

“Inspired by Annie”: The Story of the 1924 Welsh Women’s Peace Petition to America

[JULY 31, 2019 CRAIG OWEN](#) (UPDATED 5 MARCH 2020 FOR #IWD2020 FEATURE)



*The 1923 Welsh Women’s Peace Petition, coordinated by the Welsh League of Nations Union, was signed by 390,296 women in a call for America to join and lead the League of Nations, to prevent the outbreak of another war in the aftermath of World War One. The Welsh delegation, led by **Annie Jane Hughes-Griffiths** (pictured above in Washington, March 1924) presented the Memorial to US President Calvin Coolidge, alongside the National League of Women’s Voters which represented millions of American women.*

In 1923 - the horrors of World War 1 having galvanised a whole generation against conflict - women of Wales organised an unprecedented campaign for world peace. 390,296 women signed a memorial petition through the Welsh League of Nations Union (stated in the press to have been over 7 miles long), calling for America to join and lead the new League of Nations – calling for ‘Law not War’. This is the story of this jewel from the archive collections of Wales’ Temple of Peace and Health.

The Welsh Women’s Peace Petition to America is one of the most inspiring stories to have emerged through the Heritage Lottery Funded [‘Wales for Peace’](#) programme over the [WW100 centenary period](#) 2014-18. Led by the [Welsh Centre for International Affairs](#) in partnership with [10 of Wales’ leading organisations](#), Wales for Peace explored how, in the 100 years since WW1, people had contributed to the search for peace – involving many hundreds of volunteers and community groups Wales-wide in uncovering and ‘joining up’, for the first time, the [‘national story’ of Wales’ rich peace heritage](#).

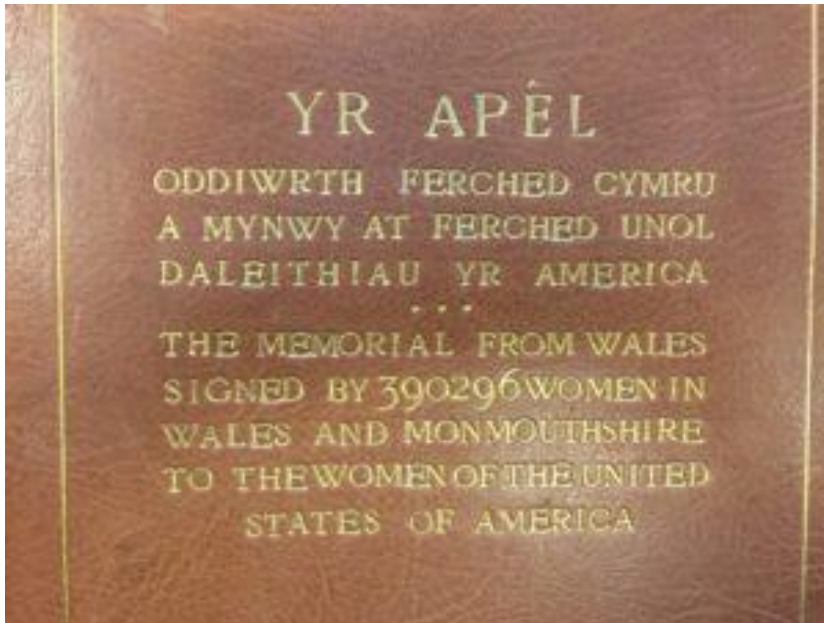
The Women’s Peace Petition itself has fascinated thousands of exhibition visitors, attracted the interest of politicians and academics, and inspired creation of a community-led campaign, ‘[Heddwch Nain Mamgu](#)’ (‘Grandmother’s Peace’), which aims to involve Welsh women in taking action on peace today, towards the centenary in 2023-4.

Discussions are developing between the National Library of Wales and the Smithsonian Institute with a view to digitising the Petition signatures held in Washington, and perhaps even reuniting them with the [Memorial Binding and Declaration](#) held by WCIA, for the 2024 centenary of this remarkable campaign.

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The Story of the ‘Rediscovery’

In 2014, amidst research towards setting up the ‘Wales for Peace’ project, WCIA Chief Executive [Martin Pollard](#) (now Chief Executive of the Learned Society of Wales) was exploring old volumes in the library of [Wales’ National Temple of Peace and Health](#). He drew out a Moroccan Leather binding bearing an incredibly tantalising gold leaf inscription:



Contained within, are just a [few pages of vellum parchment](#) illuminated in mediaeval style manuscript of Indian Ink, with a declaration of Peace and Solidarity between the women of Wales and America – calling for America to join and take a world-leading role in the League of Nations to forge ‘peace for future generations’ in the aftermath of WW1. Martin Pollard recalled:

“It was a breathtaking moment... This document commemorated a post-WW1 peacebuilding movement of vast ambition, far beyond anything we have witnessed in living memory. But how could such a story not be known as part of Wales’ story – and especially of the Temple of Peace? How could such a record have become forgotten in plain sight? Where were the signatures... and where might they be now? How was such a gargantuan effort coordinated? Who by... and who to? What happened, and what happened as a result? How might we find out...?”

The Story of ‘Women, War & Peace’

Volunteers and community groups Wales-wide helped to explore one of Wales’ most fascinating ‘hidden histories’ of peace; [activism by Welsh women on the international stage](#) to **build a better world out of the ashes of WW1**. It is poignant to consider these actions in the **context of the early 1920s: Suffrage – the right to vote** – had only been extended to ‘propertied women’ in 1918, and would not reach most women until 1928. Against this backdrop, the Peace Petition represents a hugely significant and bold movement to **champion equality through elevating the voices of women to the international stage**.

Supported by [Ffion Fielding](#), as Exhibitions & Community Engagement Coordinator for the Wales for Peace project over 2015-18, volunteers uncovered archive materials and even [Pathe newsreel footage](#) of a 1926 North Wales Women’s Peace Pilgrimage.

Volunteer blogs started to draw the story together:

- WCIA marked [International Women's Day 2016](#) with an article 'Remembering Wales' women peace builders, launching a 'call for hidden histories' about the petition.
- ['Those Marvellous Women'](#) was a blog article written up by WCIA Volunteer Gwenllian Jones in June 2016, and used extensively as an online reference over the WW1 centenary period as a result of which it was updated in May 2019, to reflect further information and corrections that had come to light.
- The [North Wales Women's Peace March of 1926](#) article written by WCIA Volunteer Stephen Thomas in June 2016, highlights how the momentum of the 1923-4 women's campaign continued through the 1920s, calling for '**LAW NOT WAR**'.
- Bangor University student [Lowri Ifor](#) has undertaken and [presented research into the Women's Peace Petition](#) and Peace Pilgrimage, at the [Cymdeithas y Cymod Remembrance Weekend](#) in Caernarfon Nov 2017, at the [Wales Peace History Conference](#) marking UN Peace Day 21 Sept 2018 and '[Peacemakers of WW1](#)' conference in Blaenau Ffestiniog for WW100 weekend Nov 2018.

By 2017, interest and momentum had snowballed further, as WCIA teamed up with [International Photojournalist Lee Karen Stow](#) to stage the '[Women War & Peace](#)' [Exhibition](#) – unveiled at the Senedd in August 2017, alongside the 1418NOW 'Poppies: Weeping Window' sculptures from the Tower of London, visited by an estimated 80,000 people. The Women's Peace Petition took centre stage, with the Memorial in a display case accompanied by a panel outlining its story.



- View [Women War & Peace Exhibition Launch](#)
- View [Cardiff Poppies Launch](#), 7 Aug 2017

The post-WW1, 1920s Women's Peace Petition became a highlight within of a [rich 'peace heritage' of movements and actions led by Welsh women](#), from those who supported WW1 Conscientious Objectors, to 'What the Suffragists did next', the Welsh League of Nations Union and Education Advisory Committees of the 1920s-30s, Peace Ballot of 1935, and particularly within the Anti Nuclear CND (Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament) from the 1950s onwards – in particular, the Wales led [Greenham Common Women's Peace Camp](#) from 1981-2000.

In drawing together the '[whole story](#)' [exhibition of Wales for Peace](#) in 2018, it was therefore no coincidence that the central strand of the Peace Heritage rainbow, 'Championing Equality', brought together the story of the central role [women have played in Welsh internationalism over the last 100 years](#).

The Story of the 1923 Peace Petition Campaign

Researching the story of the 1923 Women's Peace Petition campaign *itself* has been an **archival treasure hunt**, involving many volunteers and researchers from Cardiff to Bangor and Aberystwyth.

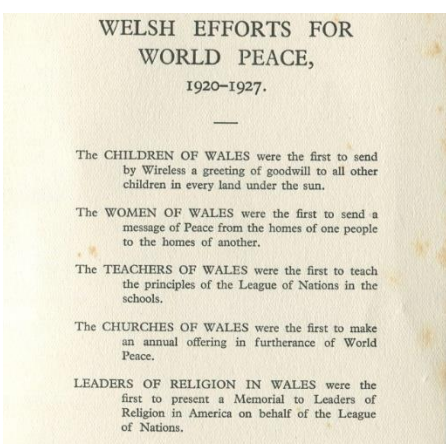
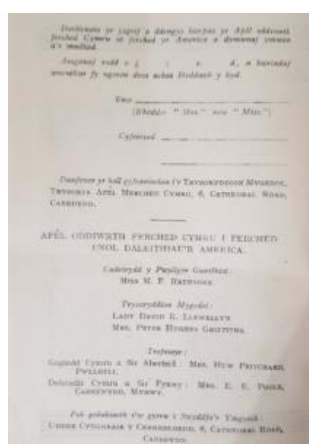
Origin of the Idea – 1922

Two sources record origins of the original idea of the Women's Peace Petition: A [letter of July 3rd 1922](#) from Rev Gwilym Davies, Organiser of the Welsh League of Nations Union, to Lord David Davies, WLoNU Chairman, proposing the idea; and an article in the ['Welsh Outlook' magazine of November 1923](#), which records that:

“It was at the Welsh School of Social Service held at Llandrindod Wells in August 1922, that the idea of initiating a peace movement among the women of Wales was first discussed”

A “National Conference of Women” met in Aberystwyth on May 23 1923 to finalise plans for a Wales-wide campaign, appointing two organisers: Mrs Huw Pritchard of Pwllheli (for N Wales & Cardiganshire) and Mrs E. E. Poole of Cardiff (for South Wales & Monmouthshire). Mrs Peter Hughes Griffiths and Lady Llewellyn as Honorary Treasurers, appealed for funds and received donations towards the costs of the nationwide campaign.

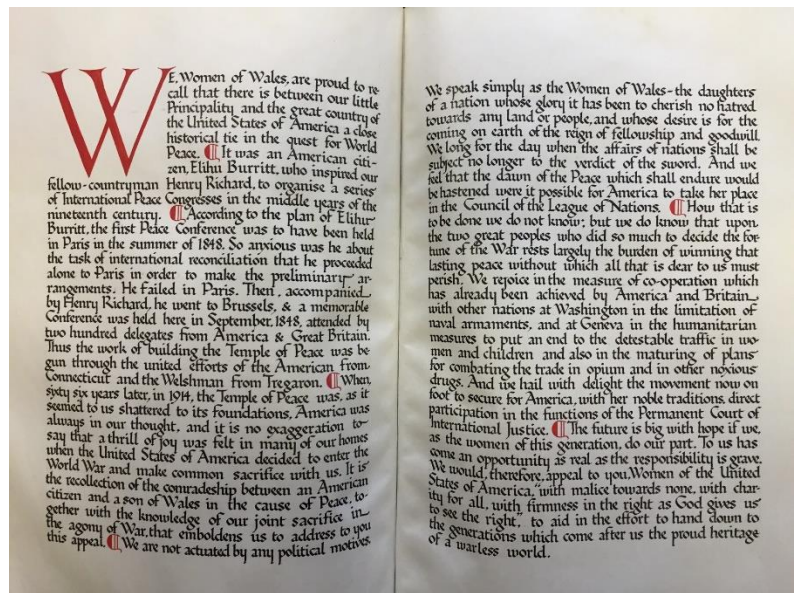
- View [County Organising Committees for the Women's Peace Petition](#), from the Welsh League of Nations Union Archives, Temple of Peace



Within the archives of the Temple of Peace Library remain copies of [signup leaflets](#) that had been distributed to households, via county organising committees of the Welsh League of Nations Union; as well as personal copies of the [Women's Peace Petition Memorial Declaration](#) for signatories to keep and display proudly in their households, or fold into their papers.

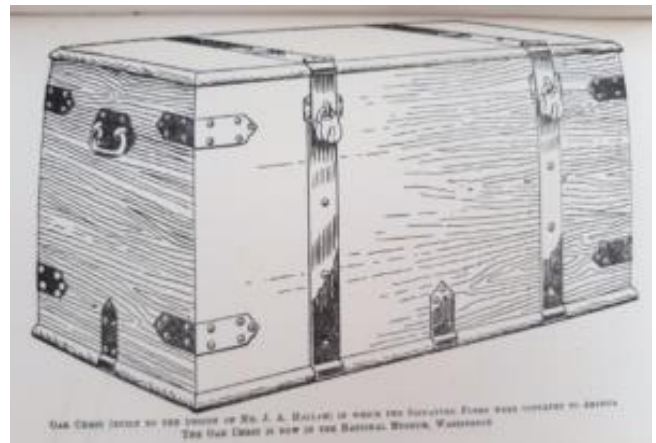
The [Welsh League of Nations Union Yearbook for 1924](#) records the progress of the campaign both in Wales and America ([images 10-12, yearbook pages 16-20](#)). In total the [petition was signed by 390,296 women](#) in Wales and Monmouthshire, representing [30% of the female population](#) (total Welsh population from the 1921 [census](#) being 2,656,000).

A 'Peace of Art' – 1923



The Memorial itself – the beautiful leather binding and vellum pages with mediaeval revival illumination by **Cecily West** – were almost certainly produced at the then newly founded [Gregynog Press](#), opened in 1922 by the [Davies sisters of Llandinam](#), Gwendoline and Margaret. Their brother, [David Davies](#), founded the Welsh League of Nations Union and would go on to found the Temple of Peace. Their incredible story is beautifully told in Trevor Fishlock's book, [A Gift of Sunlight – the story of the Davies' sisters](#) of Gregynog by Gwasg Gomer. The Women's Peace Memorial is of an identical style and materials to others produced by the Gregynog Press.

A great [Welsh Oak chest](#) was designed by Mr J. A. Hallam, in which to convey the enormous number of signature forms to be conveyed to America, with the intention that the chest be presented to the National Museum in Washington – today better known worldwide as the [Smithsonian Institute](#).



Following correspondence between WCIA and the Smithsonian in 2016, it was established the chest was still held within the collections there, and in 2018, [Jill Evans MEP](#) (below) had the opportunity to visit the Smithsonian as part of a political delegation, and was able to witness the signature sheets still held within the chest.

Over 2019, through efforts of [Heddwch Nain](#) supported by [WCIA](#) and the **Wales Peace Institute**, there has been developing correspondence between the [National Library of Wales](#) and the [Smithsonian Institute](#) with a view to exploring scope for digitising the signature sheets, and / or organising a Wales-America project to uncover and share the story of the Welsh Peace Petition to America in the runup to the **Campaign Centenary in 2023-24**.



Mrs 'Peter Hughes Griffiths' Story, and involvement with the Welsh League of Nations Union (WLoNU)



Mrs. Hughes-Griffiths, 1920s. TI Ellis Papers, NLW

Regularly appearing in records and correspondence associated with the creation of the petition, Mrs Hughes-Griffiths was the Chair of the Welsh League of Nations Union during the mid-1920s. As was the convention of the 1920s however, on official records she is referred to by her husband's name, [Rev Peter Hughes Griffiths](#) (1871-1937), who was a highly regarded Calvinistic Methodist Minister from Carmarthenshire.

Martin Pollard, original architect and author of the Wales for Peace project bid, during the [Nov 2018 Temple 80th Anniversary programme](#), spotlighted Mrs Hughes Griffiths as his nomination for **'Wales' Most Inspiring Peacebuilder'**:

"To choose one individual story of Wales' peace builders that really stands out (from the hundreds gathered by Wales for Peace), I would have to choose Mrs Peter Hughes Griffiths. That she is known to history only by her husband's name (so far), rather than as a woman of clearly exceptional leadership and inspiration to thousands – a woman who was Chairman of the Welsh League of Nations Union, and oversaw the organisation of 390,296 women in signing the Peace Petition to America – is not only astonishing today, but a reminder of the journey that Welsh women have been led towards championing equality and having a voice – not just on equality issues, but on international affairs."

Martin Pollard, Learned Society of Wales



Annie Jane Ellis at Aberystwyth station in 1911-12 with friends: Jane Davies, Gwyneth Williams, Annie Jane (then known as Mrs T.E.Ellis) and Mary Ellis, who would join her on the Peace Delegation to America in 1924. TI Ellis Papers, NLW

Mentioned in a number of men's biographical sketches and with over [71 references](#) and [20 subject listings in NLW Archive holdings](#), today Annie-Jane Hughes Griffiths seems today highly deserving of her own biography!

Born as Annie Jane Davies in 1873 in Llangeitho, Carmarthenshire, she was active in Welsh cultural and political life from an early age. In 1898 she married [Thomas Edward Ellis](#) (1859-99) from Bala, the Liberal MP for Merionethshire (1886-99), one of the first proponents of a legislative devolved Welsh Assembly, and Chief Whip for the Liberal Party (1894-95) during transition from Gladstone to Rosebery (see [T.E.Ellis papers, NLW](#)).

They had one son, [Thomas Iorwerth Ellis](#) (1899-1970), who became a prominent educationalist, author and secretary of [Undeb Cymru Fydd](#) (the 'New Wales Union') from 1943-67.

Thomas Edward (TE) Ellis, Annie's first husband (above)

Thomas Iorwerth (TI) Ellis, son of Tom and Annie Ellis (below)

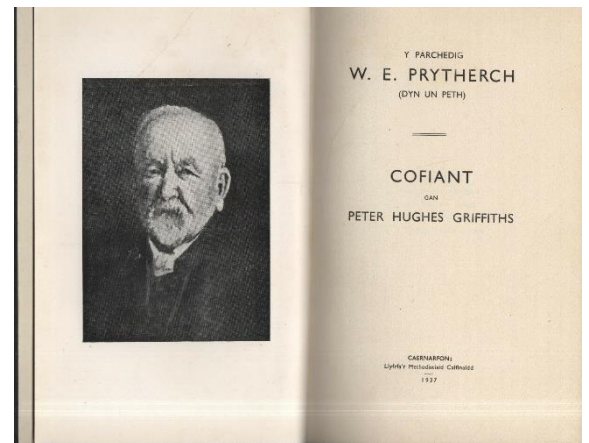


Tragically however, Tom Ellis' health was fragile (having developed typhoid on a trip to Egypt in 1890), and he died aged just 40 in Cannes France, 8 months before his son was born.

Annie brought up her son Tom as a widowed single mother, until on [24 October 1916 she remarried](#) the [Rev Peter Hughes Griffiths](#) (1871-1937) from Ferryside, Carmarthenshire, a Methodist Minister in Charing Cross, London.



Rev Peter Hughes Griffiths, Memorial Booklet 1937

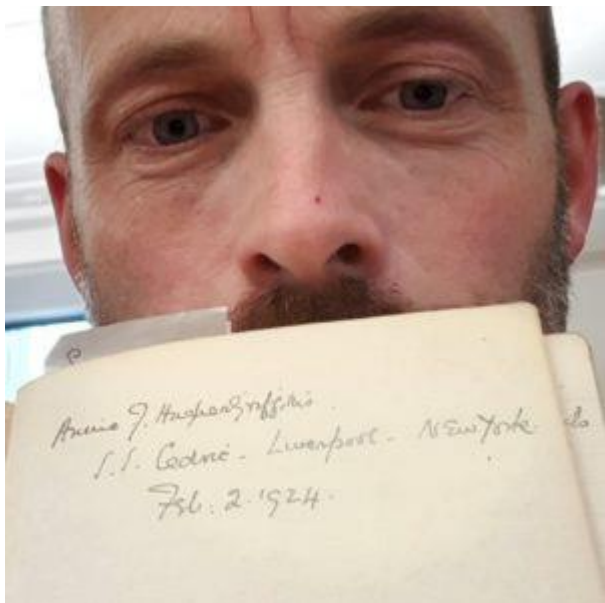


A Leading Welsh Internationalist

Following WW1, Annie Hughes-Griffiths became hugely involved in international peace building efforts through the [Welsh League of Nations Union](#) (founded in 1922), becoming its Chair in 1923 and President of the WLoNU Women's Committee.

From May 1923, she took on leadership of a Wales-wide campaign, coordinating the Welsh Women's Peace Petition and Memorial to America. In March 1924, she led a 'peace delegation' of 3 women from Wales to America: **Mrs Annie-Jane Hughes Griffiths, Mrs Mary Ellis and Miss Eluned Prys.**

Annie's Diary: The Story of the Peace Delegation to America



Craig Owen discovers Annie Hughes-Griffiths' American Journal from 1924, in the National Library of Wales archives, June 2019.

In April 2019, Head of Wales for Peace Craig Owen was developing a reference resource for Peace Archives held in the National Library of Wales when he stumbled across a reference for [Mrs Ellis 'American Journal'](#), tagged "Peace Societies", held in the archives of the "[T I Ellis Papers](#)" (Thomas Iorwerth Ellis, 1899-1970, the son of Annie-Jane Hughes Griffiths).

Tantalisingly, the listing summarises...

SCOPE AND CONTENT: "Journal, February-March 1924, of Annie J. Hughes-Griffiths, recording her trip to America as part of the Welsh Women's Peace Memorial, including the outward and return voyages. The journal contains references to Leila Mégane, including the part played by Hughes-Griffiths in Megane's wedding to T. Osborne Roberts on 21 March 1924."

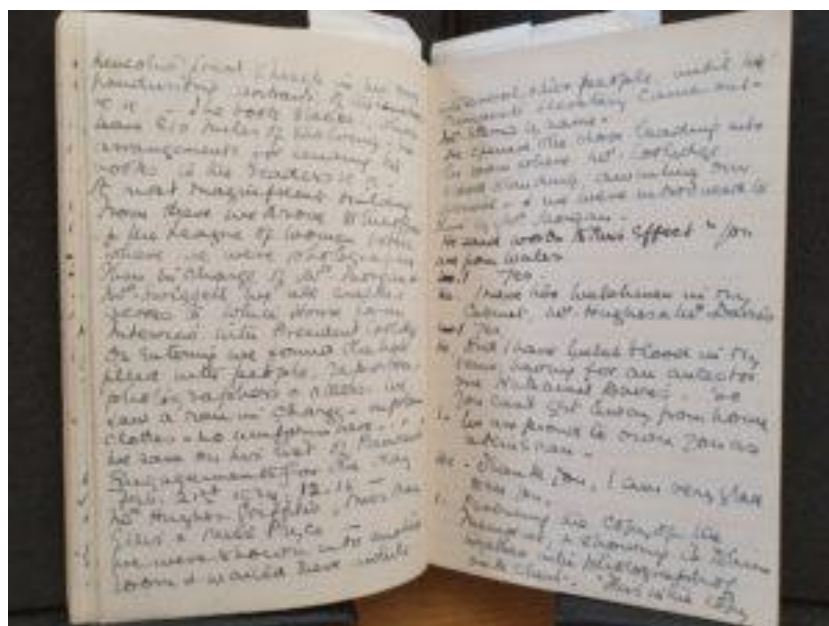
National Library of Wales Archives

[View the digitised pages of Annie's Diary here](#)

(indexed by date)

[View the draft transcription document here](#)

This is currently on *Google Docs*, with work progressing to improve the quality of record.



A Book Club with a Difference



Annie's Book Club evening, L-R: Tracy Pallant, Katy Watson, Craig Owen, Ffion Fielding, Jane Harries, Fi Fenton, Jenny Allen.

In June 2019, a novel 'Book Club' evening gathered at the Temple of Peace – but a book club with a difference. Each of the participants agreed to transcribe a chapter, draw out highlights from Annie's accounts, and briefly research historical references they could find online. As each shared a section, the story of Annie's Journey unveiled – poignantly in her own "voice" as the whole group were reading from her pen, and experiencing the journey with her.

The session was filmed by [Tracy Pallant](#) and Amy Peckham from [Valley & Vale Community Arts](#), who will be creating a short video clip over August of "Annie's Story".

"It was quite emotional journey... with not already knowing each other's sections, Annie's journey literally unfolded for us like a live re-enactment of her own experiences. It was a lot of fun – her hugely understated writing style, observations and insights into the norms of the time, were captivating. She might reference "a lovely meal, with a pleasant group of people listening supportively"; and then you'd find via other sources she'd actually addressed a crowd of 500 American society leaders for over an hour. Then on a following page, a eulogy to the American Cafeteria. Annie's Diary is a very personal insight into a time of huge hope and change." [Ffion Fielding](#), National Museum of Wales

Missing Pages?

During the Book Club session, it became apparent a few pages seemed to be missing as there were notable 'gaps' in the account (or cities that seemed to have quite 'brief' visits). On returning to the National Library in July 2019, Craig identified a further 7 pages in the Ellis Papers that had escaped digitisation – these are now added into the [digitised set on Flickr](#), with the pages re-indexed by date. Once transcription and indexing / tagging is complete, the diary will be uploaded to People's Collection Wales for long-term accessibility.



Euston Station, 1923



LMS Railway 'Royal Scot' – Wikimedia

The Sendoff: London, Liverpool and crossing the Atlantic

A Saloon Carriage had been reserved for us through the extreme kindness of Mr Glynnne Roberts of Euston Station, & this was no ordinary saloon, but a Drawing Room with comfortable easy chairs, table... (research suggests he may have procured them a carriage from the stock of the Royal Train, by the then newly formed London Midland and Scottish Railway).

Reporters were busy taking own notes, and several photos were taken by the Press Association. Mr. Goronwy Owen spoke a few words, summarising the gesture which was being dissipated between Wales and America, and wishing us God speed. I said a few words in reply, and fried thank them all adequately and fittingly. We then got aboard the train.

(Annie also lists many of the 'great and the good' of Welsh society and political leaders who had turned up to Euston Station to wish the delegation on their way)

Mrs. Boyd Robson presented me with a beautiful bouquet of yellow daffodils tied with yellow shot green ribbon...

(These beautiful daffodils become a signature of Annie's appearances on the journey, surviving through to Washington 'in perfect condition'!)

Welsh League of Nations Union
Press Cutting from the Western
Mail of 5th Feb 1924, with Annie
Hughes Griffiths surrounded by
wellwishers at London Euston
Station, carrying the Peace
Memorial to America.





White Star Liner RMS Cedric

(Wikimedia Commons)

(In Liverpool) we got on the boat, the [SS Cedric](#), And a representative of the [White Star Line](#) company made himself known to me and told me that the oak case containing the 390296 signatures was safely in the hold. Miss Prys, Mr Davis and myself were photographed several

times. Their return voyage to Liverpool incidentally would be on the [RMS Olympic](#) – sister ship to [Titanic](#), which had sunk only 12 years earlier.

[Leila Megane](#) (a famous Welsh Opera singer) and her fiancé [Osborne Roberts](#) also going on this boat she goes 1st class he 2nd class the line between 1st and 2nd is severely observed on the boat. (Leila Megane was a Welsh opera singer then at the height of her career; Annie would later play a role at their wedding). All our friends, our farewell friends, had to leave the boat about 3:15 and we left soon after 3:30 p.m. It was a dull day; but not wet. We steamed down the river and soon had tea. I found at the purser's office about 15 telegrams, and just as many letters wishing me luck.

Annie goes on to describe the Transatlantic crossing, from Feb 2nd to Feb 11th – which was not smooth sailing.

“Felt sick and needy and did not go on deck a tall. Heavy rolling of boat. Took no meals in saloon, just sat about and slept and read novels. Had very little zest for anything”.

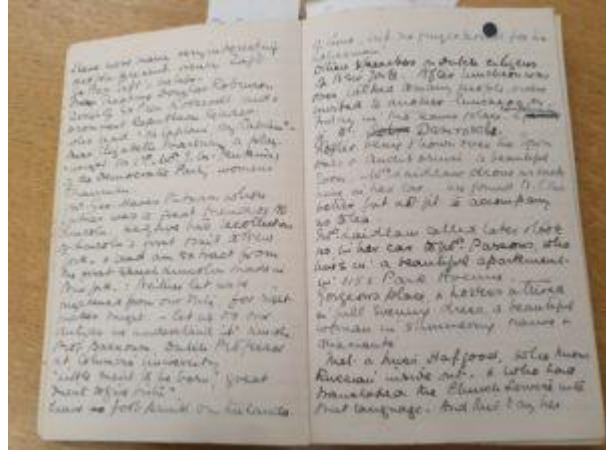
However, by 10th Feb, “Had (Sunday) service in 1st Class Saloon. Leila Megane sang ‘[O Fryniau Caersalem](#)’ as a solo, & a few of us sang it over again as a chorus. After the service was over, a gentleman came & asked us if we were a Welsh choir on tour in the States... very tickled at this as our singing was truly atrocious.”

Leila Megane (1891-1960), Welsh Mezzosoprano Opera Singer, who married Composer Osborne Roberts in 1924. They journeyed from Wales to America on the SS Cedric with Annie and the Women's Peace Delegation

Little did Annie know at this point that, in 2 months time, she would be giving away Leila Megane at her own wedding to Osborne Roberts! See page 18.



Arrival in New York: Women of Wales and America Unite



Arrival in New York beneath the Statue of Liberty – Wikimedia Commons

The Cedric took ten boats to push her up the river thro' the ice'. Saw Statue of Liberty glowing in the sunlight. Bitterly cold wind, bright sunshine. Waited about until 12 – had hurried lunch. When at lunch, a press man came to me and said 'Mrs Griffiths, I am from the press'. 'I have nothing to say', I said.

'Oh!' Said he – 'we know your story of the Women of Wales Movement – but we want to take some photos – will you come to the top deck when you have finished?' Agreed said I. So Eluned & I trotted up to the top deck 1st class – where we found four ranks of photographers awaiting us. There we were photographed quite twenty times – in different positions... and back again to 2nd class to await the coming of the Immigration Officers.

We went on Deck & had seen Marg Ellis, Mrs Tuttle, Miss Belle Bauch & other American ladies, who had come down to meet the deputation in the Customs Shed awaiting us. Eventually they got on board and there was much hand shaking & welcoming us. The ladies all wore daffodils – I had had the daffodil bouquet (from Euston) put in cold storage when I got on the Cedric & it was beautifully fresh for our arrival in New York, so I carried it in my hand and wore my best costume and hat to greet the American ladies.

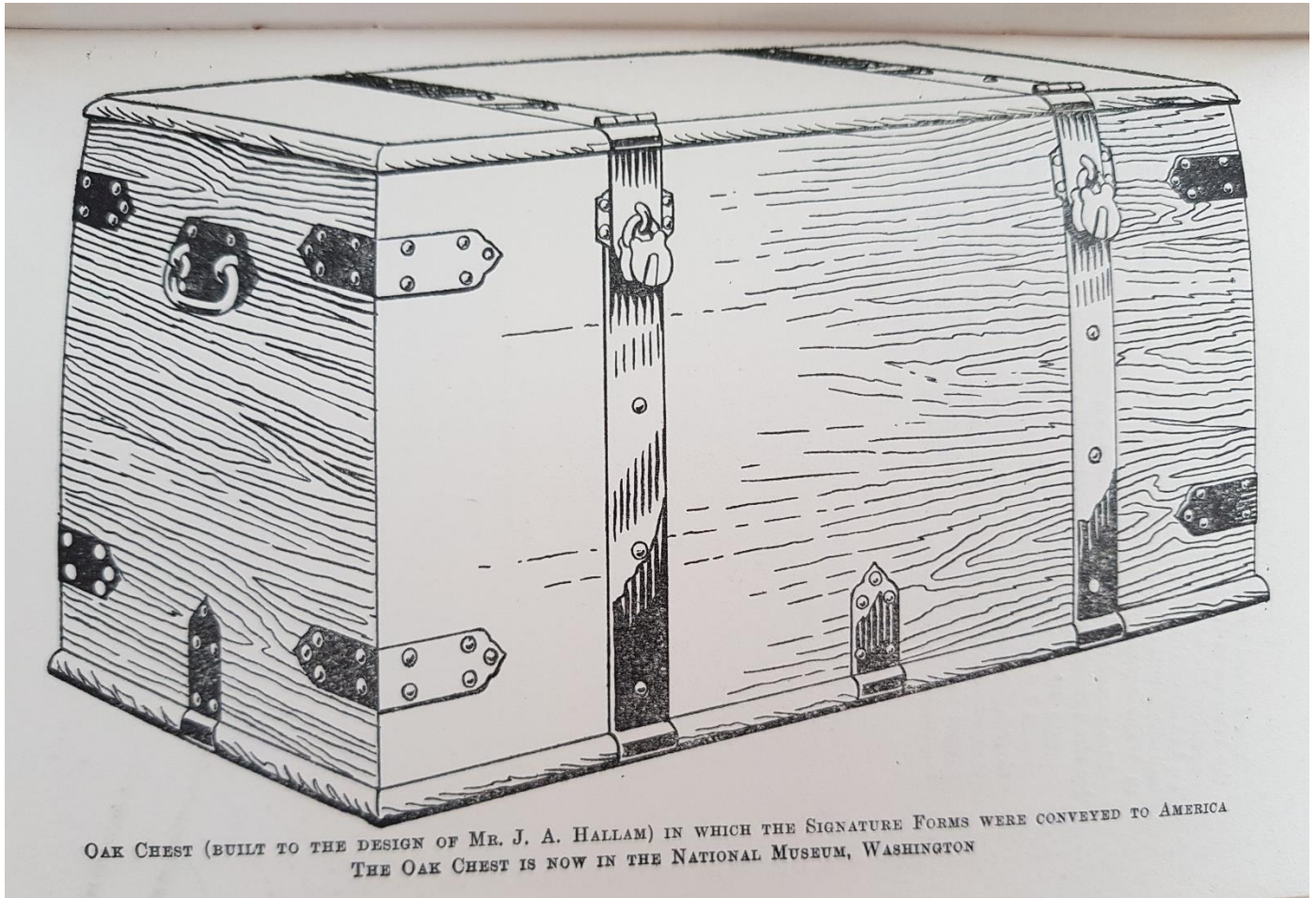


New York skyline, 1920s-30s – Wikimedia Commons

My impressions of the American women I have met today is that they are genuine & sincere in their efforts to give the Movement all the support they can. Their reception of us was so spontaneous so natural & without any of the snide and affectation of English women. They accepted us at our highest value, as Ambassadors of Peace. They did not quiz and criticise us first and 'gradually thaw'.

Rather a blizzard when we got to New York, but better weather towards evening. After dinner we went to the Ambassador's Hotel. The Club is very comfortable but very warm; still one gets used to the warm atmosphere & dresses accordingly.

The following pages offer insights into Annie's first few days in New York, with press interviews, ticket bookings and travel arrangements, meetings and lunches, and many fascinating observations on her impressions of America – such as Annie's wonderment at the experience of a 'Cafeateria'. On February 18th, the delegation were received for a large luncheon organised by the [National American Women Suffrage Association](#) alongside 9 organisations (representing 5 million American women) – who would go on to work together to form the first [Conference on the Cause and Cure of War](#). There the Welsh delegation **presented the oak chest containing the 390,296 signatures**, to the women of America:



The Oak Chest holding the 390,296 signatories to the Welsh Women's Peace Petition, as illustrated in the Welsh League of Nations Union Annual Report for 1924-5.

“After the luncheon we had speeches. [Mrs Ruth Morgan](#) introduced the delegation – & I gave them an address on the links that bind Wales & America together, & our act of memorial. It seemed to be appreciated. Then we three went up to the chest which had been placed on a dais & padlocks were unlocked, & we gave up the padlocks & the memorial to Mrs Ruth Morgan. Then the chest was inspected and the first question I was asked concerning it was “Oes yma enwau o Sir Feirionydd” (where are the signatories from Merioneth?). Miss Sue [?] Harvard sang ‘[Gwlad y Delyn](#)’ & ‘[Hen Wlad fy Nhadau](#)’ & thus ended one chapter in the history of the Memorial.

“It was a truly thrilling gathering and one which in our wildest flights of imagination, we had never thought of on such a comprehensive scale.”

Washington: Petitioning the President for Peace



Union Station, Washington DC – Wikimedia



From Penn Rail Road Station... Got on the 12.10 train for Washington – had lunch on the train – passed thro' Baltimore, Philadelphia & other places. An un-interesting journey: Except for the two rivers that we crossed, houses all detached & wide acres of flat country partly covered by snow. Had a comfortable journey. Met at Washington station by Mrs Eastman & her car – & drove to the [American Assoc of University Women's Clubs](#).

Following a couple of days exploring Washington – visiting Lincoln's Memorial, and paying their respects to former US President [Woodrow Wilson](#), architect of the League of Nations, who had [died on Feb 3rd 1924](#), 2 weeks prior to their visit – on **February 21st 1924**, the Welsh and American Women's Peace Delegation met with the [US President, Calvin Coolidge](#). The following is Annie's (hugely modest and understated) account of their meeting with the 30th President:



White House, 1920s postcard

We drove to the office of the League of Women Voters, where we were photographed.

Then in charge of Mrs Morgan & Mrs Swiggelt, we all walked across to White House for an interview with President Coolidge. On entering we found the hall filled with people, reporters,

photographers & others.

We saw a man in charge – in plain clothes –no uniform here! We saw on his list of President's Engagements for the day Feb 21st 1924: 12.15 – Mrs Hughes-Griffiths, Mrs Mary Ellis and Miss Pryce – we were shown into another room & waited there awhile with several other people, while the President's secretary came out. Mr Sterns by name.

He opened the door leading into the room where Mr Coolidge stood standing, awaiting our arrival – & we were introduced to him by Mrs Morgan.

He said words to this effect “ You are from Wales”.

I: Yes

He: And I have Welsh blood in my veins, having for an ancestor Nathaniel Davies. So you can't get away from home.

I: We are proud to own you as a fellow countryman.

He: Thank you, I am very glad to see you.

I: (Producing the copy of the Memorial & showing it to him together with photograph of oak chest). “This is the copy of the memorial we have brought over from Women of Wales to the Women of America, and the chest containing the signatures. We hope you will allow the chest to be placed in the Smithsonian Institute for all time.”

He: I will do what I can to help you. I do not see what reason there is for it not to be placed there – I was the President of the Institute.”

We then left the room, after being cordially pleasantly welcomed by the President, a quiet dignified man of middle height. Straight nose with the crease in his trousers, a pleasant manner and voice.

We went outside the White House & were besieged by an army of photographers – 9 in all. Taken many, many times. Shots have reached us this eve which are exceedingly good.

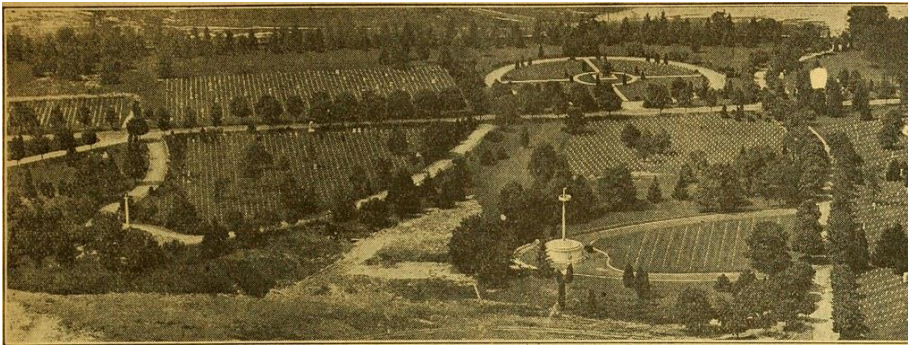


Annie-Jane Hughes Griffiths holding the Welsh Women's Peace Memorial outside the White House, following their meeting with US President Calvin Coolidge; alongside Mrs Ruth Morgan (President of the American League of Women Voters), Miss Eluned Prys and Mrs. Mary Ellis.

TI Ellis Collections, NLW

Over the course of the day in Washington, following the meeting with President Coolidge:

We started for [Arlington \(Cemetery\)](#), a place about 4 miles from Washington, where sleep the silent hosts who died in the war for the Union.

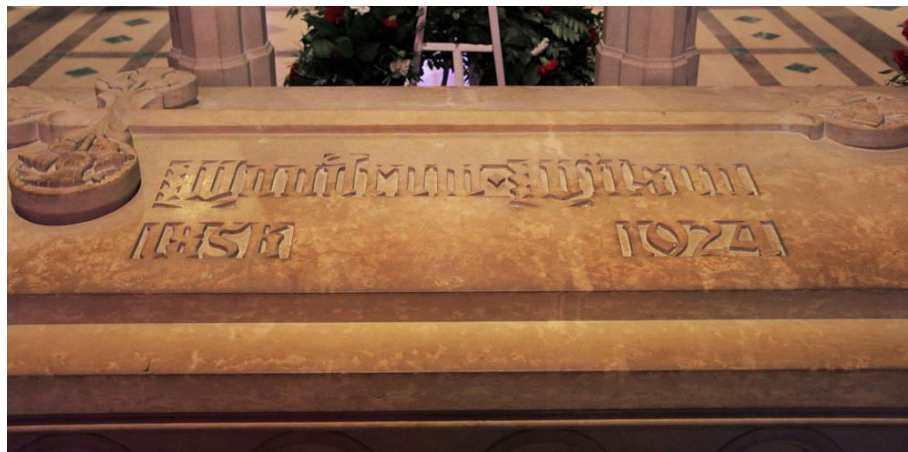
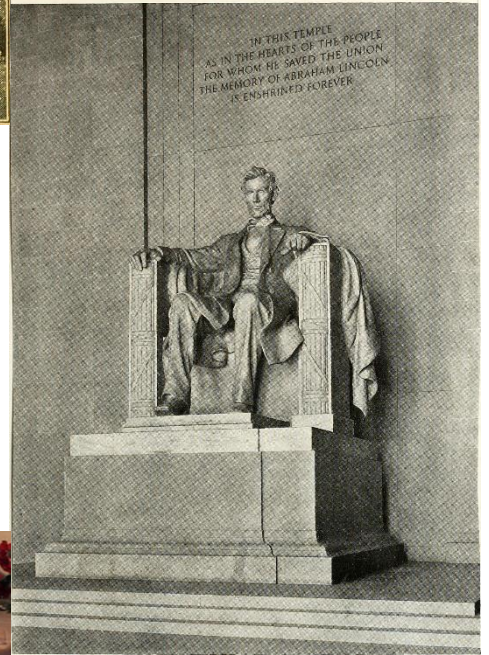


Arlington Cemetery, 1920s

Lincoln Memorial (below)

Then we drove back past the [Lincoln Memorial](#) where Eluned took some photos. From here we went to the Photographers who took our photos outside White House. I ordered some large ones & post cards.

Thence to [Washington Cathedral](#) where we saw [Woodrow Wilson](#)'s tomb with the simple inscription [Woodrow Wilson, 1856-1924](#)



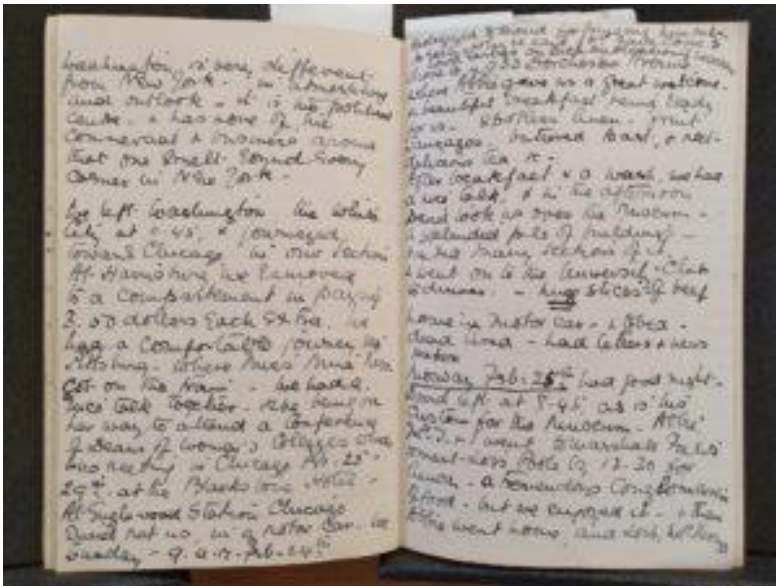
28th President Woodrow Wilson, who negotiated the 1918 Treaty of Versailles and Paris Peace Process that ended World War 1, had died just 18 days before their visit.

A beautiful building in process of building – the money to be procured before continuing to build. From there back to Club lunch – where we were entertained by the alumni of [Radcliffe College](#), the female part of Harvard University. Made a short speech after lunch, Mrs Doyle presided.

Car to Smithsonian Institute where we decided – !! – on a spot where the oak chest should be placed. Had very jolly drive – back to Club. Thence to [Mr. & Mrs. La Follette's](#) – a Senator likely to be new President & lead new party (the [US Progressive Party, 1924-34](#)) a very nice couple.

[George Washington Day](#) – cherry flavour (reference to 'cherry pies', traditionally associated with the National Holiday which celebrates the 1st President's birthday) – large crowd Senators' ladies standing in a row receiving the said. Best part of this house was the great sympathy with Peace movement – "we are all interested in it, but we have different ways of setting about it." Went to George Washington Anniversary meeting in [Memorial Hall](#).

'Peace Tour' of the United States: A Month Spreading Wales' Message, 22 Feb-22 March 1924



On Saturday, Feb 22nd 1924, Annie and her companions were 'waved off' from Washington on a 'Welsh Women's Peace Tour' that would take in the whole of the United States over the course of 4 weeks.

Mrs. Ruth Morgan came to bid us goodbye, her last message being as

follows:

"Our organisation, the National Council for Prevention of War, is trying to do one definite thing & is arranging an active Campaign to attempt to secure the sanction of the Senate for entrance into the Permanent Court of International Justice. Your visit to us has awakened a great deal of fresh interest, & will help our campaign forward greatly, for the success of such a campaign depends entirely upon popular interest, & your message to us has added that touch of drama which is necessary to arouse that interest."

Find out the impact that this 'statement of intent' ultimately went on to have on have for the American Women's Peace movements, on page 26.

Chicago

*Mrs. Thomas & I had been invited to meet the Deans of Women's Colleges by Mrs. Kerr... Got to the 2nd floor where the guests, about **400 women**, were assembled – but the most awful Babel of voices it has ever been my lot to hear. Prof. Merriam of Chicago University; a Dr. (Agnes) Wells, a woman of great distinction & President of the Assoc. of Women Deans, gave her report. Then Frau Schreibe gave an account of the need for brotherhood, being one of 35 members of the Reichstag 15 of which were school teachers. Then I was called upon to speak of the Memorial, did so for 15 minutes. Got home by 10.30. Very glad the ordeal was over... Mrs. Thomas said I did alright.*



Colorado

Annie's diary, particularly of their month's American tour, is fascinating not only for its social commentary of the internationalist women's movement, peace campaign and politics of the time, but for her observations of the natural environment, landscapes and cultures.

We now got to the Land of Canyons. Most wonderfully formed rocks of bright red colour. Most wonderful formation. Sphinx like in shape, formidable in appearance. Came to quite the most well-kept station on the (rail) road... 'Morgan' written in white stones on the station level... We hired a car & hied us to the Ogden Canyon, a distance of 11 miles. Our drive was an exceedingly well set up. Young man in knee breeches, & in passing thro the town called at his garage for his overcoat & splendid crown & yellow check coat. We drove up through the ravine or pass or canyon, thro' snow covered rocks & hills, with here & there the hot steam appearing from the hot water springs higher up.



Salt Lake City

Mr John James is British Vice-Consul, a native of Swansea, born in Haverfordwest... Mr James told me we ought to have been at the St David's Day Celebrations the previous evening. He wanted to see us **take our message to the women of Utah**: It was arranged that we two were to go... to the Mormon Temple grounds.

Soon Mr Williams a Welshman from Brechfa, Carmarthenshire – the State Senator – arrived with his wife and son, in a fine motorcar... I had to tell the W.O.W. (women of Wales') story...

We went as far as the University on the hill, where one had a most splendid view of the city beneath the clearly cut snow clad mountains, like white icing so smooth and straight in appearance – a fine mist rising from the Lake in the distance was a most impressive picture.



San Francisco

We drove on to Stanford University which stands in its own grounds of 8000 acres. The buildings are of buff sandstone and they are grouped around open courts or quadrangles and are connected by continuous open arcades of arches and pillars. The no. of students at present is about 2500 – 2000 men, and 500 women....



Mr. Salisbury Williams from the harbour commission Presided, and there was singing and recitations and speeches. I spoke for about 20 minutes, and at close of meeting met Mr. & Mrs. Dunn. Mrs. Dunn is an old Aber student from Pontypool, knew me in Aber. Has been out in S F Since August. Very homesick when I spoke to her.

Los Angeles

Almost as soon as I got into the (Gates) Hotel, a lady accosted me being anxious to have an interview with me for the Los Angeles Times. I sat and and talked with her and told her of our message, and of our visit to the Presidents Tomb in Washington. I announced that I was to **speak in the evening service**. The interview appeared in Monday's paper, quite a nice article.

...through South Pasadena to 212 Brauch street. Chapel crowded. Mr. Jones's son commenced the service very earnestly and prayerfully. Dr John Davis introduced me by questioning Sara and John Saunders, and brother John & myself. I then **spoke for 40 minutes – without one note!** – of our mission.

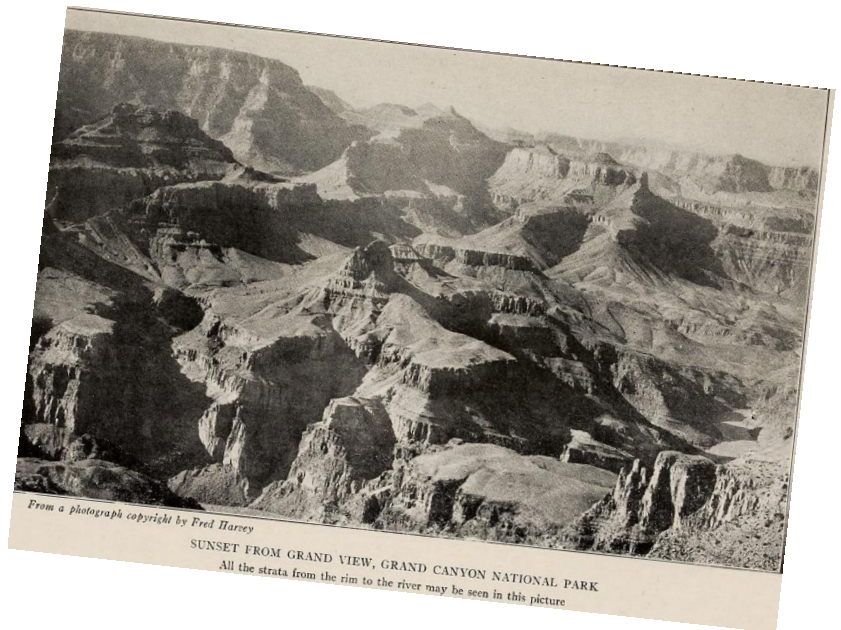
Went to office to get reservations and then drove to Hollywood. Went to West Coast Production studio, to Beverly Hills Hotel where they were shooting pictures in the garden...

Then Santa Monica Ocean Park, Venice, where we went to a Chinese restaurant. Had Chow Mein and Tea in the Chinese-style. I didn't enjoy it.



Grand Canyon

The Grand Canyon is beyond description in formation colour and effect... We went to a Morie Lecture given by 2 brothers, who had travelled through the Canyon from Colorado River right through the Gulf of Mexico, a distance of 217 miles. We saw pictures of their wonderful experiences in 2 flat bottomed boats, and the many escapades they injured and narrow escapes they had. We went over to Hopi House (the Indian Centre), saw the Indians dance. And shook hands with the chief – who had a University training. He told us he had already 4 wives, but he was still on the market.



Niagara Falls... and an Engagement

Annie's Diary contains a couple of pages recounting the thrill of being guided beneath Niagara Falls through tunnels, and on a boat – a fascinating insight into 1920s tourism! But Annie and Mary also had pressing things on their mind in Niagara: at some point in their travels, their companion Eluned Prys (who was with them in Washington) had taken a separate path – with a fascinating development...!



We got off the train (at Niagara) and went into the station; and began wondering what we had better do about getting in touch with Eluned Prys, who had arranged to meet us at Buffalo that day. As Buffalo was 23 miles beyond Niagara, we decided to get off there and get in touch with Eluned at Lennox Hotel Buffalo – the place arranged for our meeting (They then explore Niagara Falls).

*By that evening: "She was not there.... We then sent a long wire to Eluned." By the following lunchtime: "No sign of Eluned." Finally, they decide to continue their onward train journey without her: "3.42pm when we left by train for Utica, leaving Georgette alone on the platform. We had a pleasant trip by train to Utica: passing through Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse – where Miss Carver and her brother in law came to see us pass through. Miss Carver looked well and bonnie and was very cheery and told us the news of **Eluned's engagement to an Austrian Count!!***

She told us she intended sailing for home on April 5th."

The diary shows they do finally succeed in reuniting with Eluned on Thursday March 20th, at the Women's University Club in New York.

New York... and a Wedding

On their return to New York, from Wednesday 19th March 1924, they reconnected with their colleagues from the [National American Women Suffrage Association](#)

Mrs (Ruth) Morgan spoke of messages which should be sent by women of America to Women of Wales in reply to their message. These replies were (to be) provided for the Annual Meeting of the Welsh Council of the League of Nations Union – in Whit week.

Copy of a letter received from Mrs. C. Chapman Catt, President of the National American Woman Suffrage Association.

THE MEMORIAL FROM THE WOMEN OF WALES TO THE WOMEN OF AMERICA.

NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS,
171, MADISON AVENUE,
NEW YORK,
4th May, 1925.

LEAGUE OF NATIONS UNION,
CARDIFF,
WALES.

GENTLEMEN,

Two years ago the women of Wales presented to the women of the United States of America a memorial upon the subject of world peace, and a committee of these Welsh women brought a petition to the United States where it was presented to several groups of women.

The women of America are now returning the compliment, and beg to inform you that they have held a National Conference on the Cause and Cure of War, which was organized by the nine chief organizations of women in this country, numbering many millions of women in their membership. The subjects which were given in the week of that Conference have been put into printed form, and the women of that Conference, through you, beg to present that report to the women of Wales.

It will be a long journey to the final triumph of the peace movement, but be assured the sympathy for that movement and the determination to serve it, is as earnest in this country as elsewhere.

I have the honor to be,

Yours very truly,

(Signed), CARRIE CHAPMAN CATT,

Chairman,
Conference on the Cause and Cure of War.

The reply as it was published in Wales ([view here](#)).

We had some telephone calls to see to, including one from [Leila Megane](#), who had decided to **get married** the following day, and wished me to give her away!

Leila Megane (1891-1960), Welsh Mezzosoprano Opera Singer, who married Composer Osborne Roberts in 1924. They journeyed from Wales to America on the Cedric with Annie Hughes Griffiths and the Women's Peace Delegation

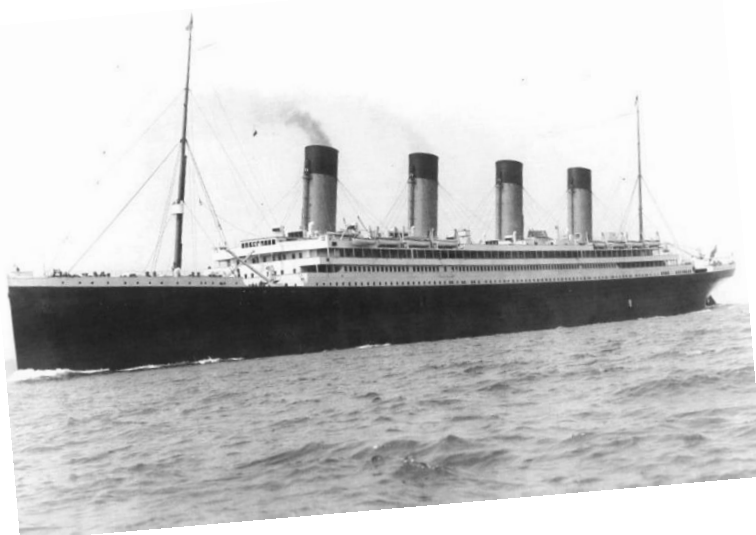
We dressed ourselves in our evening clothes, and ... went to the League of Nations Nou Panhsa Dinner at the Baltimore Hotel. I was put to sit at the speakers table between [Mr Frank Emerson](#) and Mrs James Neal. After speeches by [Mrs Vanderlip](#), Mrs Little and Mr Levenmore, I was called up to give a 2 mins speech . It was a case of "Play up Wales".

In the morning we went down to White Star Offices and got our tickets stamped (for the RMS Olympic). After a very nice lunch, French looking, we four and Mr Schang, the best man, went in a taxi to the Welsh Chapel 120th Street. (Leila) Megane dressed in a covent courting costume, light fawn with felt hat to match. (Megane got the flowers meant for Eluned). Rev Jospheh Evans performed the ceremony in Welsh, and I gave the bride away. There were a few spectators – including Mr and Mrs Mrs Hughes, and Mrs Cobinga Bright and her little girl. At 5.30pm the bride and groom arrived and we had a sumptuous dinner.

We then all went along to the Welsh Church where a reception had been arranged in our honour – Dr Keigwhi Dr Keigwhi presided the Minister of one of the Presbyterian Churches in New York – Addresses of welcome were delivered by Rev. Joseph Evans on behalf of the Welsh Churches of the city, by ladies representing different societies. I spoke for about 25 minutes, giving the message.

This was Annie's **final 'peace message' from the women of Wales to the women of America**, completing their tour of the United States.

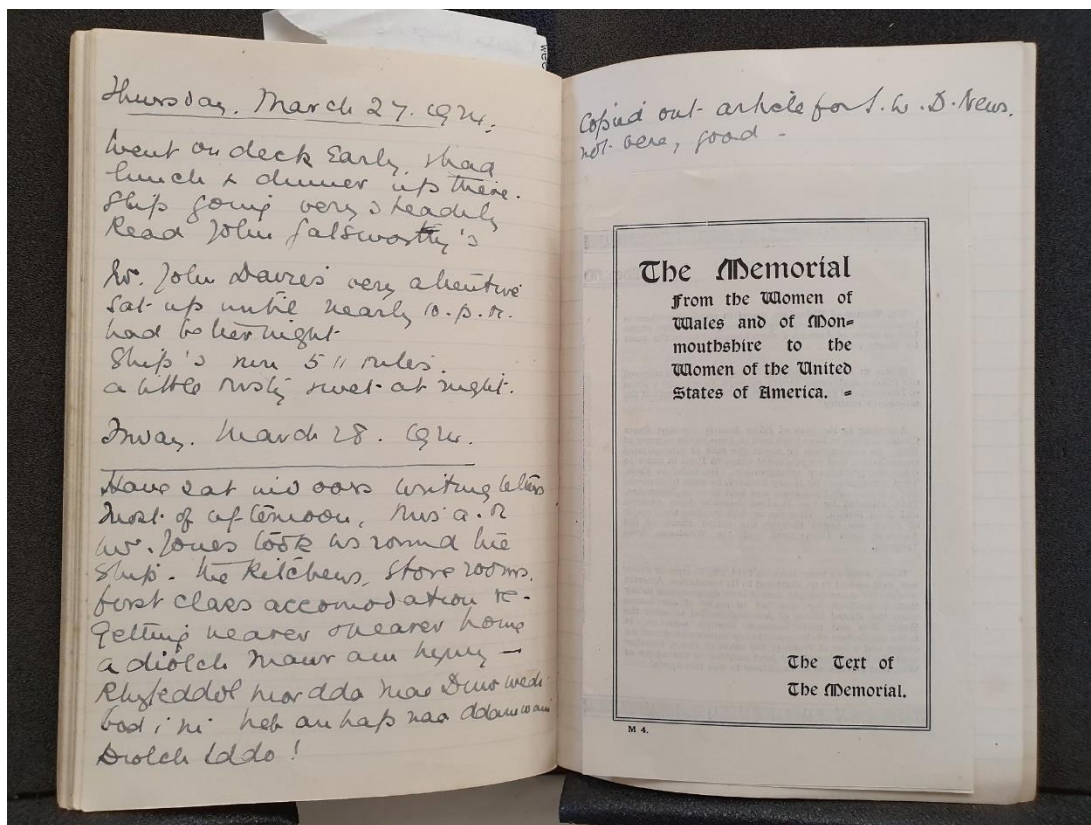
The following morning they set sail for the 7 day voyage home to Liverpool, on [the RMS Olympic](#), sister ship to the [the RMS Titanic](#) - which had sunk only twelve years earlier, on its 1912 maiden voyage from Southampton to New York.



Annie's diary entries for the return Transatlantic crossing, finishes with the reflection:

Rhyfeddol niordda niae dior wedi bod I ni heb au hap naa ddauwain... Diolch lldo!

"It's amazing how good god has been to us, with no incidents... Thanks be!"



Final page of Annie's Diary

Notes Pages

The rear pages of Annie's diary contain notes and sketches from her travels, some of which seem to be from speeches she liked. One such note was on the recently deceased US President, who had founded the League of Nations just 4 years beforehand:

Woodrow Wilson was an idealist, and gladly suffered the fate of most idealists:

**"I would rather fail in a cause I know some day will triumph,
than win in a cause I know some day will fail"**

Her notes also offer some fascinating personal reflections on her impressions of America's 'Great Cities':

- New York ... a city of heights**
- Washington... a city of beautiful buildings**
- Chicago ... a city of lengths - Michigan Avenue 60 miles long!**
- Utica ... a city of beautiful boulevards**
- Salt Lake City... a city of Mormons**
- San Francisco... a city of hills**
- Los Angeles ... a city of beautiful suburbs**

The Impact of the Women's Peace Petition



US President Calvin Coolidge with delegates of the [1925 'Conference on the Causes and Cure of War'](#) in Washington Credit: Kai's Coolidge Blog'

The Welsh League of Nations Union Report for [1925, 'Wales and World Peace'](#) applauded the efforts of the Women's Peace Delegation, and also carried a 'letter of response' ([image 8 in scan / page 12 of yearbook](#)) from [Mrs Carrie Chapman Catt](#), President of the [National American Women Suffrage Association](#), following their first [Conference on the Cause and Cure of War](#).

Held in 1925 by 9 organisations (representing 5 million American women) who were initially brought together for the Welsh Women's Peace Petition delegation visit, the initial CCCW conference was so successful they were [held annually until 1941](#). After WW2, the [work of CCCW continued as the 'Committee for Education on Lasting Peace'](#).

America did not ultimately sign up to the League of Nations; and [the League is largely acknowledged to have failed](#) due to lack of 'buy-in' from essential world powers (such as America, Germany and Japan), and through member governments 'not playing by their own rules' (such as France, Belgium, Germany, Russia and Italy). The [Manchuria and Abyssinia Crises](#) of the 1930s, and the [rise of Hitler](#) in Nazi Germany that had been [reeling from WW1 reparations](#), set the stage for World War Two.

However, the lessons of the League – and the vision expressed by the women's movements of Wales and America in 1923-6 – was finally realised after WW2 with the [founding of the United Nations](#), in which America has played a leading role through history (although recent withdrawals by the [Trump Administration](#) undermine progress on peace, human rights and climate change).

Thanks to our 'Book Club' Volunteers

Many thanks to the 'Transcription Team' and Book Club participants who volunteered many hours, over a short time frame, in order to transcribe, research and share Annie's Diary.



- **Craig Owen**, WCIA
- **Ffion Fielding**, National Museum of Wales
- **Fi Fenton**, National Museum of Wales
- **Martin Pollard**, Learned Society of Wales
- **Jane Harries**, WCIA Peace Schools Coordinator
- **Katy Watson**, Alaw Primary School
- **Jenny Fletcher**, Hub Cymru Africa
- **Stuart Booker**, Swansea University Doctoral Researcher
- **Meinir Harries**, National Assembly for Wales
- **Tracy Pallant**, Valley & Vale Community Arts
- **Amy Peckham**, Valley & Vale Community Arts

The Journey of Rediscovery

WCIA are hugely grateful to Tracy Pallant and Amy Peckham, of Valley & Vale Community Arts / Oasis, who created a short film capturing our volunteers' experience of uncovering the story held in Annie's Diary which can be viewed on Youtube.

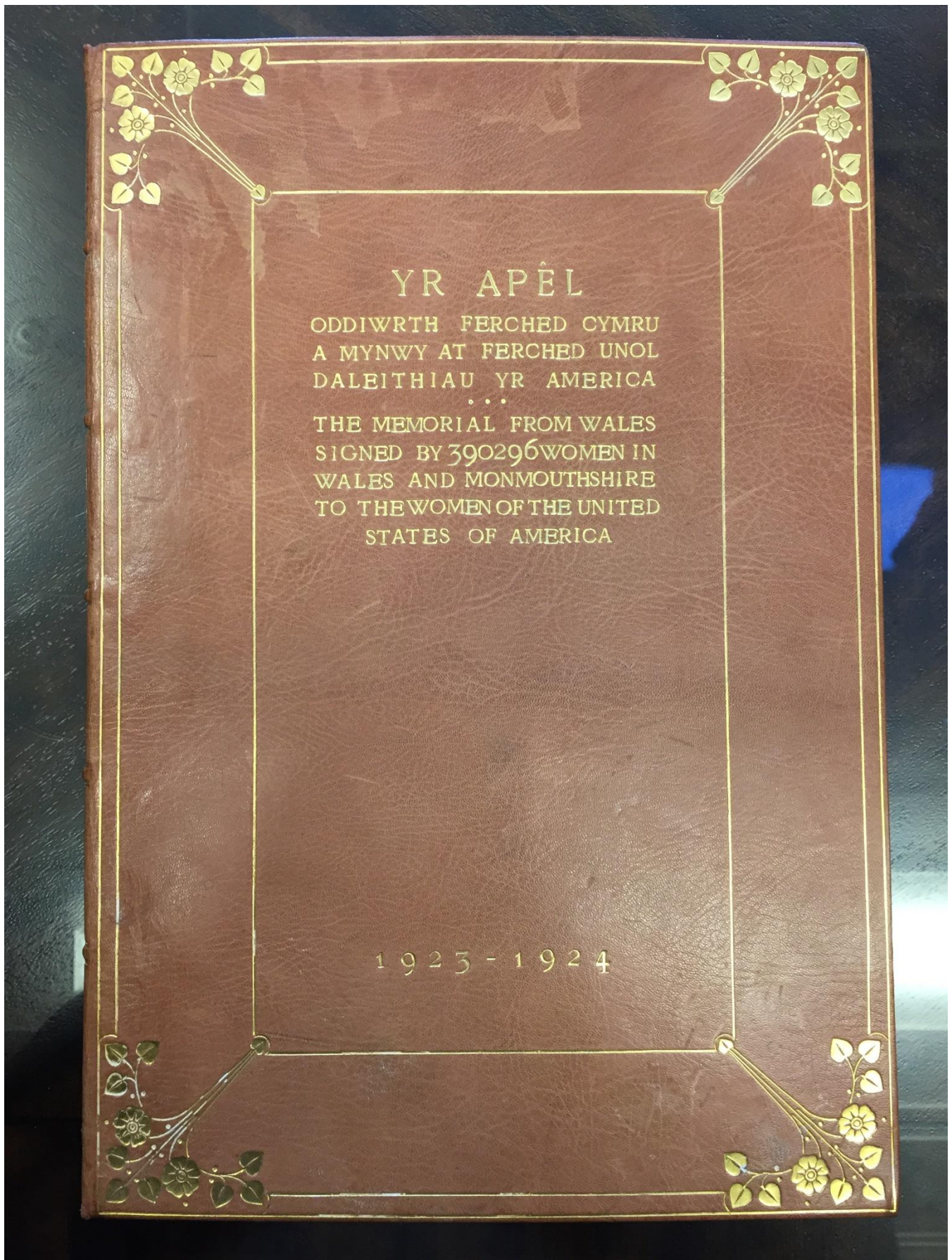
Teacher Katy Watson has used the diary to inspire children in [Alaw Primary School, Rhondda](#), through cross-curricular projects on History, Geography, English and Maths, as a pilot for [WCIA's Peace Schools Scheme](#). Hear how Annie's Story can still inspire our 'Peacemakers of the Future' today... 100 years later!

Centenary of the Women's Peace Petition, 2023-24 Can you Help?

WCIA hope to build on this work alongside the Wales Peace Institute, the National Library and Nations Museums of Wales, Heddwch Nain Mamgu, and other partners over coming years, so that by 2023 – the centenary of the Women's Peace Petition – we can hope to fully uncover and share the story to inspire a new generation of women internationalists Wales-wide.

If you would like to contribute to this inspiring project – through volunteer research, digitisation / transcription, community or schools projects, or sponsorship / donations towards building a Centenary Programme – please contact

walesforpeace@wcia.org.uk.



The Welsh Women's Peace Petition to America of 1923, presented to the women of America, and the President of the United States, in March 1924 by a delegation of Welsh women peacemakers - led by Annie Hughes Griffiths - from the Welsh League of Nations Union, predecessor of today's WCIA (Welsh Centre for International Affairs), founded to build peace after WW1 between Wales and the World.