

I. Beginnings

Three of us, Mollie Reynolds, Hannah Harbury and myself were having coffee together, and we saw the wife of one of the members of staff going past. In that pre-feministic age, the custom was to refer to 'the wife of this-or-that professor'. Anyway, not one of us could remember who she was, and we agreed that that was a laughable situation.

You have to remember that only a fifth of the number of students that are here today were at the College at that time; the majority of the staff lived in the town and the professors either walked or bicycled to the College. There were very few houses on Waunfawr, and nearly every College department was in the old building.

Mollie suggested that we start a Club. And so we set about composing a letter and having copies made. There was no such thing as photocopying then. We were surprised by the reaction, everyone was enthusiastic, and I found myself treasurer of this new Club, much to my husband's unease!

This is how Mair Williams described the formation of the University of Wales Women's Club (or the College Women's Club as it was first called) in *Yr Angor* in 1995 on the occasion of its 40th anniversary. She later recalled that this had happened at a College event around 1954, *about the time that Goronwy Rees had arrived at Aberystwyth.*

Mollie Reynolds suggestion *that we start a Club* stemmed from the fact that she had been a member of a Women's Club at the London School of Economics where her husband, Philip A. Reynolds, had been a lecturer before being appointed to the Wilson Chair of International Politics at Aberystwyth in 1950, and it was through the LSE Women's Club that *wives had got to know each other.*

The first meeting of the College Women's Club was held at the Belle Vue Royal Hotel at 8.00pm on Thursday, 13th January 1955. The minutes of that meeting are as follows:

The meeting was arranged by Mrs Mollie Reynolds, Mrs Hannah Harbury and Mrs Mair Williams in order to form a College Women's Club. As this was an inaugural meeting, suggestions rather than formal proposals were put forward by members. It was decided, however, that meetings would be held at the Belle Vue Hotel at 8.00pm on the first Friday of every month during the academic session.

Officers were elected for the Club:

President – Mrs Mollie Reynolds

Treasurer – Mrs Mair Williams

Secretary – Mrs Margaret Davies

And a Committee of six: Mrs Hannah Harbury, Mrs Enid Davies, Mrs Gwilym Evans, Mrs Dorothy Meyler and Mrs Beryl Johnston.

It was suggested that the membership subscription should be 10/6d.

Mrs Christensen gave a short talk on the Faculty Wives' Club of the University of Minnesota, and Mrs Aaron spoke of a similar at Yale University of which she was a member during her year's visit to the United States.

Many suggestions were received from members regarding the future programme of the club, and it was proposed that the committee draw up a programme of activities to be submitted at the next meeting on February 4th. It was also proposed that the committee draw up a Constitution to be read at the next meeting.

Rhiannon Aaron who spoke at the meeting had accompanied her husband, Professor Richard I. Aaron, to Yale in 1952 when he was Visiting Professor, and in many of her letters home she mentioned the varied activities of the Yale Newcomers' Club and her enjoyment of many of them

which she attended between October 1952 and April 1953:

On Wednesday I went to my first American tea party... This party was in connection with the Yale Newcomers – an organisation to welcome all the new wives. It was not the first meeting proper (I'm going to that tomorrow afternoon) but one of very many small preliminary parties held in several different houses, so that you could get to know a few of your own locality before going to the first meeting where there will be 200-300 new people (the annual turnover in staff here is immense). (5th October 1953)

Last night (Monday) I went to one of the 'Activity Groups' run by the Newcomers' Club...It was just like our Play-Reading at home... There are more of these groups meeting this week – I'd thought I'd go to several (Music, Square-Dancing etc. etc.) and choose the one I wanted to stick to. (12th October 1953)

And at the end of their year at Yale she writes:

I have enjoyed the Newcomers very much. I haven't missed a meeting all year and have made so many good friends through it. (You'd be surprised at the number of people coming to stay with us when we get home!) We only have 2 meetings left before the end of the year. I shall be sorry when it stops.

Rhiannon Aaron's address at the Club's first meeting must have painted a similar lively and welcoming picture of the activities of the Yale Newcomers' Club and is sure to have contributed to the enthusiasm of the members for their new Club and to return for its second meeting on the 4th February.

The main business of that meeting was presenting the members with the Club's Constitution which – with a few amendments – was duly accepted and passed. The members also approved the Committee's decision to *invite the following ladies to become Honorary Members of the Club – Lady Hughes-Parry, Mrs Ivor Evans, Mrs Jenkin Alban Davies, Mrs Goronwy Rees, Miss Margaret S. Davies, Mrs Myfanwy Ellis and Mrs Ifor L. Evans.* These seven were wives or widows of former principals, presidents or council members of the College and the wife of the present principal. The wives of future principals and vice-chancellors would also be invited to become Honorary Members of the Club.

The programme for the remaining four meetings for 1955 was also announced:

Friday, 4th March. An entertainment of Welsh, English, Irish and Scottish folk songs provided by Mrs Rhiannon Davies and Mrs Morgan-Jones.

Friday, 1st April. Mr Scott Nisbet, Instructor at the Department of Art, on 'Painters and Women'.

Friday, 6th May. Mr Ivor Brown of Negri on 'Interior Decorating'.

Friday, 2nd June. Mrs Peggy Shapperson of Reno Nevada on 'American Food Habits'.

And with the Club's business completed, the evening was concluded with the showing of three films: *Mexico, Colour in Clay and Switzerland.*

But members wouldn't have to wait until March to meet again, as on Wednesday, 16th February, a visit was made to the Leri Woollen Mills at Tal-y-bont, and *after an interesting tour through the mills the party had tea at the White Lion Hotel.*

It appears that some of the members were also attracted by the Yale Activity Groups as it was announced at their meeting of 4th March that *on Friday, March 18th a Bridge and Canasta party was arranged at the Belle Vue Hotel for those interested.* And so the first of the College Women's Club subgroups was formed.

And to round off the year the Club had its first Annual Outing, when on the 8th of June *members paid a visit to Gregynog Hall, Newtown, as guests of Miss Margaret S. Davies who entertained them to tea and showed them around the Hall and gardens.* Margaret Davies was an Honorary Member of the College Women's Club and the grand-daughter of David Davies Llandinam, one

of the College's first patrons. And so the first, very successful, year of the Aberystwyth College Women's Club ended with the members looking forward to the following year and a full and busier programme.

Aberystwyth in the 1950s may not have been Yale with its immense annual turnover of staff, but the College was growing and changing with new members of staff and their families moving to the town. The number of students at the College in 1954-55 was 1,049, and the Prospectus for the session lists a total of 171 teaching and administrative staff, 21 of whom were women. The female members of staff could join the Staff Women's Club, but for the wives of the male members of staff coming to a new town, with a different language and culture, there was no similar social club. It was to fill this need that the College Women's Club, or the Wives Club as some referred to it, was formed, and as the second amendment of the new Constitution stated, *The object of the Club shall be the promotion of social intercourse among the members.*

The Club's activities for the 1955-56 session began with a meeting and dinner at the Belle Vue Hotel with Miss Gwenan Jones, Senior Lecturer and Mistress in Method in the Education Department, as guest speaker. In her address to the Club she said *what an important part was played by the women of the College, and that as she looked around the room she came to the conclusion that one of the functions of the 'Training Department' was to train wives for members of the College Staff.*

Today such a comment would result in an avalanche of criticism and condemnation, but *in that pre-feministic age* it was accepted and even expected that wives would serve in the background, supporting their husbands' careers and not be lecturers or administrators in their own right. And in this, Aberystwyth was no different from other universities, education authorities, or the Civil Service.

The wives also lived in the shadows of their husbands in their names, as the Club's first Minute Book refers to members as Mrs Goronwy Rees, Mrs Jenkin Alban Davies, Mrs Ivor Evans, Mrs John Bowen, Mrs Gwilym Evans, Mrs Gwyn Jones, Mrs Tom Owen, Mrs Hugh Williams etc.

Of the 21 female members of staff listed in the 1954-55 Prospectus, there were 18 Misses and only 3 Mrs, one of whom was the warden of Carpenter Hall, and one of the other two was Professor Lily Newton who had been widowed in 1926, two years before she was appointed lecturer in Botany at Aberystwyth. As Leontia Slay (or McCartan as she was when she came to Aberystwyth in 1956 as a lecturer in Zoology) said, *there were almost NO married female staff! The basic policy was that married women were not appointed to academic posts! I came as a single lecturer and was able to continue in post after getting married in April 1958.*

And what was a group of educated and able individuals expected to do with their time, energy, creativity and organisational skills? In Aberystwyth the College Women's Club was one outlet and their contribution to the life of the university and town for over 60 years went far beyond *the promotion of social intercourse among the members.*

II. The Monthly Meetings

The pattern of six monthly meetings per academic session was quickly established as the programme for the Club. Two of the meetings would normally feature outside speakers, another two would be in the care of the members themselves or someone who was on the College staff, while the remaining two would be the Christmas and Saint David's Day meetings. The AGM would be held in May and the Annual Outing in June. But as the number of subgroups grew, there would be many more opportunities for the members to meet during the year.

The first prominent outside speaker was the novelist Berta Ruck (October 1956) who had lived in Aberdyfi since 1939, but despite her prominence Miss Ruck had not been the Club's first choice as main speaker. Unfortunately Joyce Grenfell and Dame Sybil Thorndike had been unable to

come.

If no celebrities were available, individuals in national roles would be their choice, including J. Noel White, Deputy Director of the Council of Industrial Design (1960), and Glyn Davies, the Director of the Forensic Laboratory, Preston, who was also a former student (1962). In 1963 it was Dr Roger Webster, the Arts Council Director for Wales. He was also a former Aberystwyth student and would return to the College in 1978 as Professor of Education, and his wife Ivy Webster would be an active member of the Club for many years.

The same year, Miss Nan Davies of the BBC came to speak about her work as a producer in Cardiff. Sir Ben Bowen Thomas came in 1966, and in 1971 it was Dr William Evans, a retired Harley Street physician from Tregaron. In February 1973 Miss Eurwen Richards, former student, lecturer and warden of Carpenter Hall and Penbryn *who is now the Dairy Technologist for Marks and Spencer* spoke on '*Penny Bazaar to Superstore: behind the scenes at Marks and Spencer*'.

Lady Eirene White, a member of both the College Council and Court of Governors and daughter of Thomas Jones, former President of Aberystwyth, was the speaker in 1974, and in 1984 Dame Mary Warnock came to give The Rachel Creed Memorial Lecture. Miss R. M. Creed had been a lecturer in the Education Department and an early member of the Club. In February 1986 P.D. James spoke on 'Making Crime Pay', and invited to the pre-meeting dinner with the Club's officials was Auriel Watkin of the Education Department who had been *a onetime colleague of P.D. James*. Rosie Swales, author and traveller who had made an epic journey through Chile and sailed solo across the Atlantic was the main speaker in October 1994. And at their first meeting in October 1997 the Club's *most prestigious speaker of the Session* was the author and broadcaster Mavis Nicholson.

Attracting such speakers to Aberystwyth obviously gave the Committee much satisfaction, but it was the continued success of the College Women's Club itself that gave them the greatest cause for celebration. The first meeting of the 1976-77 session was at the Cambrian Hall where *85 members including 18 of the founder members gathered to celebrate 21 Years of the College Women's Club. Morfudd Moelwyn Hughes had baked a Birthday Cake and the Flower Group had made 21 arrangements using the College colours of red and green to decorate the room. Rhiannon Aaron, Beryl Johnston and Peggy Wynn Jones recounted the history of the Club and Mair Williams proposed a toast for the next 21 years of the College Women's Club.*

The 30th anniversary celebrations in 1985 were held at the Music Department where again the room was decorated by the Flower Group, but this time the cake was baked by Peggy Jones. The Club's 40th celebrations in 1995 were held in the Seddon Room with Lord Emlyn Hooson, QC, former MP and Aberystwyth student, as guest speaker. The guest speaker at the Club's 50th Anniversary in 2005 was Emrys Wynn Jones, former Registrar of the College and Peggy Jones's husband, who spoke on 'College Women: Radical Ladies', while founder members Mollie Reynolds, Mair Williams, Mary Llewelfryn Davies, Meg Bowen, Beti Edwards and Mrs J. Anthony Jones spoke about their experiences over the fifty years.

III. Displays and Demonstrations

The other regular monthly meetings of the College Women's Club that were addressed by outside speakers were of a more practical nature. Cookery demonstrations were given by a representative of the Regional Gas Board (1956), a Senior Home Service Adviser (1961), a representative of the Pig Industry Development Authority (1963) and an economist from the Food Information Centre (1967), while in later years 'Hand-made Chocolates with a Seasonal Flavour' was the topic for December 1998, and wine tasting was on the menu the following Christmas. In the same year Elisabeth Luard, the cookery author and journalist, who lived at Ystradmeurig, was the speaker.

Fashion and beauty demonstrations were also popular topics. In November 1955 Mrs Gronow of

Yardleys gave a talk on 'Beauty Culture'. In November 1958 over 100 members saw *a Mannequin Parade presented and compered by Mrs Alison Coates*. A spokesperson from the International Wool Secretariat spoke on 'Developments and Achievements in Modern Hand Knitting' in April 1959. 130 members and guests came to the Cambrian Hall in February 1962 for *a talk on skin care and make up by Mrs Stafford Mitchell of 'Beauty Counselors', a dress show by 'Marie' of Terrace Road and hair styles by 'Patricia' of Portland Road*.

In November 1975 a *Fashion Show of clothes designed and produced by Sylvia Mary (Mrs Sylvia Kingswood)* was presented at the Joint Lecture Theatre at the College of Librarianship Wales, Llanbadarn. The October 1984 meeting was 'An Evening of Fashion and Beauty with Capricorn Gowns and Salon Tlws', and B. Viridi of The Body Natural Healing and Beauty Centre was the speaker in February 1996.

Gardening was another popular topic. In November 1962 Mr Basil Fox, Curator of the Botanical Gardens on Penglais, gave tips on 'Planning a Garden', and in February 1975 Mr Fox was the speaker again on 'Seaside Gardening'.

'Your Home is Your Own' was the title of Gwyneth Francis-Jones's talk about planning, colour schemes and new materials in November 1972, and in November 1990 the speaker was Delyth Wilson, from Y Cam Nesaf, Market Street, who gave members an *insight into the work of an interior designer*.

But social and international issues were also featured. The Centre for Alternative Technology (2004), food security (2008) and climate change (2013) were among meeting topics.

Local speakers at the monthly meetings included Gwyn Martin of Taylor Lloyd the Chemists (1961 and 1966), as well as his wife Jean (1969). The artist Mary Lloyd Jones (1980); Margaret Evans of 'Aberystwyth Yesterday' (1982); Rachel Rowlands of Rachel's Dairy (1990) and Sue Balsom, 2004 Business Woman of the Year in 2007. The local medical profession was also well represented: Dr Richard Edwards (1983); Dr David Lewis (1987); Mr J. Edwards, surgeon at Bronglais (1989); Dr John Hughes (2002) and the dentist Illtyd Griffiths (2014), as were politicians: Cynog Dafis (2002) and Elystan Morgan (1972, 1974 and 2006). In 1974, under the title 'A Cause for Concern', a panel of local experts, N. Greenwood, Area Manager for British Rail, J. Kendall Harris, Aberystwyth Town Clerk, Elystan Morgan, MP for Cardiganshire, and John Phillips, Director of Education for Cardiganshire, answered questions from 75 members of the Club.

Members of the University staff were also regular speakers. In October 1958 T. Maelgwyn Davies, the Registrar, gave a talk on the College's new building programme, 'The Next Five Years', and at the Club's AGM in 1960 *it was proposed, seconded and passed that the Club organize a special effort to support the College Appeal Fund*. Principal Thomas Parry was the speaker who opened the 1967-68 session and he was introduced by the Club's President for the year, Mrs Enid Parry, his wife. Principals Goronwy Daniel (1972), Derec Llwyd Morgan (1996) and Vice-Chancellor Professor April McMahon (2012) have also been guest speakers. Dr Jane Morgan, who was Honorary President of the Club when her husband Kenneth O. Morgan was Principal, addressed the Club in October 1990.

In 1972, the College's Centenary Year, the speaker was Dr E. L. Ellis of the History Department, and author of the official College history, and not even a power cut during the evening which meant that Dr Ellis had to finish his talk *by the aid of candles and torches* spoilt the members' enjoyment.

The first meeting to be addressed by a Club member was in February 1956 when Joan Conway and her husband Steve, who had joined the Education Department at the beginning of the session, showed coloured slides of their recent visit to the United States. Joan Conway became a long-time member of the Club until her death in 2014, serving as President, Secretary and Treasurer in

her time – as did Gwyneth Trott, Margaret Bateman, Gillian Manton and Sheila Jones in their time.

In November 1956 *four of our own members gave vivid accounts of their travels abroad...Spain by Mrs Johnston, New Zealand by Mrs Beacham, Australia by Mrs Mansel Davies and finally Canada by Mrs Gwilym Davies.* ‘Holidays Abroad’ was also the topic for Elizabeth Davies, Gwyneth Trott and Geraldine Walker (1957). Dr Gwendolen Rees spoke of her visit to Ghana (1961), Rhiannon Steeds on Japan (1969) and Betty Loyn on her visit to Nepal (1985). But nearer to home, in 1998 Ivy Webster spoke of her childhood on the Stackpole Estate, Pembrokeshire. And some of the members’ children were also called upon as speakers: Gwen Aaron on her visit to Peru (1988); Catrin Webster on ‘Art and Landscape’ (2004) and Janet Thomas on ‘Working in Publishing’ (2005).

IV. Christmas and March Meetings

But it was at the Christmas and Saint David’s meetings that the members played more prominent roles. The first Christmas meeting at the Exam Hall, Old College, in December 1956 was a ‘Dramatic Evening’ with performances of *The Charwoman’s Daughter* and *The Late Miss Cordell*, both plays being performed and produced by Club members. Following the performance a buffet supper *prepared by Miss Garner and assisted by Club and Committee members* was served in the Quad. They also had carol singing accompanied on the piano by Charles Clements of the Music Department and *the evening ended with Amy Parry-Williams singing the College Song.*

The following Christmas the venue was the Refectory of the Students’ Union (Joseph Parry Hall), *and afterwards there was a short entertainment. Professor Treharne recited, Mrs Morgan Jones and Mrs Betty Evans sang, and Mrs Nosworthy played the piano. The entertainment was followed by games, competitions and carol singing. The charge for the evening for members and their husbands or other guests was 6/- each.*

Over the years the Christmas celebrations would be occasions for the Club members, and the beginnings of both the Drama Group and the Choir can be traced to these meetings as they usually provided the entertainment. A ‘Christmas Programme’ of songs and readings (1960). A *Fashion Cavalcade illustrating the changes in women’s fashions from 1860 to present time presented by the Dramatics Group. The Choir conducted by Mr Charles Clements sang a number of songs* (1968). ‘Entertainment was provided by the Choir and Drama Group on the subject of LOVE’ (1969). *Entertainment was provided jointly by the Drama Club – a shortened version of ‘Murder at the Red Barn’ – and the Choir sang two songs under Mr Charles Clements’ leadership* (1970). A *Christmas meeting in the hands of the Drama Group who read correspondence of famous women of the 19th century – The Private Lives of Famous Women. The Choir also sang songs with Charles Clements conducting* (1971). A *Christmas meeting by the Drama Group and Choir on Women at U.C.W.: A Pageant of the Role of Women Students through the Years collected by Mrs Sonia Dobson* (1972). This performance was at Theatr y Werin, the new theatre on Penglais, which had only been completed in the autumn.

Sometimes the members themselves would reminisce on ‘Christmases Spent Abroad’: Charlotte Johnston (Sweden), Brigitta Heller (Austria), Mercedes Mills (Argentina), Mair Williams (USA) and Dorothy Williams (Nigeria) (1967). Some of these recollections were recounted again by the members in 1981, and in 2001 Paula Thomas, Jennifer John and Ann Green recalled their experiences of Christmas in other countries.

At other times outside groups would be invited to provide the entertainment: *An evening of entertainment by Mrs Emily Davies and five students of UCW Drama Department on ‘the Christian as opposed to the secular Christmas’* (1979). A *Musical Evening at the Music*

Department provided by Students of UCW (1986). Showtime Singers 'Songs for a Winter Evening' (2010).

As the Club always met on the second Friday of the month, the March meetings never fell on Saint David's Day, but the Committee tried to have a Welsh theme for the monthly meeting, especially in the early years.

The first Welsh evening was held in 1956 in honour of *St David's Day in the Ball Room of the Belle Vue Royal Hotel*. Mrs Megan Jones Pierce sang two groups of Welsh Songs and Mrs Betty Evans two groups of Classical songs translated into Welsh by Professor Parry-Williams. The following year the Club was most fortunate in having as its speaker Mrs Amy Parry-Williams, one of the most talented of its members, who gave us an interesting, informative and artistic talk on Welsh folk music. In 1958 Professor David Williams, the Sir John Williams Professor of Welsh History, spoke on 'The Welsh Cultural Heritage', particularly the language, literature, and the National Eisteddfod.

In 1961 A programme of Welsh folk songs and penillion singing sung by Sian Emlyn (Mrs Owen Edwards) and harp music by Miss Ann Lloyd and a talk by Dr Gwyn Williams on Saint David. In 1962 the programme was arranged by Enid Parry: Miss Meinir Lewis, a former student, sang a selection of Welsh folk songs and Miss Bennett-Owen, a present student, played penillion and other music for the harp. And during a short interlude Professor Gwyn Jones read an extract from his new novel [*The Walk Home*]. Elinor Bennett-Owen was invited again the following year, this time to accompany Lady Amy Parry-Williams. The programme had been arranged by Lady Amy, her sister Mary Llewelfryn Davies and Mair Jones.

In 1969 David Jenkins, the newly appointed Librarian of the National Library of Wales spoke on *The Gregynog Press with a collection of beautifully illustrated and bound books*. Other speakers at the March meetings over the years included: Elystan Morgan (1972); Professor E.G. Bowen (1973); Minwel Tibbott, St Fagan's Welsh Folk Museum (1974); Peter Smith, Commission on Ancient Monuments Wales (1975); Jane and Michael Frost, members of the Guild of Goldsmiths and Silversmiths Wales on 'Gold and Welsh Culture' (1976); Dr J. Geraint Jenkins, St Fagan's Welsh Folk Museum (1978); Geraint Talfan Davies, Head of News and Current Affairs at HTV (1979); Dr Prys Morgan (1987); Tom Arfon Owen, President of the Welsh Arts Council, spoke about the Council's work. (1989); Miss Gaenor Howells, BBC World Service (1993); Miss Teleri Bevan, BBC (1994) and Robin Huw Bowen, the triple harpist (1998).

In 1995 the Welsh evening was a Film Show by the Wales Film and Television Archive at the Science Park, but this was not the first time that the Club had enjoyed a film show. Three travel films had been shown at their second meeting in 1955, and in 1957 they had seen *Les Vacances de M. Hulot*, the classic French comedy, starring Jacques Tati. In 1959 through the courtesy of D. M. Davies, manager of the Celtic Cinema, the film 'Run For Your Money' was shown at the Belle Vue, and in 1960, through a similar arrangement, they had seen three films. However, the venue this time was the Biology Building, Penglais, and in 1966 members returned to the Campus, but this time to the Physical Sciences Lecture Theatre to see a full length French film called *The Suitor* (1966). And the Physical Sciences Lecture Theatre would be their regular venue for the next few years to see a French film, *His Greatest Role* (1967); *Gangsters and Philanthropists*, a Polish comedy thriller (1968); *Beware Automobile*, a Russian comedy (1970) and another French film, *The Red Inn* in 1971.

V. Buildings and Rooms

Members had first visited the Physical Sciences building in December 1964 when Professor Granville Beynon had shown them a scientific film on the sun and they had then been given a guided tour of the building which had only been opened the previous May. The Club had always been very supportive of the developments on Penglais and members had been among the first to

perform on the stage of Theatr y Werin.

For the first two years the monthly meetings had been held at the Belle Vue Royal Hotel, but from January 1957 until February 1978 the Cambrian Hall at the County Offices, the former Queens Hotel, was the venue. However at its 1978 AGM, held at Staff House, the Committee decided that *owing to the rather small average attendance at the monthly meetings, [it would] be better to hold these meetings on College premises.*

They had previously tried to vary their monthly meeting places and had decided at the 1975 AGM that in future three meetings would be held in the Cambrian Hall, one on the Llanbadarn Campus, one in the Botany Theatre and the final one in Brynamlwg, *the new Sports and Social Centre*. This arrangement was followed until October 1978 when they reported, *we have taken the opportunity to hold our meetings in the newly furnished Seddon Room in the Old College* which had become available as a result of further building on Penglais. The Hugh Owen Library had been opened in 1976 and most of the departmental libraries, including the modern languages collections which had been in the Seddon Room, were moved into the new library. And from then until June 2014, the Club's monthly meetings were held there.

The Committee had tried for many years to find a base for the Club at the College. At its AGM in 1961 it was minuted that *Mrs Mansel Davies emphasized the need of permanent accommodation for the club – a point which had been stressed in the Secretary's report – and thought that the Registrar might be approached for help in this matter.* At the 1962 AGM a letter from the Registrar was read, saying that the Club's request *would receive sympathetic consideration when the Maths and Physics Departments moved to the new building.* But twelve months later the Registrar wrote again saying that it had not been possible *to find accommodation for the Women's Club in the South wing of the building which was vacated by the Physics Department.* He did however suggest that they approach *the Common Room Committee with a view to a room being reserved for us in the new Staff House at 9 Laura Place.* But it wasn't until September 1965 that the President, Megan Beynon, could report *that she had heard from the Deputy Registrar that 2 rooms in Penrock, Marine Terrace, would be available for use by the Club.* And on 8th June 1966 a coffee morning was arranged *to give members an opportunity to see the The Club Room at Penrock.*

During the meetings that followed, furnishing the Penrock kitchen and main room were often discussed: *a double gas ring so that it would be possible to boil a kettle and a milk saucepan...it might be possible to acquire a table from the college stores...approval was given to order 1 dozen stacking chairs... [It was decided to buy] 4 Ashford type chairs and 4 Newlyn type chairs in addition...36 cups, saucers and spoons... [and the secretary] was asked to buy three large plates, two teapots, a scourer and six tea towels as further equipment for Penrock.*

Having these rooms enabled the Club to arrange daytime meetings; the Discussion Groups met there and the Social Services Group used the rooms *for the purpose of entertaining the Old People on their outings.* The Club also held monthly coffee mornings there for newcomers to the College.

But within a few years the Club lost exclusive use of the rooms. In 1968 the Careers Office asked to use the Club Room *for the purpose of interviewing students.* The Committee agreed to the request and at their meeting in September 1969 the President, Mrs Jill Pennington, told the Committee *that she had been informed by the registrar that the Club room at Penrock would in future be required during the day as a waiting room for the College Doctors and Dentists.* It would still be available in the evenings but the loss during the day would mean the coffee mornings would have to be discontinued and that the subgroups would have to find other meeting places. In May 1971 the Club Secretary reported *this session we lost the use of Penrock,* and by 1973 all the equipment and furniture they had bought for the rooms had been sold.

VI. The Annual General Meetings

Every May the Club held its Annual General Meeting, when the Secretary would give her report on the monthly meetings and the leaders of the subgroups would report on their activities. The Treasurer would give the Club's Statement of Accounts, and any changes to the Constitution would be discussed and voted on. Usually they concerned membership eligibility but in the 1980s a number of amendments relating to the use of the Welsh language were made.

The March monthly meeting had always had a Welsh theme, but despite Amy Parry-Williams, Enid Parry and Mair Jones and many others being prominent in Welsh life, apart from some carols at Christmas and songs at Saint David's celebrations, very little attention was given to the language. At the 1980 AGM an amendment was *proposed by Mrs Morfudd Moelwyn Hughes and seconded by Mrs Nansi Davies that the Club should head its notices bilingually, to be consistent with official College policy, so that the notices would have the heading, 'College Women's Club / Clwb Merched y Coleg'*. The amendment was carried by 30 votes to 4. In 1986 it was suggested that the principle of a bilingual newsletter should be formally added to the constitution next year and in the same year the Club's programme card was also produced bilingually, which in 1995 bore the new name of the Club:

Clwb Merched Prifysgol Cymru
Aberystwyth
University of Wales Women's Club

Members who were leaving Aberystwyth, usually because their husbands were going to other universities, would be thanked at the AGM for their contributions to the Club and wished well, while the passing of other members would be noted, remembered and honoured with a minute's silence. In 1971, amongst the get-well letters and congratulations for giving birth cards that were sent to members, Dr Anita Williams *suggested that we ought to write from the Club to congratulate Dr Gwen Rees on being admitted a Fellow of the Royal Society*. Gwendolen Rees, who had been a member of the College Women's Club from the beginning, was the first woman working in Wales to be elected a Fellow and was, in the 1970s, one of eight Fellows of the Royal Society on the academic staff of Aberystwyth.

The AGM was also the occasion when the officers and Committee members for the following year would be elected. Some years, positions would be fiercely contested, with heavy canvassing. In later years, however, members would be reluctant to have their names put forward and some individuals would serve for more than one term.

The Belle Vue and Cambrian Hall were the locations of the first two AGMs but in 1959 they changed to the Marine Hotel where the meeting was followed by a dinner. They also met at the Students' Union refectory and at Staff House where in 1968 the meeting was *preceded by a light buffet of sausage rolls, sandwiches, cakes and coffee at a charge of 3/6 per head. Mr Mathewman had offered to reduce the price to 3/- if disposable cups were used. Committee members preferred to have china cups and they agreed to act as waitresses in order to keep the price at 3/6*. The Club alternated between these five locations until 1973 when they settled on Staff House and remained there, with only a one year break, until 1991 when they had to move to Brynamlwg, as *we no longer have the use of Staff House* as the building had closed. Brynamlwg and Penbryn would then be the venues for the AGMs until their final meeting in 2013 which was held in the Seddon Room.

VII. The Annual Outings

The final meeting of the year was held in either May or June, but not in any of the rooms at College as it was the Annual Outing. Members had visited Leri Mills, Tal-y-bont, in February

and Gregynog Hall in June 1955, and in 1956 Professor T. Jones Pierce of the History Department *arranged and guided* the first of a series of tours. Through his connections T. Jones Pierce had access to a number of historic houses across mid and north Wales and in 1956 the Club's outing began with a visit to Hengwrt where they were welcomed by Mrs Vaughan. From there they went to Cymmer Abbey, followed by tea at Caerynwch Hall, Cricieth, before going to Peniarth where they were *shown around by Mrs Williams Wynn*. The following year T. Jones Pierce took forty members on a bus excursion to north Wales where they visited Portmeirion, Ystumllyn, where *through the generosity of Mr and Mrs Shaw were able to look around the historic house and have tea* before following the David Lloyd George trail to Llanystumdwy and his grave by the River Dwyfor. Then they visited Brynawelon, Lady Megan Lloyd George's home, where they saw some of the downstairs rooms and the gardens. And in 1958 they visited various historical sites and houses in Breconshire, including Cilmeri, Maesyronnen Chapel, Old Gwernyfed Hall and Llanfilo Church. But these tours came to an end in 1960 and it was reported in the Minute Book that *the sympathy of the members had been conveyed to Mrs Jones Pierce on account of the illness of Prof. Jones Pierce*.

Over the years the Club tried to vary their outings between national and local destinations: the Milk Marketing Board Creamery at Felin-fach (1956); the Harlequin Puppet Theatre, Rhos-on-Sea (1959); Nanteos, where they saw the Nanteos Cup (1960); Powis Castle (1962); Llandysul Woollen Mill (1963); Lake Vyrnwy (1964); the National Library of Wales (1970); Castell Flemish Potteries Tregaron (1971); a train trip along the Cambrian Coast to Harlech (1973); Hereford for fruit picking (1975); Llywernog Silver Lead Mine (1977); Laura Ashley at Carno (1979); Outward Bound School, Aberdyfi (1981); Royal Worcester Porcelain Factory (1983); Llanerchaeron (1994); The Derwen Stud, Llanarth, (1997); Welsh Royal Crystal Factory (1999); Llanllŷr Garden (2007).

In 1964 they began a series of evening walking excursions when they met at Ponterwyd to walk along the Rheidol (1964); Bedd Taliesin (1965); Artist's Valley, Furnace, (1966); Trawsgoed to see the library and gardens (1967).

On Thursday 8th June 1972, on the same date exactly that they had visited there 17 years earlier, 57 members travelled in two buses to Gregynog Hall which had been gifted to the University of Wales by Margaret Davies before her death in 1963. The Club was met by the warden Glyn Tegai Hughes and Mrs Dora Herbert Jones who was then 82 years old. Following a tour of the hall and tea, 45 members arrived back at Aberystwyth at 11.45, but the minibus carrying the other 12 broke down at Llandinam. The members *tried our best at pushing the mini-bus, but to no avail! and at midnight a duplicate bus arrived and we arrived home at 1.35am, tired and weary – but, it was an evening to be remembered in more than one respect!*

But wherever they went on their Annual Outing, they always ended the day with a meal, and the long list of hotels and restaurants they visited over the years include: The Café Royal, Brecon; Glen Usk Hotel; Cletwr Café; Talbot Hotel, Tregaron; l'Hirondelle, Aberaeron; Dyffryn Castell Hotel; White Lion Hotel, Tal-y-bont; Buckley Arms Hotel; Castell Malgwyn Hotel; Plas Penhelig Hotel; Maesmawr Hall; Elan Valley Hotel and the Falcondale Country House Hotel.

VIII. Membership and Recruitment

The main reason for establishing the College Women's Club was to have somewhere where wives of new members of staff at the College could come to meet and get to know other wives who had already settled in the town. In the 1950s, when the College community was still small and the Club had links to many departments, it was relatively easy to know when there were newcomers at College, and Committee members could invite them to meetings via the academic departments.

At the October meeting for the 1958-59 session the Club's President, Dr Gwendolen Rees,

welcomed 82 members and also announced that *this session there were fifteen newcomers to the staff who were eligible for membership of the Club. Dr Rees said we were very pleased to welcome them on this occasion as our guests and hoped that we would be able to count them in our membership later.* It isn't recorded how many did join, but the attendance at the November meeting was *one hundred and eleven people.*

For the first six years of the College Women's Club's existence no membership figures were recorded in the Secretary's annual reports, but from the beginning of the 1958-59 session the attendance at most of the monthly meetings was noted, and between then and the 1962-63 AGM, when the Secretary's report did contain the number of members, attendance varied from 40 to 130, with 6 meetings attracting over 100 members. But at the same time, as the number of members attending these meetings in later years could be fewer than half the Club's membership, it is safe to say that the membership in the 1950s was fairly high. But as members could also bring guests to the meetings – guests being women who were not eligible to be members of the College Women's Club in their own right – one cannot assume that everyone who attended the monthly meetings was a member.

The Secretary's report for the 1962-63 session began with these words: *The year 1962-63 saw a continuation of expansion with membership reaching 170. There were 25 new comers to College, 15 of whom joined the Women's Club. The Committee entertained the new comers to coffee at the Marine Hotel on Wednesday 10th October 1962,* two days before the first meeting of the session.

And this was the pattern that the Club adopted; they would invite the new wives to a coffee morning at the Marine or the Belle Vue where the Committee *outlined the aims of the Club and leaders of the various groups spoke about their activities and invited new members to join.* Also at these first meetings, *newcomers would be given an overall picture of Aberystwyth.*

In 1970 the coffee morning became a coffee evening at Staff House *to see if it would be more convenient for working wives with young children. However as there were about twenty new members, this does not seem to have made much difference.* However they persevered and in 1973 the coffee evening became a sherry party at the Cambrian Hall *to welcome new members to join the Women's Club,* but it only attracted 14 new members. In 1974, rather than have the newcomers' meeting a couple of days before the first monthly meeting, they decided to hold it prior to the main meeting. But once again they only managed to attract 12 new members.

In 1976 they reverted to the coffee mornings, but despite the continued growth of the College and a regular turnover of staff, the number of new members remained low. At a Committee meeting in September 1981 *it was decided to abandon the coffee morning for new members who were conspicuous by their absence.*

All this was extra work for the Committee whose main business was to *decide on days and dates of Club meetings; discussion and arranging of the programme; contacting speakers; booking rooms; printing the Club's programme; advertising; collecting subscriptions; paying speakers; organising equipment and, if necessary, arranging translation services.*

But the need to attract new members was always a present and pressing concern. They continued to publicise the Club's meetings on departmental noticeboards and in *Aber News & Views* as well as invitations to those who were eligible for membership. They tried a sherry evening again in 1982, but despite sending 520 letters only one new member of staff attended the reception.

In membership terms the peak of the College Women's Club was from the early 60s to the mid 70s. During these years the numbers were often near the 200 mark, and on five occasions went above it with the highest number of 220 recorded in 1967, and from 1974 onwards the pattern was one of gradual decline. But even at its peak, fewer than half of the members would attend the Club's monthly meetings, as many of them were more interested in the activities of the subgroups, and wouldn't even pay their subscription to the College Women's Club. This problem

became evident early on in the Club's history.

In January 1963 the Committee had agreed that *the leaders of the subgroups should point out that no-one would be allowed to join their groups unless they were members of the College Women's Club*. But apparently things had not improved, as at the April Committee meeting Beryl Johnston suggested that *Head of subgroups should send in a list of their members to the treasurer, so they could be checked on*. But despite these reminders this situation was not completely resolved and in 1979 when the Drama Group asked the College Women's Club for financial help they were reminded that *all members of subgroups should be paid up members of the College Women's Club* as this affected the amount of money the Club received through subscriptions.

Over the years, one way of increasing the Club's membership was to cast their net wider and make others from outside the College eligible, and this is reflected in the changes that were made to the Club's Constitution. When the Club started, membership was open to *women members of staff...wives and widows of members of staff, former women members of staff and to wives and widows of former members of staff*. 'Staff' is defined as *members of the teaching staff, research assistants, and such members of the administrative staff as are eligible for membership of the University College of Wales Senior Common Room* which provided opportunities for academics to socialise. As a result of more and more academic departments being relocated to the Penglais Campus during the 1970s and 80s, the Senior Common Room at Old College closed and eligibility for the College Women's Club became based on membership of Staff House at 9 Laura Place.

At the 1984 AGM the President, Christine Price, gave notice of an amendment that she intended to propose at the next AGM concerning membership, as she wished to extend it to *all wives of all workers in the College, be they academic staff, administrative or cleaners*. At the 1985 AGM, following a *lively discussion*, it was felt that more information was needed to find out *how many people might be involved, to consider how they might be circularised, and to present its findings to the Club for discussion*. To this end a small subcommittee consisting of Peggy Jones, Christine Price, Judith Smart and Mercedes Mills was set up.

Following this, at the 1986 AGM, five amendments concerning membership were made to the Club's Constitution, three of which changed the definition of 'Staff' which from then on would be defined as *members of the teaching staff, clerical staff, technical staff, manual staff, research assistants, and such members of the administrative staff as are eligible for membership of the UCW Staff House*. But even then when it was noted that *the potential membership was c.2,000* the actual membership remained the same as it had been the previous year, 127.

By the mid 1980s members could come not only from the College but also the Royal Commission for Ancient Monuments, the British Geological Survey, the National Library of Wales, the Welsh Plant Breeding Station, the College of Librarianship Wales, the Welsh Agricultural College and the United Theological College. And in 1992, Coleg Ceredigion, the Countryside Council for Wales and the Forestry Commission were added to the Constitution. In 1996 the Staff Women's Club was amalgamated with the Aberystwyth University of Wales Women's Club, but despite this, numbers continued to fall. In 2000 there were under 100 members, and in 2013, the Club's final year, there were 48 members, its lowest ever recorded number.

IX. The Subgroups

The College Women's Club with its six monthly meetings during the academic year was the main means of promoting social intercourse among the members, but it was not the only one.

Within two months of the Club's first meeting a Bridge and Canasta Group had been established when, as reported in the 1997 AGM minutes of the Club, *Mavis Rees mentioned that the group*

was formed in 1955 when Beryl Johnston presented covers and cards. In October the following year notice was drawn to the existence of the Dressmaking Class as well as the newly formed Folk Dancing Class. That was the only time that the Folk Dancing Class was mentioned in the Club's minutes, with the Dressmaking Class lasting a little longer until April 1958 with several members modelling clothes that they had made at the 1957 AGM.

1957 also saw the creation of the Drama Group which lasted until the 1980s and was one of the five main subgroups, the others being the Bridge Group (1955-2009), the Discussion Group (1959-2014), the Social Services Group (1959-2002), and the Flower Group (1973-2010).

In addition to these groups, members came together to form a Choir (1962-1974) which featured regularly in the Club's Christmas entertainment. Its first leader and accompanist was Joy Owen who was followed later in the year by Sue Gerallt Jones, and then most notably Charles Clements, who had been asked by Rhiannon Mansel Davies to teach and conduct the Choir. Members Margaret Dyfri Jones and Mair Hughes recall that they would rehearse at Pantycelyn, and in addition to contributing to the Club's Christmas and Saint David's celebrations, they would also entertain the elderly residents of Avondale, Bodlondeb and Deva, and at the Old Students' Association Easter reunions during the 1960s and 70s.

A Keep Fit Group was started in 1966 before stopping and stuttering on irregularly until 1974. French and Russian classes were held during the 1970s with Helen Waring donating the money she received from the students of the Russian Class to the Social Services Group. The 1970s also saw the creation of a Mother and Toddler Group (1973-76), a Chess Group (1974-79), a Walking or Rambling Group, and also a Riding Group, both of which were mentioned only once, in 1974 and 1976 respectively. Apart from brief entries in the AGM minutes, no reports or meeting minutes for these short-lived subgroups have survived.

The Bridge Club

By 1957 the Bridge and Canasta Group, which had first met in the Belle Vue Hotel in March 1955, was known simply as the Bridge Club and was meeting in the Senior Common Room in the Old College on alternate Mondays. Since 1956 its leaders, Olive Morton, Margaret Evans, Enid Nosworthy, Dorothy Saunders, Beryl Johnston, Gladys Griffiths and Gwyneth Trott, had presented their annual reports at the College Women's Club's AGM, but unfortunately none of those reports, the Bridge Club's Minute Book, its Scores Book or any of its other archives for the period 1955-70/71 session, have survived.

Over the fifteen years since its creation the Bridge Club rules had been well established, but even so at times they still needed re-emphasising and checking as one of the minutes of the Committee Meeting for 16th November 1970 shows: *It was agreed that the Club be asked to re-affirm (if so desired) the rule that new partners should be chosen each year for the year. It seems that certain members were not conforming.*

What also appears to be well established by 1970 is the Club's tradition of awarding at its AGM silver spoons to the main overall winners with the greatest number of points accumulated over the year. The Treasurer's report at the 16th November meeting notes that they had *a balance of £26.11.5 after six silver spoons had been paid for. Two further spoons are ordered, and it was agreed that further purchases can be considered later as 22 spoons are now held.* To make things fairer for all the members, Beryl Johnston suggested at the 18th May 1971 meeting *that those who were to receive spoons at the AGM night should not be eligible for the prizes given that night.* And at the AGM, minute 8 simply records: *The spoons were presented.*

But there were also differences in the types of spoons that were presented, as the list of winners in the 1973-74 session shows:

- | | | |
|-------------------|-----|------------------|
| 1. Bunty Richards | 277 | Queen Anne Spoon |
| 2. Kay Kidgell | 276 | Queen Anne Spoon |

| | | |
|---------------------|-----|------------------|
| 3. Dorothy Saunders | 268 | Queen Anne Spoon |
| 4. Barbara James | 264 | Teaspoon |
| 5. Pat Corlett | 257 | Teaspoon |
| = Frances John | 257 | Teaspoon |
| 7. Enid Nosworthy | 252 | Small Spoon |
| 8. Margaret Dummer | 242 | Small Spoon |

Reference to the silver spoons, their number, their cost and how many should be presented are recurring items at the Bridge Club's meetings. In 1979, 4 silver spoons were bought for £6 each from Susan Whitehead, Llangurig, but *the price of silver having risen so rapidly it was decided to defer purchasing more this year*. Over the years some members proposed that the number of spoons presented each year be reduced from 8 to 6 or even 4. The members always decided to keep it at 8, but in light of the continuing high price of silver it was decided in 1980 *that the Club could not afford to present eight silver spoons annually*. They had seven spoons in hand and it was proposed by Mavis Rees and seconded by Edeila Williams *that spoons be presented only to the top four players and the next four players to receive tokens of £5: £4: £3: £2 respectively*. This proposition was carried by a large majority.

By 1986 *the silver spoons had become so expensive that only one spoon had been bought, not three, so that four spoons would be in hand for 1986*. But despite the price of silver, and the suggestion in 1988 of buying silver plated spoons, the Club succeeded in securing, either second hand or through the generous gesture of a Club member who wished to remain anonymous, to continue to award silver spoons as prizes until 1995 when it was noted that *as it is now impossible to buy a silver spoon for less than £5, it was decided to award the 5 spoons which are held and subsequently to give £5 tokens for the 4 highest scores*. And that was effectively the end of the silver spoons being awarded to the highest points scorers.

The fall in membership of the Bridge Club over the years had also become a cause for concern. In 1982 Veronica Guy thought that the Club could *attract some younger members by a less formal approach and proposed the first evening next session should be widely publicised as a social evening with bridge*. And in 1984 they agreed that classes should be arranged *when those who are interested can meet to discuss and learn more about the game – bidding, conventions, rules etc*. The membership remained constant over the next decade and in 2002 Pamela Woodhouse could report *that we had averaged five full tables per session*.

But by 2005 the Club was slowly, steadily, losing numbers which meant that sometimes they only had 3½ tables, and *after a wide ranging discussion it was agreed that we would relax the rules governing guests and allow 2-3 guests each week, always providing no member was left without a partner. This was passed unanimously*. But that did not improve matters. In 2008 Margaret James's report noted that *The number of members is now 18, and the average attendance has been 3½ tables. There has been a suggestion that the club should close, but it has been decided to continue as long as possible*.

The fall in membership affected the club's officers; with fewer members the duties were either shared by more than one person, or an officer would remain in post longer than the usual year as in the case of Treasurer Joanne Maltman, who remained in post for twelve successive years from 1998 to 2009. On 3rd June 2009 Margaret James wrote to Rosemary Law, Secretary of the Aberystwyth University Women's Club: *It is with great regret that I write to inform you that, as of last evening, the Bridge group of the Women's Club has had to close. The problem of course is that we inevitably lose members and no one comes along to replace them. Consequently, our numbers have fallen so low that we can no longer guarantee having 3 tables, which is really the minimum number required*.

It is very sad that this club, which has given so much pleasure for so many years has now ceased to exist, but unfortunately there was no alternative.

The Drama Group

It was agreed at the College Women's Club's second AGM in May 1957 that they would *set up a Drama Group*, and in January 1958 *two plays by the newly formed Dramatics Society were performed in the Examination Hall, 'The Vixen and the Grapes' and 'The Brontë Sisters'*. Within two months another two plays, *The Shadow Passes* and *A Husband for Breakfast*, were performed in the Examination Hall to an audience of 150 members and friends.

These productions proved so popular that in 1959 the Drama Group presented the three-act play *Ladies in Retirement* over two nights, 21st and 22nd January. This was the first time that they had attempted a full length play and it was also the first time that the performances were open to the public. Over the two nights 301 people attended.

Alternating programmes of one-act plays and a full length play performed over two nights was the pattern that the Drama Group followed for some years. Amongst them were Tennyson's *The Falcon*, Chekov's *The Bear*, J.B. Priestley's *The Rose and Crown* and Pamela Johnson's *Corinth House*.

The high standard of their performances is reflected by the fact that the Group won the County Drama Festival in 1962 and the cup was proudly displayed at that year's AGM.

Amongst the plays that were performed over two nights were *Breath of Spring* (1962), *The Constant Wife* by Somerset Maugham (1964) and *Ring Around the Moon* by Jean Anouilh (1968). In 1969 the two nights of plays became Three Nights of Drama, with *The Beaux Stratagem* (1969), *Pride and Prejudice* (1970) and *Hobson's Choice* (1972) all performed in the Examination Hall, Old College.

In 1972 the Drama Group was one of the first companies to perform on the stage of Theatr y Werin, Penglais, which had only been completed in the autumn. The occasion this time was the Group's Christmas meeting for members and guests, and with the Club Choir was a pageant of the 'Role of Women Students Through the Years' collected by Sonia Dobson.

In 1975 the Group returned to Theatr y Werin for *A Buffet and First Night* for their production of *Dinner With the Family*, when *a buffet was held afterwards in the Great Hall foyer through an arrangement with Roger Tomlinson, manager of the Arts Centre*. Their performance of Agatha Christie's *The Hollow* in 1976 was also followed by a buffet. The cost of a ticket to the play and the buffet was £2.30.

Elizabeth and Telfryn Pritchard had come to Aberystwyth in 1966 and by the beginning of the 1966-67 session she had joined the College Women's Club. Her reminiscences of her long association with the Drama Group paint a vivid picture of their activities:

Very soon after joining the main club I signed up for the Drama Group which I really enjoyed. The first productions we did after I joined were in the Exam Hall and later ones in Theatr y Werin. The first one I remember was 'The Importance of Being Earnest' [1967]. I was given the job of writing the programme for this – only to be gently reproved by Arnold Duff who was playing Canon Chasuble, because I had spelt Canon with a double n. I was also in charge of the takings which was rather rash of the group as, when teaching, I could never get my Dinner Money to balance at the end of the week.

The most enjoyable production we did was 'Pride and Prejudice' [1970]. Most of the other plays were produced by Alison Davies but Del Williams did this one. I was usually cast as a maid or a minion of some kind but in this I rose to the dizzy heights of the aristocracy as Lady Lucas. Deian Hopkin was the wicked Mr Wickham, Peter Bement was Mr Darcy, and Rhiannon Steeds was Elizabeth Bennet. Ieuan Davies and Nesta Dodson were Mr and Mrs Bennet. Alison Davies who was some years older than me, was cast as my daughter Charlotte.

Other plays in the Exam Hall were 'Ring Around the Moon' [1968] and 'Hotel Paradiso' [1974]. Later productions in Theatr y Werin included 'Absurd Person Singular' [1978], 'Dinner With The Family' [1975], 'Was He Anyone', 'The Rape of the Belt' [1979] and 'Breath of Spring' [1978]. In the early days the Drama Group frequently put on an item for the Christmas meeting of the club. We did 'Murder in the Red Barn' one year [1970] and another year various dramatic readings from Queen Victoria's diary. We also had fashion shows of some of the costumes we had collected. From somewhere they had been given a pair of beautiful crinoline dresses which had belonged to a pair of (very thin) twins. We couldn't use them in any productions as no one was thin enough to wear them. I think they eventually went to St Fagans.

The costumes were kept in the pigeon-infested tower of Old College. We had had gifts of costumes from a variety of sources. Sonia Dobson had a relative who had been a government official in some role which involved a jacket festooned with braid and gold lace and we had that. We also had various accessories, belts, hats etc. of various periods. Most of the furniture for productions was borrowed from Margaret Evans of 'Aberystwyth Yesterday' but 'The Rape of the Belt' involved us drilling with long and heavy javelins borrowed from the P.E. Department. David Tinker of the Art Department designed the sets.

It was a great group to belong to as we had a lot of fun. The people doing the props often played tricks on the cast. I think it was in 'Absurd Person Singular' that the cast were eating salad on the stage in one scene and a small green plastic frog was introduced into the salad. In 'Was He Anyone' (which was an absurd play) Elizabeth Andrews was shown a photograph with the line 'This is his married sister from Dumfries'. Each night it would be a different picture; once it was one of Elizabeth, another time it was a gorilla – how she didn't laugh I don't know.

It appears that the three night performance of *The Rape of the Belt* at Theatr y Werin between 17th and 19th May 1979 was the last play that the Drama Group produced. The AGM minutes notes receiving reports from the Group until 1981, but there is no mention of any further productions.

The Discussion Group

The first meeting of the Discussion Group was convened for Thursday, 19th February 1959, at 10.30am to decide the subject and venue for the first discussion. Present at 'Talfryn', Stanley Road, the home of Rhiannon Mansel Davies, was Rhiannon herself, Mrs Beddows, Mrs T. I. [Mari] Ellis, Mrs D. Davies and Mrs Gwen Evans. The subject 'Roof lifting' i.e. realism in literature, theatre and art was chosen, and special mention was made of 'Cat on a Hot Tin Roof' to which reference was to be made. Mrs T. I. [Mari] Ellis kindly offered the use of her home for the next meeting to be held Sat. 21st March at 8 p.m.

But before they closed, two ground rules for the Discussion Group meetings were noted:

- 1. It was agreed that no hospitality other than tea and plain biscuits was to be provided by any hostess – so as not to break in too much on the discussion nor become too burdensome for any one person to undertake.*
- 2. It was also agreed that it might be advisable to choose different days of the week for each meeting so that no one person should be regularly prevented from attending.*

At that second meeting at 4 Laura Place to discuss 'Roof lifting', in addition to the five members who attended the first meeting were Mrs Eveling, Mrs Cooper and Mrs Llewelfryn Davies. *The subject was discussed with much vigour. Conclusions were many and varied but most agreed that where realism was over-done merely for the purpose of being real i.e. shocking, then it ceased to be effective; when realism was introduced to point out some great wrong or deficiency in social life it was usually effective and much appreciated.*

The next meeting would be on Wednesday May 6th at 8 p.m. at Mrs Beddows' home, Frondeg, Llanbadarn, when they would discuss the poems of John Betjeman, R. S. Thomas and Vernon

Watkins.

The final meeting of their first year was held on Thursday 11th June and the topic under discussion was 'Primary Education at Aberystwyth', a subject that was sure to create much discussion amongst the 13 present. They began with nursery education and then moved to the 4-7 and 7-11 age groups, but the *most spirited contributions were reserved for the 11+ exam which was felt to be mismanaged in many ways. The division of the community into Modern & Grammar schools with different uniforms was felt to be deplorable in many ways as it spoilt family life and children's friendships.*

Mrs Enid Parry, Principal Thomas Parry's wife, had attended the discussion on 'Primary Education at Aberystwyth' and she was also amongst the 10 who were present at the first meeting of the following academic year, on 13th October 1959. It may have been the topic of 'The Novels of Emyr Humphreys', that attracted her with *His very obvious borrowings from Welsh backgrounds e.g. U.C.W. & Bangor Varsity and his very sensitive treatment of his characters.* But despite these positive comments, there was one criticism that the group had and that was *His comparative weakness in describing women.*

They had an even larger attendance at their next meeting held on the 13th November 1959 when they met at the Cambrian Hall, as it was included in the programme for the whole of the College Women's Club. Fifty-eight members were present when *A panel of members of the Discussion Group gave spontaneous answers to questions on a variety of subjects.*

Topics that were discussed by the Group at their own meetings during their first year were: 'Christmas: Holy Days or Holidays'; 'The Gulf Between Arts & Science'; 'The Power of Non-violence'; 'Wales in Fact & Fiction', and they ended the year at Enid Parry's invitation at Plas Penglais where they discussed *The Buttercup Field*, a collection of short stories by Gwyn Jones, who was at the time Professor of English at Aberystwyth.

Over the summer the Group met to arrange the programme for the 1960-61 session and their choice of topics were: 'We pride ourselves on our freedoms. How free are we?' 'The works of Alun Lewis'. 'Education as a training for life'. 'The responsibility of the press'. And finally 'The new translation of the New Testament'.

This mixture of literary, social and religious topics plus personal impressions of events and people was typical of the Group's programme for many years, e.g. 'Hinduism', 'Buddhism', 'Islam' (1961-62); 'The Tourist Industry in Wales', 'George Eliot', 'My Suburbia' (1962-63); 'Iris Murdoch', 'Honest to God' (1963-64); 'Quebec Travellers Tales' by Mair Williams and Beti Jones who had spent time in Canada and the United States when their husbands taught there. 'Harold Pinter's Tea Party' (1964-65); 'Changes in Etiquette', 'Depopulation of Mid-Wales', 'The Student's Art Exhibition' (1965-66); 'The Ceri Richards Exhibition', 'The Plowden Report', 'Mrs D.R. Thomas's visit to the USA' (1966-67). And at the end of the 1960s and into the 70s there were a number of discussions on social and controversial issues of the day: 'Crime Drama on Television', 'The Reith Lecture: the family as an unit of society', 'The Doctor's Ethical Problems', 'The New Divorce Bill' (1967-68); 'The Responsibility of the Press in a Permissive Society', 'The Immigration Problem', 'Advertising' (1968-69); 'Student Unrest' (1969-70); 'The Common Market', 'The Generation Gap', 'Pollution' (1971-72). In 1986 they linked up with the main College Women's Club to discuss 'The Novels of P.D. James' ahead of her appearance as the Club's guest speaker.

Aberystwyth had been the subject of a number of the Group's discussions: 'Our Town Aberystwyth' (1963); 'Aspects of Aberystwyth' (1970); 'Reorganisation and Aberystwyth' (on the formation of Dyfed County Council) (1975); 'Where is Aberystwyth Going?' (the proposed new development plan for the town) (1993); 'Aberystwyth' (the appeal of the disappearing and changing town) (1998) and 'Aberystwyth: improvements we would like to see' (2006). But no meeting to discuss Aber would have caused more discussion than the one held in March 1988 to

discuss *Aber, Aber* the S4C fly-on-the-wall documentary on student life in the town. The previous week the Group had even ended their meeting early so that members could go home to watch the programme. They had a *lively discussion* that was *hard on the BBC. Bad publicity for the College. The BBC provided the booze.*

Up until 1966 Discussion Group meetings had been held in members' homes but when Penrock became available they met there until 1971 when the Club lost the use of the room. They would then meet in either the Senior Common Room or Staff House until 1991 when it appeared that the Seddon Room would become their regular venue.

But after some years of undisturbed use of Seddon, between 1998 and 2001 they faced competition from a yoga group who started to use the room for their meetings despite the fact that the Discussion Group has booked it with the College. But the Group persisted and succeeded in gaining access in November 2001. *In the Seddon Room. We were fortunate that some members arrived at 7.00pm and were able to claim the room (which we had booked). The Yoga Group came a little later and would have occupied the room.* They succeeded again the following month to beat the yoga group to the room and after that they were left in peace.

But within a few years the future of the Group itself was in doubt. In March 2005 Dr Beryl Thomas had written to Mercedes Mills, the Women's Club Secretary, saying, *I had told the current members last summer that this would be the last session I would undertake to organize the Discussion Group so that, if any one felt like taking over, they would have an opportunity to come forward. It has always been a very lively and enjoyable time together but we are all getting a little older and so far no one has offered to take it on. Rather than press a decision from the faithful who turned up this week, I said I would write to the Women's Club committee to say that there is as yet no organizer for the Discussion Group for next session. I will bring the records to the AGM in May so that the future of the Discussion Group can be put on the Agenda and if no new leader emerges, a decision can be made whether the Group lapses.*

The first meeting of the 2005-06 session was held in November and was an extraordinary meeting to discuss 'The Future of the Discussion Group'. Fourteen members attended and *It was clear that all those present wanted the Group to continue. After some discussion it was decided to share out some of the responsibility between some of the members with Joan Conway volunteering to be its leader, and in this way the Group survived.*

At the Group's AGM in October 2011 Mercedes Mills stood down as Chairman and Beryl Thomas offered to replace her. Mercedes Mills gave news of some members who, for various reasons, *will not be able to attend our meetings in the near future.* Joan Conway had had an operation on her knee and was convalescing in Bodlondob *but it is likely to take longer than thought.* Joan Anthony-Jones has been greatly affected by a family bereavement and Mavis Rees's treatment was proving debilitating.

The Group survived for another year, but in October 2012 they were *still keeping our options open as to what form the Discussion Group may take in future. It could well be a Lunch Club with an informal discussion to follow. Most people have ever increasing family commitments and no one felt able to make a promise to fill vacancies. All agreed that meeting each other was very rewarding.*

In March 2013 a *meeting took place in Beryl's house, as it was more convenient for her than the Seddon Room. We also talked about the future of the Group and decided not to book the Seddon Room but to go ahead and regroup for the Annual Lunch cum AGM in mid-October.*

By October Joan Conway could not be present but she sent her best wishes to the Group. It was also reported that Kay Lewis, *one of the stalwarts of the group,* had passed away. The future of the Group was discussed again and Mercedes Mills agreed to take over from Beryl Thomas for the coming year. They decided to return to the Seddon Room, but this was short-lived and their

March 2014 meeting to discuss 'The State of the NHS in Wales' was held in Dr Beryl Thomas's house. Interest amongst the seven members who attended was still relatively high and if everyone who sent their apologies for not being able to attend meetings could have been present, then the numbers would have been in the low teens, more than enough to *make up a sufficient number for a formal discussion*. In the event this was their last meeting, and after 55 years of discussing a wide range of personal, local, national and international topics, the Discussion Group came to an end.

The Social Services Group

At the AGM of the College Women's Club held in May 1959, when the President, Dr Gwen Rees, asked for suggestions for the following year's programme, Kathleen Magill *proposed that the Club might organise some activities of a philanthropic nature to benefit old people, children or the disabled. After much discussion it was proposed, seconded and passed that a Social Services Group be formed under the Chairmanship of Mrs Magill to investigate the possibilities of doing work of this nature.* And as a result the subgroup that contributed most to good relationship between Town and Gown was born.

Following its formation in June the Group held a series of meetings that resulted in a flurry of activities over the next six months:

- A *Bring and Buy coffee party held at Rhydgaled, North Road, raised funds for the Group which enabled it to take some old people from Aberystwyth on an outing to Borth.*
- A *sack of children's second hand clothing produced money for the World Refuge Year.*
- In a general meeting of supporters of the Group at Godreglais, Caradoc Road, Miss Anita Williams reported on a visit by the committee to two children's homes (family unit type) in Cardiganshire. It was agreed that the children at the Cardigan home should be entertained to a party shortly after Christmas and members would provide hospitality overnight. And the children at the Llanybydder home should be taken to the pantomime in Aberystwyth.*
- At a meeting held on Monday 9th November the question of the wives of overseas students who were felt to be on their own at Aberystwyth was considered. By the next meeting the following week a list of wives *had been provided by the College's Welfare Officer and it was agreed that members of the committee should visit them and invite any eligible children to the Christmas party. Mrs Magill said that she would visit Club members with a view of putting them in touch with lonely overseas students' wives who lived nearby.*
- At a meeting held on Wednesday 16th November *Mrs Anita Williams reported that she had sent a compendium of games to the children's home at Allt-y-blacca (Llanybydder) and a variety of fireworks to the children's home in Cardigan.*
- At a committee meeting held on Sunday 13th December the final arrangements were made for the children's Christmas Party the following Saturday, 19th December, at the College Refectory with the permission of the Students' Union. Dr Mervyn Jones would provide transport in his Dormobile. Members helped with refreshments and if they had children aged between 5 and 12 years old they would be invited. Mrs Kathleen Magill provided a Christmas tree and the daughters of four members were asked to help organise games: C. Gapper, B. Nash, G. Aaron and J. Richards.

And there would be no slacking in the New Year.

- At the meeting on Friday 1st January it was reported that the coffee party raise £60 for the World Refuge Year. It was also reported that the children's party had been a success and *had introduced the Cardigan children to homes in Aberystwyth.*
- A film show was arranged for residents of Bronglais for Thursday 13th January and for a combined group from Avondale and Deva for Friday 14th.

Even though the first AGM of the Social Services Club wasn't held until October 1961, when they drew up their Constitution stating that *the objects of the Group are to conduct social and welfare work mainly in and about the town of Aberystwyth*, they had already established

relationships between themselves and the main local beneficiaries of its commitment and hard work for the next forty years.

The Group had arranged a Christmas party for the children of the Cardiganshire children's homes of Peterwell, Erw Lon and Cartrefle in 1959 and would continue to do so, as well as arrange trips to see pantomimes at Aberystwyth and Swansea, with some pocket money, until 1980. Christmas presents would also be given to them, *up to £3 for each child in the homes* in 1979, but it wasn't only at Christmas that the children were remembered.

In 1962 they received a letter from the County Children's Officer thanking them for arranging *a holiday at Clarach during the Whit holiday for the children*. In 1963 they booked two caravans at Clarach for them and continued to do so until 1976. In 1972 they also gave the children 10/- each pocket money to spend on their holidays. In 1976 two caravans were booked for the week 29th May to 5th June at the Aberystwyth Holiday Village at a cost of £119.88 for 16 children and 4 house mothers from Peterwell, Lampeter. But the children from Cartrefle and Erw Lon were not forgotten; a day trip to Aberystwyth and £1.50 pocket money was arranged for them in August.

Throughout the 1970s and 80s they continued to pay for caravans for the children's holidays but by 1987 Peterwell was the only surviving children's home in Cardiganshire. Cartrefle had closed in March 1980 and Erw Lon had followed before the end of the year. The change in the county's childcare policy would also eventually affect Peterwell. The Group reported in 1990 there *are rumours that it will close but nothing definite*, so they continued to support the children by booking another caravan holiday for the Spring Bank Holiday. In October the matron left and *the home would be closed when places could be found for the three children*. By the following October the children had been fostered and the Group had been asked if they would *pay for curtains and duvet covers. They would give curtains as a house-warming present and duvet covers as Christmas presents up to £250*.

The Social Services Group's 33 year connection with 'Peterwell children' came to an end in 1992 as it was reported with some pride at the AGM that they had left the foster home and that one of the boys had *gained 5 GCSEs and is working for his uncle, a builder, in Haverfordwest, living with his sister, happily*. And that the girl *is doing well as a YTS Trainee at Bron Aeron Home, Felinfach. She is living independently in a flat and doing well*.

The Group's support for the old people's homes of Bodlondeb, Avondale and Deva continued. Following the film shows in January 1960, in June the Group took some of the residents on a trip to Borth, and following its success they arranged another one to Devil's Bridge in September. And during 1961 *Miss Powys Roberts and Mrs Morgan Jones did their 'small Victorian drama' and Mrs Owen's singing group [the Choir] provided entertainment for the Old People's Homes*. The Group decided that they would leave visiting patients in Bronglais to other groups that had been doing visiting work for years, and continue with the trips, *which the people obviously enjoyed*. And they enjoyed them so much that in June 1961 they arranged another trip to Borth and to the gardens at Trawsgoed, and reports appeared in the *Cambrian News*.

Also in June, the Choir and the Drama Group's concert of 'old time songs' for the Deva residents *was so successful that every effort should be made to repeat it*. And this they did in November when pupils at Ardwyn Grammar School (who included children of Group members) and the Choir provided a concert for the residents. When a similar concert was held in March the following year, in addition to items by *College Women's Club choir and Ardwyn pupils, there would be songs by the overseas students*.

Since the situation of the wives of overseas students had been brought to the Group's attention they had endeavoured to keep in contact with them through a coffee party in June 1960, but *although seven had been invited only four felt able to accept. Following the party the committee noted that the main problems that confronted the wives were accommodation and language*. And so in June 1961 they decided *to hold a series of talks at the beginning of the 1961-62 Session by*

local people with specialist knowledge on: Shopping; the Health Service; Aberystwyth and District Points of Interest; as well as heating, clothing, washing and cooking.

Christmas gifts would be sent to the wives, entertainments arranged – *a piano recital by Josephine Anthiano from Singapore* (November 1963) – and transport to take *the overseas wives and their children to a party arranged by the British Council at Penglais* in December 1964. And in May 1966 the Group arranged an *evening drive to Aberdyfi and then tea at Clettwr Café* for them. But after this there is no mention made of the overseas students and their families until 1974 when the Group was asked by Mair Williams if they would pay for a *set of English books for the overseas wives*. This was agreed *as long as the wives paid a small amount each time they used the set*.

But the links with the residents of Bodlondeb, Avondale and Deva continued. The Christmas concert in 1962 was provided by the College's Madrigal Singers, and pupils of Saint Padarn Convent School would perform a Nativity play for them at the school. The concerts for the residents would continue throughout the following years, as would the trips to Trawsgoed, the Welsh Plant Breeding Station in Penrhyn-coch, Borth, and Glandyfi Castle where *the owners provided tea for the old people and showed them around the castle*. But in addition to these outings, the members would invite them to their homes for tea and Kathleen Magill would arrange cars to bring and return the residents.

One of them, Margaret Alban Davies, who had been an Honorary Member of the College Women's Club right from the start, chose to hold a tea at her home, Brynawelon, Llan-non, for the Deva residents. It's no surprise that she should invite them as her father-in-law, David Alban Davies, had been behind the purchasing of Deva for the Aberystwyth and District Old People's Housing Society when he was chairman of the society. He had also been responsible for buying the Penglais Estate for the University in 1946 and securing Plas Penglais as the Principal's residence. Within a few years Plas Penglais itself would become the centre of the Group's fund-raising activities.

The Social Services Group had been formed at the suggestion of Kathleen Magill, and she had been its leader and driving force since then. In 1964 her term as President came to an end but she was asked to *continue as president of the group for another year, since it was felt that no other member of the committee could do the job as well as she had been doing it*. She agreed, but in May 1965 she told the Committee that *she had decided to retire from the presidency of the group at the end of this term* although she would remain on the Committee. This was such a blow to the Group, especially as there was nobody else who was willing to take her place, that at their next meeting in September *the future of the group was discussed and members of the committee would approach one or two persons to ask whether they would be prepared to serve on the committee*. In the event Mrs Vanstone agreed to be President with Mrs Williams as secretary and Mrs Johnston as Treasurer. Encouragingly the finances of the group were *quite satisfactory, since we have over £50 in hand*.

£50 would have been enough to buy presents for the children and the residents of the old people's homes that Christmas, but if the new officers were to continue with all their work in 1966, they would soon have to start raising more money.

The Committee Meeting for January 1972 records, *funds much lower after Christmas expenditure and it was suggested that a Jumble Sale be held as soon as possible*. The 'Christmas expenditure' that had been incurred was recorded, along with other activities, in the minutes for the previous meeting under the heading 'Christmas Activities':

North Road Hospital: *Mrs Owen Davies and Mrs Wynn Jones will do flowers for hall and chapel again. The Matron will let us know if any patients require personal gifts (i.e. not expecting any at all). Mrs Betty Kitchen will be asked to bring the choir to sing carols in the wards. Members would help staff put up decorations on the 23rd.*

Bodlondeb: To provide for 19 residents (12 men, 7 women). It was decided to give the men cigars, and ties for non-smokers, and the women soap and talc. We would make enquiries about the Bible film or the Hafod film for Bodlondeb after Christmas.

Avondale: Presents for those who are not likely to receive any, as above for 4 men and 4 women. Also a party after Christmas, with a choir visit.

Deva: Presents as above for 3 women and 3 men.

Bodlondeb, Avondale and Deva would also be given bottles of sherry (6 for Bodlondeb, 3 each for the others) and jars of sweets (6 altogether).

Pantomime: Mrs Wynn Jones reported that tickets had been booked for 6 adults and 24 children. It was decided to give them 50p each pocket money.

Donations: It was decided to give £10 each to the League of Friends' Bus and to Save the Children Fund.

This was quite a shopping and commitments list, and not just for that one year but the same or similar for nearly every year that the Social Services Group existed. For example, over the 30 years that they gave Christmas gifts to Bodlondeb, Avondale and Deva, the homes received over 300 bottles of sherry or wine.

And for this and all the other volunteer work that they did and charities and groups that they supported for the other 11 months of the year, a regular income of funds was required. In addition to jumble sales, they organised bring and buys, one day or nearly new shops and coffee mornings. The jumble sales would usually be arranged in either February or March, to replenish their bank account after Christmas, and held at the Parish Hall or the Catholic Church Hall, with the members collecting the jumble and manning the stalls.

For the one day or nearly new shops the Group would either take over an empty shop such as *the bicycle shop in Pier Street or the fruit shop in Terrace Road or the Old Police Station in Great Darkgate Street*. Once they had acquired a location, they would fit them out with clothes rails borrowed from laundries or clothes shops such as Cardigan House and Morgan and Jones and fill them with donations from members' friends and neighbours, and in this way they would raise hundreds of pounds annually.

But their main fund-raising occasion during the 1970s and 80s was the annual coffee morning at Plas Penglais. When Sir Goronwy Daniel became Principal in 1969 he approached the Social Services Group asking if they would support *the idea of organising, in conjunction with the students, a fete in the grounds of Plas Penglais. The proceeds would be our contribution to the 25th anniversary of the United Nations Appeal Fund*. This was the first of many occasions held at the Plas, as on her arrival at Aberystwyth, Lady Valerie Daniel had joined the College Women's Club, becoming an ardent supporter and regular contributor to the work of the Social Services Group, especially in inviting them to use the Principal's residence every May for their coffee morning. Organising not only coffee for over 350 people but also plant and cake stalls was quite an undertaking for a group of around a dozen, but other members of the College Women's Club would also help them.

Gareth Owen followed Sir Goronwy Daniel and Beti Owen followed Lady Valerie with equal unstinting support for the Group's activities. In 1990 when Gareth Owen retired, the Group lost the use of Plas Penglais but they continued to organise fund-raising coffee mornings, first at St Paul's Methodist Centre and then at the Seddon Room.

The money raised had gone towards many good causes: Ockenden Venture Home in Aberdyfi, Aberystwyth 60 Club, Meals on Wheels, Friends of St David's Hospital, Carmarthen, Llanbadarn Handicapped Centre, Park Avenue Centre, Adult Training Centre, Children's Ward Bronglais, as well as Oxfam, War on Want, Dr Barnardo's, Save the Children Fund and Shelter – as well as helping some individuals who needed financial support.

Because of their activities and obvious concern for local affairs, members were invited to become

representatives on numerous committees, such as the Probation and After Care Committee, the Marriage Guidance Support Group, the Women's Refuge, the Citizens Advice Bureau, as well as the Town Twinning Committee with St Brieuc.

But despite their many successes and good reputation, the future of the Group had been discussed on many occasions over the years: in 1964 when Kathleen Magill resigned as President; in 1981 and again in 1983 because they were a small group and unable to attract new members. By 1995 membership of the Group was dwindling and members were ageing, and at their AGM following a coffee morning which had raised £159, the future of the coffee morning was discussed because *as we now only have nine members, 4 over 80, 2 over 70 and 3 over 60, it was realized we could not hold another coffee morning without help.* They succeeded in getting help and continued to hold the coffee mornings at either Seddon or Brynamlwg for another few years, but from 1999 no more fund-raising activities were held.

At the 2000 College Women's Club AGM the Group decided *not to disband; to stop raising money but to use up the current reserves; to continue to meet socially and keep the situation under review*, and from then on members would meet once a year for lunch and a walk at the Conrah Hotel. They would also continue to buy Christmas gifts for Angharad Ward, Bronglais, Llanbadarn Centre, Deva, Havelock and Bodlondeb homes and the Women's Refuge. In 2001 they had spent £57.70 on presents, and at the Group's last meeting in February 2002, *Peggy Jones proposed, and Margaret Pyle seconded, that we should give the remaining £18.51 to the local Salvation Army. Mary Llewelfryn Davies felt that we should continue. The minute books are to go to the main Women's Club records.*

The Flower Group

The Flower Group was started in 1973 by Margaret Owen Davies, and many of us learned how to arrange flowers at the monthly Friday morning meetings held in Staff House, providing arrangements for the College Women's Club's evening meetings, said Jenny John in her report on the Group at the College Women's Club's AGM on 12th May 2000. Members at the Flower Group's first meeting on 7th June 1973 were Gwyneth Trott, Peggy Jones, Kathleen Magill, Nansi Davies, Morfudd Moelwyn Hughes, Lynne Lewis, Dr Anita Williams and Janet Davies, and apologies were received from Margaret Dyfri Jones, Mary Llewelfryn Davies, Joyce Bradshaw and Dorothy Saunders.

During 1973 the membership grew to twenty-five, but according to the minutes the numbers that attended the meetings were usually in the mid-teens. The minutes also record the themes of the arrangements that they made that first year: *Arrangements of autumn and harvest flowers; Christmas decorations to hang; Dried flower arrangement; Mixed arrangements possibly suitable for display at a coffee morning* they were organising for 4th April at Staff House to raise money for the Group.

Within a year the Group had decided that flower arrangements were *to be supplied to old folks who were very much alone in Deva and Avondale for birthdays*, and by 1975 it was recorded that *the flowers to the old people's homes were much appreciated. Over 60 arrangements had been provided, and for 5 old people it had been their only birthday gift on their last birthdays.* This arrangement would last for as long as the Deva and Avondale homes were open.

The Group's themed displays at the College Women's Club's monthly meetings were first recorded at the 1977 AGM when *Nansi Davies thanked Lynne Lewis for her support to the Women's Club during the year in providing floral arrangements for the meetings.* And these displays would be a regular contribution by the Flower Group for many years. But one display for the Friday evening meetings was nothing compared to what the Group prepared for the College Women's Club at the Cambrian Hall on Friday 8th October 1976 when 85 members, including 18 of the founder members, gathered to celebrate 21 years of the College Women's Club. *Morfudd Moelwyn Hughes had baked a Birthday Cake and the Flower Group had made 21 flower*

arrangements using the College colours of red and green to decorate the room.

Following that meeting the Group appeared to go from strength to strength, despite a small drop in membership, as their review of the 1977-78 session shows: *We have met regularly once a month throughout the year starting in September [and] on the whole meetings have been well attended, though numbers were low in the winter. The group started the year with 20 members and now has 18. Our diaries are already being filled for next season as we have been asked to do the flowers in September for Hazel Sinclair's daughter's wedding.*

Over the following years the Flower Group supported the activities of the College Women's Club and its sister subgroup the Social Services Group by providing floral arrangements as birthday presents and Christmas displays for Avondale, Bodlondeb, Deva and North Road Hospital. And because of this members felt that they should *receive a grant from the College Women's Club to help pay for the flowers that we do for the Friday evening meetings in the Seddon Room. This is a large room which is quite difficult to make much impact on without a lot of flowers. All the flowers used for the monthly meetings were provided and paid for by our group.* Their request was answered by a grant of £15, increasing to £20 in 1982, to provide *one arrangement at the Speaker's table and one small one at the Treasurer's table.*

However, at the 1989 AGM concerns were voiced over the future of the Flower Group, but Peggy Anne Jones told the members that *Margaret O. Davies wished the group to continue.* And despite having no chairperson and no monthly meetings they continued to make arrangements for the Club and Deva. The Deva gifts were financed by a bottle stall at the home's coffee morning, raising between £40 and £60 annually.

In 1992 Margaret O. Davies, Peggy Jones, Cicely Edwards and Mavis James were thanked *for arranging flowers in Llanbadarn Church on the sad occasion of Jane Morgan's memorial service [the wife of Principal Kenneth O. Morgan]. The flowers were later taken to the Deva.*

After Staff House closed in 1991, the Group would meet at the homes of the members, and as the number of Deva residents grew, to 27, the number of Flower Group members fell, to 6, and the members were asked to *try and make at least 4 arrangements each.* But by 1997 it was reported that as Deva had *lost 12 residents in the last year and still have 3 empty rooms we don't know how much longer it will operate.*

Concluding her report at the College Women's Club's AGM on 12th May 2000, Jenny Jones said, *our members have sadly decreased over the years and we now have only five active members. Perhaps we should call ourselves The Floral Five. We still have our annual dinner when we plan our activities, which include providing flowers for Deva residents' birthdays. We very much hope there will be a future for the University of Wales Women's Club, and we will give our support as always.*

The Floral Five continued until 2005, but by 2006 the Group were down to three: Peggy Jones, Mary Llewelfryn Davies and Anne Reynolds. *I'm afraid, wrote Peggy Jones, the Flower Group is existing in ever decreasing circles. From our zenith in 1973 our numbers have dwindled to three... Last Autumn when the College Women's Club was celebrating 50 years of survival Deva had to close its doors for the last time. As Deva residents were our main raison d'être the 3 of us can just about manage something for the Women's Club meetings.*

In 2007, with Deva closed and the news that Bronglais Hospital *no longer allows us to take flowers for patients there,* Peggy Jones and Anne Reynolds would *only provide flowers for the Women's Club meetings.* But within a year Peggy was on her own. *After 35 years of being a member of the Flower Group, I have been going solo this year, providing the seven College Women's Club displays, albeit relying heavily on Morrison's ready-made bouquets and vases. And although she was prepared to continue she thought that it would be time to disband myself this time next year.*

And the following year saw Peggy Jones's final Flower Group report to the College Women's Club's AGM. *As I decided to disband myself last year I made very few arrangements myself and tonight is the last. Although I don't play bridge myself, I was very sorry to see the passing of the Bridge Group, but the Discussion Group is still flourishing. During the last 55 years many groups have come and gone, and there is no reason why we should not start other groups to celebrate our Emerald Anniversary, or start up again others that have lapsed. I think the reason many people don't like going to Women's Club is because it's difficult to park near the Seddon Room and during the winter months it's dark and sometimes cold and windy, but the groups quite often meet in other places, and during the day time when it is light. We used to have colloquial French and Russian, perhaps some of us would like another language. There used to be a chess group, perhaps a Scrabble group could be founded within the club, or a 'Ladies who Lunch' group. I realize that not many of us could produce toddlers for a Mother and Toddler Group, but I'm sure there are some 'silver surfers' who would enjoy the benefits of mastering the computer. We've been awash with snooker on TV at home recently. I see there is a table here at the end of the bar, and dart board, but if that's not your cup of tea, perhaps knitting or patchwork is. Please give a thought to reviving old interests or exploring new ideas, and ask the committee if it would be feasible to start a new group for the next session.*

But that was not to be.

'What the College Women's Club has meant to me'

We arrived in Aber in November 1963 so missed all the introductory visits from Women's Club members to new wives. I therefore probably did not become au fait with the Club until my second year here. However the Club was really good for me then (academic year 1964/1965) as I met other young women there, several pregnant, as I was! Remember that there was a big influx of staff in the early 1960s as universities expanded. Often incoming staff (mainly male) were mid twenties, recently married and producing families – university salaries even included additions paid for each child! I met many young women of my age and vintage at these 1960s Club meetings, and made enduring friendships. Was this time the heyday for Women's Club? Perhaps membership numbers can tell you.

The Club also helped me realise how the University (College then) worked both internally and externally. In particular I learned how it fitted into the landscape of Aberystwyth. We previously had had commuting jobs in London and I think I had almost forgotten that it was possible to live, work and relax within the same community. Women's Club helped me reconnect with that idea from my childhood.

Margaret Bateman (1964-2014)

When we came to Aber in 1966 I knew no one and Ann was born three weeks after we arrived. Mary Brown came round to invite me to my first meeting and it was wonderful to get back into a world which was not dominated by feeding bottles and nappies!

For the last few years before we left Aber the Drama Group had ceased to function, so I joined the Discussion Group led by Beryl Thomas and Jean O.R. Jones amongst others. We discussed several interesting topics and a number of books which I wouldn't otherwise have read.

In all, the Women's Club was an important part of my life in Aber and gave me many friends and interesting experiences.

Elizabeth Pritchard (1966-2006)

When I moved to Aberystwyth in 1970 I was not eligible to join the Club as my husband did not work for the College. However I did benefit from the Club's practice of welcoming newcomers and was visited by members who invited me to their homes to meet others over coffee. On a number of occasions I was also invited to attend meetings as a guest. After a change to the constitution to widen the membership, I was able to join and by then had already made a number of friends in the Club. I looked forward to the meetings as the programme was well balanced between information, education and entertainment.

The College Women's Club gave me excellent opportunities to hear talks and lectures on a wide range of subjects, given by people who were specialists in their field and to be able to meet and talk to the speakers afterwards. It was also an opportunity to meet and get to know other members, and very frivolously, an excuse to dress up a bit and put on my 'Sunday best' for the evening meetings!

Judith Bray (1970-2014)