

**Rob Phillips**

**THE WELSH POLITICAL ARCHIVE  
AT THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF WALES**

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Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru or The National Library of Wales (NLW) in Aberystwyth was established in 1909, to collect and provide access to the documentary history of the nation. It is a legal deposit library and is therefore entitled to receive a copy of all books, magazines, newspapers etc. published in the United Kingdom and Ireland. The Welsh Political Archive (WPA) is a dedicated programme within the Library, established in 1983, to collect, catalogue and promote archival material which reflects the political life of Wales. There is one staff member who coordinates the WPA's activities, answers enquiries, promotes the archive and works to attract archives to add to the collection. Organising and cataloguing archives is undertaken by staff in the NLW's Archives and Manuscripts Section. But as the political collections include tapes of radio and television programmes, photographs, works of art, electronic files and websites, the WPA works across departments within the National Library.

In addition to curatorial work, the Welsh Political Archive also works to promote the use of the political collections through lectures and exhibitions. An advisory committee (comprised of representatives of political parties and civil society, journalists and academics), guiding the work of the WPA, meets annually.

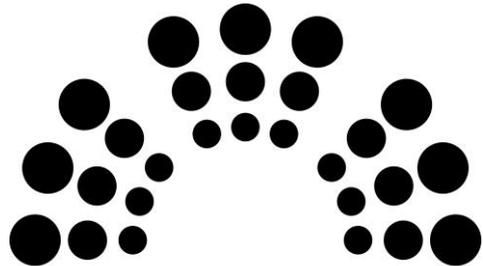


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## Collections

Many of the political archives the NLW holds are personal collections of well-known political figures (Members of Parliament, Lords, Members of the European Parliament and Assembly Members); the formal records of a large number of political organisations – including the main political parties, campaign groups, referendum campaigns – and business and labour groups constitute another important part. The WPA has also created certain thematic collections such as collections of ephemera related to elections, specific campaigns and referenda.



YR ARCHIF WLEIDYDDOL GYMREIG  
WELSH POLITICAL ARCHIVE

The NLW concentrates on nationally significant figures and organisations. Although the NLW does hold some legacy material of a local nature, since the establishment of a network of local record offices across Wales, such material can often be found in these offices. Public Records, created by government departments, agencies and the judiciary are kept at the National Archives in Kew.<sup>1</sup>

As a general rule – but not without variations – the NLW uses the term ‘papers’ (‘papurau’ in Welsh) to describe the collection of an individual and the term ‘archive’ (‘archif’ in Welsh) for the papers of an organisation. The language of the NLW’s catalogue is English, though in some cases collections are catalogued in Welsh or bi-lingually. The name of the organisation is usually given in its original language but in this article I have provided an English version alongside the first instance of any organisation where the original title is not in English. In some cases, where there is no recognised English name, I have provided a close translation.

### *The Welsh national movement*

The National Library of Wales has been successful in attracting archives from parties, organisations and individuals. It is home to the archives of the Welsh Conservatives, Welsh Liberal Democrats, Welsh Labour and Plaid Cymru as well as the archives of a number of constituencies and branches. These all contain valuable material on the development of Wales as a political nation, debates around political devolution to Wales, national institutions and the political dimension and official attitudes to the Welsh language and wider Welsh culture.

The Plaid Cymru Archive is amongst the largest political archives held in the National Library. Plaid Cymru was established in 1925 to campaign for independence for Wales as well as for the protection and promotion of the Welsh language and the traditional culture of Wales. It was initially known as Plaid Genedlaethol Cymru (Welsh National Party), but later changed its name to Plaid Cymru (Party of Wales). Three of its leading figures were jailed for arson after burning the Royal Air Force (RAF) Bombing School at Penyberth (North Wales) in 1936 in protest at the location of the facility in a Welsh-speaking community. The party fought elections and obtained some local representation, but did not gain a foothold in the UK Parliament until Evans won a historic by-election in Carmarthen in 1966. Support for the party grew during the 1960s and early 1970s and it campaigned for a measure of political devolution to Wales both in 1979 and 1997. It is currently the largest opposition party in the National Assembly for Wales.

The Plaid Cymru Archive includes the papers of the National Executive Committee, conferences, the National Council, various party sections (including the Women's Section), papers relating to the 1997 referendum, elections, research as summer schools, as well as the archives of regional committees and local branches. It also contains a large amount of correspondence and campaign material. The NLW also hold the archives of the Hydro Group, which was established to oppose the socialist stance adopted by the party in the 1970s.

In addition, the NLW also holds the papers of many prominent Plaid Cymru politicians including those of party leaders and presidents such as Saunders

Lewis, Gwynfor Evans, Dafydd Elis-Thomas, Dafydd Wigley and Ieuan Wyn Jones as well as a number of its Members of Parliament (MPs), Assembly Members (AMs) and leading thinkers. These include the papers of Lewis Valentine, Cynog Dafis, Elfyn Llwyd, Simon Thomas and Phil Williams.

The NLW's holdings also include papers from a number of prominent figures from other parties including Secretaries of State for Wales, MPs, AMs and Lords. In some cases, these are people who have campaigned for devolution to Wales (such as Lord Morris of Aberavon) or for the promotion of the Welsh language and culture (such as Wyn Roberts and Gwilym Prys Davies). Others, such as Leo Abse and Viscount Tonypanody, who served as Speaker of the House of Commons, campaigned vociferously against devolution to Wales and were fiercely opposed to the national movement in Wales.

Outside of the parliamentary parties, the NLW holds records of the 1979, 1997 and 2011 Welsh devolution referenda as well as the archives of the Parliament for Wales Campaign, the Council for Wales and Monmouthshire and Undeb Cymru Fydd (Young Wales Movement).

The Welsh language has been a political issue since the publication of the 1847 Report on the State of Education in Wales, popularly known as the Blue Books, which criticised the standards of education and morality in Wales – problems which were attributed to the Welsh language. Towards the end of the nineteenth century various parliamentarians took up the cause of the language. In 1922 the Urdd Gobaith Cymru (Welsh League of Youth) was established and Welsh medium education began to take hold with the opening of the first Welsh medium school in 1939. From the 1950s onwards campaigns for language rights and the promotion of the language took on the form of non-violent direct action. Inspired by the Beasley family, who refused to pay their domestic rates until a demand was sent in Welsh, Saunders Lewis called for an organised campaign in a radio lecture that led to the formation of Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg (The Welsh Language Society) in 1962.

The campaigns for the Welsh language, including calls for a Welsh language television service, are well represented in the NLW with collections including the archives of Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg, Urdd Gobaith Cymru

Mudiad Ysgol Meithrin (a voluntary group providing Welsh medium nursery schools), Fforwm Iaith Genedlaethol (National Language Forum) which brought together various groups to draft a strategy for the Welsh language, Adfer (a movement which worked to strengthen Welsh-speaking areas) and Cefn (a civil rights groups for Welsh speakers), as well as those of prominent individuals such as Saunders Lewis and Kate Roberts.

The control of water resources has long been at the heart of Welsh politics, no more so than following the announcement of plans to flood the village of Capel Celyn to supply water to the city of Liverpool. Several archives, including those of Plaid Cymru, Cymru Fydd and Dr Noelle Davies contain material on this topic.

There have been several instances where elements of the national movement in Wales have used violence in order to further their aims. Byddin Rhyddid Cymru (Free Wales Army) was a paramilitary organisation active during the 1960s and aiming for an independent Welsh Republic. The aims of Mudiad Amddiffyn Cymru (Welsh Defence Movement) were similar and it was responsible for several bombings in the 1960s. A later group Meibion Glyndwr (Sons of Glyndŵr, named after Owain Glyndŵr, the last native Prince of Wales) carried out a firebombing campaign against holiday homes in Welsh-speaking areas during the 1980s. Understandably there is very little in the way of official records of these organisations but their activities feature in correspondence and other papers of politicians and political movements, as well as being recorded in the press and television programmes.

The more radical campaigns of the Welsh Republican Movement are recorded in the personal papers of Cliff Bere, Ithel Davies, Harri Webb and Gwilym Prys Davies. The Tŷ Cenedl Papers, a collection of material relating to these radical elements of the national movement in Wales, are also available in the NLW.

One of the most important collections in the NLW is the collection of electoral ephemera. It includes copies of the election addresses, flyers, letters etc. from 1837 to the present. In 1983 a network was established with connections in every constituency in Wales in order to collect material on behalf of the Archive from European elections, general elections and by-

elections to the UK Parliament and the National Assembly for Wales. The collection includes flyers published by pressure groups and on various themes, in addition to those published by candidates and parties.

As part of the work of collecting campaign ephemera, the NLW makes archival copies of the websites of the main parties, MPs, AMs, pressure groups and candidates several times a year, and more frequently at election time. Archival copies of the candidates' websites were also made during the Plaid Cymru leadership campaign in 2012. Until recently, the NLW had to obtain permission from the copyright holder before making an archival copy of a website, but since a 2016 change in the law this can now be done without such a permission, meaning that recent elections are covered in more depth within the collection.

Many archives relating to the primary Welsh language cultural festival, Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Cymru (National Eisteddfod of Wales) are also held in the NLW. These contain administrative records, many of which relate to organising the festival at various locations (including dealing with local authorities and local committees) and records related to the various literary, musical and artistic competitions. As well as being the focus of a great deal of Welsh language cultural activity, the Eisteddfod has also been a focal point for political activity both through culture and directly in the form of protest.

In addition to the archival collections, the development of the national movement in Wales is captured in paintings, photographs and film. The Geoff Charles photograph collection contains coverage of elections, the flooding of Capel Celyn, protests by Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg and the activities of the Parliament for Wales Campaign from the 1930s to the 1970s. Much of this collection has been digitised and can be searched and viewed freely on the National Library's website. The NLW's Framed Works of Art collection also contains portraits of leading figures in the national movement such as Gwynfor Evans and Dafydd Wigley.

There is a broad variety of material in the audio-visual and music collections. This ranges from folk songs with overtly nationalist messages by artists such as Dafydd Iwan, movies such as the 1992 anti-war biopic *Hedd Wyn*, news, current affairs and history programmes in both Welsh and

English. The ITV Wales collection, which includes Welsh language programmes produced for S4C was transferred to the Library in 2012.

### *Other national movements*

The national movement in Wales developed many connections with similar political, cultural and language movements in the other Celtic nations. Given that the NLW's charter directs it to 'collect, preserve and give access to all kinds and forms of recorded knowledge, especially relating to Wales and the Welsh and other Celtic peoples' it is appropriate that, while the Library's main focus is on material directly related to Wales, these connections are reflected in the collections. Much of this material held at the NLW stems from correspondence between leading figures in the national movement in Wales and the other Celtic nations, co-operation between nationalist organisations and the establishment of pan-Celtic organisations. Some material, such as that in the diaries of Ambrose Bebb, was collected as a result of his interest in Celtic culture, while other material has been donated to the NLW as a result of its other collections relating to the Celtic nations.

Breton nationalism was a subject of interest to many figures in the Welsh national movement and the Ambrose Bebb Papers contain a diary from 1939, which notes the attitude of some Breton nationalists towards France and Germany in the period before the Second World War. The Library also holds the papers of the Breton nationalist Louis Feutren together with two fellow nationalists' papers he accumulated, Neven Henaff (Célestin Lainé, 1908-1983) and Alan Heusaff (1921-1999). All three were prominent members of the Breton collaborationist force Bezen Perrot (Perrot Militia) formed in December 1943, and all three eventually fled to Ireland sometime after the Second World War. One box of this collection specifically relates to the activities of Bezen Perrot.

The J. Dyfnallt Owen Papers reflect an issue of great concern to many in Wales after the end of the Second World War: the treatment of Breton nationalists. They contain papers relating to the imprisonment of Breton nationalists and the alleged suppression of Breton language and culture by the French state following the Second World War, papers relating to the

visit of the National Eisteddfod Council delegation to Brittany in 1947 to raise these concerns.

The Plaid Cymru Archive also contains material on Breton, Scottish and Cornish nationalism, arranged into various subject files. The papers of John Legonna, a prominent Welsh and Celtic nationalist, include various files relating to the national movements in Cornwall and Scotland, while the Welsh Political Ephemera Collection contains files of election literature distributed by Cornish nationalist party Mebyon Kernow (Sons of Cornwall), the Troops out of Northern Ireland campaign and some Scottish material.

Furthermore, the NLW holds the archives of the Celtic League, an organisation established to promote the political, cultural, social and economic freedom of Brittany, Cornwall, Ireland, Man, Scotland and Wales. The collection contains records on a broad range of political, cultural and environmental issues, reflecting both the similarities and the differences between the situations in each of the Celtic nations. Some material from this collection relating to the Isle of Man has been transferred to the Manx Museum Library.

Given Wales' close links with Ireland it is hardly surprising that the national movement in Ireland would feature in archives collected by the National Library of Wales. The birth of the Irish Free State features in documents in the Lloyd George Manuscripts (including NLW MS 23663E – The Irish Question) and the Thomas Jones CH Papers. Thomas Jones was Deputy Secretary to the cabinet from 1916 until 1930 and accumulated an extremely valuable collection relating to Ireland. The core of the collection is a series of government papers, including secret memoranda, notes of discussions in Cabinet, records of conferences of ministers and representatives, particularly for the period 1920-1922 and 1925. The papers of the NLW's first Librarian, Sir John Ballinger, contain letters exchanged with an Irish prisoner at the Fron-goch camp regarding Welsh place names and the loan of a book to the camp, while the D. Alwyn Rees Papers also contain photographs of the 1916 Easter Rising.

The Wyn Roberts diaries contain detailed entries on the 'Troubles' during the 1970s and 1980s, with another manuscript (NLW MS 22130B)

containing twenty-seven letters from Sinn Féin activist Gerry Maclochlainn in Maidstone prison to Ioan M. Richard, organiser of Dros Ryddid (For Freedom), a left-wing republican movement in South Wales. The papers of Lord Temple-Morris contain material relating to the peace process and his role as co-chairman of the British-Irish Inter-Parliamentary Body while the Peter Hain Papers contain a great deal of material, including a number of photographs, from his period as Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Finally, the archives of the European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages deal with linguistic issues, including international comparisons and reports on minority languages and study visits to Bolzano, Friesland, Calabria, Denmark, Luxembourg, Galicia, the Basque Country, Catalonia and Ireland.

### *Other material*

Due to the NLW's status as a legal deposit library, the collections also include a comprehensive collection of publications such as books, journals and newspapers. Recent legislation has brought e-journals and e-books within the legal deposit privilege although these items are only available to consult in the NLW itself.

## **Public services**

Anyone is welcome to use the material in the NLW. The original material can be consulted in the reading rooms, open from Monday to Saturday, while much of the digitised material is available freely on the National Library's website. Visitors can register as a reader in advance or on the day of their visit. Information on most of the archives is available by searching the collections at the online catalogue, but the staff is happy to offer help or answer search queries.

The Welsh Political Archive organises a number of events and activities to promote the political collections at the NLW to potential depositors and researchers and engage the public in learning about political discourse in Wales. Among the tools to achieve this is the annual newsletter, which notes recent accessions and publications and reports on the work of the Archive. Moreover, every year on the first Friday in November, the Annual WPA Lecture is held. Previous lecturers have included Sir Wyn Roberts, Kenneth O. Morgan, John Davies, Rhodri Morgan and Cynog Dafis. Tickets are available free of charge from the NLW shop. Other lectures on specific topics are also organised throughout the year. The WPA also hosts exhibitions both in the NLW and at other locations. These are promoted through the annual newsletter and other National Library of Wales publications.<sup>2</sup>



*The Welsh National Library in Aberystwyth*

## **Archives overview**

Below is a list of the principal archives relating to the national movement in Wales and other Celtic countries, held at the National Library of Wales. This is not an exhaustive list and relevant papers may be found in other collections in the Library's care.

### *Archives primarily relating to Plaid Cymru*

- Archif Plaid Cymru
- Papurau Plaid Cymru: Rhanbarth Ceredigion (Plaid Cymru Ceredigion Region)
- Plaid Cymru Hydro Group Papers
- Cynog Dafis Papers
- Papurau Gwynfor Evans
- Ieuan Wyn Jones Papers
- Dafydd Elis Thomas Papers
- Simon Thomas Papers
- Dafydd Wigley Papers
- Phil Williams Papers
- Harri Webb Papers
- Elfyn Llwyd Papers
- Peter Hughes Griffiths (Gwynfor Evans) Papers
- Saunders Lewis Manuscripts
- Papurau Lewis Valentine
- Huw T Edwards Papers
- Papurau Dafydd Orwig

### *Archives relating to devolution*

- Papurau Undeb Cymru Fydd (Young Wales League)
- Archif Plaid Cymru
- Labour Party Wales Archives
- Papurau Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg (Welsh Language Society)

- Aberystwyth 'No Assembly' Campaign Archives (1979)
- No Assembly Campaign Papers (1979)
- Wales for the Assembly Campaign Papers
- 'Yes for Wales' 1997 Referendum Campaign Records
- 'No' 1997 Referendum Campaign Records
- Yes for Wales (2011)
- Papurau Elwyn Roberts Papers – Organiser Parliament for Wales Campaign, 1953-1956
- Leo Abse Papers
- Huw T. Edwards Papers
- Institute of Welsh Affairs Records
- Council for Wales and Monmouthshire Records
- Gwilym Prys Davies Papers

### *The Welsh language*

- Papurau Tŷ Cenedl Papers
- Archif Cymdeithas yr Iaith (Welsh Language Society)
- Archif Cymdeithas yr Iaith Cell Casnewydd (Welsh Language Society Newport Cell)
- Archif Cymdeithas yr Iaith Ceredigion (Welsh Language Society Ceredigion)
- Papurau Cymdeithas yr Iaith (Rhodri Williams) (Welsh Language Society)
- Archifau Urdd Gobaith Cymru (Welsh League of Youth)
- Papurau Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin (Nursery School Movement)
- Papurau Mudiad a Chwmni Adfer (Adfer Movement and Adfer Company)
- Archif Cefn (Civil Rights Group for Welsh speakers)
- Papurau Gwynfor Evans Papers
- Papurau Kate Roberts
- Papurau Ymchwil Dylan Phillips (Dylan Phillips Research Papers)
- Papurau Rachel Mary Davies
- Papurau Dr John Davies

- Papurau Cynog Dafis
- Strategaeth Iaith 1991-2001 (Language Strategy 1991-2001)
- Institute of Welsh Affairs Records 1982-2001
- Gwilym Prys Davies Papers
- Wyn Roberts Diaries
- Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Cymru Ffeiliau'r Swyddfa Ganolog (National Eisteddfod Central Office Files)
- Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Cymru - cyfansoddiadau a beirniadaethau (National Eisteddfod compositions and adjudications)

### *The water industry*

- Archif Plaid Cymru
- Papurau Undeb Cymru Fydd (Young Wales Movement)
- Papurau Kate Roberts
- Papurau Tŷ Cenedl Papers
- Huw T. Edwards Papers
- Dr Noëlle Davies Papers

### *Elections*

- Welsh Political Ephemera Collection, 1837-2016
- Roger Roberts Papers (Lord Roberts of Llandudno)
- Ivor T. Rees Political Papers
- Political ephemera (NLW ex 1930)
- Denis Balsom (Welsh Opinion Polls) Papers, 1979-2004

### *The Welsh republican movement*

- Cliff Bere Papers
- Ithel Davies Papers
- Papurau Tŷ Cenedl
- Gwilym Prys Davies Papers

- Harri Web Papers

*Other material related to the national movement in Wales*

- Papurau J. Gwyn Griffiths
- Papers relating to the growth of Welsh Nationalism 1939-1941 (NLW Facs 993)
- Papurau Ioan Bowen Rees Papers
- E. G. Millward Papers
- Clive Betts Papers
- Papurau Elwyn Roberts
- Cliff Bere Papers
- Bert Pearce Papers (Welsh Communist Party)
- Welsh Liberal Democrats Papers
- Peter Black (Liberal Democrats Wales) Papers
- Welsh Liberal Party Papers
- OM Edwards Papers
- David Lloyd George (Lloyd George Manuscripts)
- A. J. Sylvester Papers (Lloyd George)
- William George Papers (Lloyd George)
- Olwen Carey-Evans (Lloyd George)
- Labour Party Wales Archive
- Deian R. Hopkin Papers (Labour Party in Carmarthenshire and Cardiganshire)
- Gwilym Prys Davies Papers
- Ron Davies Papers
- Tom Ellis Papers
- Paul Flynn Papers
- Megan Lloyd George Papers
- Jim Griffiths Papers
- Peter Hain Papers
- Lord Cledwyn Papers (Cledwyn Hughes)
- Rhodri Morgan Papers
- John Morris Papers

- Lord Ogmores Papers
- Goronwy Roberts Papers
- Viscount Tonypanody Papers (George Thomas)
- Ann Clwyd Papers
- David Morris MEP Papers
- Nicholas Edwards Papers
- Wyn Roberts Diaries
- Welsh Conservatives
- Conservative Party (North Wales) Papers

*Material related to the national movement in Brittany, Cornwall, Scotland, Ireland and the Isle of Man*

- Ambrose Bebb Papers
- Louis Feutren Papers
- J. Dyfnallt Owen Papers
- Archif Plaid Cymru
- John Legonna Papers
- Welsh Political Ephemera Collection
- Celtic League
- European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages
- Lloyd George Manuscripts
- Thomas Jones CH Papers
- Wyn Roberts Diaries
- NLW MS 22130B
- Lord Temple-Morris Papers
- Geraint Dyfnallt Owen MSS,
- NLW ex 1728 (Breton Ephemera)
- Cowethas Flamank Archive (Flamank Association)
- Cliff Bere Papers

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P. O'Leary, 'The Welsh Political Archive', in: *Llafur. The Journal of the Society for the Study of Welsh Labour History*, 4/2 (1985) 101-102.

R. Phillips, 'Liberal Party archives', in: *Journal of Liberal History*, 85 (2014).

## **Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup> Contact details for Local Record Offices in Wales can be found at <https://archives.wales>.

<sup>2</sup> More information is available on the WPA's website <http://www.llgc.org.uk/welshpoliticalarchive>. The Archive also has two Twitter accounts: @AWGymreig (Welsh) and @WelshPolArch (English).