

The Women's Peace Petition

Primary Activities



Piecing Together the Story

1 Launching the Petition

The Welsh Women's Peace Appeal to America was officially launched at a 'Wales Conference for Women' held in the Old College, Aberystwyth University on 23rd May, 1923 as part of a wider Welsh League of Nations Union Conference.

WOMEN OF WALES AND PEACE.
ORGANISING OF MEMORIAL TO AMERICA.
A public conference of the women of Wales was held on Wednesday afternoon in the Examination Hall of the University College.
Mrs. Peter Hughes-Griffiths, who presided, said the women of Wales had to consider, suggest and plan what they could do to promote world peace, and surely women had never had a greater problem to face. But it was their sacred duty to face it, a duty entrusted to them by those who were no longer with them and a duty which they as mothers of the oncoming generations could not ignore. "We will not flinch or fail until we have made war impossible," she concluded.



A newspaper report of the WLNU Women's Conference, Aberystwyth – May 1923

Mrs Annie Hughes Griffiths representing the women of Wales in Aberystwyth.

For further information on the launch and the conference, see: <https://www.wcia.org.uk/academi-heddwch-cymru/otd-23-may-1923-the-aberystwyth-conference-of-women-for-world-peace/>

2 Wales after World War I

Imagine you are living in Wales in the 1920s. Around 40,000 Welsh people died during WWI – mostly men in the armed forces – and every community across Wales was affected. Most families lost at least one person – a husband, brother, son.....

Because of this, people worked really hard during the 1920s to create a more lasting peace. You can see below some of the things that happened in that decade.

WELSH EFFORTS FOR WORLD PEACE, 1920–1927.

The CHILDREN OF WALES were the first to send by Wireless a greeting of goodwill to all other children in every land under the sun.

The WOMEN OF WALES were the first to send a message of Peace from the homes of one people to the homes of another.

The TEACHERS OF WALES were the first to teach the principles of the League of Nations in the schools.

The CHURCHES OF WALES were the first to make an annual offering in furtherance of World Peace.

LEADERS OF RELIGION IN WALES were the first to present a Memorial to Leaders of Religion in America on behalf of the League of Nations.

Welsh League
of Nations
Union Report,
1927



A Peace Ballot (vote) was held across the United Kingdom (UK) in 1935 to find out what people felt about peace and the international order. The results showed that most people wanted the UK to stay in the League of Nations and a majority were in favour of disarmament.

Over 1 million people in Wales voted in this ballot – 62.3% of those of voting age at the time.

For more information on the Welsh League of Nations Union (WLNU) and the Peace Ballot, see:
www.wcia.org.uk/wlnu

3 The Return – and the Effect of the Journey

The women's delegation returned to the UK at the end of March 1924. How can we measure the effect the petition and their Peace Tour had? Strong links had been made with peace groups in the US, and in January 1925, an 'American Women's Conference on the Cause and Cure of War' was held. Women continued to be active for the promotion of peace in Wales and the UK too, and in 1926 a national Women's Peacemakers Pilgrimage was organised, ending with a rally in London in June 1926. A world disarmament conference was held in Geneva in 1931 – 32. Had it not been for the rise of Nazism in Germany, world events may have taken a very different turn....



Women taking part in the North Wales Peace Pilgrimage, 1926

Geneva Conference



Arthur Henderson speaking at the conference on 2 February 1932

Begins	1 February 1932
Ends	November 1934
Location(s)	Geneva
Coordinates	46.2044° N, 6.1432° E
Country	Switzerland
Participants	31 nations
Organised by	League of Nations

Find out more about campaigns for peace and international cooperation here:

Findings of the conference on the Cause and Cure of War, 1925: <https://awpc.cattcenter.iastate.edu/2018/10/05/findings-of-the-conference-on-the-cause-and-cure-of-war-1925/>

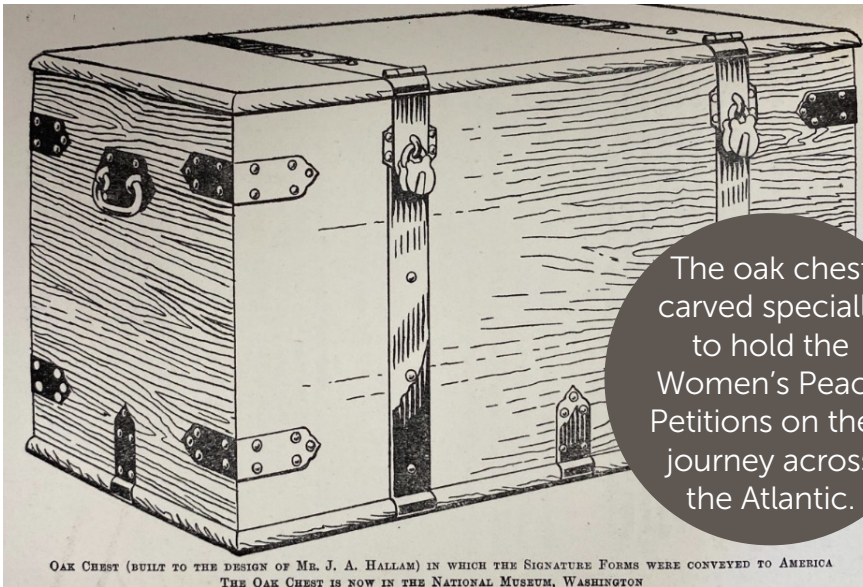
North Wales Women's Peace March: <https://wciavoices.wordpress.com/2016/06/01/north-wales-womens-peace-march-1926/>

World Disarmament Conference: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conference_for_the_Reduction_and_Limitation_of_Armaments

4 Gathering the Names

Between June and November the main work of gathering 390,296 signatures to the petition took place. This was largely coordinated through County and Community organisers of the Welsh League of Nations Union and must have involved a lot of knocking on doors!

A great chest was carved, ready to house the signatures on their journey across the Atlantic. Mary Ellis, one of the women's peace delegation, travelled to America to make arrangements for the Peace Tour which was to take place in Spring 1924. The stage was set for a great trans-Atlantic adventure!



The oak chest carved specially to hold the Women's Peace Petitions on their journey across the Atlantic.

?

**What is a 'petition'?
And a 'delegation'?**

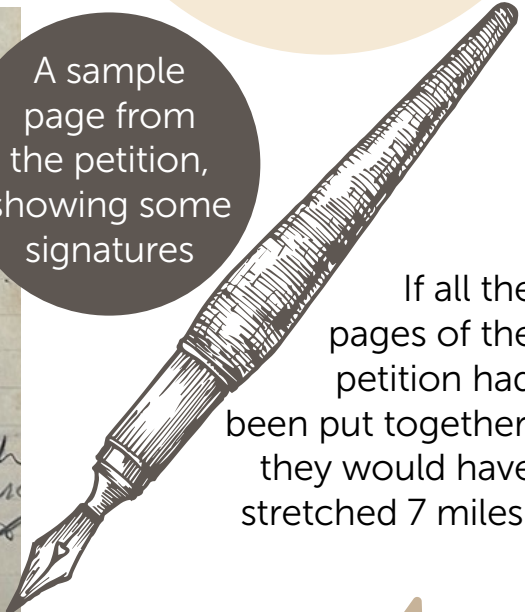
What were the women asking for?

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.

as real as the responsibility is grave. We would, therefore, appeal to you, Women of the United States of America, "with malice towards none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right" to aid in the effort to hand down to the generations which come after us the proud heritage of a warless world.

NAME.	ADDRESS.
Emily Reynolds.	1 Velindra Road. Whitechurch
E. A. Jones	3 Velindra Road Whitechurch
R. Jones	" " " " " "
G. R. Haine	7 Velindra Road - Whitechurch.
Ch. Haine.	41. Richmond Rd. Cardiff.
W. G. David	21 Velindra Rd Whitechurch.
E. Bailey.	" " " " "
M. J. Leost	'Hillbrook' Velindra Road.
E. P. Beswarick.	19 Velindra Rd Whitechurch
A. M. Evans.	25. Velindra Rd. Whitechurch
A. G. Morgan	27 Velindra Rd Whitechurch
E. Newell	" " " " "
M. B. Jones	29 Velindra " "

A sample page from the petition, showing some signatures



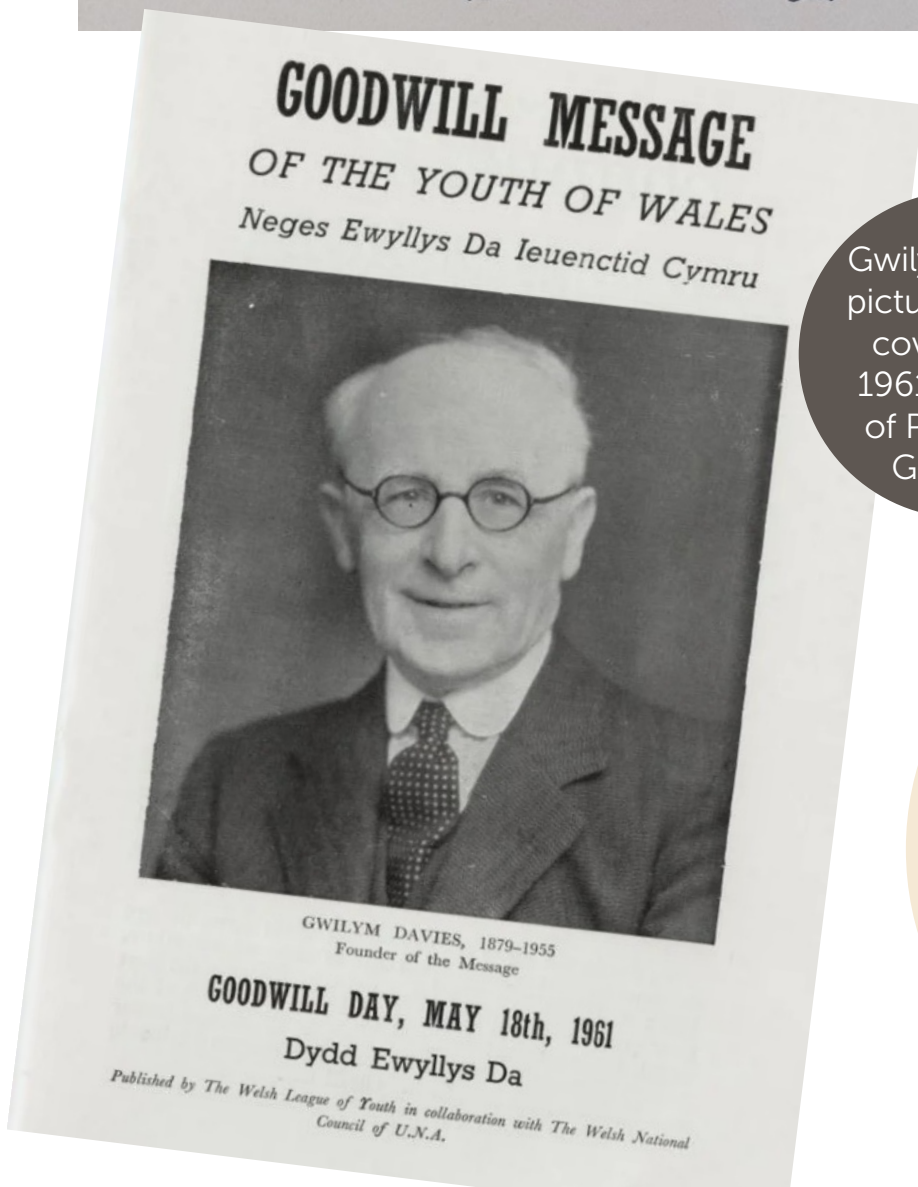
If all the pages of the petition had been put together, they would have stretched 7 miles!

For more details, see the Women's Peace Petition timeline here: www.wcia.org.uk/womens-centenary-timeline/

5 The Start of a Big Idea...

It was Gwilym Davies (co-founder of the Welsh League of Nations Union and founder of the Message of Peace and Goodwill from the children of Wales to the children of the world) who first mentioned the idea of a women's peace petition as part of the campaigns of the League of Nations Union, in a letter dated 3rd July, 1922. The text of that letter can be seen below.

there can be no reason whatever. And I want to suggest to our Executive Committee that we ask the Women in Wales to organise a memorial which shall be taken round from house to house in every town and in every village and in every hamlet in the Principality, a Memorial from the Women of Wales to the Women of America, asking for the sake of ~~our~~ homes and ~~our~~ children that America should



Gwilym Davies, pictured on the cover of the 1961 Message of Peace and Goodwill.

Extract from a letter written by Gwilym Davies on 3rd of July, 1922



What was Gwilym Davies' 'big idea'?

What does 'memorial' mean, in your opinion?

What else is Gwilym Davies famous for in Wales?

For more details, see the Women's Peace Petition timeline here: www.wcia.org.uk/womens-centenary-timeline/



6 The Journey Across America

The women's Peace Delegation headed by Mrs Annie Hughes Griffiths (Chair of the WLNU) took place in February – March 1924. The women set off from Liverpool aboard the RMS Cedric on 2nd February, and arrived in New York on 11th. Their voyage took them over to Los Angeles on the West Coast, then back to New York by 19th March. Although they met with US President Calvin Coolidge, the main aim of the visit was to talk to women's peace groups in America and gather their support for the petition, so that their government would join the League of Nations. This was seen to be highly important if another world war was to be avoided.



The Women's Journey:

- 1 - New York
- 2 - Washington
- 3 - Chicago
- 4 - Salt Lake City
- 5 - San Francisco;
- 6 - Los Angeles
- 7 - Arizona
- 8 - Colorado
- 9 - Niagara Falls
- 10 - Utica



The RMS Cedric – the ship on which the women sailed to America

To follow Annie's personal account of their journey across the US, see her diary and the transcript here:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/129767871@N03albums/72157680212085978>

The Women's Peace Petition

A Storyboard

A large empty square box with a thin brown border, intended for drawing or writing.A large empty square box with a thin brown border, intended for drawing or writing.A large empty square box with a thin brown border, intended for drawing or writing.A large empty square box with a thin brown border, intended for drawing or writing.A large empty square box with a thin brown border, intended for drawing or writing.A large empty square box with a thin brown border, intended for drawing or writing.