

Now the war was over and the men had returned, demanding their jobs back and she was forced to step aside and answer the phone. They had asked her to stay, her experience would be valuable the man said, knowing how things worked, easy see, to help the men.

In the beginning she thought it would be ok, but as each shout went out, she felt more bitter and jealous that they had taken her job.

Ceri turned and shouted to Huw she was off, he could see them all back in, and she walked home shaking off the prickling in her eyes and the tightness in her throat. She turned off Westgate Street, into the Grand Hotel and climbed the back stairs to the staff quarters before letting herself into a room thick with steam and the smell of hot food.

‘Hello love,’ said Gwenllian, waving a tea-towel in the steam. ‘Dinner’s nearly ready, just got a bit behind,’ and she kissed Ceri quickly.

Ceri took off her coat and hung it in the small cupboard that threatened to disgorge all its contents every time someone opened a door, and, relieved nothing had fallen out, she slammed it shut.

Over dinner they dissected their day, Gwenllian as a senior manager at the hotel noted all the comings and goings of the guests, a hodgepodge of society, that she

described with humour and acute observations. But she stopped, and gazed at Ceri before quietly asking, 'How many shouts today?'

'Three.'

'Still hard?'

Ceri sighed and pushed her empty plate aside, drinking deeply from a glass of whisky, but before she could answer the doorbell rang and she shot an alarmed look at Gwenllian. They didn't have visitors.

'It's ok,' Gwenllian reassured her, 'It's Mary,' and Ceri felt a sense of relief. Mary was one of them.

'Come in, come in,' Gwenllian was happily ushering in Mary and her close friend Anwen. 'Would you like a drink?'

'No,' said Anwen, removing her coat and draping it across her knees, 'We can't stop long we've got the whole of Westgate Street to do yet,' and she began pulling files and papers from her basket.

'What's this about?' asked Ceri.

'I told you yesterday,' Gwenllian admonished her, 'You know they want signatures for the Peace Petition.'

Ceri snorted, 'What's that going to do?'

Mary answered, 'It's going to be taken all the way to America, to the president, so he can help prevent future wars.'

Ceri leaned back in her chair, as a flood of guilt washed through her. Peace! When her life had come alive in war, had made her feel real, useful, important. She closed her eyes as the others watched her nervously, Mary and Anwen looking to Gwenllian to take the lead.

'It's a sad thing,' she began tentatively, 'That for some, war makes us see and do things we would not otherwise ever have done. It's hard for Ceri being a fire fighter all the way through the war, now she answers phones and files reports.'

Mary and Anwen nodded sympathetically; they knew how Ceri felt.

‘All that,’ added Ceri bitterly, ‘And I don’t even get to vote! Mrs Pryce, what did she do during the war? Sat on her fat arse and complained bitterly about how she was suffering and she gets to vote because she’s two years older than me! It’s a joke! After so long fighting for the vote, only over thirties get it.’

‘Yes, but women over thirty, a lot of them did fight for the vote.’

Ceri pushed herself up in the chair, ‘Yes, I agree but what about all the young women who fought in the war, who did men’s jobs, we should have had it as well. You talk of peace, and God knows I want peace as much as the next person, but how do we advance when we have no opportunities to do so?’

‘Now we have peace, we can go back to the suffragettes, join them,’ Anwen leaned forward, talking quickly, ‘We couldn’t do it during the war, there was too much to do, but we can now get political, get all women the vote. We have to fight.’

Gwenllian agreed, ‘She’s right love, we must move on. I know it’s painful for you to be pushed aside after all the work you, we,’ she looked at Mary and Anwen, ‘have done, but it’s the future we must put our faith in, not the past.’

Ceri sighed, ‘Yes, I know you’re right, it’s just so damn hard.’

‘Fighting always is,’ said Mary.

‘Give me your petition,’ Ceri stretched out her hand, ‘I’ll sign it. And who knows,’ she looked up at them and smiled, ‘maybe one day we can fight for love as well.’



The Sheets

Helen Sandler

She rushes out the door
late as usual
to gather names
on the blank sheets
of the appeal
lingers on the front
cloudless sky
slate-blue sea
spread before her.
Nervous of recruiting
strangers on every doorstep
she gifts herself a walk
to the end of the prom
kicks the bar
with her one-bar shoe.
And there is Alexandra Hall
where she knows two girls
on the second floor.
What better place to begin.
Is it her place though?

They open the door and then
Come upstairs says Iris
opening more doors
to Margaret, Brynhild,
Dorothy, Daisy.
Come down on the beach –
Myfanwy and Nancy –
and each woman speaks
of a brother, cousin, friend,
gassed, killed, wounded, missing.
The sheet is a channel and
the gatherer a conduit
reaper of names
absorber of memories –
of these boys who
teased them or played catch
before, before.
She retreats with the pages
flapping in her hand
a cloud compressing in her chest.

Yr Apêl

Shelagh Fishlock

Ochneidiodd Gwladys yn ddwfn, gan ymestyn ei chefn a sychu'i dwylo ar y ffedog tamp. Roedd diwrnod y golch yn artaith bob wythnos, dim siawns i hongian y dillad yn yr iard ym mis Ionawr, a'r glo yn brin ar y tân. Ond 'ta waeth, roedd angen dillad glân ar y plant.

Ni fu gwaith i'r gŵr ers y streic yn 1921, ond bu William, yr ail fachgen, newydd droi ei bedair ar ddeg, ac wedi cael swydd fel gwas siop. Roedd y ddwy ferch ieuengaf dal yn yr ysgol, doedd hi ddim eisiau eu hanfon yna heb fod yn daclus. Diolch byth am Elizabeth, a oedd yn anfon punt neu ddwy o Lundain, lle cafodd hi le da mewn tŷ crand y llynedd.

Rhoddodd Gwladys sosban ar y bwrdd, ac aeth ati i blicio'r tatws ar gyfer swper. Roedd ei mam-yng-nghyfraith yn pendwmpian yn y gadair freichiau, ond yn dal i gadw llygad barcud ar bopeth o'i chwmpas.

"Mae staen o hyd ar y crys 'na, Gwladys."

"A weloch chi'r twll yn hosan Owen? Bydd angen ei greithio heno."

"Wnaethoch chi ddim 'sgubo eto bore 'ma? 'Sdim eisiau llygod yn y tŷ, wir."

Gwyddai Gwladys mai taw piau hi, a brathodd ei thafod. Ond roedd angen llonydd arni.

"O'r gorau, mam. Rwy'n pigo allan i'r siop. Siawns i William sorto tamed o facwn i fi."

"Doedd dim angen prynu cig pan oedd mochyn yn y twlc..."

Tynnodd Gwladys ei chôt oddi ar y bachyn heb yngan gair. Wedi cloi'r drws ffrynt, oeddodd am eiliad i ddod yn ôl at ei choed. "Mochyn, wir! Mewn tŷ teras!" Lapidodd y gôt yn dynn amdani cyn cychwyn lawr y stryd. Gwelodd grŵp cyfarwydd o fenywod yn clebran tu allan i'r siop.

“Shwmae, Mrs Jones, sut dych chi, a’r tywydd mor wael? A sut mae mam Owen? Dal i gwyno am bopeth?”

Doedd Gwladys ddim mor fodlon i drafod trafferthion yr aelwyd.

“O, go lew, diolch i chi, ond beth yw’r pwnc llosg bore ‘ma?”

“Wel, mae pawb yn sôn am yr Apêl, ac yn meddwl am arwyddo. Deiseb Heddwch, mae’n debyg, i’w hanfon i America. Bydd gwraig Mr Williams y gweinidog yn galw gyda ffurflen heddiw.”

Dyna’r tro cyntaf i Gwladys glywed am yr Apêl. Ymunai Owen â chyfarfodydd Undeb Gymreig Cynghair y Cenhedloedd yn y ‘Stiwt yn gyson, ond doedd hi erioed wedi cymryd sylw o’i ddadleuon. Mater i ddynion oedd rhyfel a gwleidyddiaeth. Bwrodd hi ymlaen â’i siopa, ac yna mynd adre at y gwaith tŷ oedd yn aros amdani.

Ond am weddill y diwrnod roedd Gwladys yn cnoi cil am y sgwrs. Pwy oedd ar fai am holl ddioddef a gwastraff y Rhyfel? A’r streiciau? Y diweithdra a’r tlodi? Efallai roedd yr hen Syffrajets yn iawn, roedd angen llais ar fenywod i newid y byd.

Amharwyd ei myfyrddod gan gnoc ar y drws.

“O, pnawn da Mrs. Williams, dewch i mewn. Ddrwg gen i am gyflwr y stafell - diwrnod golch yw hi.”

Gwenodd yr ymwelydd yn gyfeillgar, a throdd at yr hen fenyw yn y gornel.

“Peidiwch â phoeni, Mrs. Jones, a sut dych chi ers talwm Mrs. Jones – dim gormod o drafferth gyda’r cryd cymylau, gobeithio?”

“O, dw i ddim yn un i gwyno, ‘chmod, Mrs Williams, ond henaint ni ddaw ei hunan..”

“Sut gallwn i’ch helpu chi, Mrs. Williams?” gofynnodd Gwladys yn gyflym, er bod hi’n eitha siŵr beth oedd pwrpas yr ymweliad.

Esboniodd Mrs Williams am yr ymgyrch i gasglu llofnodion menywod Cymru ar ddeiseb i’w hanfon at Fenywod America, iddyn nhw alw ar Lywodraeth yr Unol Daleithiau ymuno â Chynghair y Cenhedloedd. Dangosodd hi’r Apêl i Gwladys, a darllenodd y geiriau olaf yn uchel: “ein hymdrech i drosglwyddo i’r oesau a ddêl fyd di-ryfel yn dreftadaeth dragywydd.”

Doedd dim modd i Gwladys wrthod arwyddo’r ddeiseb, ond trodd Mrs Williams eto at ei mam-yng-nghyfraith.

“Beth amdanoch chi Mrs Jones? Mae hawl gan bob menyw arwyddo.”

“Ges i ddim ysgol, Mrs Williams, alla i ddim sgwennu.”

“Dim ond eich marc sydd ei angen, Mrs Jones, rhowch groes yma, a gwna i roi eich enw yn y blwch.”

Wedi ffarwelio â'r fenyw fonheddig, roedd y tŷ'n dawel. Aeth Gwladys lan llofft, agorodd drôr y gist dillad a thynnodd bocs bach. Eisteddodd ar erchwyn y gwely i edrych ar gynnwys y bocs.

- Sawl llythyr, pob un yn dechrau, “Annwyl Mam, paid â phoeni amdana i...”

- Ceiniog efydd oddi wrth y Brenin

- Llun sepiâ dyn ifanc mewn gwisg milwr, Private John Owen Jones, Royal Welch Fusiliers.

- Llythyr swyddogol, Saesneg, “We regret to inform you that your son...”

Heb iddi hi sylwi, llifai ddagrau hyd fochau Gwladys. Cododd hi'r llun i roi cusan ysgafn ar dalcen ei mab. Byd di-ryfel - ai uchelgais nobl neu freuddwyd gwrrach oedd hynny? A fydd lleisiau menywod yn cael eu clywed rhywbryd? Doedd Gwladys ddim yn siŵr. Dychwelodd y bocs i'r drôr, ac aeth lawr at y gegin i hwylio'r swper.

Copi wedi ei rwymo o ddeiseb heddwch y merched

Bound copy of the women's peace petition

WE Women of Wales, are proud to recall that there is between our little Principality and the great country of the United States of America a close historical tie in the quest for World Peace. ¶ It was an American citizen, Elihu Burritt, who inspired our fellow-countryman Henry Richard, to organise a series of International Peace Congresses in the middle years of the nineteenth century. ¶ According to the plan of Elihu Burritt, the first Peace Conference was to have been held in Paris in the summer of 1848. So anxious was he about the task of international reconciliation that he proceeded alone to Paris in order to make the preliminary arrangements. He failed in Paris. Then, accompanied by Henry Richard, he went to Brussels, & a memorable Conference was held here in September, 1848, attended by two hundred delegates from America & Great Britain. Thus the work of building the Temple of Peace was begun through the united efforts of the American from Connecticut and the Welshman from Tregaron. ¶ When, sixty six years later, in 1914, the Temple of Peace was, as it seemed to us shattered to its foundations, America was always in our thought, and it is no exaggeration to say that a thrill of joy was felt in many of our homes when the United States of America decided to enter the World War and make common sacrifice with us. It is the recollection of the comradeship between an American citizen and a son of Wales in the cause of Peace, together with the knowledge of our joint sacrifice in the agony of War, that emboldens us to address to you this appeal. ¶ We are not actuated by any political motives.

... simply as the Women of Wales - the daughters of any land or people, and whose desire is for the reign of the sword. And we do not know; but we do know that upon the day when the verdict of the sword shall be given, we shall be no longer to the affairs of nations. ¶ How that is possible for America to take her place in the League of Nations. ¶ How that is possible for the great peoples who did so much to decide the fate of the world, to rest largely the burden of winning that peace without which all that is dear to us must be sacrificed. ¶ How that is possible for the nations at Washington in the limitation of armaments, and at Geneva in the humanitarian work, to put an end to the detestable traffic in women and children and also in the maturing of plans for the trade in opium and in other noxious articles. ¶ We hail with delight the movement now on foot for America, with her noble traditions, direct in the functions of the Permanent Court of International Justice. ¶ The future is big with hope if we, of this generation, do our part. To us has therefore, appeal to you. Women of the United States, with malice towards none, with charity towards all, to aid in the effort to hand down to the world, which come after us the proud heritage of peace.

The Appeal

Shelagh Fishlock

Gladys stretched her aching back with a sigh as she dried her hands on her damp apron. Washing day was a nightmare every week, with no chance to hang out the clothes in January, and coal for the fire running low. But the children needed clean clothes, so she just had to get on with it.

Her husband had been out of work since the 1921 strike, but William, her second son, had just turned fourteen and got a job as an errand boy. With the two youngest girls still at school, it was a struggle keeping them presentable every day. Thank heavens for Elizabeth, who would send a pound or two from the smart house London where she was in service.

Gladys put a saucepan on the table and started peeling the potatoes for tea. Her mother-in-law was dozing in the corner, but somehow still keeping an eye on everything.

“That shirt still has a stain on it, Gladys.”

“Didn’t you see the hole in Owen’s sock? You’ll need to darn that tonight.”

“Haven’t you swept the floor yet today? We’ll be getting rats if you don’t look out.”

Gladys knew there was no point arguing, and held her tongue, but she really needed a break.

“Alright, mam. I’m just popping out to the shop. William might have sorted me out a bit of bacon for tea.”

“We didn’t need to buy bacon when we had a pig in the back yard...”

Gladys grabbed her coat off the peg and shut the door behind her. She took a moment on the doorstep to calm down and breathe. “A pig, for heaven’s sake, in the middle of town!” She fastened her coat and set off down the street. The usual group of women were chatting outside the shop.

“Hello, Mrs Jones, how are you? What an awful day! How’s Owen’s mam? Still complaining about everything?”

Gladys didn't really want to say too much about her domestic trials and tribulations.

"Oh, not too bad, thanks. What's the gossip this morning?"

"Well, we're all talking about the Appeal, and if we're going to sign it. It's a Peace Petition apparently, to send off to America. Mrs Williams the minister's wife is going round with it."

This was the first Gladys had heard of the Appeal. Owen was always off to meetings of the Welsh League of Nations in the Workers' Institute, but she didn't really listen to him. War and politics were men's business. She finished her shopping and went back home to her housework. But as the day went on she kept mulling over what she had heard. Who was to blame for all the horrors of the War? And the strikes? And what about all the unemployment and poverty? Maybe those Suffragettes were right, and women needed to speak out for change in the world.

She was still pondering when there was a knock at the door.

"Oh, good afternoon, Mrs Williams, do come in. I'm afraid it's a mess in here – so difficult on washing day."

The visitor smiled sympathetically, and turned to the old lady in the corner.

"Don't worry, Mrs Jones, and how are you, Mrs Jones, after all this time? I hope the rheumatism isn't giving you too much trouble?"

"Oh, I'm not one to complain, Mrs Williams, but there we are, old age catches up with us all."

"How can I help you, Mrs Williams?" asked Gladys, although she was pretty sure she knew why the minister's wife was there.

Mrs Williams explained the campaign to collect signatures from Welsh women to send to the women of America, who would hopefully persuade their Government to join the League of Nations. She showed Gladys the Appeal, and read out the final words: "the effort to hand down to the generations which come after us, the proud heritage of a warless world."

Of course, Gladys was ready to sign the petition, but then Mrs Williams turned back to the old lady.

“What about you, Mrs Jones? This petition is for everyone to sign.”

“Oh, I never went to school, I couldn’t sign it.”

“We only need your mark, Mrs Jones, if you put your cross, I can fill in your name for you.”

Once the minister’s wife had left, the house seemed quiet. Gladys slipped upstairs, and took out a little box from the chest of drawers in the bedroom. She spread out the contents on the bed, looking at each one in turn.

- A few letters in Welsh, always starting, “Dearest Mam, don’t worry about me...”
- A bronze King’s penny.
- A sepia photograph of a young man in uniform, Private John Owen Jones, Royal Welch Fusiliers.
- An official letter, in English, “We regret to inform you that your son...”

Gladys didn’t notice the tears running down her cheeks. She picked up the photograph and gently kissed her son’s brow. A warless world – was that a noble ambition or just wishful thinking? Would women really have a voice one day? Gladys wasn’t sure. She put away the box, and went back down to the kitchen to get on with the tea.

Haiku for Our Eight Great Great Aunts

Heather Aspinwall

Circling my dreams
In bright heather, blue wet slate
Signatures shining

Our eight great great aunts
Strengthening and moving us
To rise up for peace

This haiku is dedicated to eight of our great great aunts who lived in and around the village of Glyndyfrdwy, Merionethshire. They all signed the Welsh Women's Peace Petition 1923/24.

Mary Evans

Mary Roberts

Lizzie Roberts

Annie Eleanor Roberts

Elizabeth Roberts

Elizabeth Thomas

Emily Ellen Jones

Jane Elizabeth Hughes

Letter to Mam, January 1924

Christian Donovan

Such excitement – you remember Auntie Peggy talking about a Petition to Women in America? Well, today a lady brought it to us in the café. She arrived at the same time as Mr Jones, Bodior Mill delivered twelve hundredweight of flour. Mayhem! We might have not noticed her, but for the fact she sat on a gilt chair all the time we lugged twenty-four sacks past her to the bakehouse. If I wanted to be a porter, I wouldn't be wearing this short dress, apron & fancy cap, would I? I'd be on the farm with you and Da, lugging swedes, grain, whatever else into the barn & clearing dung from the calf-cot.

Once that was over, we offered her pastries, swiss roll, eclairs, all our best fancies. She shook her shingles; only sipped China tea. I can't tell you how glam she is. I would die for a fur tippet and cloche like hers, and to dowse myself in eau-de-cologne. In a basket beside her was a thick fan of papers. Goodness knows what size the whole Petition will be, if that is just the signatures of Llandudno parish ladies. Once as many women of Wales have signed as possible, someone – not sure who yet – will carry the lists across the Atlantic Ocean & persuade American women to join in demanding peace for the world from their government. About time too. Anything to make men turn away from war as the answer to everything. All of us Cambridge Café waitresses feel the same. Although we never talk

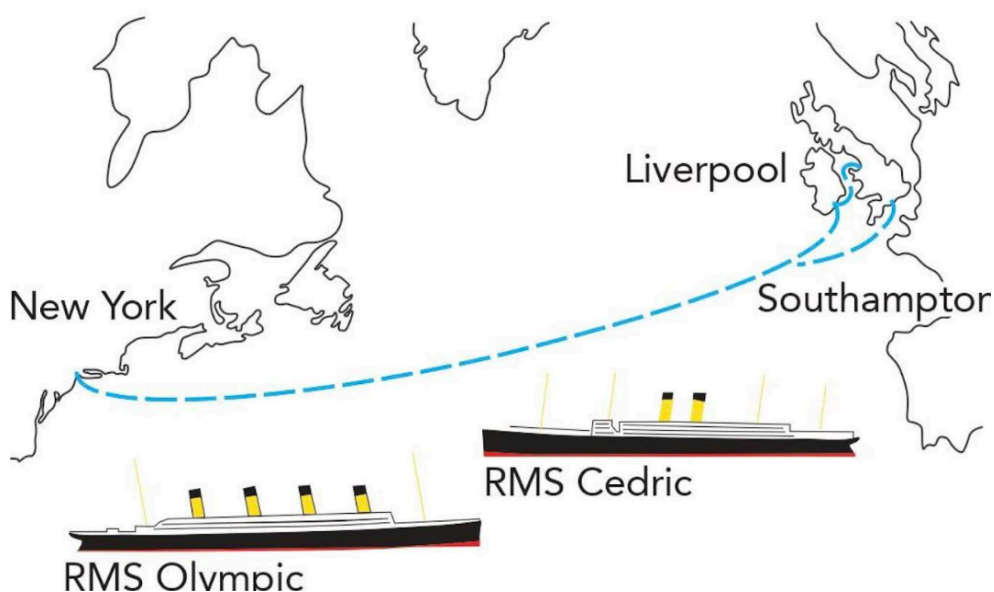
much of our sadness, we each share loss from the Great War. Our Billy is always on my mind, as I know he is with you. One by one the eight of us signed, even the English girls from across the border & Ma Payne did too. Just think, women thousands of miles away will read our names. I don't imagine I will ever travel that far, but my name is going to. Perhaps the ship will steam past where Billy's boat was sunk. I'd like to think poppies might be thrown overboard there for those who died. But so many were lost, over such a huge area.

Mam, when the lady calls with you, be sure to sign.

Your affectionate daughter,
Annie

Y daith i America i gyflwyno'r Ddeiseb i Gynghrair (America) Pleidleiswyr Benywaidd ac amrywiaeth o fudiadau merched eraill mewn cinio a gynlluniwyd yn arbennig, 1924.

The trip to America to present the Petition to the [American] League of Women Voters and a selection of other women's organisations at a specially planned luncheon, 1924



1 - Efrog Newydd; 2 - Washington; 3 Chicago; 4 Salt Lake City; 5 San Francisco; 6 Los Angeles; 7 Grand Canyon; 8 Colorado; 9 Niagara Falls; 10 Utica; wedyn yn ôl i Efrog Newydd (1)

1 - New York; 2 - Washington; 3 Chicago; 4 Salt Lake City; 5 San Francisco; 6 Los Angeles; 7 Grand Canyon; 8 Colorado; 9 Niagara Falls; 10 Utica; then back to New York (1)

Yn lle'r gwaed

Gwell nód mewn inc
ar bapur cyn wnedd â blanced babi
- Llofnod y llaw a fagodd y llanc
- a phob enw yn arwydd o alar.

Ruth Roberts Owen

How long is longing?

**This is the longest love letter
ever written to a son
so many grieving mothers
so many lost sons.**

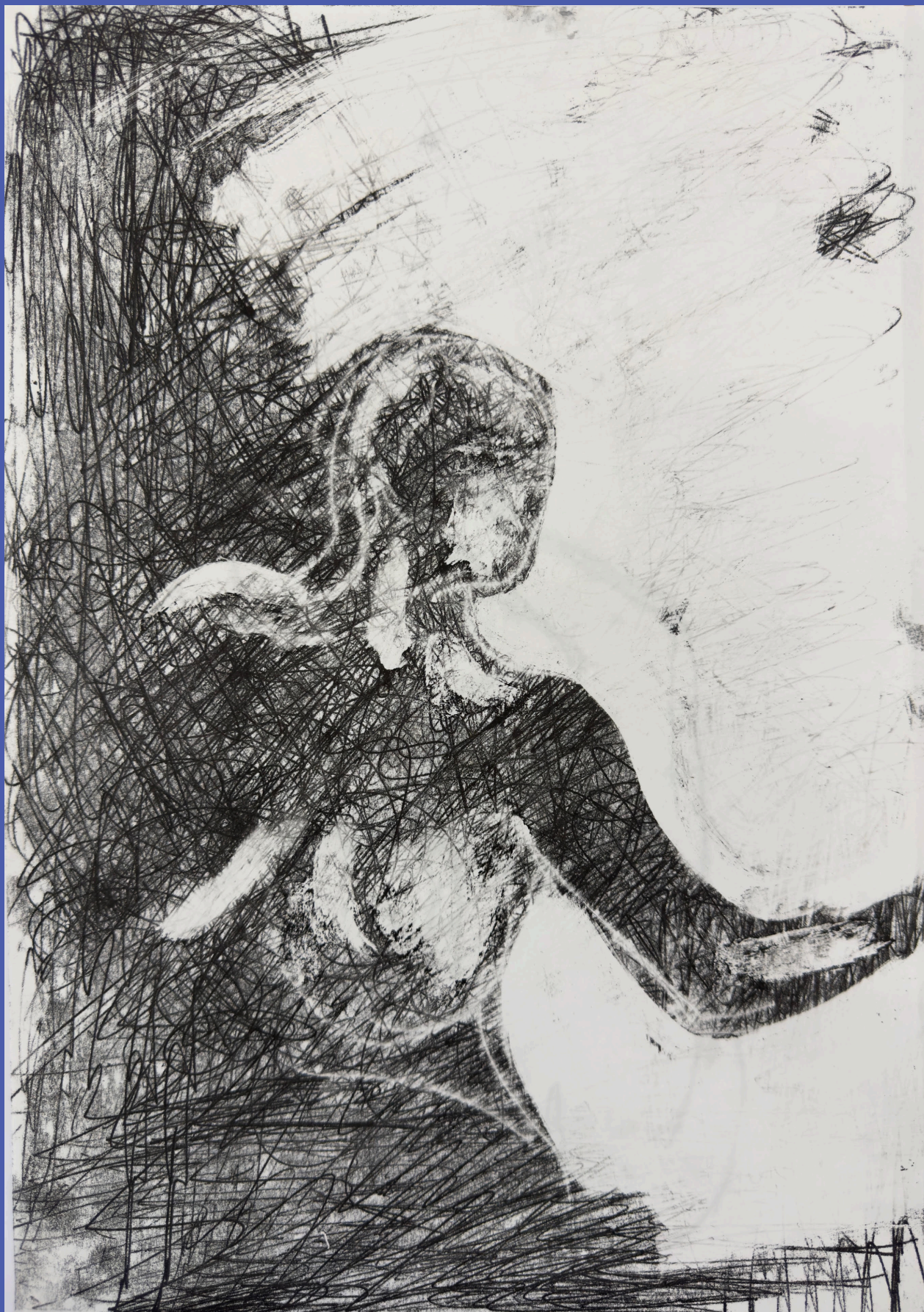
Ruth Roberts Owen



Ateb Kitchener

Nid gorchymyn oer
ar boster gwag
ond tystiolaeth o law byw mam
llofnod gofid o'r Galon.

Ruth Roberts Owen



Jane Elinor Barraclough

When Minnie met Katie

Jane Hoy

Minnie looked about her, the battered old table and chairs, her older sisters getting ready for work. She drank her tea and wondered what the day had in store. 'Our Min' bellowed her mother from the back room 'Go and ask the housekeeper at the big house for a maid's job. Take Leonard too. And when you get back I'm in the washhouse. You can turn the mangle for me.'

Minnie bit back a retort. She wasn't a shirker. Hadn't she helped her Father lug furniture around all day yesterday. Why did Mother always nag her? She hated the thought of a maid's pinny, stuck indoors at some Madam's beck and call. As for sewing, well, look at the size of her hands! She jammed her hat on with an old hat pin, grabbed her brother's grubby hand and stepped out into Leamington's morning. Didn't Mother realise the country was at war and the big houses weren't hiring? Anyway the fresh air felt good. Eight people living in three rooms created quite a fug. No jobs. But the housekeeper kindly gave little Leonard a slice of bread and jam. 'Can we go to the river and skim stones?' he asked.

'Course we can,' said Minnie, happy to have an excuse not to return to the steamy washhouse.

Halfway down the main street they heard a terrible noise, women's raised voices accompanied by a crude sounding brass band. A procession of young women in strange outfits marched past, some riding horses.

'Why are those ladies dressed as men?' piped Leonard. 'They got trousers and big boots!'

'Shush, don't be rude,' said Minnie as they cowered in a doorway.

One of the women gave her a smart salute, a big smile and a leaflet. Minnie couldn't stop herself. Dragging a protesting Leonard, she ran after the parade, wishing she also wore trousers so she could stride along so forcefully.

At the Town Hall there were speeches from the Mayor and other bigwigs. Recruitment posters featured women wielding pitchforks on top of haystacks or feeding cute calves and sizing up timber ready for felling. Enrol in the Land Army today! ... English Women like yourselves! Urgent and Indispensable! ... Recruits Required Immediately!

When it was over Minnie headed for home in a daze, certain that the rally had been aimed specially at her.

‘Ere’s our Min,’ shouted her mother as she appeared. ‘Come and say ’ello to Mrs Dobson and ’er Archie.’

Minnie sighed. She hated the way that Archie never stopped staring at her. She had a good idea what he was after – and it wasn’t going to happen. She’d sign herself up first! Now there was a thought.

Next day she went to the Employment Exchange and did the deed. ‘Name?’ asked the recruitment officer peering over her glasses.

‘Miss Minnie Jeffrey.’

‘Age?’

Minnie stood tall. ‘Eighteen’ she replied, feeling a flush in her cheeks that might give her away. But she didn’t seem to notice. After all she would be eighteen in a few months.

‘Any dependants?’

‘No.’

‘Goodoh,’ said the officer. ‘You’ll be in the Women’s Forestry Corps.’

A week later she was up at dawn and on the train with her travel warrant and outfit. You could sit how you liked wearing trousers so she sat with her legs apart, taking up more space than she had ever imagined.

Minnie changed trains at Birmingham. The carriages were packed with Welsh soldiers going home on leave, many with awful wounds and bandages. Some shaking uncontrollably. Minnie tried not to stare.

‘Ble wyt ti’n mynd, cariad?’ asked one of them who was missing a leg.

Minnie shook her head, embarrassed. They hadn’t said they were sending her to a foreign country! ‘Sorry, don’t understand.’

‘Where are you going?’ he asked in English.

Minnie checked her destination. ‘Matchinlith,’ she mumbled.

He laughed. ‘Machynlleth! Say it after me!’

So Minnie learnt her first Welsh place name and some simple greetings, as the green hills of Wales came into view.

A pony and trap was to meet her at Machynlleth station. A Welsh voice shouted 'Minnie Jeffrey?'. She jumped and turned around.

'Katie Pugh ydw i,' said a mischievous-looking girl who seemed a little younger than herself.

'Bore da, Katie Pugh Ydw i,' said Minnie boldly.

'Oh! You know some Welsh!' Katie seemed delighted. 'But leave out ydw i – that just means "I am".'

'Sorry,' apologised Minnie. 'I only know a couple of words.'

'At least you tried,' said Katie. Much later she would tell Minnie that from the start she was rather taken with this 'merch saesneg yn gwisgo trowsus'.

She led Minnie to a pony and trap. 'This way. Jump in. Adre, Seren bach!' The pony whinnied softly. 'Seren knows the way home, Miss Jeffrey.'

Minnie felt reassured. 'Please call me Minnie'.

'Me too!' Katie said and laughed. 'I mean call me Katie. I'm 16. How old are you?'

'Eighteen, well nearly,' blurted Minnie.

Katie looked her up and down. 'I like your trousers,' she said. 'What's it like wearing them?'

And so the four miles to Pennal passed quickly. They were amazed to find they both had bossy mothers. 'I've got nine brothers and sisters but I'm the only one left at home, so Mam expects me to stay and look after her and Dad,' revealed Katie.

'My mother wants me to get a job as a housemaid! Imagine me in a frilly pinny!' grinned Minnie.

Pennal was a tiny village. Everyone wanted to shake the hand of the latest 'woodswoman' recruit to the Forestry Corps, but Katie fended them off and drove Seren up to Pennal Towers, a posh country house. 'Pob lwc,' called Katie and turned Seren for the ride home. Several

woodswomen came out to greet Minnie but she felt a surprising pang of loneliness as she watched Katie disappear.

At tea time she enjoyed slices of delicious bara brith, thick with local butter and chatted to the other woodswomen, all English, all knowing next to nothing about Wales or, as Minnie soon discovered, timber cutting.

Timber was urgently needed for the war effort – railroads, trenches, telegraph poles. But work at the Cwm Dŵr sawmill progressed slowly as most of the Landswomen didn't have a clue and were hampered by a lack of Welsh.

A translator! That's what was needed. Minnie went down to the village to find Katie Pugh.

'I'll come with you tomorrow,' agreed Katie. 'But only if I can wear trousers.'

So Minnie lent Katie her second pair. Minnie fastened her prized Land Army belt with the special buckle around Katie's waist. As their fingers touched, Minnie's stomach lurched and her hands trembled. Their eyes met for a long moment and the colour rose to Katie's cheeks.

'Cariad,' she whispered, and she squeezed Minnie's hand, 'I'm so glad you are here.'

Relief surged through Minnie as they walked up the hill to Cwm Dŵr. And that was the beginning. Katie stayed to work in the mill alongside Minnie and the rest of the women's Forestry Corps. After a few weeks they all agreed that the work didn't seem that difficult. Why was it supposed to be a man's job?

Every summer the woodswomen were invited by Lady Londonderry of Plas Machynlleth for sporting activities and picnics on the lawn. Minnie learnt to drive the carriage and as Seren trotted along, Katie would lean on her shoulder humming, 'There's a silver lining through the dark shining' – their favourite Ivor Novello song.

When peace came the women of the Forestry Corps and Land Army were expected to make way for war heroes. It wasn't long before The Cambrian News was reporting that demobilised men were unable to obtain forestry work, owing to the competition of women in jobs 'that are essentially men's work'.

Minnie did not want to leave Pennal. She loved watching the mists rise over Tarren Hendre and began to feel part of village life now her Welsh was improving. She even went to Chapel with Katie and was affectionately nicknamed Miss Jeffs by the local children. But she needed a job, she wouldn't scrounge off Katie.

Many families in Pennal had lost men in the terrible war and the returning soldiers were somehow different, haunted by dreadful memories. Minnie noticed how the loss of a son affected other families in the village, where a son was also a cousin, a father, an uncle.

But life went on. Between them they opened a little general store. Everyone thought it was Katie's shop as it had 'PUGH' in large letters outside, but really it belonged to them both. Bronhaul was tiny but it suited them very well. Minnie enjoyed managing the stock while Katie worked in the shop. They celebrated with a 'hanner stowt' in the tafarn. Never mind what the gossips said.

In autumn 1923 a Miss Gladys Thomas of Aberystwyth, sporting an expensive fox fur stole, appeared in the shop. She was collecting women's signatures for a petition for world peace to be sent to the women of America asking for their support. Katie suggested they keep the petition on the shop counter and she would encourage customers to sign.

Most women customers willingly signed, especially if they had lost men in the terrible carnage of the war. One or two women refused. 'My husband wouldn't like it' was a popular excuse. Or 'Are you saying my lad died fighting for nothing?' One young woman who had lost her sweetheart at the terrible battle of Mametz Wood burst into tears and would not be comforted.

But Minnie felt the best moment was when she and Katie signed the petition together, a pledge for peace which also felt like a promise to each other for the future. They had another 'hanner stowt' in the tafarn on the strength of it.

Acknowledgements

This story is fiction but it is based on two real life women. Thanks to Pennal's historian Eluned Besent, who first drew my attention to Minnie and Katie's signatures and address on the Women's Peace Petition of 1924 and provided the photos.



Cofiaf hefyd Katie Pugh a Minnie Jeffries oedd yn rhedeg Siop y Bont yn y '60au a Miss Pugh yn gyrru tacsî i'r ysgol. Yn 1923 roeddent yn rhedeg siop yn Haulfryn, ac ers hynny cefais lun ohonynt tu allan iddi, a darganfod eu bod wedi cwrdd ym melin goed Cwm Dŵr adeg y rhyfel, Katie o Bennal a Minnie wedi dod yma o Warwick fel 'Land girl'.



Minnie Jeffries a Katie Pugh

My first boy Rhys shot into life while I could barely get my boots off. He was loud, angry, shaking his little fists and screaming at the world. I had no idea that love could be so intense, so instant. Whilst he was still little, I used to inhale him. His sweaty, angry little face, his scalp smelling of baby, and milk. Kiss his chubby little cheeks. I gently bit his little arms as I loved him so much, I wanted to eat him all up, keep him safe with me always.

My second, Dafydd, eased himself into the world with a slow, tearing pain that was ferocious. I didn't feel torn (though I was, in fact, and had stitches) but knew that this pain was the worst there could be, and that I wanted to beat my head against the wall, as anything, any other pain, anything, would be better than this agony of tearing, tearing.

Where Rhys was anger and storm, Dafydd was giggles and kisses. He slept through the night, he did everything early – walk, talk, stand, toilet. I knew it was me, I had shaped my boys inside me, and I had made them of the parts of me that were hidden, my fear in my first, and from him, came that great love that helped me shape my beautiful Dafydd.

Two boys born so close together, I wouldn't catch again. Not whilst Dafydd was on the breast, surely. Thankfully, that was the case, and I resisted lying with Iolo for as long as I could, but he had the bluest eyes, and curly dark hair. So then came Tomos, my sweet, musical, red-haired boy, surely favoured by the bards of old.

When I was asked to sign the petition, I did. In big, bold letters. For my boys would still be with me if they hadn't been ordered to lands far away to fight and die for who knew what? I would have signed it a thousand times and more, for each one of them to come home. I signed for your sons, for your nephews, for your boys. As mine are with God, and I pray that I will be with them soon.

Sign my Petition

Lowri Kirkham.

A Poem inspired by Harriet Evans, volunteer organiser from Llangollen and all the women and men from across Wales who gave up their time to collect the 390,296 signatures for the Welsh Women's Peace petition 1923/24.

Sign my petition,
Sign it for them,
Sign it for all our heroic, young men.

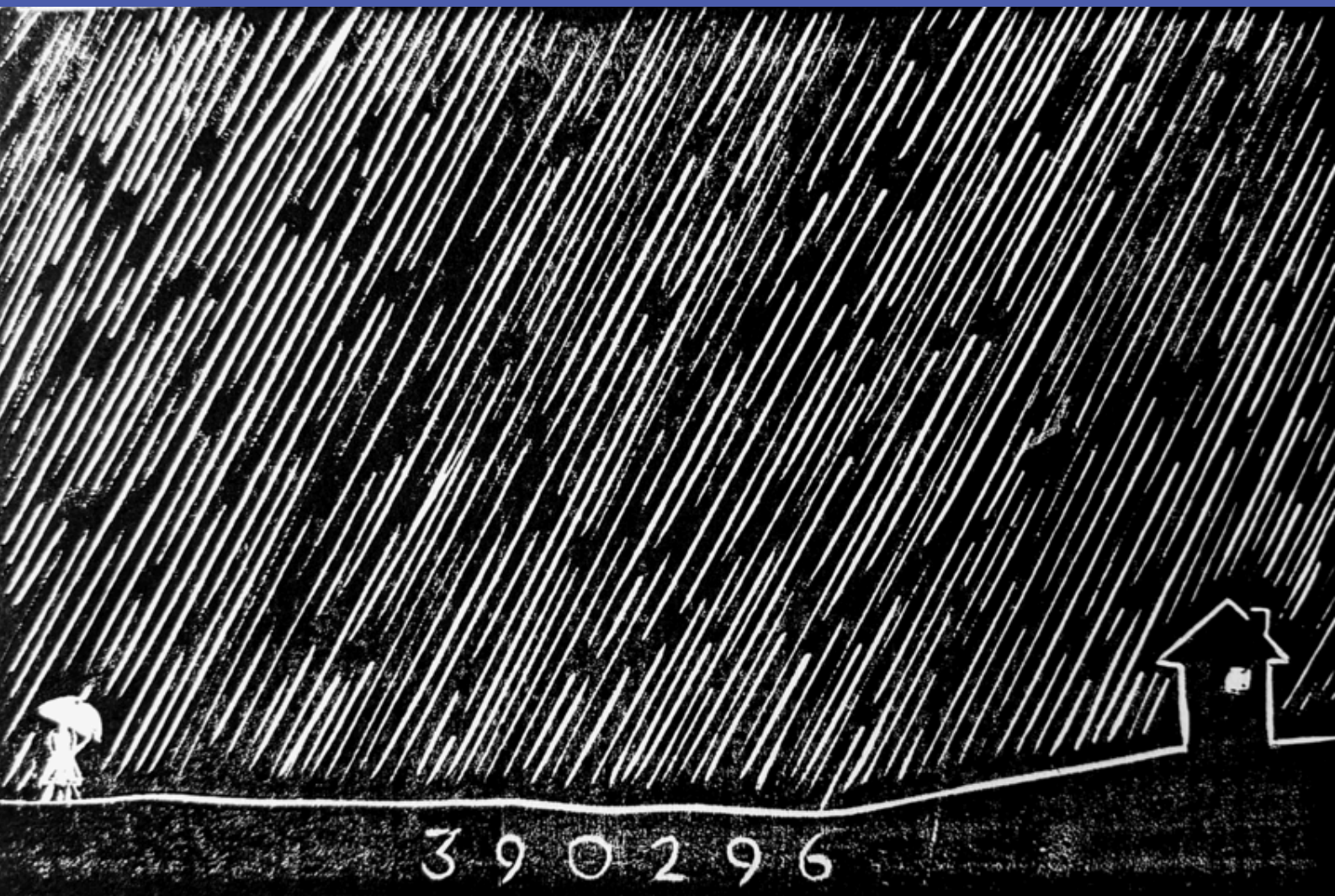
Sign my petition,
Sign it for me,
I'll hold the baby, while you do the tea.

Sign my petition,
Sign with no shame,
Sign with an 'X' and I'll fill out your name.

Sign my petition,
I've walked all this way,
I've got twelve more houses to visit today.

Sign my petition,
I know you feel shattered,
It just takes a minute, and every name matters.

Sign the petition,
Sign it for you,
Sign it because... what else can we do?



Lino cut © Lowri Kirkham