

Philanthropy at **Aberystwyth University**
1860 – 1950

Great Colleges become what they are by opening their gates to all comers

Thomas Charles-Edwards



Recently at Aberystwyth University and within our vision for the 'New Life for Old College' project we have been exploring our tradition of giving in more detail with the help of Dr Susan Davies. Susan is a retired (but still extremely active!) member of staff who has given her research expertise by compiling this history of philanthropic giving to Aber from the 1860s to the 1950s. This is a little gem of research and we are so proud to be sharing it with you in this booklet. We very much hope you will enjoy reading it.

We often mention our earliest days as a University founded by gifts, but we had far too little definitive knowledge about our donors and their motivations since our foundation, and Susan is helping us put that right. We see this important, inaugural piece of work as our contribution to re-establishing the vital part philanthropy has played and continues to play in the history of higher education in Wales. Indeed we would never have existed without the contributions, large and small, from so many in London, in Wales and beyond who believed passionately in the ideal and the reality of university education in Wales and for Wales.

Our very first Principal, Thomas Charles-Edwards said, 'Great Colleges become what they are by opening their gates to all comers'. That was an amazing thing to say back in 1885 – and it meant we were one of the very first universities to make scholarships available to anyone who had the talent to succeed, never mind where they came from in the world, whether they were men or women, and what background or religion they might have had. This was an extraordinarily forward-looking view, and we are very proud of that tradition, and it is still part of what makes Aberystwyth special today.

In fact the role of philanthropy in our foundation has more than symbolic or historical value – it reminds us powerfully of the importance of generosity, and of giving back to your University, and to Wales, today as much as ever.

And this brings us to the latest step in the Aber history of philanthropy: the Peter Hancock Need and Merit Scholarship Fund, an exceptionally generous donation of just over half a million pounds, which we believe to be the largest gift we have received from a living donor in Aberystwyth University's recent philanthropic history.

In gratitude for the scholarship he was awarded 50 years ago which led to a successful academic and business career, Aberystwyth University alumnus Peter Hancock and his wife and fellow alumna Patricia Pollard (née Trevitt), have endowed Aberystwyth University with £506,000 to create a major new scholarship fund. Peter comments:

'The key element in making this gift is to give something back to student life and the university that over 50 years ago gave me so much academically, socially and in developing my leadership and business skills. At the same time, I hope it will make a difference through providing scholarships for in-need, promising students to enable them to commence rewarding careers that contribute to society and so, in turn, help others.'

The Fund launched in 2015 will assist deserving, meritorious, in-need Year 2 Honours students or equivalent in any discipline and of any nationality and who show potential to benefit society through the successful completion of their degrees. We are delighted to announce that in recognition of this very generous gift Peter was the recipient earlier this month of a Community Foundation in Wales Philanthropy Award.

Since its very inception, here in 'Aber' we have been standing on the shoulders of giants in terms of generosity and philanthropy. Long may we continue to live by the examples set so bravely all those years ago!

Louise Jagger

Louise Jagger, Director of Development and Alumni Relations
November 2016, Aberystwyth

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*Cover: View of the Old College, Aberystwyth, from the Castle by Scott Nisbet
Date painted: 1950s Oil on board, 55 x 75 cm
Collection: Aberystwyth University, School of Art Gallery and Museum*

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A unique heritage in popular support, individual giving and inclusivity: the story of **Aberystwyth University**

▀▀ *Aberystwyth has a great and colourful past: to understand whence we came may offer some small help to the charting of the future* ▀▀

(Ellis, pp.xi-xii)

This work represents the first tranche of work undertaken on the history and role of philanthropy at Aberystwyth University. The overall is to provide factual evidence and sufficient historical context to demonstrate the significance of benefaction in the development of the University, but challenges in establishing accurate data from the earlier decades required additional research effort and made completion in one phase unrealistic.

The period considered here spans the 1860s to the 1950s. This includes the major benefactions, especially of land on Penglais, which enabled significant developments by the University but are not always clearly understood or fully appreciated, alongside examples of other types of benefaction, both large and small, each of which without exception has contributed to our rich heritage of philanthropy.

It is anticipated that this will raise awareness and prevent misunderstanding of this aspect of our history; similarly, the contextual detail will assist those who are new to our institutional history to gain understanding while also providing clues as to the motivation of our benefactors in their generosity to the University College at Aberystwyth. Of course, we cannot question these benefactors in retrospect, but they lived in very different times, subject to different influences and challenges: it would therefore be inappropriate to evaluate personal motivation in the distant past according to modern experience and understanding.

The reference material used is wider and more extensive than is indicated in the bibliography and includes nineteenth-century maps. The works listed (and cited in the footnotes) represent the most useful printed sources, including online newspapers, journals and articles, which have led to accurate identification of details for the most significant benefactions, especially of land, and factors which undoubtedly contributed to motivation. For example, when an individual is commonly described as a London Welshman, every effort has been made to identify the Welsh connection, such as place of birth and continuing associations in Wales, and any other known influences.



Introduction

The heritage of our University naturally focuses first on the magnificent physical presence of 'Old College' on the sea front, often described as one of Britain's most significant nineteenth-century buildings.¹ Its architectural style and associations are remarkable, reflecting the key movements, stylistic features and achievements of the time and standing today as a monumental reflection of the high-minded architects and designers whose work is known across the UK. From its eighteenth-century origins in the earlier Castle House designed by John Nash, to its development into the Castle Hotel during the 1860s by Thomas Savin, with John Pollard Seddon as his architect, its subsequent sale in 1867 (still unfinished) for the purpose of becoming the first University College in Wales and development thereafter, the architectural 'saga' is remarkable.

Yet, the other – equally unusual – side of the story is why and how this University College was established, which is a tale of national social endeavour by and on behalf of the people of Wales, based on a non-sectarian principle that was supported by individual giving and generosity.

Contributions in time, effort and advocacy were equally generous, much of which involved travel, administration, fundraising and writing for the press – all at a time when rapid communication had not been invented and mobility was heavily dependent on the new railway network. Many leading figures were Welshmen based outside Wales in commerce and industry, the law, education, politics, and leading nonconformist roles, and almost all fulfilled this work on top of their professional commitments. Particular centres of support were – not surprisingly – Liverpool, Manchester and London.



Building of the Castle Hotel (1860s)

But why are the circumstances so unusual?



*John Pollard Seddon (1827–1906),
Architect of Old College
by Hans Olaf Heyerdahl
Date painted: 1890–1905
Oil on canvas, 42 x 32 cm
Collection: Aberystwyth University,
School of Art Gallery and Museum*

This requires a brief excursion into Welsh history in the mid-1800s.

The majority of the population were nonconformist in religious affinity and spoke Welsh as their first language. Little elementary schooling was available in Welsh, even after the establishment of Board Schools in England and Wales following the Elementary Education Act 1870 (Aberystwyth was the first area to build and open a Board School in Wales and one of the first across England and Wales), because Welsh was not an approved element in the curriculum before the 1890s. Also, there were few endowed schools at ‘secondary’ level in Wales compared with England. Yet the Sunday School movement in Wales, by contrast with England, gathered adults as well as children to learn to read the Scriptures in their native language and attracted whole communities – as evidenced by the Religious Census of 1851. Sunday Schools contributed to a notable surge in Welsh literacy and a population that was well informed and articulate on denominational issues and differences. The self-improvement ethos of nonconformity, especially Calvinistic Methodism, was also strong, and manifested itself in a thirst for education.

Several notable nonconformist academies had been established in Wales to train candidates for the ministry, supported by the denominations in Wales.² At the same time, many Church of England clergy were unsurprisingly more anglicised in view.



*Plans of Old College
Collection: Aberystwyth University Archives*

The lack of higher education opportunities within Wales was a significant issue, especially as nonconformists were unable to attend institutions such as Oxford and Cambridge because admission required a religious declaration in line with the Established Church. This also applied to St David’s College, Lampeter, founded in 1822 to train ordinands for the Church of England, where the nature of the core theology syllabus also excluded members of nonconformist denominations.

Another notable lack of training provision related to emerging technical roles in commerce and industry e.g. in mining and engineering, which was a particular concern in areas of heavy industry and commercial shipping, but also in rural Wales where agriculture required new skills and the woollen industry needed expertise in chemistry to use the synthetic dyes which rapidly replaced the traditional natural products. When the University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire was established in Cardiff in 1884, the need for training in heavy industry skills was recognised, whereas the College in Aberystwyth developed extra-mural-type classes, (often in conjunction with County Council technical instruction committees), to address the needs of agriculture and the woollen industry.

Given these various circumstances, it is not surprising that the origins of Aberystwyth University are firmly rooted in the religious and social history of Wales in the mid-nineteenth century and a rapidly growing feeling both within and beyond Wales among expatriates that Wales was suffering from a lack of opportunities for education which were more readily available elsewhere. Rapid growth in the Welsh language press at this time and the beginning of a significant surge in Welsh ‘identity’ are also relevant, as is the arrival of easier long-distance travel and communication via the railway network.

The concept of a non-sectarian establishment to supply higher education in Wales emerged in the mid-1800s amid articulate debate in the flourishing Welsh and English press. This principle was unique in university development at this time, but it soon underpinned a widespread commitment to the cause of establishing a University College for Wales, supported by individual generosity and community giving. Contributions ranged from the smallest, such as two shillings and sixpence given by individuals across communities and congregations, to hundreds of pounds from prosperous supporters, and even thousands from the few ‘who could’.

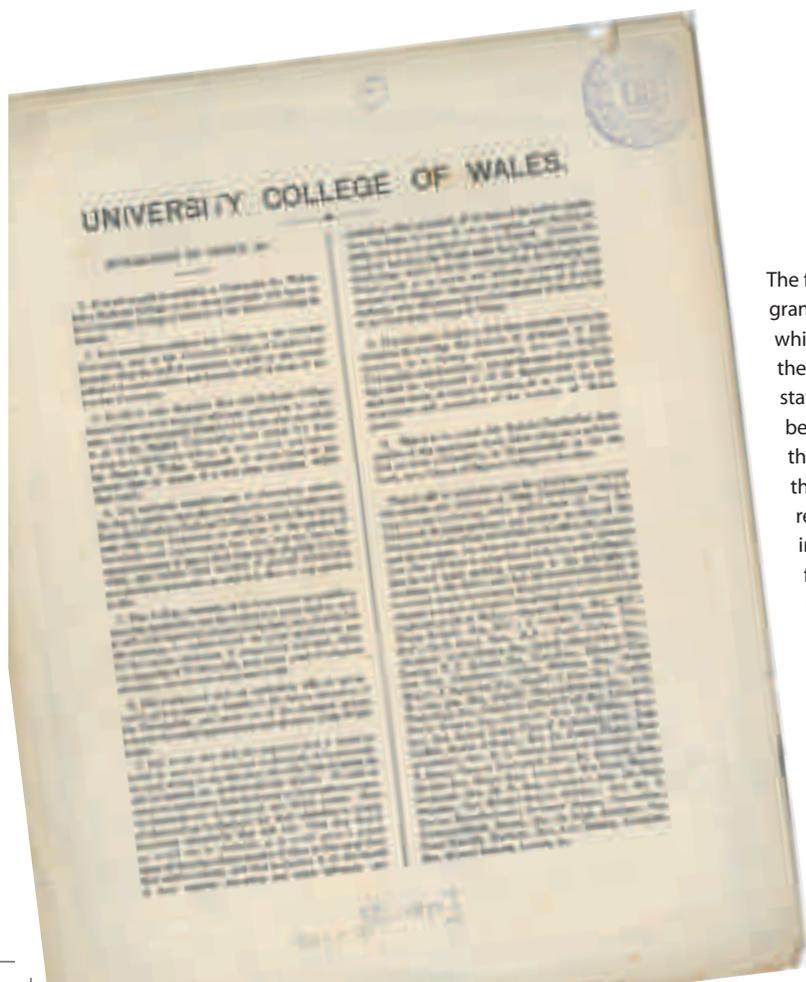
The non-sectarian principle

Dr Thomas Nicholas (1816 - 1879) 'educationist and antiquary' was a key figure in articulating this issue.³ Born in Pembrokeshire and highly educated (in Germany as well as England), he had taught at the Presbyterian College in Carmarthen before becoming the paid secretary of the London Committee which was focusing on establishing a university college in Wales. He clearly recognised that such an establishment must 'avoid fettering itself with ecclesiastical or denominational peculiarities' and be open to all religious persuasions.⁴

Another was the **Reverend Dr David Thomas (1813 - 1894)**, a native of Pembrokeshire who became a leading Congregational doctrinal exponent and Biblical commentator, of Stockwell, London. In 1862 he was motivated to mark the bicentenary of the nonconformist decision not to sign up to Charles II's Act of Uniformity by establishing a non-sectarian university in Wales.⁵ He subsequently laid claim to this concept, as reported in the *Cambria Daily Leader* half a century later by **David Morgan Thomas**, his son and founder of this newspaper, who was also a London lawyer.⁶

'In 1862, the Free Churchmen of England and Wales celebrated "The Centenary of the Ejected Ministers of 1662" — that year in which 2,000 clergymen were turned out of their positions, to endure poverty misery, and death, because they would not comply with the requirements of Charles II's "Act of Uniformity". These celebrations in Wales appealed to the readers of The Leader, and there was a general evocation of enthusiasm.

*It is gratifying to record that, out of this feeling, a great National Institution had its origin in The Cambria Daily Leader. It was evolved in the following manner. Dr. David Thomas considered that the best way for Welshmen to celebrate this great historical event was by founding a University for Wales. Accordingly, he wrote a letter in our columns urging the establishment of one, and pointing out that whilst at that time Scotland had four Universities, Ireland had one and the Queen's College, and England, also, had her share; Wales, whose intellectual possibilities were equal if not superior to, any population under Heaven, had not one, nor even a High School.'*⁷



The first Royal Charter of Incorporation granted to the College at Aberystwyth, which dates from 1889, expresses the non-sectarian principle clearly by stating that no declaration of religious belief would ever be required, and that theology would not be taught at the College.⁸ The same non-sectarian requirements had already been included in the foundation charters for Cardiff and Bangor which date from 1884, and were also reflected in the charter granted to the federal University of Wales in 1893, but some relaxation followed thereafter, when it became advantageous to collaborate with established theological colleges.⁹

The early benefactors

From the time of the purchase of the bankrupt Castle Hotel in 1867 to the opening of the College in 1872 benefactors were varied in background, occupation and location. Several, such as Hugh Owen, were based outside Wales, so it is not surprising that they held their meetings in London. (The minutes of the 'London Committee' for 1863-74 are held by Aberystwyth University's archives.)

Ted Ellis asks the question why London rather than Wales was the focus of the early struggle for the Welsh University and responds with practical reasons that are part of contemporary social history: the Principality had no capital or geographical centre, communications were poor, historic divisions existed, and personal leadership by the Welsh peers and gentry could by now be discounted. London could therefore provide the energising initiative.¹⁰ At the same time, he recognises the subtle factors in the history of the College which he describes as 'a romantic story of a slowly successful fight against the odds, against deep seated prejudice and the indifference or hostility of the powerful, against the crushing burden of penury and demoralizing intervention even of natural disaster' - and that the tale is worth telling.¹¹

This is the context in which the early benefactors gave their support.

The financial need became urgent when the Castle Hotel, on the sea front at Aberystwyth and incomplete, became available for purchase in 1866-7 as a consequence of bankruptcy. This was seen as an ideal location for the College but no government grant was available then - or before the late 1880s, more than ten years after the College first opened its doors on 16 October 1872. Contributions towards the £10,000 (*c.£1 million) purchase price in March 1867, building work and revenue costs were essential, and donations from several benefactors who were all outstanding individuals, many outside Wales and reflecting different perspectives and motivations, who gave e.g. £200 (*c.£21k) each. The town of Aberystwyth contributed a remarkable £1,032 (*c.£110k) to the purchase effort, the result of a month of intensive collecting.¹²



Plaque in honour of London Welsh Founders.
Old College Quad, Ladies Entrance



David Davies of Llandinam (1818 - 1890)
Collection: Aberystwyth University Archives



Donation



Equivalent Value

David Davies of Llandinam (1818 - 1890)

Amongst the earliest and most generous benefactors was **David Davies of Llandinam (1818 - 1890)**, industrialist, MP and philanthropist, who was born at Llandinam, Montgomeryshire, which remained his home. His background lay in the Calvinistic Methodist tradition, but he made his name and wealth as an engineering contractor in railway development in mid-Wales, and coalmining and the building of Barry Docks in industrial South East Wales, before taking a prominent role in public life.¹³ He continued to support the College at Aberystwyth well into the 1880s, serving as Treasurer between 1875 and 1886. His family continued this tradition for almost a century.

His first gift to the College was £100 (*c.£10k), then another £300 (*c.£30k), but at a public breakfast the day before the College opened on 16 October 1872 he declared that, in the absence of any real prospect of government assistance to start an endowment fund of £50,000 (*c.£5million), he was prepared to give £1,000 (*c.£106k) towards the building fund. This was followed by £2,000 (*c.£212k) towards scholarships and ongoing generosity for more than a decade. Ted Ellis comments that 'without the steady support, especially at times of crises, of David Davies, the one very rich Welshman whose generosity put the others to shame, it is difficult to see how the College could have avoided closure by bankruptcy.'¹⁴

Henry Parnall (unknown - 1878)

Less well known was a prosperous London businessman, **Henry Parnall**, who was modest and self-effacing on the subject of his own generosity but helped to rescue the College by contributing to revenue funding in times of crises during the 1870s. With his brother Robert, he ran a large clothing and drapery business in London, but had Carmarthenshire roots and a home in Llanstephan. Substantial philanthropy in poverty-stricken areas of London and in Llanstephan and Carmarthen benefited church and chapel alike, as well as education (Carmarthen Grammar school and UCW). He was one of the first to subscribe to the proposed University College of Wales, and served as one of the Vice-Presidents during the 1870s. Agricultural science was a particular interest, and he funded a substantial series of lectures on agriculture and the translation of an associated text book into Welsh, of which 20,000 copies were distributed free. Richard Colyer notes that this initiative was supported by Parnall's offer early in 1877 to give £200 (*c.£21k) annually for three years, and that he had already provided £2,500 (*c.£260k) for the capital endowment of a Chair of Natural Science.¹⁵

Henry Parnall's sudden death in 1878 was both a shock and loss, but his bequest of £5,000 (*c.£500k) literally saved the College from financial collapse at the time when a request for a government grant of that amount had been turned down.¹⁶



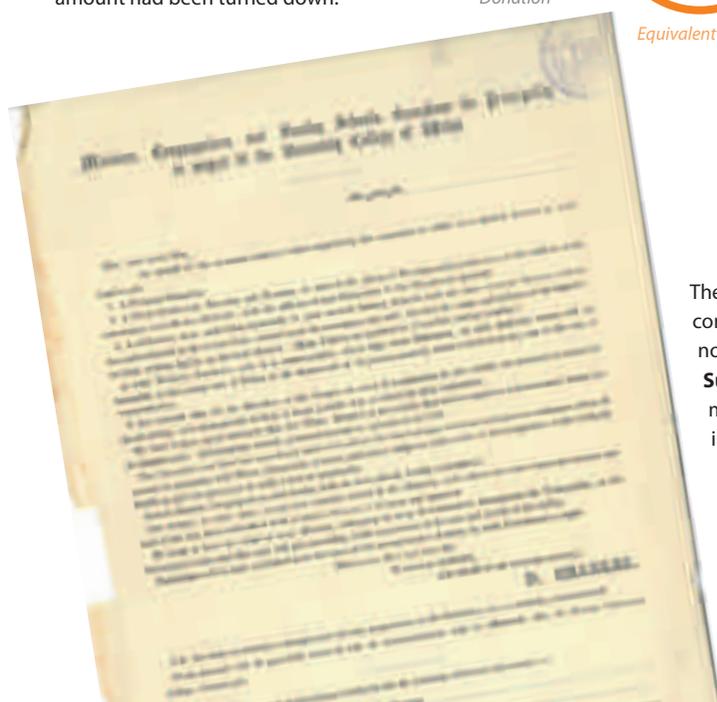
Donation



Equivalent Value



Collection: Aberystwyth University Archives



The lack of state grants at this time meant that small contributions from congregations and communities were just as important as larger donations in supporting revenue costs. The nonconformist denominations agreed that one Sunday in the autumn would be designated as **Sul y Brifysgol**, when a collection would be made for the College at Aberystwyth.¹⁷ Similarly quarry men and miners contributed, there were also area collections in Wales and special collections in Manchester and Liverpool. The real significance of this local activity and widespread giving is acknowledged in the Charter of Incorporation in 1889, which states *'that the said College was established in the year one thousand eight hundred and seventy-two [and]... for the first ten years of its existence it was supported by the voluntary efforts of the whole Welsh people'*.¹⁸

Letter to congregations for public donations, Collection: Aberystwyth University Archives

Hugh Owen (1804 – 1881)

Hugh Owen later Sir Hugh Owen, was perhaps the most significant among the early benefactors whose donations were largely in time, expertise and indefatigable effort. A native of Anglesey, with a strong background in law and senior civil service roles in London, he was wholly committed to educational improvement in Wales throughout his life, including significant support for the establishment of Bangor Normal College to provide for teacher training. His subsequent involvement in the work to



Sir Hugh Owen
Collection: Aberystwyth University Archives

establish the College at Aberystwyth, as one of the honorary secretaries, quickly acquired another dimension, when he concluded that a systematic house-to-house canvass and organized chapel collections would require his personal effort. The *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* notes that 'the trim figure of Hugh Owen with his black travelling bag, waiting patiently on railway platforms or alighting from a cab, became familiar throughout Wales'; also, when in 1880 he analysed the various amounts the College had received, he was able to say that 100,000 miscellaneous sums were below half-a-crown, because he had counted every penny.¹⁹ This attention to financial detail enabled him to make a key point when giving evidence to the Aberdare Committee, (which reported in 1881): namely, that more than £50,000 (*c.£5.4 million) had been raised for the College at Aberystwyth by public subscription.²⁰ It is not by accident that he is commemorated in the name of Aberystwyth University's main university library and principal humanities building on the Penglais campus.



Donation



Equivalent Value

the trim figure of Hugh Owen with his black travelling bag, waiting patiently on railway platforms or alighting from a cab, became familiar throughout Wales



The first state grant for Aberystwyth did not come until 1885 after a long battle. The Colleges at Cardiff and Bangor, established following the *Aberdare Report*, were awarded annual grant of £4,000 p.a. (*c.£443k) from their foundation in 1884, while Aberystwyth, which was already established and growing, had to fight for parity.²¹ The fire which destroyed the north wing in 1885 exacerbated the situation by adding further need for financial support.



There was considerable support from Aberystwyth town during the difficult mid-1880s, but expatriate assistance was also significant and heart-warming, especially during the 1890s as rebuilding continued. An Australian, Mr W T Jones of Melbourne, a leading stock broker there and a native of Aberystwyth, paid £500 (*c.£58k) to create the striking ornamental roof of the Quad, bearing the coats-of-arms of each of the newly established County Councils in Wales. Diverse individual contributions from the US and Canada provided for fitting out the library in Old College and for books. Reports by Principal Thomas Charles-Edwards to the Court of Governors, following his fundraising tour to North America in 1890, list the donors who contributed more than £1,000 in all (*c.£115k).



Donation



Equivalent Value



Donation



Equivalent Value



Special features of the early College

The Charter of Incorporation granted to 'The University College of Wales, Aberystwyth' in 1889 sets out the key elements with absolute clarity, and not only by enshrining its unique name for posterity. 'The University College of Wales' was always the preferred description, but it was now recognised formally as 'The University of Wales, Aberystwyth'.

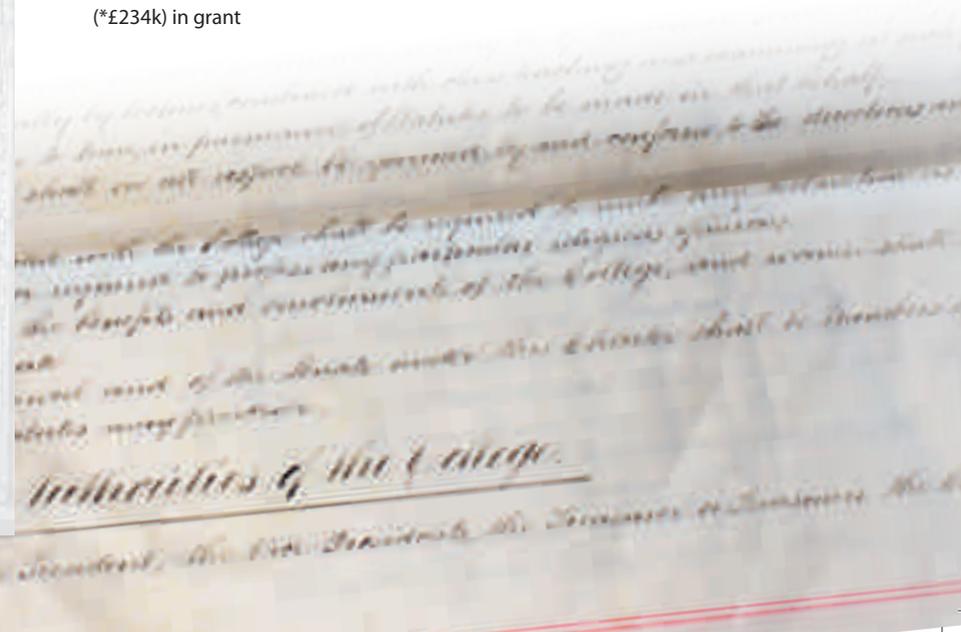
Female students shall be admissible to all the benefits and emoluments of the College, and women shall be eligible to sit on the Governing Body, on the Council, and on the Senate

Women had been able to study some courses at The University College of Wales from the 1870s, but equal access to degree courses dates from 1884 and is clearly set out in Clause 6, as is the role of women in the governance of the College: *Female students shall be admissible to all the benefits and emoluments of the College, and women shall be eligible to sit on the Governing Body, on the Council, and on the Senate.* It was further specified that five women should be members of the Court of Governors and that three of them should be nominated as members of the Council.



Collection: Aberystwyth University Archives

Equality for men and women in the University Colleges came earlier in Wales than in many higher education institutions in England. It was specified in the charters at Bangor and Cardiff when those Colleges were established in 1884 and implemented at Aberystwyth at the same time²² but Aberystwyth was building on earlier experience in the 1870s, and subsequently pioneered the first purpose-built hall of residence for women. This was Alexandra Hall, which was opened by Princess Alexandra in 1896 on the occasion when her husband, the Prince of Wales, was installed as Chancellor of the new federal University of Wales. Aberystwyth town council donated the land for Alexandra Hall at the north end of the promenade, and the College secured £2,000 (*£234k) in grant



aid towards building from the Pfeiffer Bequest, a trust that promoted education for women.²³

In modern terms, Aberystwyth's first charter is remarkably inclusive and ahead of its times – a feature of this university ever since. It also expresses commitment to providing education at modest cost – obviously mindful of the poverty of most Welsh students and the ethos that gave rise to the College in the first place:

'The object for which the College is established, and is intended to be carried on, is, and shall be, to afford at a moderate expense the means of instruction in such branches of learning and science, excepting theology, as are or may be for the time being usually studied at the Universities of the United Kingdom, or any of them, and as the Governors or other persons who shall for the time being have authority in that behalf, shall from time to time... direct; to provide, when expedient and practicable, such technical or other instruction as may be of immediate service in professional and commercial life; and further to promote higher education generally by lectures, combined with class teaching, and examining at such places and in such subjects (except theology) as shall be determined from time to time, in pursuance of Statutes to be made in that behalf.'



It is also worth noting that philanthropy and benefaction are recognized in the governance arrangements:

'Every person at any time contributing to the College a donation of one hundred pounds or upwards, whether contributed in one sum or by instalments shall be a Life Governor, and every person contributing... fifty pounds shall be a Governor for five years, and every person contributing an annual subscription of five pounds shall be a Governor for such period as is covered by the subscription paid by him...'

Where any testator has by his will bequeathed the sum of one hundred pounds or upwards to the College or its funds, any person nominated by him in that behalf, or in default of such nomination, his executor or personal representative, shall be a Life Governor, and, if there be more than one executor or personal representative, then such one of the executors or personal representatives as the executors or personal representatives may agree upon shall be a Life Governor.²⁴

Benefactions of land for development on Penglais

Three significant gifts of land to the College between the 1890s and 1946 provided for all the University's developments on Penglais Hill thereafter. They were made possible by the decline of the historic landed estates in Wales, as in England, and consequential change in landownership and society between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In this case we must refer to the Penglais estate, which spanned both sides of Penglais Hill and dated back to the sixteenth century. In the 1800s it was owned by the Richardes family who lived at Penglais mansion. The family also owned land in Llanbadarn, Llangawsai and about twenty farms in the Rheidol valley. From the mid-1800s the Richardes family was in financial difficulties and the estate was being sold piecemeal.²⁵



Collection: Aberystwyth University Archives



Lord Rendel of Hatchlands (1834–1913),
President (1895–1913) by Henry John Hudson
Date painted: 1894
Oil on canvas, 142 x 112 cm
Collection: Aberystwyth University,
School of Art Gallery and Museum

Stuart, Baron Rendel (1834 - 1913)

Baron Stuart Rendel began the acquisition of land on Penglais when, as President of the College in 1897, he purchased an area considered to be the ideal site for the College's agricultural science activities and a potential site for a national library. It was a small holding comprising fourteen acres, known as Grogythan – Hangman's Hill (not to be confused with Gogerddan), bought from the owners of the Penglais estate for £2,000 (*c.£230k) and leased free to the College.²⁶ A few months later Rendel acquired a small additional 'tongue' of land which was added to the initial purchase to provide access between the Grogythan land and the nearby road, including the small field between the National Library of Wales (NLW) current driveway and Cae'r-gog. Four acres required to build the Library was gifted to NLW in 1909, as was the original intention of the College and Rendel; the remainder was bequeathed by to the College when Rendel died in 1913.²⁷

On 25 February 1898 *The Cambrian News and Merionethshire Standard* reported that at a meeting of the College Council in Chancery Lane, London, 'The seal of the College was affixed to a lease of the Grogythan lands, bought by Lord Rendel for £2,000 and leased rent free to the College for a period of ten years, with an option to buy at the purchase price. These lands are situated on the Llanbadarn-road. The Council empowered the Finance Committee to get a ground plan of the land prepared, in order to show how it may be best adapted for future building operations.'

£2,000

Donation

c.£230k

Equivalent Value

Rendel is described in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (ODNB)* as an 'industrialist, politician, and philanthropist'. Born and brought up in Plymouth, he was the son of a civil engineer, educated at Eton and Oxford, who became London manager for Armstrong-Whitworth (a major arms manufacturer with an international market) and continued his connection with the company, rising to vice-chair in later life. He had no Welsh connections and was High Anglican in religious affiliation, yet he became Liberal MP for Montgomery in 1880 and developed a particularly strong affinity with Wales (especially mid-Wales), a sensitive understanding of Welsh aspirations and 'self-help' attitudes, and an excellent understanding of strategic issues in Wales.²⁸ At Westminster he was known as 'the member for Wales', becoming leader of the Welsh Liberal MPs with whom he developed coherent action for the benefit of Wales. Friend of Gladstone, he was also close to rising politicians such as TE Ellis²⁹ and David Lloyd George and took a special interest in Welsh education and culture. He remained MP for fourteen years and was raised to the peerage on Gladstone's resignation in 1894.³⁰

Kenneth Morgan describes Rendel as a self-effacing and uncharismatic man but highlights his major contribution to Wales and to Liberal politics. He tells us that *'His career reintroduces us to the glowing period of Liberal achievement, political, social, economic and cultural, in later-Victorian and Edwardian Wales'*, that he had a huge breadth of understanding of British and international affairs, but that *'his main historical significance lies in his relationship to Wales'*.³¹

His connection with Aberystwyth began in 1883 at a time of crisis when he began to use his tactical and parliamentary skill to lead the efforts to secure the future of the College. In 1885 he became Treasurer of the College,³² and ten years later, following the death of Lord Aberdare, he became the second President.³³ Years later he was described as 'the preserver of the College',³⁴ but how did this come about?

In 1881 the *Aberdare Report*³⁵ had concluded that Wales should have two University Colleges, one in the South and one in the North, and by 1883 it was clear that Cardiff and Bangor were the chosen locations. Widespread distress at how the *Report* had impacted on Aberystwyth, and a sense of unfairness that the new Colleges would receive an annual government grant,³⁶ created a groundswell of support for Aberystwyth and anxiety to secure the future of the only established College which had hitherto succeeded against the odds. Large areas of Wales also felt a stronger affinity with Aberystwyth than either Cardiff or Bangor and with the foundation principles of the College.

an  industrialist, politician,
and philanthropist 

Active supporters ranged from well-placed individuals in high places to powerful local figures, including John Gibson, editor of the *Cambrian News*, who used his paper to express strong views on this subject. Coordinated effort at Westminster was crucial, and this was led by Rendel from 1883, working closely with other College supporters including David Davies of Llandinam, another industrialist and one of Aberystwyth's most loyal benefactors as already noted.

Ironically, this process gained further momentum from the disastrous fire which damaged the College in July 1885 and saw a new tidal wave of support. This culminated in significant success in August 1885,³⁷ when the government, not insensitive to the strength of feeling in Wales and Rendel's quiet advocacy, finally agreed that Aberystwyth should receive the same annual grant as Cardiff and Bangor. At last it was clear that there should and would be three University Colleges in Wales, of which the first – which had succeeded against all financial pressures – was very special.³⁸

Nevertheless, the grant for Aberystwyth was at that point only for three years and conditional on raising private subscription of £1,000 p.a.³⁹ Rendel continued to work on Aberystwyth's behalf at Westminster, largely behind the scenes, both on the grant issue and the next big goal – making the case for and securing the grant of a Royal Charter of Incorporation. Preparatory work began in 1884 and culminated in a high-powered deputation to London in 1888 led by Lord Aberdare, the College President, and including the Principals of Bangor and Cardiff.⁴⁰ The Charter was finally issued in September 1889.

At the same time Rendel was heavily involved in a wider educational achievement for Wales that was to transform the roles of each of the University Colleges, namely the legislation that became the Welsh Intermediate Education Act, 1889.⁴¹

He was also a major patron of the College. From 1900 he committed himself to giving £750 (*c.£82k p.a.) annually for the rest of his life to augment the miserable stipends of teaching staff. When he died in 1913 he bequeathed £5,000 (*c.£515k), together with the Grogythan land purchased in 1897 and leased to the College; the income from both was used to endow a new Chair in English Language and Literature.⁴²

Ken Morgan notes that *'The Rendel Chair and the student hostel of Neuadd Rendel today commemorate a devoted and generous servant of the University College of Wales and of Welsh higher education in general'*.⁴³ Ted Ellis concluded that Aberystwyth College above all embodied the national virtues that commanded Rendel's regard, and that in its first hundred years, the College had never had a truer friend.⁴⁴



Joseph Davies Bryan
Collection: Aberystwyth University Archives

Joseph Davies Bryan (1864 - 1935)

Joseph Davies Bryan was the next benefactor in terms of land on Penglais. In 1929 he bought and gave to the College the remaining 85 acres owned by the Penglais estate on the south side of Penglais Hill, extending uphill from the National Library site to Cefn Llan and including Brynamlwg. The cost was nearly £15,000 (*c.£850k) and the purpose of the gift was to resolve the College's urgent need for space to expand. The land was to be managed by Trustees, of whom Joseph was one, and is now occupied by the main University Campus. On 24 September 1929 *The Western Mail* reported:

**COLLEGE SITE GIFT.
ABERYSTWYTH BUILDING
PROBLEM SOLVED.
OLD STUDENT'S MUNIFICENCE.
FRIEND OF WELSH SOLDIERS IN
EGYPT...**

£15,000

Donation

c.£850k

Equivalent Value

The Davies Bryan family's link and indebtedness to the College is incredibly strong, beginning in 1884 when Joseph was a poverty-stricken student in Aberystwyth from the lead-mining uplands of Denbighshire. He was one of four highly intelligent sons of a mining family with a strong Calvinistic Methodist (CM) background, who were committed to educating the boys but needed to count the cost of schooling and apprenticeships. The boys progressed from elementary school in the Wrexham area to apprenticeships, pupil teacher positions or college admission, also benefiting significantly from the strength of the Sunday School and CM chapel environment and ethos, to the extent that 'comparative religion' was a particular interest which broadened to a global perspective during the long sojourn of three brothers in Egypt.⁴⁵

When Joseph was struggling with financial difficulties at College he was one of a small number of poor students quietly assisted by Principal Thomas Charles Edwards as 'new exhibitors'.⁴⁶ Unexpected circumstances then required Joseph to leave his studies before graduating, because his brother John, who had opened his business in Egypt, urgently required his assistance. The business prospered and expanded and Joseph eventually rose to be president of the British Chamber of Commerce in Egypt and of the British community in Alexandria. Yet, he remained closely attached to Aberystwyth for the rest of his life: he married a girl he had met as a student – from a local maritime family – at Tabernacle CM Chapel, and the service was conducted by Principal TC Edwards, who was regarded as the most distinguished Calvinist Methodist minister of the day as well as a gifted scholar.⁴⁷ Two of Joseph's five daughters were later schooled in Aberystwyth, and two went through university here. His brother Robert, who had qualified as a teacher, also studied here, supported by his brothers, and went on to Oxford to study music, but his health broke down and he spent his life as an author, writer and composer with strong literary connections. Joseph maintained a house in Aberystwyth – the last being Gorselands in North Road.

By the mid-1920s, he was a life member of the College's Court of Governors and a member of the Council by 1930.⁴⁸ His major philanthropic initiative to purchase and gift the land above the National Library site and establish a Board of Trustees to oversee it, including terms and conditions for any land which the Library and Plant Breeding Station might need, suggest a high level of business acumen as well as deep commitment to the College – which would result in transforming the development of the University over time. The University of Wales conferred the honorary degree of LLD upon Joseph Davies Bryan in 1933. He died, aged 71, in 1935.⁴⁹

“ a high level of business acumen as well as
deep commitment to the College ”

David Alban Davies (1873-1951)

David Alban Davies was the person who enabled the University to acquire the land on the other (north) side of Penglais Hill, when he financed the purchase in 1946 of the remaining 205 acres of the Penglais estate, including Penglais mansion, the woodland and Penglais farm, for £34,000 (*c.£1.2 million). This was not the end of his generosity at this time: he was particularly interested in agriculture and added fifteen acres of land at Plas Hendre to the 205 on Penglais, and gave £10,000 (*c.£374k) to the Agricultural Development Fund.⁵⁰ He was awarded an Honorary LLD in 1947.⁵¹

The College decided that Penglais mansion would be renovated and extended as a home for the Principal under the direction of Sir Percy Thomas. This has resulted in Penglais mansion, like Gogerddan and Trawscoed but unlike other significant Cardiganshire houses, surviving as a dignified residence, thanks to Alban Davies's benefaction in enabling the University to acquire the remains of the historic Penglais estate on Penglais Hill.

£34,000
+ £10,000

Donation

c.£1.2 million
+£374k

Equivalent Value



Bronze of David Alban Davies, 1917,
by T B Huxley-Jones, (1908-1969)
Collection: Aberystwyth University Archives

Like so many of his compatriots, Alban Davies, son of a mariner and a native of Cardiganshire, spent his working life in London. Having arrived there in 1899, he built a major dairy business in Walthamstow, which grew to employ 500 and was one of the giants of its kind.⁵² He served on the Borough Council and also began philanthropic activities as a major contributor to establishing the Welsh Presbyterian (CM) chapel in Walthamstow. In 1933 he returned to Llanrhystud, where he had been brought up, and began his contribution to public service in Cardiganshire as High Sheriff, a member of the County Council and supporting health and agricultural interests, alongside significant benefactions to local chapels. More significant in the present context is that he became a member of the College Council and a major benefactor at a crucial stage of the College's development.⁵³

Given the scale and significance of the several benefactions of land on Penglais to the development of University, it was entirely fitting that when Penbryn Halls of Residence were built in the 1960s, suitably named for the hilltop position, the constituent halls were named after the benefactors, Neuadd Rendel, Neuadd Davies Bryan and Neuadd Alban Davies, in modest recognition of their contribution to enabling the Penglais development. Two distinguished Principals were commemorated in the other two halls – **Ifor L Evans** (who worked so hard to achieve the Penglais developments) and **Thomas Charles Edwards** (the very first Principal in 1872).⁵⁴

It is also worth noting that the College and NLW always shared coequal interests in the Penglais site. Although the land was provided by friends of the College and most would be needed for university purposes, the needs of the Library were always part of the considerations. The Penglais Trustees, responsible for the 85 acres given to the College by Joseph Davies Bryan in 1929, were empowered to provide NLW with any portion of land that was necessary to the Library and its amenities – which they did.⁵⁵

Other significant benefactions and acquisitions at this time

Alban Davies's gift was actually the second private benefaction of great value immediately after the Second World War.⁵⁶ The first came from **Sir D Owen Evans**, Liberal MP for Cardiganshire for several years, who became College Treasurer in 1938. When he died in 1945 the College, as a residuary legatee, received £35,000 (*c.£1.3million) unencumbered by conditions. This was used for academic purposes rather than land purchase or building.



Donation



Equivalent Value

The next significant acquisition which facilitated today's pattern of development was **Plas Gogerddan** and its surrounding land, purchased by the College in 1950 when the historic Gogerddan estate, based at Plas Gogerddan, which had played a major role in the history of Cardiganshire and mid-Wales for many centuries, was being dispersed. Its new purpose was to provide a home for the Plant Breeding Station, one of IBERS' distinguished forebears which also owes much to benefaction (see below).⁵⁷



Phenomics Centre, Gogerddan Campus



Examples of benefaction for particular purposes

From its foundation in 1892, the **Old Students' Association (OSA)** has maintained its declared aim 'to further the interest of the College,'⁵⁸ actively building close connections which continue today, including significant benefactions. These began with fundraising for the completion of the College building in the 1890s,⁵⁹ but after the turn of the century efforts focused on sporting needs, because the College was notably lacking in space and facilities for sport and athletics. 1906 brought a splendid solution, although the precise details are unclear: a series of *Cambrian News* reports reveal that David Davies had succeeded in purchasing the Vicarage Field for use by the College, but the process had been difficult because, with other local property, it was in the hands of an administrator.⁶⁰ It seems that the Vicarage Field was then leased to the College and prepared and improved with assistance from the OSA.⁶¹ At the same time, a former student, Penry Vaughan Thomas, who was particularly interested in gymnastics had already indicated that he and his family would raise funds to build a modern gymnasium for the College. He raised over £1,000 (*c.£107k+), the OSA contributed the proceeds of a fundraising bazaar, and David Davies gave a free site overlooking Vicarage Fields for this purpose.⁶² This must indeed be a rare example of collaboration between benefactors to enhance a common purpose; the resulting facilities gave the College an enviable reputation for its gymnastic tradition and served our students well.



Donation



Equivalent Value



The Assembly Rooms, Collection: Aberystwyth University Archives

The First World War was a stressful time for OSA members, who largely suspended their operations during those years.⁶³ They then began fundraising to celebrate the forthcoming College Jubilee in 1922 – raising more than £5,000 (*c.£218k). In September 1921 they announced their decision to buy and equip the Assembly Rooms for use as a Students' Union, and that this would serve as a joint Memorial to the Founders of the College and students who had fallen during the War. It was formally opened in October 1923 by the Prince of Wales, Chancellor of the University.⁶⁴ It is worth noting here that the Assembly Rooms dated from 1820, were built by public subscription and owned by the Powell family of Nanteos, but had already served the College well over the previous twenty years, first being leased to accommodate the expanding Chemistry Department prior to its move to the Edward Davies Laboratories in 1907, and subsequently adapted to accommodate the valuable collections of books and manuscripts accumulated by the College since the 1890s for a future National Library. These were given to NLW when it was established in 1907 (as mentioned in its foundation charter) but the

Assembly Rooms housed the nascent National Library from 1909 to 1917.⁶⁵

“The remarkable, constant and continuing OSA support is immeasurable.”

By the 1950s, space for sport was again an issue, but this was resolved when the College leased six acres in Llanbadarn in 1957.⁶⁶ However, further OSA assistance was needed for sport development on Penglais, for which they raised the greater part of the cost of the splendid new Sports Hall, opened in 1964.⁶⁷

More broadly, OSA support has focused on the various stages of College development through fundraising, appeals and contributions towards student needs. They have also been involved in innovative roles which brought OSA members together with current students and university staff, for which Aberystwyth offers a model.⁶⁸ The remarkable, constant and continuing OSA support is immeasurable.



The Sports Centre, opened in 1964



The Laboratory



The Edward Davies Building, Collection: Aberystwyth University Archives



first Baron David Davies of Llandinam (1880- 1944), Collection: Aberystwyth University Archives



Donation



Equivalent Value

The Davies family of Llandinam and later Gregynog

The most significant endowments and benefactions made by one family, **the Davies family of Llandinam and later Gregynog**, began in the mid-1800s with David Davies of Llandinam, one of the College's earliest supporters (see above), and extended over a century. David Davies was followed by his son Edward, and Edward's three children David, Gwendoline and Margaret. The family's role as benefactors of the College is truly extraordinary: they funded the building of new Chemistry Laboratories 1903-7 and continued with major donations and endowments thereafter. Their commitment to educational, cultural and social benefit enabled this University to establish Chairs, develop initiatives and pioneer disciplines.

David Davies died in 1890, and in the same year his son **Edward Davies** was invited to become joint Treasurer of the College. He remained in office until his early death in 1898 at the age of 45, perhaps worn down by responsibility for his father's multimillion pound business. It is thought that his own career choice would have been to become a scientist, which is reflected in the decision by his widow and three children to give £23,000 (*c.£2.5million) towards the construction of state-of-the-art Chemical Laboratories in memory of Edward Davies. The building on the Buarth, (which now houses the School of Art), was opened in 1907 by H H Asquith, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, who would within months be Prime Minister.⁶⁹

When the College Council met in Chancery Lane, London, in February 1898 proceedings began with a tribute to Edward Davies:

*"That the Council desire to place on record their deep sense of the loss sustained by the College through the death of Mr Edward Davies, one of the joint treasurers, who worthily continued the noble work for the College begun by his father, the late Mr David Davies, and by his wise counsel, his strong faith in the future of the College, and his great generosity rendered services of the highest value and won an honourable place in the number of the benefactors of the College."*⁷⁰

Edward's son **David Davies**, later **first Baron Davies (1880–1944)**, was named after his grandfather and educated at King's College Cambridge. Described in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*⁷¹ as 'politician and philanthropist', he was not only a particularly generous benefactor to the College but had his own thoughtful ideas on how it might develop academically. His personal lifelong interest, especially after his first-hand experience of the First World War, lay in furthering the international quest for peace, which led him to work on behalf of the League of Nations, the forerunner of the United Nations, and to his title as Baron Davies of Llandinam. He was Liberal MP for Montgomery from 1906 to 1929, when he stood down to accept a seat in the Lords.

Early in the century he made a significant benefaction to the College when he purchased the Vicarage Field for use by the students for sport, as already mentioned above in connection with the OSA. However, his main benefaction must surely be the £20,000 (*c.£800k) that he gave in 1919, jointly with his sisters, to establish a Chair of International Politics as a memorial to the students who had been killed or wounded in the First World War. The new Chair of International Politics, named after Woodrow Wilson, was the first of its kind in any university.⁷²

Throughout the 1920s he devoted himself to the cause of world peace, working with the Welsh Council of the League of Nations Union to persuade the League of Nations to adopt a more aggressive policy. He saw education as a key aspect of this work, hosting a succession of international conferences on education at Gregynog Hall. At his insistence, the 1926 AGM of the Federation of League of Nations Societies was held at Aberystwyth rather than Dresden, and he personally paid the expenses of more than 100 delegates from twenty-two countries.⁷³

His sisters **Gwendoline (1882 - 1951) and Margaret Davies (1884 - 1963)**⁷⁴

also gave generously to the College. In July 1916, at a time when they had already helped Belgian refugee poets and artists to escape for the war in Europe and resettle in mid-Wales and when Gwendoline was about to leave for France to undertake war work, she wrote to the Registrar to say that she and her sister wanted to help the College. She was particularly interested in acquiring land behind the National Library for the

College, building a Hall in memory of students killed in the war, 'some kind of Music scheme', travelling scholarships for students, and 'obtaining the finest men to fill the university chairs'. She also indicated that she had already made arrangements on these lines in case she did not return. Later that year the Haldane Commissioners were told that anonymous donors intended to give £100,000 (*c.£7.7million) in instalments of £20,000 (*c.£1.5million) over five years.⁷⁵

A series of anonymous gifts were indeed made to the College between 1918 and 1923, amounting to £100,000, but it was not until they were consolidated into a single fund called 'The Gregynog Gift' in 1936 that the donors were identified publicly as the Misses Gwendoline and Margaret Davies of Gregynog Hall.



Gwendoline Davies,
'Photograph courtesy of Gregynog'



Margaret (Daisy) Davies
Collection: Aberystwyth University Archives

These donations were designed to support the 'Gregynog' Chairs of Music and Geography, extra-mural studies, travelling grants for students, Celtic studies, and the provision of public lectures.⁷⁶ The name of the Llandinam building, the home of Aberystwyth University's Geography and Earth Science Department, reflects this generous benefaction by the Davies sisters to the College almost a century ago.

Gwendoline and Margaret Davies were also among our School of Art's benefactors, along with **George Powell of Nanteos, Sir John Williams, Dr Elvet Lewis, Marian Evans-Quinn**, as well as friends and former students of the University.



Llandinam Building

£100,000

Donation

c.£7.7 million

Equivalent Value

Dr Thomas Jones CH (1870 - 1955) was a close friend of the Davies family and adviser to Gwendoline and Margaret on their philanthropic ventures over many years. He was widely-known to friends and colleagues as TJ, as indicated in the title of his biography by Ted Ellis: *T.J. A Life of Dr Thomas Jones*. His entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* describes him as 'civil servant and benefactor' and notes that after starting to establish a reputation as a preacher as teenager in his native Monmouthshire and winning the Calvinist Methodist scripture gold medal, he left to study for the ministry at the University College of Wales at Aberystwyth. He began his studies here in 1890 and was clearly very able, but had difficulty passing the specific mathematical examinations that were mandatory for those who wished to proceed to graduation under University of London regulations, which applied to students at Aberystwyth at that time. He later wrote a fascinating account of his time as a student here, applying the analytical powers for which he was highly regarded throughout his life and revealing his observations on all aspects of the 'student experience' in the early 1890s (published in 1942 with the unlikely title *Leeks and Daffodils*).⁷⁷

He had already acquired a lifelong commitment to the College at Aberystwyth when he moved to the University of Glasgow to progress in his studies, achieving a highly distinguished first class honours degree in Philosophy and Economics in 1901 and proceeding to a lectureship there. He was then appointed Professor of Political Economy at Queen's University, Belfast, but returned to Wales to become Secretary



Dr Thomas Jones

to the King Edward VII Welsh National Memorial Association, set up personally by his friend David Davies, then Liberal MP for Montgomeryshire, in an attempt to combat tuberculosis by establishing sanatoria. In 1912 he became Secretary of the Welsh National Insurance Commission, quickly earning the respect and regard of David Lloyd George who was influential in TJ's subsequent move (1916) to be assistant, and later deputy secretary to the Cabinet secretariat. There he remained until 1930, serving four successive Prime Ministers. But he had aspirations to return to higher education at Principal level when a vacancy arose first in Cardiff, and then at Aberystwyth following the death of T F Roberts. The Aberystwyth position would have been his ideal role in the place and institution to which he was totally committed, but he was unsuccessful, losing out to J H Davies of Cwrt-mawr, Llangeitho, Registrar at Aberystwyth since 1906 and highly respected in Cardiganshire. He felt this rejection deeply, even after he was appointed President of the College in 1944.⁷⁸

Thomas Jones was not a major benefactor in terms of wealth, but the generosity with which he gave his immense experience, wisdom and network of valuable contacts to the development and support of the College at Aberystwyth was outstanding. He was totally committed to the College and saw it as *'a great engine of social progress'*, with a mission *'to strengthen all that was good in Welsh life'*.⁷⁹

As a close advisor to the Davies sisters in their philanthropic work for many decades, he was particularly interested in their large initiative to benefit the College as indicated in Gwendoline's letter to the Registrar in 1916 (see above), and conceived detailed plans for the future of the College in line with her proposals. He saw Aberystwyth as a centre for 'humanist' education, but also promoted a school of Social Science, together with the need to acquire land for building development on Penglais above the National Library.⁸⁰ Acquisition of the Penglais land was not included in the subsequent Davies benefactions, but this need was to be handsomely addressed by Joseph Davies Bryan in 1929 (see above).

Thomas Jones had been Secretary to the Pilgrim Trust 1930 - 1945, and was subsequently a trustee (1945 - 52) and chairman (1952 - 54). The Trust distributed some £2 million in the 1930s on the relief of the unemployed and longer-term protection of the heritage, and produced a seminal report in 1938 on *Men without Work*, concentrating on the psychological and moral problems faced by the unemployed. The College at Aberystwyth was able to benefit from this connection when, in 1931, TJ persuaded the Trustees to give £200 (*c.£12k) to the student loan fund, followed by further smaller sums.⁸¹

He was President of the College from 1944 to 1954, contributing his expertise at a difficult time in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War but also looking to the future and making plans, supported by Alban Davies's magnificent benefaction to acquire the remaining land on Penglais, the D Owen Evans legacy, and Lord Milford's generosity to the Plant Breeding Station and Agricultural Science (see below).

Sir John Williams (1840 – 1926)



Sir John Williams
Collection: Aberystwyth University Archives

Sir John Williams (1840 – 1926) must also be mentioned individually. Born in Carmarthenshire, son of a minister and farmer, he succeeded in pursuing training as a doctor, first practising in Swansea before moving to London to build a highly distinguished medical career. He developed a lifelong interest in books, manuscripts and pictures of Welsh/Celtic interest and a significant private library.⁸² Well known as a major benefactor to the College in terms of collections of books and manuscripts destined for a national library, in advance of the establishment of NLW, he also participated in all the related discussions. He and David Davies were Vice-Presidents of the College at the same time, and John Williams succeeded Stuart Rendel as President 1913. He was also the first President of the National Library from 1907. In 1909 he made the first of many benefactions to the College by offering to give £120 (*c.£4.8k) annually for three years to cover the salary of a lecturer in Welsh History, provided that the College did the same for an assistant



Donation



Equivalent Value

lecturer in Welsh Literature.⁸³ This reflects continuing public pressure on the College to provide for study of the language, literature and history of Wales and was a first step in a long process. It was widely understood that he intended to endow studies relating to Wales, which happened as a result of major bequests to the College when he died in 1926: Ted Ellis notes that investments and cash amounted to more than £50,000 (*c.£2.7 million), together with his Aberystwyth home (Blaenllynant) and its valuable furniture. The resulting endowment was the Sir John Williams Chair of Welsh History. E A Lewis was the first appointment to this Chair in 1931, a scholar experienced and skilled in using primary sources in manuscript form for research, and aware of the wealth of untapped sources relating to Wales which awaited scholarly attention. He had already inaugurated the teaching of Palaeography and Diplomatic in the College and continued this work in his new position,⁸⁴ thus establishing a tradition of critical skill in this field at Aberystwyth University, which has been taught to postgraduate students of Archive Administration since 1957 and is available to all other postgraduates who require it for their studies and research.

Sir Laurence Philipps, Lord Milford (1874 - 1962)

Sir Laurence Philipps, Lord Milford was a contemporary with the other major benefactors in the first half of the twentieth century, and committed to the College and to securing benefits for Wales, is another individual whose benefaction was transformational in our University's development within the agricultural science field. He was **Sir Laurence Philipps, Lord Milford** (1874 - 1962), described in the *WDNB* as a 'philanthropist, industrialist and sportsman' and member of a historic Pembrokeshire family. He had studied at the Royal School of Mines, but his career focused on maritime trade and establishing the Court Shipping Line, of which he became chair alongside senior roles in other companies. He was a member of the College Council 1922-57 and a life-governor, and in 1939 he received an honorary LLD from the University of Wales.⁸⁵

As part of his philanthropic activities, he was a particularly generous benefactor to the College, donating £10,000 (*c.£461k) in 1919 to found the Welsh Plant Breeding Station (PBS) which would become world-famous in plant and grassland science and provide immeasurable benefits for agriculture. He also committed £1,000 (*c.£46k) annually for ten years to support the development of PBS.⁸⁶ But this was

not the end: in 1944, he offered £800 (*c.£32k) annually for ten years to enable the College to establish a Chair in Animal Health as a research professorship associated with PBS.⁸⁷ This was another huge step forward for the College in the wider context of agricultural science, although the particular specialism was diversified by circumstances over time.

The benefits to the College and contribution to science have been immense, as indicated by Ted Ellis, Richard Colyer, John Valentine, and Russell Davies,⁸⁸ who highlight the developments over time. Changes in the affiliation and remit of PBS from 1986 separated its work from the University for a while, but it returned to the University in 2008 for a new beginning, when merger with Biological Sciences and Rural Studies restored its historic position as an integral part of our University and created 'IBERS'.

In recognition of Lord Milford's generosity, the first laboratory to be built at Gogerddan was named after him when it was opened by the Queen in 1955. Other buildings at Gogerddan have similarly memorialised key figures to which PBS was deeply indebted, such as **Sir George Stapledon**.



Donation



Equivalent Value

The Lord Milford Building, Gogerddan Campus



Stapledon Building, Gogerddan Campus





What next?

The story of benefaction to our University, as illustrated by the donors mentioned, has continued through the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, as the University developed and new needs arose, but other types of benefaction have also grown throughout our history.

Apart from researching and analysing the evidence required for this paper, a secondary aim was to establish a framework for the earlier benefactions and a pattern of presentation. In providing contextual detail, the purpose was primarily to indicate those factors which are likely to have contributed to motivation but also to facilitate understanding by today's readers who are less familiar with the history of Wales and how our university grew. Collaborative effort may provide the most effective way to develop this work, by focusing on specific strands of research and particular interests and extending the chronological span, all with the purpose of creating a wider-ranging reference resource about our University's philanthropic heritage.

Better understanding of Aberystwyth University's endowments will require reference to the original documents, as will research into individual scholarships and their benefactors, starting with the South Wales Commercial Travellers Association in the 1870s. Lists of donations and endowments regularly feature in the *Annual Reports to the Court of Governors* over many decades – which offer another fruitful avenue for data gathering.

Donations of items, including 'special collections' of museum objects, artworks, rare books and archives to enrich scholarship are also significant, and it is important to identify and learn more about the donors.

Each of the gifts received, in whatever format, has originated in the personal desire of the donor/s to give to our University, thus enriching its heritage for all who wish to study here. It is already a very long story, and long may it continue for the benefit of new generations of our alumni!

If you are considering making a significant donation or simply want more information about philanthropic giving please contact the Development and Alumni Relations Team - devstaff@aber.ac.uk / 01970 621568

Footnotes

- ¹ See Webster's excellent descriptive account of the development of the building.
- ² See *Ceredigion County History*, vol. 3
- ³ See his entry in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (ODNB).
- ⁴ Ellis, p.16
- ⁵ See his entry in the *ODNB*.
- ⁶ *Cambrian Daily Leader*, 18 July 1913, p.7
- ⁷ Dr David Thomas apparently felt that he was not given the credit he was owed for his claim to be the originator of this initiative (see letters to this effect in IS special collections in HO Library, as brought to my attention by Bill Hines). He and his son, David Morgan Thomas, were involved in completing the documentation for the purchase of Castle House in DMT's London chambers in March 1867. DMT was joint Secretary with Hugh Owen of the London Committee tasked with taking forward the College at Aberystwyth. See his obituary in the *Surrey Mirror* and *County Post*, Tuesday, 2 November 1915, p.2; and Friday, 5 November 1915, p.8.
- ⁸ *UCW Calendar 1891*: Clause 5 states: 'No Student, Professor, Teacher, or other officer connected with the College shall be required to make any declaration as to, or to submit to any test whatever of, his or her religious opinions, or required to profess any particular religious opinions.'
- ⁹ D Emrys Evans, pp.48-9,114-115
- ¹⁰ Ellis, p.18
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.xi
- ¹² *Ibid.*, p.24
- ¹³ See his entry in the *WDNB* and *ODNB*; also *National Museum Wales*, 'The industrial legacy of David Davies.'
- ¹⁴ Ellis, pp.33-34
- ¹⁵ Colyer, *Man's Proper Study*, pp.26, 43
- ¹⁶ See his obituary in the *Cambrian News* and *Merionethshire Standard*, 14 June 1878; and press reports under University College of Wales in the *Cambrian News* and *Merionethshire Standard*, 21 June 1878, including: 'The Governors desire to place on record their sense of the great loss which this College has sustained in the death of Mr. Henry Parnall, one of its vice-presidents. Messrs. Robert and Henry Parnall were among the earliest contributors towards the proposed University College of Wales, and since its establishment they have been amongst the most liberal of its supporters. During the last two years Mr. Henry Parnall took an active part in the work of the College, and particularly in its Natural Science Department, which seemed to him to be specially calculated to be useful to young Welshmen in connection with mining and agricultural pursuits. His views of the importance of this department led him to transfer to the Council securities for £2,500 bearing interest at 4½ per cent. The amount to be vested in Trustees, and the dividends applied towards the salary of the professor of the department; and subsequently to place in the hands of the Council a sum of money for the specific purpose of encouraging scientific agriculture. He attached much weight to the dissemination among Welsh farmers of information tending to stimulate them to make efforts towards improved farming. It was with this view that he induced the Council to obtain the translation into Welsh of the "First Principles of Agriculture," by Prof. Tanner, in order that the work might be circulated at his own charge among the 20,000 Welsh farmers. The translation had been made and the pointing of the work awaited at the time of Mr. Henry Parnall's death some particulars which he wished to supply in order to render the work additionally useful. It is owing to the prominence thus given by Mr. Henry Parnall to agriculture that a Professor of Agricultural Science was appointed for the College, and that the College has been recognized by the Science and Art Department of the Government as an institution in which scholarships for the Principles of Agriculture may be held.'
- ¹⁷ Ellis, p.46
- ¹⁸ *UCW Calendar 1891*
- ¹⁹ See his entry in the *ODNB*.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.66
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, p.87
- ²² D Emrys Evans, pp.52-3
- ²³ See Ellis, p.117, and in *Alexandra Hall Centenary*, p.3.
- ²⁴ *UCW Calendar 1891*
- ²⁵ See Colyer in *Ceredigion County History* and his article on Roderick Eardley Richardes in *Ceredigion*.
- ²⁶ David Jenkins, pp.41-44, makes reference to this purchase being from the Penglais estate.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*
- ²⁸ see Ellis, p.115
- ²⁹ Tom Ellis was an early student at UCW, major supporter and MP for Merioneth.
- ³⁰ Baron Rendel of Hatchlands in Byfleet, Surrey. See his entry in the *ODNB*.
- ³¹ Morgan, 'The member for Wales', pp.149-150
- ³² Ellis, p.101
- ³³ *ODNB* and Ellis, p.79
- ³⁴ Ellis, p.115
- ³⁵ Departmental Report on Intermediate and Higher Education in Wales
- ³⁶ Ellis, pp.79- 87
- ³⁷ Ellis, p.87
- ³⁸ BB Thomas, pp.17-18, and Ellis, p.87
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.92
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.92-4
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp.95-97
- ⁴² Ellis, pp.130,167; Morgan, 'The member for Wales', p.163
- ⁴³ Morgan, 'The member for Wales', p.163
- ⁴⁴ Ellis, p.167
- ⁴⁵ The story of the four brothers is told in detail by Sian W Jones in *O Gamddwr i Gairo*.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁷ *North Wales Express*, 27th September 1889 [*Friday*]. The marriage was solemnised, on Tuesday [*probably Tuesday 17 September 1889] last week, at the Tabernacle C.M. chapel, Aberystwyth, by the Rev Principal Edwards, D.D., assisted by the Rev J. Jones, Llandilo, brother-in-law of the bride, between Mr Joseph Davies Bryan, of Alexandria and Cairo, and Miss Jane Clayton, youngest daughter of Capt. John Clayton, 13, Marine-terrace. Mr Bryan was formerly a student at the University College of Wales, and is now a partner in the firm of Bryan Brothers, of Alexandria and Cairo, in Egypt. He was much respected in the town, as also is the bride. Flags were displayed on the ships in the harbour and in the town. The presents were numerous. After the honeymoon the happy pair will proceed to Alexandria, and reside there. Mr Joseph Davies Bryan is a brother of the Bryan Brothers, who kept a drapery establishment in Carnarvon all of whom were highly esteemed in the town.
- ⁴⁸ *UCW Annual Reports to the Court of Governors, 1925-30*
- ⁴⁹ *The Times*, 2 March 1935: Dr J Davies-Bryan: Aberystwyth and Egypt. In the death of Dr. Joseph Davies-Bryan, LL.D., yesterday at Hafod, Alexandria, at the age of 71, the business world in Egypt loses an esteemed British member, and the intellectual life of Wales an ardent supporter. There was great rejoicing at Aberystwyth when, in 1929, the then Principal of the College announced in his report at the autumn meeting of the Court of Governors that the problem of a site for the new college buildings had been solved through the generosity and vision of an old student. Dr. Davies-Bryan had at a cost of between £14,000 and £15,000 purchased, and vested in five trustees, part of the Penglais estate, about 85 acres in extent, primarily for the development of the college. There was a power in the conveyance to place portions of the site at the disposal of the National Library, the Welsh Plant Breeding Station, and other institutions.
- Joseph Davies-Bryan's career in Egypt was one of the romances of British business overseas. The pioneer, John, eldest of a family of four brothers, founded a small outfitter's establishment in Cairo nearly 50 years ago; his brother Joseph left college to join him, but John died soon after the arrival of the third brother Edward in 1887. Thereafter, until the death of Edward

Davies-Bryan, six years ago, the firm grew and prospered until it owned its own fine buildings in Cairo and Alexandria, with branches in Port-Said and Khartoum. The firm's name has been known throughout its existence for upright dealing and the high quality of its merchandise. None know this better than the people of Egypt who, when banks were looked upon with more suspicion by Egyptians than they are to-day, would bring large — occasionally embarrassingly large — sums of gold to one of the partners with the request that it should be kept until required. No receipt would be required, or taken if offered. The business was closed last year. (cont. overleaf)

The Great War brought the name of the brothers to every town and village of Wales through their work for the Welsh troops on active service in the Near East, and their unstinted efforts on behalf of their fellow-countrymen were acknowledged by resolutions passed by several public bodies in Wales. One of the most respected personalities of the British Community in Egypt, Dr. Joseph Davies-Bryan was elected president of the British Chamber of Commerce in Egypt in 1923 for two years, and for the same period he was president of the British Community in Alexandria.

- ⁵⁰ Ellis, p.271 note
⁵¹ See his entry in *WDNB*.
⁵² Emrys Jones p.139
⁵³ See his entry in *WDNB*; Emrys Jones p.139; and Colyer, 'Roderick Eardley Richardes', final two pages, also Ellis.
⁵⁴ Ellis, p.304
⁵⁵ Ellis, p.271
⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.270
⁵⁷ Colyer, *Man's Proper Study*, p.74; see also Colyer, 'The Pryse Family of Gogerddan', *passim*.
⁵⁸ Ellis, 106-7
⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 116
⁶⁰ *Cambrian News*, 2 March and 12 October 1906. The purchase included the Cambria Hotel in King Street, which David Davies intended to gift for use as a residential Theological College, to accommodate the college then at Trevecca.
⁶¹ Ellis, p.162
⁶² *Ibid.*, p.162
⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp.212-213
⁶⁴ The full length statue of the Prince in front of Old College, created by the distinguished Italian sculptor Mario Rutelli and dated 1923, was presented to the College by Thomas David Slingsby-Jenkins,

a native of Aberystwyth who worked in international shipping and was a member of the Court and Council of the College. He also donated money for a scholarship for local students. See his entry in the *WDNB*.

- ⁶⁵ See Ellis and David Jenkins.
⁶⁶ Ellis p.290
⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p.306
⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.151
⁶⁹ Ellis, pp.149-50
⁷⁰ *The Cambrian News and Merionethshire Standard*, 25 February 1898.
⁷¹ *ODNB*, where he is listed as David Davies, first Baron Davies (1880–1944), politician and philanthropist.
⁷² Ellis, p.187; see also the webpages for the Department of International Politics at Aberystwyth University for: *The Legacy of One Man's Vision* at: www.aber.ac.uk/en/interpol/about and the *David Davies Memorial Institute of International Studies (DDMI)* at: www.aber.ac.uk/en/research/excellence/research-centres-and-groups/ddmi-en
⁷³ See J. Graham Jones, 'The Peacemonger'.
⁷⁴ The *ODNB* entry for Gwendoline Davies is very informative about both sisters and their wide philanthropic work in Wales
⁷⁵ Ellis, pp.179-80, 182-3

- ⁷⁶ D. Emrys Evans, pp. 111-2; Ellis, chapters 6-9 *passim*
⁷⁷ See Ch.1, 'College Memories: Aberystwyth in the Nineties'.
⁷⁸ See the interesting vignette by J Graham Jones in 'The Reminiscences of Mrs Ruth Evans'; the biography of TJ by EL Ellis; and TJ's entry in the *ODNB*.
⁷⁹ Ellis, p.180
⁸⁰ Ellis, pp.180-85 and following
⁸¹ Ellis, p.250 note 90
⁸² See his entry in the *WDNB*.
⁸³ Ellis, p.167
⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p.221, 235
⁸⁵ See his entry in the *WDNB*
⁸⁶ Ellis, pp.199-202, 237; Colyer, *Man's Proper Study*, pp.50, 90, 96
⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 266; Colyer, *Man's Proper Study*, p.73-4
⁸⁸ Ellis, pp. pp.199-202, 237, 266; Colyer, *Man's Proper Study*, pp.50, 73-4, 90, 96 and *passim*; Valentine '90 years of the Welsh Plant Breeding Station: a perspective', and Davies 'Landmarks in agricultural, biological and land-based studies at Aberystwyth'.

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- * current value has been calculated using the Bank of England's online 'Inflation Calculator' which extends to 2014.
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1936-1940 archive.org/details/reportsubmitted1936univ
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Note: The original reports were submitted under copyright requirements by UCW, Aberystwyth, to the General Library, British Museum, London, handed on to the Library of the BM's Natural History Department, and later contributed to the Internet Archive by the Natural History Museum Library, London, after the NHM separated from the BM and became a separate institution (1960s). See the digitised letter dated 1923 at: archive.org/stream/reportsubmitted1916univ#page/n407/mode/2up

And: Welsh Newspapers Online, hosted by NLW (see: newspapers.library.wales) and extending to 1919 are a new resource not available to previous authors on the history of Aberystwyth University but used to locate details about individuals and events for this piece of work. These newspaper reports are invaluable and sometimes unique as source material, but they are time consuming to use because the OCR text is frequently inaccurate for names and initials and almost always wholly inaccurate for sums of money. These reports must always be checked for accuracy against the digital images of the original printed text.

Aberystwyth University's collaborating with the Community Foundation in Wales

The Community Foundation in Wales promotes and manages philanthropy, matching donors with doers. As the place for philanthropy in Wales we are acutely aware of the role philanthropy has played in enriching education, driving social reform and building vibrant and thriving communities across the nation.

Our 2015 Portrait of Philanthropy in Wales report painted a picture of giving in Wales and explored the motivations, interests and passions of today's generation of philanthropists. We were particularly delighted that April McMahon, former Vice-Chancellor of Aberystwyth University and Louise Jagger, Development Director, contributed to this report, highlighting the establishment of the University as "one of the great romantic, indeed heroic, stories of modern Welsh philanthropy".

And what a story it is. This new volume really drives home the vision, ambition and collective generosity shown by the people of Wales. It truly is an outstanding example of a community of donors coming together to make a difference.

At the Community Foundation in Wales, we know how important philanthropy continues to be to students today. We manage a suite of bursary programmes which enables students across Wales to further their education, through college, university or training. One of our bursary programmes even bears the name of Stuart, Baron Rendel, a former President of Aberystwyth University, who, as this research points out, did so much to foster the growth and development of the university in its early days.

We hope this work inspires a new generation of philanthropists to join this unique and special story. A story which students past and present should be incredibly proud to be part of.



Aberystwyth University

Timeline 1860-1950

Non-sectarian support

Supporters of the non-sectarian principle included **Dr Thomas Nicholas (1816 – 1879)** and **Reverend Dr David Thomas (1813 – 1894)** as well as his son **David Morgan Thomas**.



David Davies of Llandinam
(1818 – 1890)

First gift of £100 (*c. £10,000) to which he added £300 (*c. £30,000).

On 16th October 1872, the opening of the college, he promised £1,000 (£106,000) towards the endowment fund to help support the College in its early days and in the absence of government funding.

He also gave towards a scholarship fund £2,000 (*c. £212,000).

Public subscription Extensive collections led by Sir Hugh Owen around Wales

Including collections agreed by nonconformist denominations agreed that the 3rd Sunday in October was designated as **Sul y Brifysgol**, when a collection would be made for the College at Aberystwyth. Contributions also came from communities of quarrymen and miners as well as collections in Wales and special collections in Manchester and Liverpool. These totalled £50,000 which roughly equates to £5.4 Million in today's money.

Old College Library

Contributions from the US and Canada and collected during Thomas Charles Edwards' tour of North America in 1890 which raised £1,000 (*c. £115,000) towards the fitting out and equipping of the Old College Library.



Baron Stuart Rendel (1834 – 1913)

Bought the Grogrythan land for £2,000 (*c. £230,000) which he leased free to the university and on his death bequeathed it.

From 1900 starts giving £750 (£82,000) annually until he dies in 1913 to augment the teaching staff stipend he deems too modest.

His bequest in 1913 of £5,000 (*c. £515,000) will be used to endow a new **Chair in English Language & Literature** which bears his name.



Purchase of the Castle Hotel

For £10,000 (*c. £1.7 million).

Early benefactors across the UK (encouraged by benefactors such as **Sir Hugh Owen**) typically gave £200 (*c. £21,000).

Aberystwyth town gave £1,032 (*c. £110,000).

Henry Parnall

By 1877 Henry Parnall had given £2,500 (*c. £260,000) capital for the endowment of a **Chair of Natural Science**.

He also gave £200 (*c. £21k) annually for three years to which helped fund a **series of lectures on agriculture**. After his death in 1878 he also bequeathed £5,000 (*c. £500,000).

WT Jones of Melbourne (native of Aberystwyth)

Gave £500 (or *c. £58,000) which paid for the ornamental roof on the Quad of the Old College.

Old Students' Association (OSA) Founded



Alexandra Hall

The Pfeiffer Bequest (a trust promoting education for women) gave a grant aid of £2,000 (*c. £234,000) towards the build of Alexandra Hall on land donated by Aberystwyth Town Council at the northern end of the Prom.



Edward Davies of Llandinam, his son Baron David Davies of Llandinam and Gwendoline and Margaret Davies of Gregynog

Edward Davies's bequest represented £23,000 (c. £2.5 Million).

Baron David Davies with his sisters Gwendoline and Margaret jointly gave £20,000 (c. £800,000) in 1919 to establish a **Chair of International Politics**.

Gwendoline and Margaret Davies made a series of gifts between 1918 and 1923 which became known as the **'Gregynog Gift'** of £100,000 (c. £7.7 Million) in instalments of £20,000 (c. £1.5 Million) over 5 years.

These donations were designed to support the 'Gregynog' **Chairs of Music and Geography**, extra-mural studies, travelling grants for students, Celtic studies, and the provision of public lectures.

They were also generous patrons of the School of Art.

Old Students' Association (OSA)

A generous benefactor, continuing today of course.

One of the most notable is the purchase and gifting to the University of the **Assembly Rooms** in Laura Place in 1921 for £5,000 (c. £218,000) to serve as a joint Memorial to the Founders of the college and to the students fallen during World War One.



David Alban Davies (1873 – 1951)

Funded the purchase of the **North side of Penglais Hill** in 1946, including Penglais mansion, the woodland and Penglais farm for £34,000 (c. £1.2 Million).

He also gave £10,000 (c. £374,000) to the **Agricultural development Fund**.



Sir John Williams (1840 – 1926)

£120 (c. £4,800) annually for 3 years to support the salary of a lecturer in Welsh History.

His bequest amounted to in excess of £50,000 (c. £2.7 Million) which resulted in the endowment of a

Chair in Welsh History which bears his name.

1909

1910

1913

1919

1920

1921

1929

1930

1931

1940

1944

1946

1950

Sir Lawrence Phillips, Lord Milford (1874 – 1962) In 1919 he gave £10,000 (c. £461,000) to establish the **Welsh Plant Breeding Station**.

An additional £1,000 (c. £46,000) annually for 10 years to support the development of the Plant Breeding Station.

In 1944 he also committed to give £800 (c. £32,000) annually for 10 years to establish a **Chair in Animal Health**.



Joseph Davies Bryan (1864 – 1935)

A former student and highly successful business man in Egypt bought and gave in 1929 the university a large part of the Penglais Estate, now the main **Penglais Campus** for £15,000 (c. £850,000).



Dr Thomas Jones (1870 – 1955)

A former student at Aberystwyth and senior civil servant, he was advisor to the Davies sisters and secretary to the Pilgrim Trust who in 1931 gave £200 (c. £12,000) to the Student Loan Fund.

Sir D Owen Evans

Bequeathed £35,000 (c. £1.3 Million) of unrestricted funds which were used for academic purposes (rather than towards the acquisition of land or building).

* current value has been calculated using the Bank of England's online 'Inflation Calculator' which extends to 2014.