



NHLF Project No. OM-19-05301
PEOPLE'S VOICES IN A PEOPLE'S WAR: ABERYSTWYTH 1939-1945
FINAL REPORT: July 2022

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SECTION A: THE PROJECT

A 1 Project details

The community history project **People’s Voices in a People’s War: Aberystwyth 1939-1945** explored the impact of the Second World War (WW2) on the people and communities of Aberystwyth, a small coastal tourist town in mid-Wales that is also home to Aberystwyth University and the National Library of Wales, through the collaborative efforts of volunteers, local archives, the university, local history societies, schools, and performance and arts groups. Together, these volunteers and groups engaged with wartime records, letters, newspapers, photographs, music, war memorials and personal histories held at the National Library of Wales, Ceredigion Archives, Ceredigion Museum, the Aberystwyth University Library and public places in the area, and captured and interpreted these community histories in activities, displays, exhibitions, performance and accessible online resources.

A 1.1 Background

The success of our previous project, **Aberystwyth at War 1914-1919: Impact, Experience, Legacy** (‘AberWWI’, 2018-19), also funded by the HLF’s ‘Our Heritage’ programme, inspired us to carry out a similar community-led project that would explore, interpret and preserve the stories of the Aberystwyth community as it was during another wartime eighty years ago.

A 1.2 Application

After a consultation process involving volunteers on our previous project, as well as local organisations and community groups including Ceredigion Archives, the Ceredigion Museum, the National Library of Wales (NLW), the Aberystwyth Arts Centre and the Penparcau History and Heritage Group – i.e. the same groups and partners that had been involved in our previous project – , we submitted our application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund in December 2019. We received permission to start in March 2020.

Unfortunately, this starting date coincided with the first Covid lockdown, meaning that we had almost immediately to revise our initial timetable, specifically our plans for in-person activities. In the event, much of the first year was spent delivering the project via online activities, and many of our planned events required modification to meet ongoing Covid restrictions. With the agreement of the NLHF we were also able to extend the lifetime of the project, which meant that we could deliver some of our planned live events once Covid restrictions had been lifted. We are grateful to the NLHF for their continued support during this uniquely challenging time.

A 1.3 Rationale

The underpinning rationale for our project was, as articulated in the consultation sessions we held and the feedback received from our previous AberWWI project, that there were still obstacles that prevented local people engaging with their heritage, and that people in this area still had a lack of knowledge, skills and confidence about key aspects of their local history and how to access and interpret it. The AberWWI project had gone a long way to addressing these lacunae, but it was evident that a follow-up project on a related theme, i.e., the local experience of WW2, would consolidate and extend local engagement, expand opportunities

to identify with like-minded groups with which to share knowledge and learning, and enable that knowledge-sharing in both traditional and non-traditional ways.

As before, we sought in this project to respond to these needs with activities including research training workshops, introductions to local archives, community art, performance, and display, for as wide a range of local volunteers as possible, and with as much as possible preserved as a digital legacy going forward. We were keen to further extend our collaboration with local heritage, art and community organizations, pooling resources and jointly programming events, and ensuring that we responded to the needs of the community.

Lastly, we wanted to offer people of all ages and backgrounds a new opportunity to take part in free activities and events, skills-building workshops, volunteering, and group discovery of the past, to allow people to engage emotionally with their heritage and to help connect them directly with the impact and legacy of the Second World War, building on the positive success achieved in our previous project on the First World War.

A 2 Approved purposes

A 2.1 The approved purposes for the project were as follows:

1. Recruitment of Project Coordinating and Community Engagement Officer
2. Recruitment of community volunteers
3. 4 x 1-month full-time paid graduate trainee posts and 4 x part-time paid undergraduate work experience posts
4. Research work in partnership with archive bodies
5. Community events including a Tea Dance, film screenings and cookery classes
6. Exhibition and theatre performance at Aberystwyth Arts Centre
7. Evaluation of the project
8. High profile acknowledgment of the support of the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

Due to the unique challenge posed by the two Covid lockdowns and associated subsequent restrictions, we were unable to complete every approved purpose in the manner originally envisaged. However, over the course of the project we were able to meet almost all of these purposes and, where necessary, substitute additional events. Full details of the delivery of the approved purposes are presented in Section C, below.

A 2.2 Associated outputs identified in the project application

There were also several associated outputs identified in the project application and underpinning but not formally listed as approved purposes. They were as follows, and are discussed further in Section D below:

1. A project blog, featuring posts by volunteers based on their own research for the project. Due to lockdown restrictions, this our main activity throughout 2020.
2. An online resource in the form of a digital map that identifies significant locations and buildings in Aberystwyth associated with the Second World War.
3. Archiving of materials through Ceredigion Archives, People's Collection Wales, and Aberystwyth University
4. Provision for the Welsh language throughout the project

A 3 Project budget

Our original application to the NLHF, based on the above aims, was for £43,090. This budget would include the project officer's appointment, salary and expenses; the costs of volunteer recruitment; money towards the training and expenses of volunteers; equipment; promotion and marketing costs; budgets for specific events; and the costs of evaluation.

A 3.1 Match funding

In keeping with NLHF requirements, we budgeted to contribute match funding to the project, through externally funded bursaries as follows: c.£8,166 from Aberystwyth University for six student and graduate trainee work placements; and a further £2,000 to fund bursaries for student or recently graduated student volunteers.

Our total working project budget was therefore £53,256.

Our final spend is **£33,831** (financial records attached)

A 3.2 Non-financial support and volunteer contributions

We received non-financial support from the following (with value of in-kind contribution calculated):

1. Ceredigion Archives staff time in kind for 2 volunteer study skills sessions = £240
2. National Library of Wales staff time in kind for 2 volunteer study skills sessions = £240
3. Arts Centre café space for arts exhibition Nov-Dec 2021 = £1,000
4. Installation of exhibition as above = £500
5. Provision of venue for WW2 Big Band Concert = £162
6. People's Collection Wales staff time in kind for 2 volunteer digital archiving sessions = £434
7. Ceredigion Schools Music Service staff time in kind = £200
8. PL staff time in kind at £24/hr, 4 hrs a week, over 100 weeks = £9600

This has amounted to an in-kind contribution of approximately £12,376

Our volunteers' time in researching and writing up subject matter for the project blog, organizing and running events, attending meetings and training sessions, tending the WW2 allotment, giving presentations, etc., is time given in kind too. We can record, with great pride and gratitude, that our volunteers have contributed at least 920 hours/122 days in kind, equivalent of at least **£15,426** in cash towards this project, with an additional **£10,000** non-cash contribution from the Project Lead.

A 4 Project management

A 4.1 Project Lead

The project lead (PL), Siân Nicholas, is Professor in Modern British History at Aberystwyth University. She has nearly 30 years of experience teaching modules on the First and Second World Wars in British history and is an authority on the mass media in both wars. She came to this project with significant project leadership experience, on a major £1/4m Leverhulme Trust Research Project Grant (2011-14) and on the HLF-funded ‘Aberystwyth at War 1914-1919’ community history project (2018-19). Her role was principally one of oversight of the project, with direct engagement in specific events and outputs.

A 4.2 Project Coordinator and Engagement Officer

The key management and co-ordinating role in the project was that of Project Coordinator and Engagement Officer (PCO), a 0.4 FTE appointment over the duration of the project. The successful applicant, Kate Sullivan, took up post on 22 June 2020. Her experience and qualifications were particularly strong for this role: she was Project Coordinator on our previous AberWWI project, had longstanding community project work experience with Women’s Archive Wales and several other NLHF projects and community engagement activities, and is fully bilingual in Welsh and English.

A 4.3 Project Steering Group.

The project Steering Group, chaired by the Project Lead and with PCO acting as secretary, was a key element in the management of the project across its lifetime. It comprised representatives of all the key organisations involved with project delivery (that is, National Library of Wales, Ceredigion Archives, Ceredigion Museum, and Aberystwyth Arts Centre), with responsibility for monitoring and reviewing the project’s progress, and offering feedback and guidance as appropriate. It first met in June 2020, and monthly thereafter, with breaks for the August and Christmas holidays. Due to Covid restrictions, all these meetings were held online via Zoom. Bilingual agendas and minutes were compiled and distributed by the PCO, and these will be archived electronically along with the rest of the project materials.

Attendance at meetings varied, from nine at the initial meeting to typically five or six thereafter, with some members dropping out once events they were directly involved in were over. However, there was a consistent core of Steering Group members who continually supported the project, bringing their experience and wisdom to the meetings. Their expertise and advice were integral to the ongoing success of the project, and the monthly meetings were an invaluable means of maintaining the project's momentum and accountability. We would particularly like to note the contributions made by William Troughton (NLW), Helen Palmer (Ceredigion Archives), and Dr Susan Davies.

The project also benefitted from the inclusion of a Volunteer Representative, Lynne Blanchfield (a former AberWWI project volunteer), who operated as a liaison between the Steering Group and the volunteers and who brought an important additional perspective to the meetings.

A 4.4 Project evaluation and feedback

Throughout the project we sought to monitor and evaluate the success of our events and activities, to identify best practice, and to respond as swiftly as possible to any issues arising. In terms of participation and outreach, our evaluation methods involved quantitatively assessing attendance at all events and qualitatively assessing the demographics of our volunteers and other project participants. In terms of impact and success, we requested written feedback in feedback forms and questionnaires where appropriate (e.g., after training sessions, workshops and guided walks), and both solicited and were alert to oral feedback in conversation where we felt requests for written feedback would be inappropriate and/or intrusive. Feedback from our various project activities is noted and commented on throughout this report. Our evaluation processes are detailed more fully in Section C 7 below, and our full project evaluation is presented in Section E.

SECTION B: PUBLICITY AND MARKETING

B 1 Initial publicity

The successful recruitment of project volunteers was key to the success of the project as a whole. The PCO took the lead in this, aided by suggestions and contributions from the Steering Group.

Our recruitment strategy began in June 2020 with a bilingual Welsh/English flyer designed by the PL and PCO that was circulated throughout the town and displayed on local community, library and university notice boards. Due to lockdown, we also relied heavily on social media platforms to publicise the project, and our number of Facebook and blog followers increased significantly during lockdown.

We also designed a project logo based on a WW2 searchlight which featured in all our publicity material, along with the logo of the National Lottery Heritage Fund, and of our project partners as appropriate, i.e., the National Library of Wales, Ceredigion Archives, Ceredigion Museum, Aberystwyth Arts Centre, and Aberystwyth University.



Project logo showing a WW2 searchlight, designed by the PI and PCO.

We also emailed local centres and institutions directly and asked them to promote the project and publicise our call for volunteers. These included the National Library of Wales, Ceredigion Museum, Aberystwyth Public Library, Ceredigion Archives, Penparcau Hub, the Aberystwyth Women's Institute and Merched y Wawr, Ceredigion Family History Society,

staff and students in all departments of Aberystwyth University, the Aberystwyth University Alumni Association, and other local groups.

Unfortunately, due to the Covid lockdown, which lasted for the first year of the project, and subsequent restrictions on group meetings, we were unable to hold any face-to-face events to meet potential recruits. This notwithstanding, volunteers came on board in steadily increasing numbers, some contributing for a few weeks, others for the duration of the project. We were also delighted to welcome back a dedicated group of volunteers from the AberWWI project.

Most of the volunteers engaged in the first months of the project, ‘friended’ us on Facebook and followed us on social media, as did many people who, while expressing interest in active volunteering, could not do so for various reasons. These followers, whose reach extended from Wales and England to the USA, frequently ‘liked’ and shared the project’s social media posts across the duration of the project.

B 2 Media coverage

B 2.1 Newspapers and magazines

The project also attracted regular and positive publicity in local newspapers and magazines.

The *Cambrian News* is the main weekly newspaper for Aberystwyth and the surrounding areas, with a circulation of around 7,000 readers and an active online presence. It provided regular and positive coverage of the project and its events. In November 2020, for instance, it printed a full-page feature on the project, featuring an interview with the PI and details of the project’s aims, planned events and activities, the partners involved, and how to participate. In September 2021, it printed a half-page article outlining forthcoming events, including the first of our WW2 film screenings and our Arts Centre exhibition, and put out a call for material for the exhibition. This call resulted in a several items being made available for the exhibition by members of the public who then curated them themselves. A third article, in May 2022, was a recap of what the project had achieved to date, and gave details of forthcoming events, notably our WW2-themed guided walks and Big Band concert. The final article, on 16 June 2022, was a full-page report on our highly successful WW2 ‘secret cave’ tours. For more on all these events, please see below.

The BBC’s *Who Do You Think You Are?* Magazine printed an article about the project in January 2022, illustrated with photographs donated by volunteers, and including a call for memories and photos, We received two follow-up emails following this article from people telling us about their wartime connections with Aberystwyth, one of whom had physical memorabilia which we encouraged him to deposit in the Ceredigion Archives.

AberJabber, the newsletter of St Michael’s Church, Aberystwyth, with whom we collaborated during our AberWWI project, was sadly no longer being printed, but in September 2020 they published an article on the WW2 project in their e-newsletter, which went out to several associated parishes in the area.

B 2.2 Radio

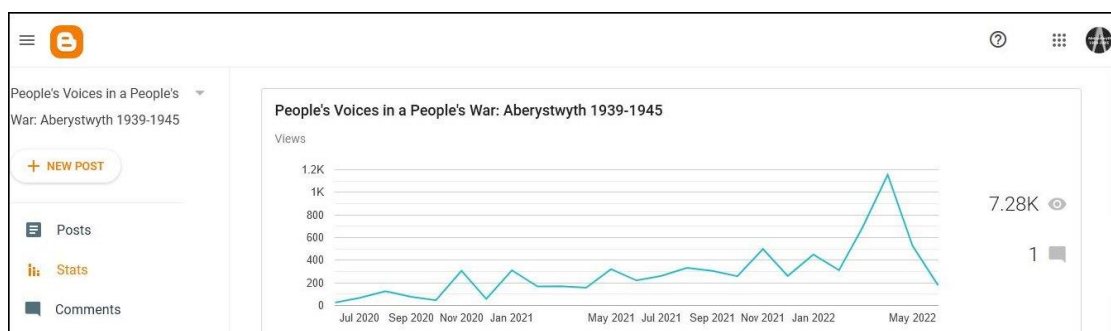
Unfortunately, lockdown conditions meant that we were unable to broadcast about the project on the local hospital radio station, Radio Bronglais, as we had done during our AberWWI project. However, a new radio station, Aber Radio, has requested an interview with us about our WW2 allotment (details below), scheduled for late summer 2022.

B 3 Social media presence

In June 2018, the PCO set up **Facebook** and **Twitter** accounts for our AberWWI project, respectively <https://www.facebook.com/aberystwyth.atwar> and [@AtAberystwyth](https://twitter.com/AtAberystwyth), both of which we then linked with the Aberystwyth University social media pages. Rather than create new pages for the WW2 project, we redeveloped these pages so as not to lose our existing followers. Since the launch of the new project, our Facebook page has gained a steady flow of followers: we currently have 326 ‘friends’ (compared to 82 at the end of our previous project), with posts regularly ‘liked’ and shared by our followers across the UK.

Our volunteer-populated blog has likewise proved immensely successful. Here, instead of re-utilizing our WWI blog, the PCO created a new Google blog for the WW2 project, in order to keep the two projects separate and unique. Our WW2 blog (further details below) has achieved 7.28K views at the time of writing, with a reach extending as far as the USA.

The project and NLHF logos are prominently displayed on our social media pages, and all our posts on Facebook and Twitter are uploaded bilingually by the PCO.



<https://aberystwythatwarww2.blogspot.com/>



<https://www.facebook.com/aberystwyth.atwar>

SECTION C: DELIVERING THE PROJECT: APPROVED PURPOSES

The NLHF specified eight Approved Purposes for this project, as listed below.

1. Recruitment of Project Coordinating and Community Engagement Officer
2. Recruitment of community volunteers
3. 4 x 1-month full-time paid graduate trainee posts and 4 x part-time paid undergraduate work experience posts
4. Research work in partnership with archive bodies
5. Community events including a Tea Dance, film screenings and cookery classes
6. Exhibition and theatre performance at Aberystwyth Arts Centre
7. Evaluation of the project
8. High profile acknowledgment of the support of the National Lottery Heritage Fund

As noted in the discussion that follows, the imposition of Covid lockdown at the start of the project, and the ongoing restrictions on movement and assembly in Wales throughout much of its lifetime, meant that not all of our planned activities could be carried out at the time or in the manner originally envisaged. However, we believe we have delivered on all our approved purposes, and in some instances have significantly exceeded our original plans.

C 1 Recruitment of Project Coordinating and Community Engagement Officer

As stated in A 1.4, above, the key management role in the project was that of Project Coordinator and Engagement Officer (PCO). Originally envisaged as a 0.5 FTE appointment for a period of 20 months running from June 2020 to February 2022, it was finally decided to make this a 0.4 FTE appointment over a longer period of 24 months, from June 2020 to June 2022, in order to address and mitigate the effects of Covid restrictions on our project activities and outcomes. A further extension of the PCO's contract, until 15 July 2022, was later agreed with NLHF, funded from budgetary underspends elsewhere.

The post of PCO was advertised in the local newspaper, the *Cambrian News*, in popular 'situations vacant' sites, and on the Aberystwyth University Jobs Page. Twenty applications were received and 3 candidates were shortlisted for interview in early June 2020.

The successful applicant, Kate Sullivan, took up post on 22 June 2020. Her experience and qualifications were particularly strong for this role: she was Project Coordinator on our previous WWI project, had longstanding community project work experience with Women's Archive Wales and several other NLHF projects and community engagement activities, and is fully bilingual in Welsh and English.

Since her appointment Kate has been the lynchpin of the entire project, as demonstrated by the contents of this Evaluation Report as well as the testimonials received from volunteers.

C 2 Recruitment of community volunteers

We had originally hoped to recruit around 50 volunteers on the project. However, due to the Covid outbreak, initial recruitment was slow and had to be done mainly via online means (see

above). We already had around 12 very dedicated volunteers from the AberWWI project, and these engaged enthusiastically with the new project from the start, researching topics for our new blog. When the lockdown eased in early 2021 other volunteers quickly came on board, and ultimately over 70 residents of Aberystwyth and the surrounding community signed on to our volunteer list and donated time when they could. Our volunteers ranged from townspeople and residents of surrounding villages, retired people, newcomers to the area and university students and staff, with an age range of between 18 and mid-70s. If we also count those who contributed by performing or engaging in project-related activities, our volunteer reach was well over 100, and if we factor in audiences to our events, the number reaches several hundreds. This is considerably more than we had anticipated, and a measure of how much interest the project generated.

We would like to pay especial tribute to these 12 ‘original’ volunteers, particularly Lynne Blanchfield, who, in addition to her own project research, served as the Volunteer Representative on the Steering Group, acted as a liaison between the main project team and the wider body of volunteers, and took an active role in publicizing the project to local groups such as Merched y Wawr and the Aberystwyth WI. We would also like to take this opportunity to thank Bethan Jones, who devised and presented our Year 5 evacuation workshops in March and May 2022, and Conor Brockbank and Rasma Bertz, who researched, devised and led our WW2 guided walks around Aberystwyth in May 2022 (details of both below, Section C 5). We are greatly indebted to them – and to all our volunteers - for their unstinting efforts over the duration of the project.

C 3 4 x one-month full time paid graduate trainee posts and 4 x part-time paid undergraduate work experience posts

The appointment of graduate trainees and work experience students to work on the project was enabled by match funding from Aberystwyth University. As with all our activities, Covid lockdown and subsequent restrictions on movement and assembly complicated the delivery of this approved purpose, necessitating a degree of flexibility in how we managed and delivered these placements over the course of the project. We were however able to deliver not only the placements we had planned for, but several additional ones, including three volunteers on the GoWales work placement initiative.

C 3.1 Aberystwyth Fund graduate bursary placements.

One element of the project’s match funding was £2000 from the Aberystwyth University Fund to provide bursaries for recently graduated students to undertake work placements on the project. Our initial aim was to provide four £500 bursaries for work placements of a fortnight’s duration. However, Covid restrictions meant that we had to delay awarding these bursaries. Once lockdown was lifted, and in order to kick-start other elements of our planned volunteer research effort, we decided to award one ‘double-bursary’ of a month’s duration over the summer of 2021, followed by two ‘single’ bursaries in spring 2022. Alice Sargent, a recent AU History graduate and former AberWWI project volunteer, therefore joined us for a month over July/August 2021, and Conor Brockbank and Bethan Jones, the former a recently-graduated MA student considering PhD study, the latter a current AU PhD student, joined us for a fortnight each in April/May 2022. Alice’s principal roles were to set up our

WW2 digital map, devising content categories and making a start on the database, and to use her previous volunteer experience to mentor our AberForward work placement students, including helping with their research and providing them with digital copies of locally sourced archival materials as required; she also conducted her own research and contributed to our blog. Conor contributed to our blog, co-devised one of our WW2 walks, and filled in much of the remaining incomplete data on the WW2 map database. Bethan devised and co-led three Year 5 workshops on WW2 evacuees with Ysgol Gymenudol Talybont Community Primary School, and contributed to the project's oral history interview collection. See below for further details of all of these activities.

Comments from our Aber Fund bursary placements:

'Before I began my bursary placement for the project, I was regularly involved as a volunteer researcher since around January 2020. I was therefore extremely excited and thankful when the project offered me a two-week bursary placement. During this bursary placement, I was able to undertake further research for the project both at the National Library of Wales and at Aberystwyth University Archives. The placement also gave me the opportunity to further understand and actively take part in the running and organising of projects on this scale, through attending and taking part in the monthly group steering meeting [The] two WW2 guided walking tours of Aberystwyth ... allowed me to share aspects of my own wider research which were also associated with the project's focus of Aberystwyth during the course of WW2. The engagement from those who attended these walks was amazing to experience whilst also giving me an opportunity to discuss further other aspects of my research These guided walks and the discussions I had during and after them from attendees, has also provided me with further questions and avenues of research which I hope to explore during the course of a PhD.' CB

Wedi gweithio ar fy PhD dros y pedair blynedd ddiwethaf, roedd yn bleser llwyr derbyn profiad hollol newydd o weithio gyda hanes. Mwynheais i'n fawr y profiad o redeg gweithdai mewn ysgol gynradd leol ac, mewn ystyr, cael dod a hanes yn fyw yn y cyd-destun hwnnw. Teimlais fy mod i wedi meithrin ar sgiliau newydd megis cyfathrebu disgwrs hanesyddol â tho ifanc. Mae'r prosiect hefyd wedi cadarnhau'r pwysigrwydd o wrando'n astud ar farn disgyblion i ddeall yr hyn a ystyrir yn bwysig iddynt. Rwyf yr un mor gyffrous i gyfweld a dynes leol i ardal Ceredigion am ei phrofiadau o dyfu i fyny yn ystod yr Ail Ryfel Byd. Mae'r prosiect, felly, wedi gweithredu fel pont rhwng y cenedlaethau lleol – o rannu'r hanes craidd gyda phobl ifanc mewn un ystyr a sicrhau fod hanes y genhedlaeth h'n yn cael ei chofnodi a'i ddogfennu mewn ystyr arall. Rwy'n ddiolchgar iawn i Kate Sullivan a Dr Sian Nicholas nid yn unig am roi'r cyfle i mi weithio ar y prosiect hwn, ond hefyd am fy mod i wedi dysgu llawer ohono hefyd. BSJ

C 3.2 'AberForward' student placements

Another planned element of our match funding was our employment of four students on month-long work placements, funded by Aberystwyth University's 'AberForward' student work experience programme. We are delighted to report that AU was in fact able to fund **six** such student placements: Andrew Wolkenhaar, Tom Buswell, Maxwell Bates, Eleanor Caine,

Ieuan James and Daniel Ahern, all students from the Departments of History and Welsh History and International Politics who had expressed an interest in working in the field of archival research, joined the project for a month each between June and October 2021. For several of these students this placement was their first chance to engage independently with original primary source materials following the closure of many archive repositories during the Covid lockdown.

During the first part of their placements all six AberForwards researched topics chosen by themselves for the project blog, including the evacuation to Aberystwyth of children from Liverpool and students from University College London; ‘digging for victory’ and wartime cookery; HMS Tanatside, a WW2 warship funded by the community of Aberystwyth; the Aberystwyth Home Guard; and the diary of a family of soldiers stationed overseas during the war. During the second part of their placements, they worked on the database for the project’s online digital map, filling in gaps by locating missing addresses and other data. As part of their career development, they were also invited to attend and contribute to Steering Group meetings, and Andrew Wolkenhaar participated as a panellist with PL Siân Nicholas and PCO Kate Sullivan in an online presentation about the project to the Aberystwyth Alumni Association on 11 November 2021 (further details below).

Because of continued Covid restrictions, including difficulties in travelling from home addresses, these work placements were of necessity carried out on a hybrid basis. We also gave the students the flexibility to spread their month of work across up to six weeks if they wished. All the students were required to visit Aberystwyth at least once, to meet the project team face to face, to have hands-on experience in local archives, and to collect research materials. Thereafter, they worked either in Aberystwyth or at home, using online resources and relevant archives close to their homes, meeting weekly online with the PL and PCO, and liaising with Alice Sargent – who provided them with digital copies of additional locally-sourced research materials as needed – and the other Aberystwyth-based AberForwards. While not ideal, this proved in practice to be an effective and collegial experience.

Comments from some of our AberForward placements:

‘As a history student this placement was fascinating as it enabled me to understand more about the unique culture and background of the town I am studying in. I enjoyed improving my research skills and learning how to use archives. I now feel I have a better understanding of the competencies required for pursuing a career in the field of history or research. Although there was some initial confusion regarding where I would be working, this placement worked well as a hybrid remote-based scheme, with weekly meetings providing helpful direction.’ AW

‘I found it a great experience to be able to conduct extensive research at a professional, academic level. Going into the archives alone and with colleagues was very interesting and useful, since I now feel well equipped for future research projects and any research I conduct out of personal interest. I particularly enjoyed going through school log books and learning facts about the daily lives of the pupils and teachers and finding out in which ways the school changed (or remained the same) during the war.’ TB

‘I had never been to a physical archive before so having someone to guide me through the process and having a specific project to research and look for was really helpful for me to learn the skills needed to use archives and increase my confidence. The placement being flexible, I was able to fit it in around another job and live at home over the summer whilst working on it I also very much appreciated the leaders of the project being very flexible with the timing of my placement, allowing me to extend it from 4 to 6 weeks to fulfil the number of hours required whilst still being able to fit it around my other commitments, which made the whole process more enjoyable and meant I got a lot more from it.’ EC

‘The project was enjoyable to research and write. I did not know about Warship Week until I researched it, so it was also a learning experience for myself as well. It was also convenient as over the pandemic I was taking a year off before doing a Masters at Aberystwyth University so I only had to travel once to see the archives as others helped as well. It also helped to keep up my writing skills and present to a non-academic audience instead of the focus on the academic, broadening my abilities.’ MB

C 3.3 GoWales work experience placements

In March 2021 the project was delighted to receive an approach from GoWales to accept an additional work placement volunteer under their ‘work taster’ initiative for students who find it difficult to find employment after graduation. Caitlin Vivian joined us as a GoWales Project Volunteer in March/April 2021, liaising with the PCO to conduct research using resources provided online for a blogpost on conscientious objectors in Aberystwyth in WW2, and gaining experience in researching and writing to a specific format. Naome Wrightson subsequently joined us in May/June 2021, researching and writing a blogpost on policing in Ceredigion during WW2, and Michael Bowen in June/July 2021, researching and writing a blogpost on the ‘secret cave’ below the NLW where some of the nation’s treasures were housed for safety during the war. We were very pleased to be able to contribute to this important work experience initiative.

C 4 Research work in partnership with archive bodies

Our research work in partnership with archive bodies took a range of forms, as follows:

1. a series of research training workshops for volunteers delivered by Ceredigion Archives, the NLW, People’s Collection Wales, and Aberystwyth University;
2. a series of oral history interviews conducted by volunteers for archiving locally;
3. liaising with volunteers to discover WW2-related family artefacts and materials to be donated to local archive bodies

C 4.1 Research training workshops

We had originally planned to hold four research skills training workshops and two oral history workshops towards the start of the project, to introduce volunteers to new skills and give them confidence in embarking on their own research. Due to Covid-19 we had to revise our plans and move our initial workshops online via Zoom. In the event, over the lifetime of the project we were able to organise **eight** research skills workshops, seven online and one in-

person, as follows: two introductions to the Ceredigion Archives, two introductions to the NLW, two digital archive training workshops, and two oral history workshops. These eight workshops were attended by a total of 46 volunteers, from a range of backgrounds and interests. Full details are as follows:

C 4.1.1 Two Ceredigion Archives research skills training sessions

Two research skills training sessions for volunteers, delivered by County Archivist Helen Palmer of the Ceredigion Archives, were held over Zoom on the afternoons of Tuesday 23 February 2021 and Wednesday 27 October 2021. Helen introduced the sources held at the archives, showed how they might be accessed for research under the then-prevailing lockdown conditions, suggested several topics that could be researched under the restricted circumstances, and scanned and copied some relevant material for volunteers that was not accessible online. The first session was attended by six volunteers and the second by seven.

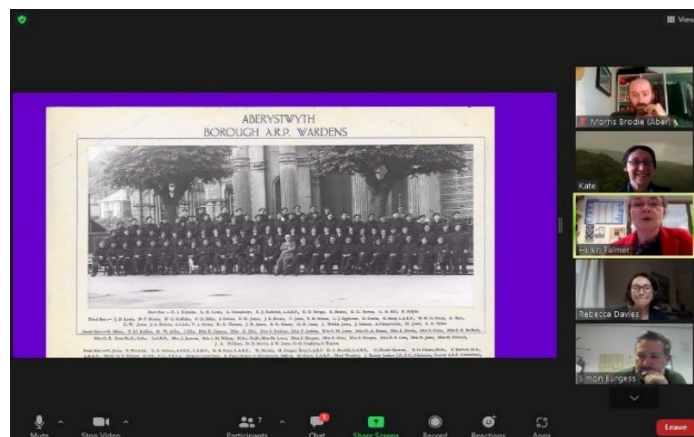
Feedback forms were emailed to the participants after both these sessions, and the responses were notably positive. Comments included the following:

‘The presenter was very knowledgeable and engaging. Even though the topic wasn’t strictly relevant to my involvement, it was clear that Helen would be a valuable source of information for our project.’

‘The tutor who led the workshop was extremely knowledgeable. She was also able to give very structured and practical help to volunteers, clearly explaining the collections available to the project, as well as outlining some possible projects she had identified.’

‘A good range of primary and secondary sources drawn to our attention, available in the Ceredigion Archives. Helen explains things very clearly, engagingly, and informatively. Good to see some new material from last training session, it was worth attending again to gain ideas for next blog after completing the current one. It was good to hear what other people are working on too.’

‘Enjoyed seeing the enthusiasm which Helen imparted for the whole project. Good to see the varied selection of topics suggested. Good to be able to decide on a topic for further research.’



Ceredigion Archives research skills training online session 23 February 2021

C 4.1.2 Two National Library of Wales research skills training sessions

Two further research skills training sessions were held online by William Troughton, archivist at the National Library of Wales, on Friday 4 June and Wednesday 17 November 2021. As in the sessions with Ceredigion Archives, Will focussed principally on the material that could be accessed online, such as wartime photograph albums, scrap books and printed material, and suggested several viable research topics. In the second workshop he was able to provide information about how to access the Library, which had recently reopened (albeit with restrictions) after lockdown. Each session was attended by four people.

Feedback from these sessions was again highly positive:

‘The enthusiasm and depth of expertise of the presenter was superb! The opportunity for further contact with this mine of information will prove invaluable no doubt.’

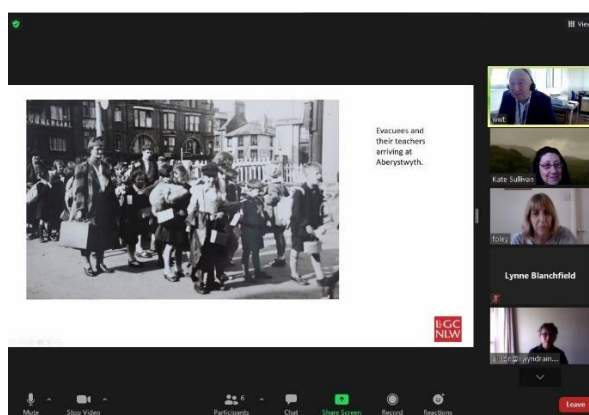
‘The trainer was very knowledgeable and demonstrated some interesting and engaging material! I liked that they showed sources and discussed avenues for further exploration.’

‘Excellent use of PowerPoint slides to display resources, knowledgeably explained and easier to see close-up on screen than from the back of a room, for example. Many helpful suggestions made for possible research avenues.’

‘It is always a privilege to listen to Will. His quiet, thorough, and modest approach facilitates a high level of accessibility and understanding for researchers. Thank you.’

‘Relaxed but well-organised, useful to hear about the strengths of the NLW, particularly local newspapers and oral history interviews, as well as the procedure for attending (which has changed quite a lot for archives during the current period). These sessions have been very useful for generating ideas and possible research avenues for my own project topic.’

‘The ability to ask questions or interact with other attendees was very useful as well as enjoyable. It was also interesting to see what WW2 resources were held at the National Library as I’ve only seen and heard about the medieval period. I also learnt about some interesting war-time local history that I had not heard before which gave me food for thought.’



National Library of Wales research skills online training session 4 June 2021

C 4.1.3 Two Digital Archiving Training Courses, with People's Collection Wales

The fifth training course for volunteers, leading to Agored Cymru accreditation, was run by People's Collection Wales online on Zoom on Tuesday 17 November 2020, led by tutor Gruffydd Jones. Five people attended the course, and learned about copyright issues, how to collect metadata, digitization techniques, and the importance of archiving. Since the session was on Zoom, the hands-on accreditation element could not yet be delivered, and was held over until lockdown conditions eased.

While the attendance was relatively low, all the participant feedback was positive, and all five gave a rating of 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' on the evaluation forms. Comments included:

'It introduced a fascinating resource. The presentation was clear and practical. It will enable us to make a significant contribution to safeguarding people's history in Wales. Everything was relevant and enjoyable, and a skill development.'

'A fascinating resource – I was aware of the website but extremely useful to have this guided session, especially how to upload material to the collections, interest in using the site for my own research as well as the project. Thank you for the opportunity.'

'I really loved this workshop. I hope there are more! I liked learning about Kate's work in the Women's Archive, and general information about how to navigate the Peoples Collection. I wish to pursue a career in the museum / archives, so this was good experience/ taster in this sector.'

'To know that there is the archive with wonderful resources for our use. Wonderful platform to share our finds. Clear explanation of how to use the website and how to upload meta data. Brief explanation of how to curate item with regard to copyright. Very worthwhile!'

The second digital archiving session, on 24 May 2022, and again led by tutor Gruffydd Jones, was a face-to-face session held on the Aberystwyth University campus that included the practice-based accreditation element that could not be delivered in the previous session.

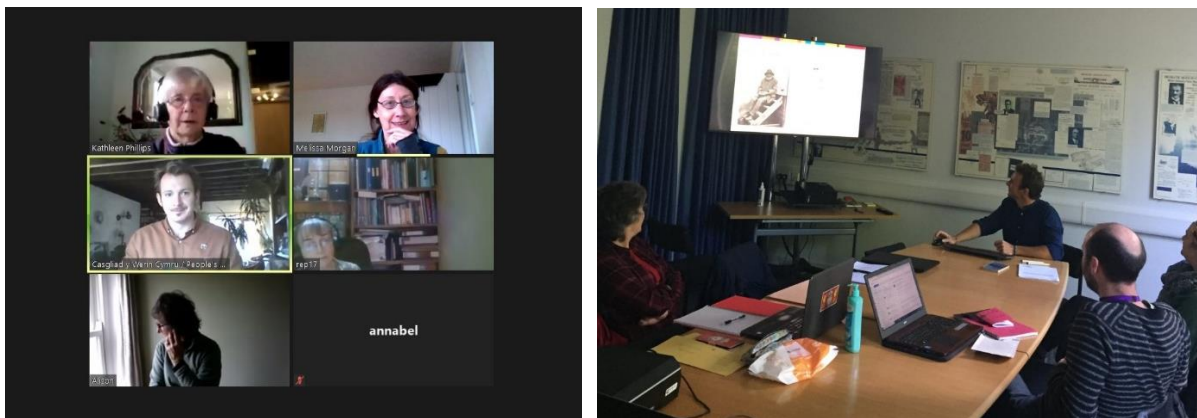
Four more people attended this course (a fifth had to cancel on the day after testing positive for Covid). All agreed on the educational and professional attributes of the course. However, their comments also pointed out some technical and practical problems on the day. Some were beyond our control (e.g., scanner breakdown), though we note for future reference the comments about internet and power access (which could have been better tested beforehand) and the pressure on time (which might have been better anticipated). Their comments are as follows:

'Good overview of PCW and copyright issues related to digitisation; materials emailed to us had lots of useful information. I enjoyed using the scanner and editing my images to be 'website ready'. It was also an enjoyable surprise when material I had worked on previously was highlighted on the PCW. ... [However] There was also only one scanner (the other one broke the day before which is unfortunate) There were also some issues with Wi-Fi – I think emailing materials out beforehand would have been a good idea. I think the session could have been scheduled to have more time – we ran over quite a bit and even then, not everyone was finished.....'

‘This was a brilliant workshop that taught me a lot about copyright in particular that will prove very useful for my future PhD work. It was a friendly atmosphere and Gruffydd explained everything very well and helped out with awkward cases like the telegram I had chosen to use. I was not able to complete everything on time so he supplied a hard copy of the guidelines so I could use my scanner at home and forward everything on to him. It has also opened my eyes to the complexities of digitisation for public use and was a worthwhile use of my time in attending and completing the tasks set. What was awkward and time consuming was being unable to connect to the university internet, which two of us were unable to do Also, the room was not the best for charging laptops as the plugs were too far away from the tables However, none of this detracted from my enjoyment of the course, we all managed and made do.’

‘Gruffydd is a good trainer and the information on copyright is especially useful. The accreditation will also be valuable. I have a clearer idea of the benchmark/good practice standard for metadata and item descriptions, as well as a better understanding of People’s Collection of Wales as a shared crowd sourced repository, rather than just as somewhere I visit to look for images to use in my own research. [However] I am not sure this is the type of course that can be done in 2-3 hours, especially with a group of people all bringing different types of ephemera to digitise – all requiring answers to different copyright questions, and all with varying levels of expertise with scanning/camera tech.’

All four attendees received their PCW accreditation certificate around three weeks after the end of the course.

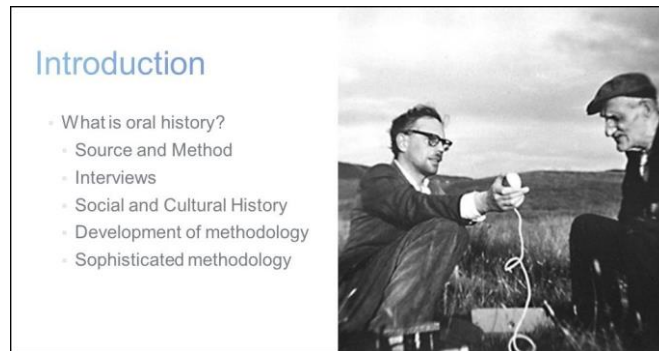


People’s Collection Wales digital archiving training course, 17 November 2020, and in-person session, Tuesday 24 May 2022

C 4.1.4. Two oral history workshops

For those volunteers who wanted to learn more about oral history rather than archival research we also held two half-day online oral history workshops with external providers, the first on Tuesday 1 December 2020 provided by the Department of History and Welsh History, Aberystwyth University, and the second on Wednesday 8 December 2021, provided by the Unlocking our Sound Heritage project at the National Library of Wales.

The first workshop, delivered by Dr Arddun Arwyn, Lecturer in Modern German History at Aberystwyth University, was part of the AU Department of History and Welsh History’s student oral history training programme, to which our project volunteers were invited to attend, and was delivered via Teams. The session, which 3 volunteers attended, focussed on the methodology of oral history interviewing, ethics, copyright and legal issues, and how to construct and carry out an oral history interview. Sample questions and example consent forms were given and discussed by the group and materials were emailed to the participants following the workshop.



Slide from the first oral history workshop Tuesday 1 December 2020

The second workshop, which had 13 volunteer attendees, was delivered by Elen Jones and Berian Elias from the Unlocking our Sound Heritage Project at the National Library of Wales. It reinforced the themes outlined in the previous workshop, including the definition, purpose and aim of oral history, provided a step-by-step project plan for carrying out an oral history interview – (including planning the interview, selection location, preparing questions, equipment, and documenting the interview), and provided links to further information.



*The Unlocking our Sound Heritage page from the National Library of Wales website
<https://www.library.wales/collections/learn-more/screen-sound-archive/audio-visual-collections/unlocking-our-sound-heritage/>*

C 4.2 A series of oral history interviews conducted by volunteers

Following the oral history workshops, several of our volunteers carried out oral history interviews with people in the Aberystwyth area. Given lockdown conditions, these interviews had to be conducted by phone rather than face to face. They were then transcribed

as a blog by the volunteer interviewer or by the PCO. The recordings and transcripts will be archived and made available to researchers as per the interviewees' wishes.

- Hugh Morgan interview with Tony Bird, WW2 veteran, for the West Wales Veterans Archive and our project (<https://aberystwythatwarww2.blogspot.com/2020/08/>)
- Lynne Blanchfield interview with Ioan Guile about his Uncle Eddie Esaias (<https://aberystwythatwarww2.blogspot.com/2020/11/>)
- Frances Foley interview with evacuee and serviceman Tony Bird (<https://aberystwythatwarww2.blogspot.com/search?q=tony+bird>)
- Kath Phillips interview with Meinir Davies and Liz Jones, the daughters of two Aberystwyth-based WW2 Land Girls (<https://aberystwythatwarww2.blogspot.com/2021/03/the-womens-land-army-in-WW2-part-one.html>)
- Kate Sullivan interview with Pat James about her childhood memories of WW2 (<https://aberystwythatwarww2.blogspot.com/search?q=Pat+James>)
- Bethan Jones interview with Katie Jones about her childhood memories of WW2 (blog yet to be posted)

C 4.3 Discovery of WW2-related family artefacts and materials

While many of our volunteers contributed to the project by conducting their own research, an important group contributed by lending or donating family materials that then formed the basis of other project outputs. These included photographs for our exhibition at the Aberystwyth Arts Centre; a collection of wartime memorabilia from the family of Rosemary Jagger; and wartime diaries, albums and written accounts of family memories, subsequently used as the basis for project blogposts.

C 4.3.1 Photographs for WW2 Exhibition

Several local people made WW2-related family photographs available for our public exhibition in the Aberystwyth Arts Centre in late 2021 (see Section C 6.1 for further details). In particular, Evan John Davies allowed us to photograph pages from his father's autograph book featuring autographs, drawings and messages collected from some of the soldiers of the British Expeditionary Force based in Aberystwyth following their evacuation from Dunkirk. Theresa Ryley loaned us photographs of her grandparents' wartime wedding. Simon Burgess provided photographs of his great-grandfather, Richard George Read, on active service in the Far East, and of a local VE day garden party. We were also loaned over 80 photographs of members of the Women's Land Army stationed in Bow Street supplied by Meinir Davies and Liz Jones, the daughters of two of them. Copies of the latter will be deposited in the Ceredigion Archives.

The Ceredigion Archives and National Library of Wales also made available a number of wartime photographs from their own collections for the exhibition, including photographs of evacuees arriving at Aberystwyth train station, the Aberystwyth Home Guard and ARP, pictures of local soldiers and airmen billeted in the town, and pictures taken in the town on VE-Day. Will Troughton, archivist at NLW, also made available images he had taken of the (now lost) graffiti made by RAF personnel billeted in the Belle Vue Hotel on Aberystwyth seafront, which was sadly badly damaged by fire in 2018. All these topics have also appeared as articles on our blog.



Sketch of a Douglas Boston bomber drawn by RAF personnel stationed in the Belle Vue Hotel in WW2, photographed by Will Troughton in 2007, believed destroyed by fire 2018.

C 4.3.2 Rosemary Jagger collection

One of the first and most significant loans of archival material to the project was a collection of recorded interviews, letters and photographs belonging to Rosemary Jagger, a former student at Chelsea College of Physical Education who was evacuated to Borth, near Aberystwyth, during the war. The collection was made available to us by her daughter, Alison Pierse, and formed the basis for one of the project's key outputs, a community theatre performance of an original play based on Jagger's story, in January 2022 (see Section C 6.2 below). Alison also wrote a blog for the project based on her mother's memories, and on our recommendation approached the local magazine *AberEgo* with the story. It appeared there in five parts over the summer of 2021.



<https://ego.today/ju21/>

C 4.3.3 Diaries and ephemera

A number of local people either loaned material to our volunteers or wrote their own blogs for us based on family materials and memories. These included the following:

1. Simon Burgess wrote several blogposts for us about the experiences of his great-grandfather, serviceman and prisoner of war of the Japanese, Richard George Read

(<https://aberystwythatwarww2.blogspot.com/2020/08/vjday75.html>;
<https://aberystwythatwarww2.blogspot.com/2021/02/the-anniversary-of-fall-of-singapore.html> ; <https://aberystwythatwarww2.blogspot.com/2021/04/return-of-japanese-pows-to-aberystwyth.html>)

2. Alison Comely wrote a blogpost based on the wartime memories and experiences of her family (<https://aberystwythatwarww2.blogspot.com/2021/11/the-morgan-family-recollections-of-WW2.html>)
3. Evan John Davies loaned a family album belonging to his father Evan Desmond Davies to volunteer Frances Foley for a blogpost on his father's wartime experiences (<https://aberystwythatwarww2.blogspot.com/2021/12/a-family-at-war-evan-desmond-davies.html>)
4. Arthur Chater donated a memoir of his childhood in wartime Aberystwyth to project partner Ceredigion Archives, which formed the basis of a blogpost by PCO Kate Sullivan on his wartime schooldays (<https://aberystwythatwarww2.blogspot.com/2022/02/memories-of-prep-school-in-credigion.html>)
5. Monica Lloyd Williams loaned the notebook of her father, schoolmaster and Special Constable George Loyn, to volunteer Lynne Blanchfield, who transcribed it and used it as the basis of a blogpost (<https://aberystwythatwarww2.blogspot.com/2022/04/george-morris-loyn-special-constable.html>)



George Loyn, back left, with the children of Bronant School, photo from Monica Lloyd Williams.

C 5 Community events including a Tea Dance, film screenings and cookery classes

Here again, due to the imposition of Covid restrictions, the inability to run public events of any kind during the first year of the project, and the significant constraints in Wales on holding live events over much of the second year, it was decided, in consultation with the project Steering Group, that the project would need to adapt its originally planned community events. Thus, for instance, while we were unable to hold as many project presentations to

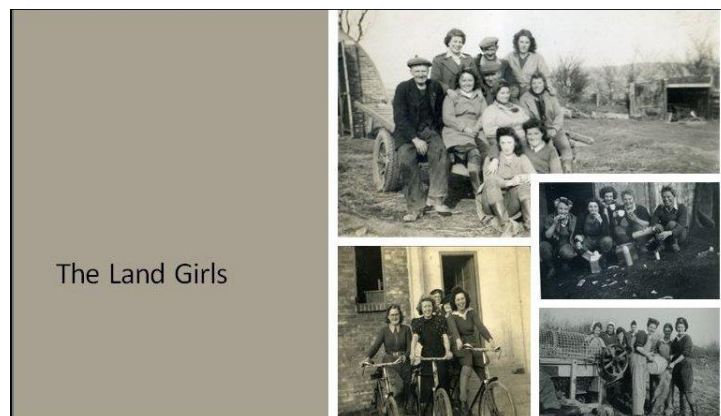
local groups as we had initially hoped, we were able to expand significantly our provision of public-facing tours (of the NLW ‘Secret Cave’ and of WW2-era Aberystwyth respectively) once restrictions were lifted. Likewise, although we were unable to hold a ‘Kitchen Front’ cookery class and ‘Make Do and Mend’ workshop as originally hoped, we were able to initiate a new outdoor wartime activity, our ‘Dig for Victory’ WW2-themed allotment. We were greatly helped in this effort by the permission we received from the NLHF to extend the lifetime of the project beyond the originally envisaged dates, and we hope that the NLHF approves of these necessary modifications to our original plans.

The project’s community events are listed below, in approximate order of delivery:

1. Presentation of ongoing project findings to local group, November 2021
2. Two WW2-themed film screenings at NLW, November 2021 and May 2022
3. Tea Dance and VE-Day Celebration, Penparcau Hub, March and May 2022
4. Three Year 5 Schools Workshops on theme of evacuation, Ysgol Gymuned Talybont, March-May 2022
5. Invitation to ‘Wales and the Battle of Britain’ exhibition launch, NLW, April 2022
6. Four tours of NLW wartime ‘Secret Cave’, April 2022
7. Community arts workshop, Aberystwyth Arts Centre, May 2022
8. WW2-themed Big Band concert, Coliseum Theatre, May 2022
9. WW2-themed ‘Dig for Victory’ community allotment, ongoing since March 2022

C 5.1 Presentation of findings to local groups

Given the Covid lockdowns and the lengthy continuation of restrictions in Wales in particular, it unfortunately proved impossible to hold face-to-face presentations or to visit community groups until very late in the project. We therefore reluctantly cut back on our original intentions for presentations, and instead sought to provide more opportunities to engage directly with participants in the live events held towards the end of the project (see, e.g., sections on our tea dance, cave tours and wartime walks, below). We were, however, able to deliver one major presentation on our findings, to the Aberystwyth University Alumni Association, over Zoom on Thursday 11 November 2021 (Armistice week), 6-7pm, to an online audience of nearly 70.



From Project Lead Siân Nicholas’s PowerPoint presentation, 11 November 2022

This talk was presented by the PL, with contributions from the PCO and AberForward Andrew Wolkenhaar. The PL's talk was based around six photographs sourced from volunteers that told stories of visitors to Aberystwyth during WW2, including evacuees, land girls and Dunkirk veterans. Andrew spoke about his experiences researching on the project, and the PCO described the project's volunteer element. The talk was well received and we gained a number of new email contacts afterwards.

C 5.2 Two WW2-themed film screenings at Y Drwm, National Library of Wales

The WW2-themed film screenings were an opportunity for volunteers and members of the public to see rare or unusual films produced during the war and with a link to Wales in a cinematic setting. The scheduling of the screenings was unavoidably delayed until relatively late in the project owing to Covid restrictions on public assembly, but they were scheduled as soon as the venue became available. The two film screenings were carefully curated to present specific wartime themes, and the project leads presented short contextualising introductions on the night.

C 5.2.1 Screening 1, Thursday 18 November 2021. This was a double bill film screening, featuring *Green Mountain, Black Mountain* (1942) a Ministry of Information short film, scripted by Dylan Thomas and presenting a vivid portrayal of Wales and Welsh life in the Second World War, and *The Halfway House* (1944) a wartime feature film again set in Wales, produced by Ealing Studios and starring Welsh actors Mervyn and Glynis Johns, in which a disparate group of people, each with their own secrets, are drawn to a mysterious Welsh inn. As one of our project partners, the NLW provided the venue for a reduced cost and charged tickets at the accessible price of £6.00/ £4.50 concessions. The audience of ten was smaller than we had hoped for, but as the lockdown was only slowly easing at this point, it was not a surprise. The PCO introduced each film, explaining something of its history and contemporary impact, and also took the opportunity to publicise the project and thank National Lottery players.



Stills from The Halfway House (1944) and Went the Day Well? (1942)

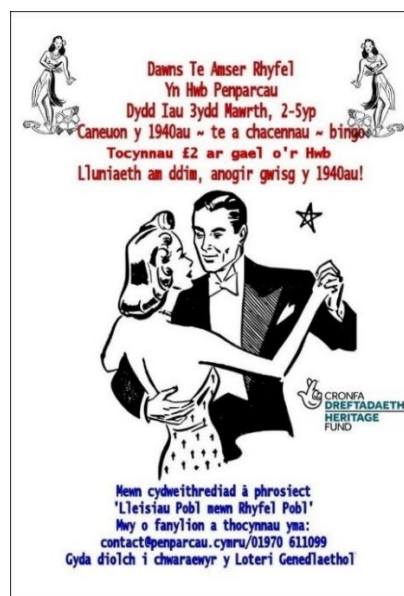
C 5.2.2 Screening 2, Thursday 28 April 2022. The second screening, also a double bill, focused on the issue of occupation. *The Silent Village* (1942) is a haunting short drama-documentary set in a fictional Welsh mining village and directed by Humphrey Jennings, inspired by the atrocities at Lidice in Czechoslovakia earlier the same year. *Went The Day*

Well? (1943), produced by Ealing Studios and based on a story by Graham Greene, starred Welsh actor Mervyn Johns, Leslie Banks and Valerie Taylor as residents of a sleepy English village that unwittingly welcomes and then has to fight off an advance party of German paratroopers. The PL provided a brief introduction to both films. Venue and ticketing arrangements were as before, and we had an appreciative audience of 15.

C 5.3 Tea Dance and VE-Day Celebration, both at Penparcau Hub

C 5.2.1 Tea Dance

On Thursday 3 March 2022, 2-5pm, the project co-hosted a WW2-themed Tea Dance at the Penparcau Hub, a vibrant community forum and centre in Penparcau, Aberystwyth. The event was the outcome of discussions with the Hub manager, Sam Hughes-Evans, and several Hub volunteers as to what kind of an event would most suit the local community.



Penparcau Hub WW2 Tea Dance poster, designed by PCO Kate Sullivan (Welsh-medium version)

The event was advertised with a poster in both English and in Welsh. The original plan (as featured on the poster) to charge £2 entry was, however, dropped, in order to maximise attendance. The venue was decorated with WW2-era propaganda posters, bunting, and period tablecloths. Hub volunteer Janet Thomas provided sandwiches and cakes, and PL Siân Nicholas provided Welshcakes made to a wartime recipe (with carrots a key ingredient) that became a popular talking point with attendees. Hub volunteer George Barratt held a bingo spot, Adrian Hollis, a member of Epic Militaria, provided a display of wartime military uniforms, and gave a talk on his family experiences of WW2, the fee for his participation covered by the project. Ceredigion Archives provided a display of evacuee memorabilia, including contemporary local news reports, a genuine child evacuee's suitcase, and a child's gas mask – which brought back vivid memories to some of the older attendees. There was also WW2-era dance music, and some dancing. The event was a great success, with around 40 local people attending of all ages, from small children to the elderly.



*Ceredigion Archives display of evacuee memorabilia, Penparcau Hub Tea Dance
Penparcau Hub WW2 Tea Dance participants*

C 5.2.2 VE-Day Celebration

The Penparcau Hub Tea Dance was such a success that it was decided to hold a follow-up, a VE-Day anniversary celebration event on Sunday 8 May 2022 (the 77th anniversary of VE-Day itself). This was a larger-scale event, utilising an outdoor marquee as well as the Hub venue itself, and benefiting from VE-Day falling on a Sunday this year. As with the Tea Dance, the event featured a vibrant WW2 display, with posters and bunting, as well as some of the projects' Arts Centre exhibition photographs, which generated a lot of interest and discussion. Epic Militaria returned with a further display of uniforms and provided another short talk. Again, there was wartime food, music, and dancing, as well as a minute's silence to mark the end of WW2 in Europe. The day was a great success and very well attended, with around 70 people participating.



Poster for the Penparcau Hub VE-Day Celebration, designed by Hub volunteers



Part of Epic Militaria's uniform display at Penparcau Hub VE-Day Celebration

C 5.3 Three schools workshops with Year 5 pupils from Ysgol Gymunedol Talybont Community Primary School

One of the most successful legacy outcomes of the AberWWI project was a schools workshop on Aberystwyth in WWI that is now an annual feature of Ysgol Penglais's Year 9 History curriculum. Unfortunately, our plans for a similar initiative - to create a Year 5 schools workshop around the stories of the schoolchildren who were evacuated from Liverpool to Aberystwyth in September 1939 - were materially hindered by the Covid lockdown. Primary schools in Ceredigion did not reopen until March 2021, after which teachers were under significant pressure to prioritise catching up on the core curriculum and discouraged from inviting external visitors onto the school site. Three primary schools in the Aberystwyth area replied positively to the project's proposal for a WW2 workshop, but ultimately only one, Ysgol Gymunedol Talybont Community Primary School, was in a position to host us. However, after consulting with the school on its specific needs, we were able to provide three Year 5 workshops, one in March and two in May 2022, delivered primarily in the school's first language, Welsh, and specifically designed to complement their existing WW2 evacuation project work.

The workshops were devised by Aberystwyth Fund bursary recipient Bethan Jones, who also ran them alongside PCO Kate Sullivan. The first workshop, on 1 March 2022 – St David's Day – foregrounded the local evacuee experience, with half the class playing local children (speaking Welsh) and the other half evacuees arriving for their first day at their new school (and only speaking English). The emphasis was on how to communicate and make friends in the absence of a shared common language. The workshop concluded with the 'local' children teaching the evacuees the Welsh National Anthem to celebrate St David.

In the second workshop, on 3 May, the children made gas mask boxes and role-played an air raid, using a YouTube recording of an actual WW2 siren and original wartime guidance for schoolchildren during a raid. Under the supervision of their teachers – headmaster Hefin Jones and assistant Sara Hughes – the children left their seats and lessons and hid under their tables until the all-clear sounded. This was followed up by a discussion on how it would have felt to have carried and worn a gas mask and on being at school when there was threat of an air raid.

In the final workshop, on 26 May, the children all dressed up as evacuees. The imagination they brought to this was wonderful – one child turned up with a genuine evacuee’s suitcase that had been handed down through the family, another was dressed in a waistcoat that had belonged to his grandfather who had been a child evacuee. The role-play in this final workshop involved pupils in pairs playing the parts of an interviewer and a former evacuee looking back on their experience with the hindsight of eighty years.

All three workshops were very successful and the children (between 20 and 24 in each workshop) engaged fully and enthusiastically. We are grateful to Bethan Jones for providing workshop templates that can be delivered through Welsh or English to other primary schools in the area in future years, and we have already had expressions of interest for next year.



Bethan Jones with the children of Ysgol Gymunedol Talybont, Workshop 2



Headmaster Hefin Jones and the Talybont school pupils following workshop posing for a period photograph in Workshop 3

C 5.4 Invitation to ‘Wales and the Battle of Britain’ exhibition launch event, NLW

Throughout the project, we have been working closely with Hugh Morgan of the West Wales Veterans Archive (<https://westwalesveteransarchive.com/>) and sharing information and contacts. Hugh put us in touch with local WW2 veterans such as Tony Bird, who was interviewed via telephone for our blog, and Hugh attended several of our activities, including a meeting with the daughters of two Land Girls, one of our study skills session with the National Library of Wales, and an oral history workshop. We were therefore delighted when Hugh invited us to represent the project at the launch of the touring ‘Wales and the Battle of Britain’ exhibition at the NLW on Wednesday 20 April 2022. The exhibition featured images, maps and recorded memories of the men and women of Wales who were involved in the Battle of Britain. The launch was also an opportunity for us to meet Tony Bird, and other centenarian veterans of the war, in person at last.



PL Siân Nicholas and PCO Kate Sullivan with WW2 veteran Tony Bird

C 5.5 Four tours of the ‘Secret Cave’ beneath the National Library of Wales.

The opening-up of the much-mythologised ‘secret cave’ under the National Library – an underground tunnel that during WW2 housed some of the nation’s treasure from the British Library, including original Shakespeare folios - was one of the most cherished aims of the project. The tunnel is only opened very infrequently, the last occasion being for a BBC documentary some years ago, so we were hugely privileged to be granted access to the tunnel by the NLW in order to host a series of guided tours.

Two tours were initially planned, on the afternoons of Wednesday 27 April and Saturday 30 April 2022, each for around 10 people. However, the public response to our Facebook and email notices of the tours was so overwhelming – 200 enquiries within the first two days – that we decided to run **two** each day rather than one, each with 20 rather than 10 people. Once the tour places were filled, names were placed on a waiting list, and, in the event, everyone who wanted to come was able to. The tours were led by William Troughton, archivist at the National Library of Wales and an expert on the caves and hard hats were provided by the NLW and Aberystwyth University. The first group included Julie McNichols-Vales, Deputy News Editor of the *Cambrian News*, and her full-page article on

the tour appeared in the paper on Wednesday 15 June 2022 <https://www.cambrian-news.co.uk/news/what-lies-beneath-550821>

The attendees were a particularly diverse group, ranging from local people to students and retired people to children. All said how much they enjoyed the tours, how much they learned about something that is very much a mystery despite being ‘on their doorstep’ and how they appreciated being given this rare opportunity to go inside the tunnel.



PL Siân Nicholas preparing to go inside the cave, equipped with hard hat; and inside the cave

Comments included the following:

‘I hugely enjoyed the cave tour yesterday. Thank you so much for arranging the event. It was awesome to actually experience entering the cave and tunnel and having a good look round. Also great to have the well-informed Will Troughton as our tour guide. Fascinating to see the cave and visualize how it would have safely accommodated and preserved so many national treasures that were under threat during wartime bombing.’

‘I really enjoyed my visit and found it very interesting indeed. I would say that the ‘cave’ would be worth including in Aberystwyth tourist tours in the future’

‘Amazing piece of Aber history!! My curiosity satisfied. Many thanks to you and Will.’

‘Dim ond gair byr i ddweud cymaint y wnes i fwynhau'r daith ddydd Sadwrn. Roedd yn hynod ddiddorol a hoffwn gyfleu fy niolch i Will am ein harwain.’

‘Thanks very much for organizing the tour. I'd always suspected that that entrance must lead to the underground tunnels that I'd read housed treasures during the war, and I was extremely curious about it. It was both interesting and satisfying to finally get inside to see what was there and to hear the history of the cave. I think it's always interesting to find out about the history around you, fascinating stories embedded in locations/buildings that are part of your daily landscape but give no clue to their past lives. What was particularly exciting about the tour was that it uncovered something usually hidden from view. While we may not know much about exactly what happened in the cave, it was an interesting point at which to start thinking about Aberystwyth during the war and how it participated in the national picture.’

C 5.6 Community art workshop at the Aberystwyth Arts Centre

Our AberWWI project had held several very successful community art workshops, and we had hoped to hold up to three such workshops again over the course of our WW2 project. However, due to the pandemic lockdown, and the subsequent delayed opening of the Aberystwyth Arts Centre following a flood that necessitated significant repairs to the building, we were only able to sponsor one workshop in the Arts Centre, on Friday 13 May 2022, for 27 pupils of Ysgol Gynradd Penrhynoch Primary School aged between 7 and 10. Three of these children were descended from evacuees to Ceredigion from Liverpool and Manchester. This was a day-long workshop, led by Laura Hughes, ceramics tutor at the Aberystwyth Arts Centre.

The morning session began with a study of images of evacuees and a discussion of how they might have felt, the clothes they wore, and what they carried with them. Connections were made between keeping children safe in WW2 and the current safety concerns of the Covid pandemic, and how decisions made by government can affect lives. The children then drew sketches and formed clay figures from their drawings, focussing on expressions and facial features. In the afternoon, they developed their figures by adding hair, clothing and accessories, with some children adding personal items such as teddy bears, dolls and suitcases, and giving their evacuees names.

Laura reported that it was a very successful day. The children identified with the topic and engaged enthusiastically with creating their pottery figures, which then were fired and will hopefully form the basis of an exhibition.



Figures created in the school pottery workshop inspired by evacuees to Aberystwyth

C 5.7 Two interactive guided tours of WW2-era Aberystwyth, conducted by project volunteers

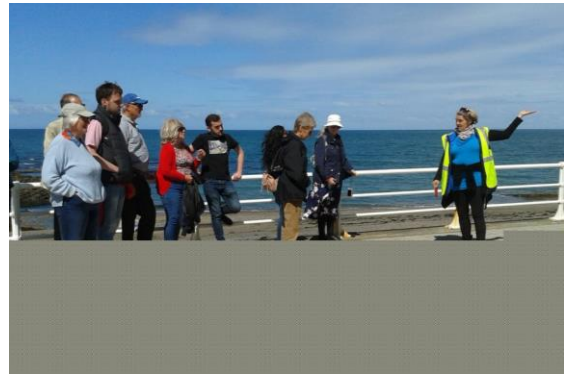
Again, our AberWWI project had had considerable success with a series of four guided tours around the town that pointed out local wartime landmarks and told stories of Aberystwyth at war. With Covid restrictions now entirely lifted, and the weather improving, our WW2 project was finally able to schedule two similar guided walks on successive Saturday mornings, 21 and 28 May 2022. The walks were advertised in the *Cambrian News* and on

social media. Based on our earlier experience of what constituted a manageable number, the maximum number of participants for each walk was set at 15, and for health and safety reasons, and in accordance with the preferences of the volunteer guides, the talks were confined to adults over the age of eighteen. The second of these walks was originally advertised as being in Welsh, but after receiving no takers it was readvertised as an English-medium walk.

The initial interest was huge, with the first walk in particular significantly oversubscribed, and a waiting list instituted. In the event, factoring in cancellations, everyone on the waiting list was able to join either the first or the second walk. In all, 28 people participated on the walks - 15 people on 21 May, 13 on 28 May - together with the two volunteer walk leaders and PCO Kate Sullivan.

Both walks were led by two project volunteers, Rasma Bertz and Conor Brockbank (the latter one of our Aberystwyth Fund bursary recipients). The walks started at Aberystwyth train station, tracing the steps of the evacuees as they arrived by train and were taken for medical checks to the adjacent Alexandra Road School (now a restaurant). The route then took in local sites including the former WI building, police station (now Halifax BS), and civil defence posts, the former Coliseum Theatre (now the Ceredigion Museum), the old Town Hall (now town library and Ceredigion Archives), former hospital and school sites, and the house of notable local WW2 conscientious objector TH Parry-Williams.

Along the promenade, the groups learned about the radar station on the top of Constitution Hill, the role of the Belle Vue Hotel in housing Dunkirk returnees and RAF trainees, the King's Hall, now demolished but once the town's principal dance hall, and the university buildings which hosted, among other things, an RAF signals training school and the town's central ARP station. The walk ended at the Aberystwyth War Memorial.



Guide Conor on the WW2 Walk, 21 May 2022; Guide Rasma on the WW2 Walk, 28 May 2022

The participants were a mix of people, from townspeople to university staff and students, and included residents of places as far away as Llanidloes. There were a mix of adult ages, with several pension-aged people. This was considered when pacing the walk (i.e., keeping it to a moderate to slow pace so that everyone could keep up), and when crossing roads (as a group, with the PCO stopping traffic as required).

All those who attended gave very favourable verbal and written questionnaire feedback, and particularly appreciated the knowledge and friendliness of the guides. Comments gathered included the following:

‘The WW2 guided walk was very interesting and very well presented. I have lived in Aberystwyth for almost 50 years, but I learned something new about the Town. I look forward to joining similar guided walks in future.’

‘Fascinating to learn about all the different roles being carried out within buildings and local organisations that are so familiar to us today. This walk has inspired me to go and find out more about the buildings, events and people involved and to share these important stories with other people. It is particularly timely and relevant given the tragic events we are witnessing every day right now.’

‘Thanks for a very informative well-structured walk and talk. My view of Aberystwyth during war time was one of community and pulling together. Getting involved and apart from the story of the evacuated children being segregated I considered Aberystwyth a town of empathy and helpfulness. It was interesting to hear about how the buildings were used at the time.’

‘Keeping people’s attention for 3 hrs is a real feat. Great superpowers at large there. What a pleasant way to spend a Saturday morning. Fascinating, formative and friendly! Thank you. Friendly fun and informative. Great insight into that period and helped me fill in gaps of knowledge. Great job!’

‘The talk made me realise that there is still some knowledge (with elderly local people) about the RAF in Aberystwyth. I don't think that many people locally know that so much military training was taking place in our local area. I much enjoyed the walk and the talk. I think there could be so many spin-offs from a project like this in regard to research, engaging with the public, recording and preserving Aber's WW2 history. The CfW (Curriculum for Wales) will expect our school children to learn the history of their communities.’

C 5.8 A WW2-themed Big Band concert by the Aberystwyth Silver Band and members of the Ceredigion Schools Music Service youth ensembles

Our original intention with this particular Approved Purpose had been to hold a WW2-themed musical event with the youth musicians of Ceredigion Schools Music Service at Ceredigion Museum’s historic Coliseum Theatre. Unfortunately, not only did ongoing Covid restrictions significantly delay the reopening of the museum after lockdown, but the CSMS was not permitted to resume its schools music ensembles programme during the entirety of the academic year 2021-22. However, through the kind agency of CSMS head Geraint Evans, we were able to put on a Big Band concert in the Coliseum Theatre featuring the Aberystwyth Silver Band and individual members of the Aberystwyth schools brass ensembles, on Thursday 16 June 2022. Tickets were £8/ £5 concessions/ under 14s free.

The concert was conducted by Graham Brand, and featured pieces including ‘The White Cliffs of Dover’, ‘Moonlight Serenade’ and ‘Singin’ in the Rain’, with solos from Rhys Durrant (Euphonium), Heather Phillips (Principal Cornet), Anna Cole (Soprano Cornet), Ivan

Anchant (Flugelhorn), and Gwion Phillips (Drums). PCO Kate Sullivan introduced the evening, providing an update on the project’s activities over the preceding two years, and thanking the NLHF and the National Lottery players. The auditorium was nearly full, and the audience’s appreciation was evident throughout, not just in the enthusiastic applause, but also the rows of tapping toes as the music transported everyone back in time. The warm comments as people were leaving and the messages posted on social media afterwards were proof that Big Band music is enjoyed as much today as it was in 1940.

The concert also marked an important moment for both the Aberystwyth Silver Band and the Coliseum Theatre, since it was for both their first public event since lockdown.

‘The band really enjoyed playing in such a great venue, so rich in history. The WW2 theme gave the band a superb opportunity to stretch its 'Big Band' legs with music from the likes of Glenn Miller, as well as arrangements of wartime songs such as 'We'll Meet Again'. It's the kind of music that is a lot of fun to play and share with a warm and appreciative audience!’ (Graham Brand, conductor)

‘The Coliseum, home to Ceredigion Museum, was built as a variety theatre in 1905 and has a long history of musical entertainment of all kinds. It was wonderful last night to have the silver band raise the roof with such a wonderful mix of music. After a long closure due to the pandemic, it was an emotional experience to see the auditorium full of people of all ages enjoying the performance and each other’s company.’ (Carrie Canham, Curator, Ceredigion Museum)



*Poster for the Big Band concert, 16 June 2022, designed by Paddy O'Malley.
Big Band concert, Coliseum Theatre, 16 June 2022, photo by Geraint Evans.*

C 5.9 The AberWW2 ‘Dig for Victory’ Allotment

As noted above (introduction to Section C 5, above), the project’s original plans to host a ‘Kitchen Front’ cookery demonstration and a ‘Make Do and Mend’ sewing session were thwarted by Covid restrictions. However, owing to a kind intervention by Professor Jon Moorby of the Aberystwyth University Farm, in late 2021 the project was gifted a piece of unused university farmland situated between the two principal university halls of residence,

Pentre Jane Morgan and Fferm Penglais. This enabled the project to institute a ‘Dig for Victory’ allotment, following the layout and planting instructions provided by a 1942 Ministry of Agriculture leaflet that set out to encourage householders to turn their back gardens into vegetable growing spaces. After the field was topped and allotment plot rotovated for us by the AU Farm, we issued a call for volunteers and began planting in March 2022, with fortnightly gardening sessions held through April (Saturdays 12.30-2.30pm), followed by twice-weekly sessions from May (Tuesdays and Thursdays 4.30-6.30pm). We also recruited the Year 1 class at St Padarn’s Primary School, Aberystwyth, to plant broad bean and runner bean seeds in pots to germinate over the Easter holidays before being transplanted to the allotment. A dedicated AberWW2 allotment volunteer mailing list, which receives weekly updates of the allotment’s progress, is now over 25-strong, and there is a hard core of around 6 regular participants as well as a wider group of occasional volunteers. Despite the driest spring and early summer anyone can remember, the allotment is thriving, and we recently made our first delivery of vegetables (2.2 kg of broad beans, and 600g of perpetual spinach) to the local community food hub, Aber Food Surplus.

The AberWW2 Allotment has already in its short life demonstrated its utility not just for recreating the past, but for hands-on lessons in food sustainability, community activity and outdoor exercise. Several volunteers have also commented on its positive impact on their wellbeing, especially after such a long period living under Covid restrictions. We intend to continue with the allotment for as long as there continues to be interest among students, university staff and locals in maintaining it, and look forward to recruiting a new cohort of ‘living history’ gardeners at the start of the new academic year this September.



Initial WW2 allotment digging session April 2022; and planting and weeding, June 2022



First delivery of WW2 allotment veg to Aber Food Surplus, 13 July 2022

C 6 Exhibition and theatre performance at Aberystwyth Arts Centre

As with our previous WWI-themed HLF project, we were delighted to be working in partnership again with Canolfan y Cefyddydau Aberystwyth Arts Centre, on two events similar to those on which we had successfully collaborated in the earlier project, viz: a photographic exhibition of Aberystwyth and area during WW2, and a community and youth theatre performance of an original play based on local wartime experiences.

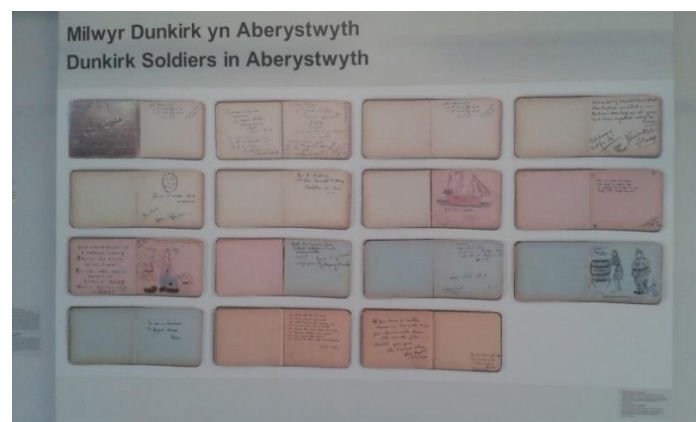
C 6.1 WW2 photographic exhibition at Aberystwyth Arts Centre Café, Nov-Dec 2021

The original project plan, as reflected in our original NLHF application, was to hold an exhibition at Aberystwyth Arts Centre featuring outputs from WW2-themed art workshops run by the project. However, because of Covid restrictions, i.e., the complete closure of the Arts Centre and suspension of all their workshops for over a year, it proved necessary to rethink this element of the project, and to schedule the exhibition **before** the arts workshops.

Therefore, and in consultation with the project Steering Group and the Arts Centre itself, it was decided instead to hold an exhibition of the project's visual finds and research in progress over the period 11 November-end December 2021. This included high-quality photographic reproductions of material discovered in the NLW, Ceredigion Archives, Ceredigion Museum, and – most valuable of all – donated and curated by local people.



WW2 exhibition in situ in the Arts Centre Café, Aberystwyth, just before its opening, November 2021



Reproductions of BEF autographs and drawings collected by Evan Desmond Davies

The exhibition photographs depicted evacuees arriving in Aberystwyth (captioned by Frances Foley); Civil Defence and Home Guard personnel (captioned by AberForward Dan Ahern); serviceman Richard George Read (captioned by Simon Burgess, Richard's great-grandson); the wartime wedding of Dai Davies and Gertie James (captioned by their granddaughter, Theresa Ryley); an autograph book containing drawings and signatures of soldiers of the British Expeditionary Force who were stationed in Aberystwyth following the evacuation from Dunkirk (collected by merchant seaman Evan Desmond Davies, donated by his son Evan John Davies, and pictured above); some of the Land Girls billeted in nearby Bow Street (donated by Meinir Davies and Liz Ashton, captioned by Kath Phillips); military training and RAF graffiti (captioned by Will Troughton); and some wonderfully evocative photographs of Aberystwyth on VE Day, depicting crowds on the seafront listening to loudspeakers and street parties in town, provided by Simon Burgess, Ceredigion Archives and the NLW.

The exhibition itself was a great success and received a good deal of attention. The Arts Centre café was a particularly good location, with considerable footfall of people, and the response was universally positive and enthusiastic. As noted in Section C 5.5.2 above, some of the photographs were later displayed at the Penparcau Hub VE-Day Celebration, where they attracted considerable interest and conversation.

C 6.2 Original theatre performance at Aberystwyth Arts Centre: *This Small Heaven*, Jan 2022

This Small Heaven was an original play performed by the Aberystwyth Community and Youth Theatre at Theatr y Werin, Aberystwyth Arts Centre, on Friday 28 and Saturday 29 January 2022, scripted by Anna Sherratt, community arts teacher at the Aberystwyth Arts Centre, and based on the recorded memories, letters and photographs of Rosemary Jagger, a student at Chelsea College of Physical Education evacuated to Borth during WW2 (donated to the project by Rosemary's daughter, Alison Pierce: see above, Section C 4.3.2).

The play told the story of how Rosemary and her Chelsea College classmates found life in a new environment very different to London, how they carried on their studies while integrating with both the people of Borth and other 'evacuees' (including a group of Polish airmen), and how she met and was tragically parted from a young RAF trainee also billeted in the area.



This Small Heaven: Shop scene with youth theatre members; Hugo Richardson, Gonçalo Dias and Przemysław Sobkowicz as Polish airmen

The play was the project's biggest single financial undertaking, but one of the most deeply appreciated both by those who participated in it and those who saw it. It was the culmination of six months of writing, planning and rehearsals, and involved an amateur cast of all ages drawn from the locality. It was the first live theatrical event to take place in the Aberystwyth Arts Centre after its reopening following the lifting of the Covid lockdown – something not guaranteed almost up to the night itself, with contingency plans in place for a live streaming of the performance in case of a further lockdown. It attracted audiences of 95 on the Friday night and 109 on the Saturday. (In fact, restrictions on audience numbers were lifted just a day before the first performance, meaning that even more tickets might have been sold with a little more notice.)



This Small Heaven: *Hannah Rae Sefton as Rosemary Jagger*

Director Anna Sherratt said:

‘There is something fitting about this being the first community theatre performance to be taking place in Theatr y Werin following the numerous cancellations and dark theatres brought on by the Covid-19 pandemic. The cast, similarly to me, fell in love with the story as soon as they heard it, and took great delight in bringing scenes about places they know so well to life. They have met various challenges, the greatest one being getting as far as opening night in the first place. I couldn't be more proud of or grateful to the actors, the crew, the Aberystwyth Arts Centre staff and everyone else who has worked so hard to bring this show to the stage.’

The performance was filmed by Daniele Robustino and Jessica Scott, and edited by Felix Cannadam, all media students at Aberystwyth University. The film of the play will be used in future screenings by the Arts Centre and has been made available as a DVD for use by local groups and schools in the future.

C 7 Evaluation of the project

As noted above in Section A 4.4, the project was the subject of a continuous and thorough evaluation throughout its lifetime. Throughout the project we sought to monitor and evaluate the success of our events and activities, to identify best practice, and to respond as swiftly as possible to any issues arising – something especially pertinent given the context of Covid lockdown and subsequent restrictions. In terms of participation and outreach, our evaluation methods involved quantitatively assessing attendance at all events and qualitatively assessing the demographics of our volunteers and other project participants. In terms of impact and success, we requested written feedback in feedback forms and questionnaires where appropriate (e.g. after training sessions, workshops and guided walks), and both solicited and were alert to oral feedback in conversation where we felt requests for written feedback would be inappropriate and/or intrusive. Ongoing evaluation processes included the monthly reporting to and feedback provided by the Steering Group; and regular consultation with volunteers both directly through email and Facebook and via the Volunteer Representative on the Steering Group.

For full evaluation of the project, see Section E below.

C 8 High profile acknowledgment of the support of the National Lottery Heritage Fund

All our publicity materials prominently featured the NLHF logo, and where possible, a written acknowledgement to NLHF and a specific thank-you to National Lottery players. All talks and public events (for instance the war walks, film screenings and Big Band concert) were likewise prefaced with a thank-you to both the NLHF and National Lottery players. Our Facebook page, Twitter account and project blog all feature the NLHF logo, and the on-line map will do so also in its final public-facing version.

SECTION D: DELIVERING THE PROJECT: ASSOCIATED OUTPUTS IDENTIFIED IN THE PROJECT APPLICATION

D 1 Project blog

The project blog was set up in June 2020 to publicise research undertaken by the project volunteers. This has been one of our most visible successes, with a new post added almost every week for the entire duration of the project – 71 in total to date. The blogposts were mostly presented in English, reflecting the language of choice of the volunteer researcher. Topics covered in our blog included the following: the Aberystwyth radar station; RAF trainees and their graffiti; the local Home Guard and ARP; the local Women’s Land Army; salvage; schoolchildren and student evacuees; conscientious objectors and pacifists; policing and crime; food and rationing; ‘digging for victory’; Irish neutrals; Jewish connections with Aberystwyth; the church; the law; HMS Tanatside; the ‘Secret Cave’; and the local impact of the 1944 Butler Education Act. Meanwhile, a number of blogposts featured local individuals who served or lived through the war, such as Richard George Read; Evan Desmond Davies;

Colin and Edna Morgan; the Hughes brothers; George Loyn; Rosemary Jagger; David William Davies and Gertrude James; Enid Jones; and Glanville Griffiths. Several of our blogposts have broken new ground in their research, and many have discovered new, unknown or forgotten aspects of life in wartime Aberystwyth.



<https://aberystwythatwarww2.blogspot.com/>

D 2 Online digital map

Digital mapping of the town and locality of Aberystwyth during WW2 is one of the most innovative of our project legacy outcomes. Over the course of the project a succession of volunteers has been compiling a database of significant Aberystwyth locations that played a part in WW2, including schools and temporary schools; places of entertainment; shops; military billets and training establishments; hospitals and centres of social welfare; buildings associated with evacuees, ‘enemy aliens’, the local ARP and/or the Home Guard; churches and chapels; air raid shelters, bunkers, pill boxes, radar and searchlight installations. We will be using ArcGIS software to generate a digital map that pinpoints, tags and provides key information on all these locations and buildings. A publicly accessible version will be made available via the website of the Department of History and Welsh History, Aberystwyth University, before the end of 2022, and will be archived for at least ten years.

| 1 | Place Name | Address | Comments | Additional Information | Information Reference | Latitude | Longitude |
|---|-----------------|-----------------------------------|--|---|---|-----------|-----------|
| 2 | Coliseum Cinema | Terrace Road, SY23 2AQ | Shown war films, news reels, funny, romantic and exciting films. 'Local soldiers were given training lectures in the Coliseum in the afternoons.' | Ceredigion Museum is now built on the site. | https://pilgrim.ceredigion.gov.uk | 52.416315 | -4.084133 |
| 3 | Forum Cinema | Bath Street | Became a NAAFI (Navy, Army and Air Force Institute). | Forum Canteen 10/06/1940 - 30/11/1941. | https://pilgrim.ceredigion.gov.uk | 52.416934 | -4.083147 |
| 4 | Forum Cinema | | USED AS A CINEMA, 1942. Public meeting held on "Victory over Hitler in 1942", emphasising need for defensive readiness in Britain. | | 02 January 1942, The Cambrian | 52.416934 | -4.083147 |
| 5 | Jackson's Cafe | | School children taken there, plays such as "Pirates of Penzance" performed; London Symphony Orchestra performed 25 July 1944; concerts performed. Everard Davies and his band played at dances and concerts on Sunday nights with a packed audiences in attendance. Air raid wardens rehearsed plays there, which were performed regularly to audiences. | In 1934, King's Hall, was built on the site of Waterloo Hotel. Baravin is now built on the site of the old King's Hall. The Charles Clement Maerigal Choir also performed here and were very popular. | 06 March 1942, The Cambrian | 52.41401 | -4.081638 |
| 6 | King's Hall | 1, Ulys Y Brenin, Terrace Road, 5 | Alexandra Road children taken there for a Victory Tea after 1945 summer holidays | | http://pint-of-history.wales/ex | 52.416925 | -4.084206 |
| 7 | Pier Cafe | | Opened on the third day of the war; said to be the only one open in the whole country. | | | 52.415812 | -4.085973 |
| 8 | Pier Cinema | | Farewell dance for the 224th Light AA training Regiment, Royal artillery @ 4.30 PM Thursday 6/3/1941 | | | 52.415812 | -4.085973 |
| 9 | Pier Pavillion | | Les Ernest played with his orchestra for sixteen weeks. | | 17 April 1942, The Cambrian Ne | 52.417899 | -4.084002 |

A page of our digital map spreadsheet showing places of entertainment in WW2-era Aberystwyth

D 3 Archiving of materials through Ceredigion Archives, People's Collection Wales, and Aberystwyth University

The successful archiving of our project outputs has always been a key feature of our project legacy, and we have consulted widely with local experts to ensure the best possible archiving of our volunteers' hard work, as follows:

1. Physical materials donated to the project will be collated and deposited in Ceredigion Archives, Ceredigion Museum, Aberystwyth University Archives, or the National Library of Wales, as appropriate, in consultation with the donor.
2. Some of the framed photographs featured in the project exhibition will be housed by the Department of History and Welsh History, Aberystwyth University, and displayed and loaned for exhibition and educational purposes. A number have been gifted to the donors of the original photographs.
3. The filmed version of *This Small Heaven* will be housed with the Department of History and Welsh History, Aberystwyth, and the DVD of the film will be offered to local schools for educational use.
4. The project blog will be made available online by the Department of History and Welsh History, Aberystwyth University, for a minimum of ten years. This is a unique learning resource written by the community for the community and about the community of Aberystwyth and surrounding areas during WW2.
5. The online digital map will be hosted by the Department of History and Welsh History, Aberystwyth University, and will be made available to the general public via a dedicated web page for a minimum of ten years.

D 4 Provision for the Welsh language throughout the project

Welsh language provision was an integral element of the project from the start. All publicity materials, including flyers, posters, handouts and feedback forms, were presented bilingually. Our schools workshop were delivered in Welsh to a local Welsh-medium primary school. We offered one of our war walks in Welsh, but, as noted above, demand was in this instance lacking.

Our Facebook and Twitter pages are presented bilingually in Welsh and English, and several of our blogposts were written and uploaded in Welsh. Our PCO Kate Sullivan is a fluent Welsh speaker, and she was always on hand to ensure that Welsh speakers were equally welcomed and included in the project.

SECTION E: EVALUATION: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

E 1: Summary of project aims and achievements

The project, **People's Voices in a People's War: Aberystwyth 1939-1945**, set out to explore the impact of WW2 on the people and communities of Aberystwyth, coastal town and historic centre of education and culture in mid-Wales, through the collaborative efforts of a wide range of local educational, archival, cultural and community groups, with a focus on volunteer engagement, upskilling and outputs that would provide a heritage legacy for the community, the area, and beyond.

As this report has detailed, the project has delivered on all these aims. We have engaged directly with over 70 and indirectly with several hundred local participants in the project, while our wider outreach activities have reached many hundreds more via local media and beyond. Our volunteers have developed archival, digital and creative skills, and have researched and interpreted for a wider audience a significant range of wartime histories of Aberystwyth and the surrounding area. The project has hosted activities, displays, workshops, film screenings, a musical event, and guided walks, and has commissioned an original theatrical performance based on newly discovered sources. It has also developed publicly accessible online resources, including its online blog and an open access digital map of the area in WW2.

Due largely to the impact and ongoing restrictions of the Covid-19 pandemic, which hampered the initial recruiting of volunteers, closed archives and libraries for several months, and prohibited the holding of events at the times we had originally planned, not everything worked out as we had initially planned. We are grateful to the core of dedicated volunteers who came with us from our previous project for the sterling work of researching and writing the high-quality blogs that formed the impetus of our project for its first few months and that helped to publicise the project to our new volunteers via online means. We are grateful, too, to all who helped to organise and host our post-Covid events and who helped make them such a success.

E 2: How our project meets our specifically stated HLF outcomes

E 2.1 Heritage

We have improved heritage management by identifying, sharing knowledge and encouraging public use of a significant range of locally available source materials relating to the local experience of WW2. We have also encouraged the deposit of new source materials in local archival sites, such as Ceredigion Archives, Ceredigion Museum and the National Library of Wales.

We have ensured better condition through encouraging and facilitating knowledge and understanding of the sources shared, by enabling volunteers to research, construct and publicly disseminate their own stories of the war and by making their work a part of the heritage awareness of WW2 in Aberystwyth.

We have achieved better interpretation and explanation through coordinating the efforts of experts in our local heritage organisations to share their knowledge and participate in

volunteer training, explanation and support. Our project war walks, blog and database are direct evidence of volunteers' effective research skills learning. Our evacuation and art workshops and the community play *This Small Heaven* are evidence of collaborative engagement in interpretation and communication. Our diverse schedule of project events has introduced a wide range of people to previously unknown aspects of their local heritage and encouraged further research interests going forward.

We have also been able to better identify and record our community heritage of WW2, particularly – though not exclusively - through our blog and database, which will be permanent resources for the local community.

E 2.2 People

We have been delighted at the extent of engagement achieved by our project. Parts of the local community that we did not reach in our previous project participated enthusiastically in this one, including primary school children (in our evacuee and art workshops and seed planting for the WW2 allotment) and the elderly (notably our Penparcau Hub Tea Dance and VE-Day event). Our volunteer cohort comprised over 70 people of all ages and backgrounds, with an expected core, given our location, of retirees and students, but we also had volunteers among veterans groups, newcomers to the area, and even people living outside the area who had family connections with Aberystwyth and who had learned about the project through social media and other online means.

Wider engagement has been and will continue to be achieved by the project's legacy outputs: the blog and online map, the *This Small Heaven* DVD, and the primary schools evacuee workshop template.

Our volunteers have demonstrated new skills in research, and in disseminating that research, in digital literacy, in performance (including public speaking), in the creative arts, and in teamwork. They have engaged in their local heritage in new and immersive ways and have taken the opportunities provided by the project to work both individually and as teams. Their skills and hard work have been publicly recorded in our project legacy outputs.

E 2.3 Communities

Over the duration of the project, we have involved more people and a wider range of people in heritage activities than we thought possible, especially during and in the aftermath of the Covid lockdown. Active participation in the project, and involvement in group events and activities has been very gratifying. Our collected feedback confirms how much so many of those involved feel they have learned about their local area and about Aberystwyth's WW2 heritage through engagement with the project, and how valuable they have found the access to local sources and resources. Some of the feedback mentions how learning about the heritage changed the participants' perceptions and, for example with the AberFund and AberForward students, may lead to change in ideas and actions through further study.

It is hard to measure the material effect of the project on our local economy. However, the project has made a distinct and distinctive contribution to the cultural heritage of the area. Our collaborations with Ceredigion Museum, the NLW (Y Drwm), and the Aberystwyth Arts Centre have brought revenue to those organisations; one job (the PCO), nine paid work

placement opportunities have been created; and a wide range of volunteers (including three in the GoWales initiative) have been up-skilled and given confidence and knowledge.

The positive effect of the project on the community and local economy as it emerged from Covid lockdown and restrictions should also be noted. Some of the first public events hosted by our partners after their extended closures were project activities, including the first film screening at Y Drwm, the community play *This Small Heaven* at Theatr Y Werin, and the Aberystwyth Silver Band's Big Band concert at the Coliseum Theatre. Volunteers and participants mention having greatly enjoyed the experience, which implies improved wellbeing, and the activities, during and post- Covid restrictions helped to make this area a better place to be.

The project's exploration and promotion of our shared local heritage has been recognised by local media and has featured in community events from the Penparcau Hub VE Day Celebration to the Secret Cave tours and War Walks, bringing local residents of all backgrounds together in a greater shared understanding of the impact of WW2 on this area.

Finally, the collaboration between the various educational, heritage and community organisations in the area promoted by the project has been one of its key successes, pointing the way to more effective pooling of local educational and heritage resources and greater shared engagement in heritage learning and capacity building in the future.

E 3: Testimonials from volunteers

We would like to conclude this report by quoting in full some of the feedback received from our volunteers over the course of the project:

'My recent contribution with a blog post was particularly enjoyable as it coincided with some of my own PhD research, which was put into a much more local perspective. Pursuing this idea and placing the pieces into place is always an exciting part of investigating an aspect of history. I also enjoyed the tour around the National Library of Wales's wartime storage tunnel, which was well organised and explained. The project being able to show, rather than tell, this important piece of local history was such a super way of engaging public interest.' EW

'I very much enjoyed taking part in this second project, having volunteered on the WW1 project before it. I was also delighted to be invited onto the Steering Committee this year as the representative volunteer, and to contribute as appropriate to the discussion and development of the project. I was pleased to be offered the chance to transcribe and research the policeman's diary of George Loyn from Bronant, from which I was able to produce two long and detailed blogs. I was also pleased to meet his granddaughter (towards the end of the project after restrictions were lifted), who had kindly loaned us the diary. I appreciated the help and training sessions from our experts Helen Palmer (Ceredigion Archives) and Will Troughton (National Library of Wales). Kate Sullivan was, as ever, helpful, informative, facilitative, and approachable for any queries that arose. Due to the pandemic, it was sad that we weren't able to run as many events as in the previous project, and some that were offered were too early in the end phase of the pandemic for me to attend, as we were avoiding group activities for a long time due my husband's medical condition.

However, since May I have very much enjoyed the outdoor guided walk by another of our volunteers and will be attending the 'Big Band' concert this week in the Museum. The difference from the WWI project was the lack of meetings with other volunteers – we used Zoom for the committee meetings, and occasionally we were able to 'meet' others when they were giving a report to the committee, but thanks to Covid the more usual networking opportunities had to be curtailed – this was nobody's fault, and we were grateful to Siân and Kate for safeguarding us all during the difficult lockdown periods whilst enabling us to contribute from home. Other than that, I have nothing negative to say, it was all an excellent experience.' LB

'I have really enjoyed volunteering for this project, from researching and writing three blogs on conscientious objectors, to compiling information from current and archived blogs, planning a route, and leading the two guided walks for 30 people in May 2022. The feedback from people on each walk was incredibly positive, and many commented on how much learning about the social history of Aberystwyth during WW2 meant to them, as well as learning intriguing bits of information about the town they live in. The two audiences were completely different, which was fun, and I learned a lot as well from people on the walks who were able to fill in some of the gaps not explored, or left as mysteries, in the blog series. The pieces I wrote for this project have tied in with other archive projects I'm connected with, and a personal blog project about buildings in Aberystwyth. I enjoy this interconnection and it all looks good on my CV.... Thank you very much for the opportunity to be part of this incredible project.' RB

'I have immensely enjoyed working on this project. I have worked as a researcher which I have found very interesting and absorbing. Kate Sullivan as co-ordinator has been extremely supportive throughout the project and always replies swiftly to queries – a feature which I have found very helpful as one can get stuck on a particular issue which threatens to hold up the writing. She has been very positive and encouraging about the blogs submitted which has increased my enthusiasm to discover another topic I would like to write about. The freedom to choose topics for yourself also has been key for me anyway in making contributions. ... I have learnt such a lot myself through my participation in this project and, as a relative newcomer to the area, it has made me enthusiastic about telling Welsh friends who are native to the area things they were not aware of about the experience of WW2 in Aberystwyth. One way in which I feel a huge debt of gratitude to the project is that it has enabled me to discover and learn to use the National Library of Wales which in the past had seemed a rather daunting mystery but now is pleasure, even a treat, to visit. I would particularly like to thank Will Troughton, curator at National Library of Wales for his invaluable advice on numerous matters linked to my blogs.' FF

'Firstly I want to thank Kate S. for her help with the research I undertook into two projects. Kate was always very encouraging and very enthusiastic and helped to make the research very interesting. The first topic I looked into was the Land Army near Aberystwyth. I have a friend whose Mum was a Land Army Girl, and after talking with a friend of hers, we discovered a large collection of previously unseen photos of both their Mums during WW2. This was very enlightening - especially as there were

pictures of the L.A. Hostel in Bow Street, near Aberystwyth. The Hostel is now demolished and not many people had realized it had ever been there. The photos are now on People's Collection Wales on the NLW website. The next project was to match ARP wardens from a photo provide by Kate with their name on the electoral roll, and then find out as much as possible about the person and his/her family. Using Ancestry, I was able to discover many facts about them and then write it all into a blog. Thanks to the NLHF for making all this possible.' KP

'WW2 looms large in my family, and when I saw a post on Facebook requesting pictures of family members who were in the armed forces and their stories for an exhibition, I thought it was an opportunity to delve a bit deeper. I emailed scans of photographs and documents relating to my Welsh grandfather, to the project and met Kate up at the university to show her the originals. I took the opportunity to tell her the stories of my English grandfather's exploits who also lived with my parents in Aberystwyth for a number of years. Kate suggested I write a blog about them both, so I did although I was rather nervous as I'd never written a blog before. Most of the stories I'd heard were from my childhood and growing up, so I needed to verify that I had remembered them correctly, therefore I spent a day chatting with my father who knew the experiences of my Welsh grandfather and emailed my uncle Mike who has all the documents and sources for my English grandfather. I learned a lot about my relatives' experiences through contributing to the project, which I would not have done otherwise. It was also very emotional seeing my Welsh grandparents in the exhibition as they have long since passed away, even more so for my sister who never knew our grandfather, being only 6 months old when he died, (I was 9 years old and very close to him). It was very kind of Kate to allow me to keep the copy of the picture after the exhibition had finished and it has taken pride of place in my office. The whole process of supplying a picture and caption for the Arts Centre Exhibition, and writing the blogs was made so much easier by Kate, who was very obliging and helpful. I have thoroughly enjoyed contributing to this project, albeit in a small way. It presented an opportunity to pay tribute to my grandparents' war efforts, while at the same time learning about others' experiences via the blogs, and how the war affected Aberystwyth and the surrounding area. It is projects such as this that bring people together from different generations; giving the opportunity for us all to learn things from each other, instead of all the division seen in the media and social media. Hopefully more projects like this will be possible in the future, as society needs more community-led positivity at the moment. By looking at history we can see how our ancestors and relatives coped through their difficult eras, and perhaps learn some lessons to help us through our own trying times. Thank you for such a brilliant project and bring on the next one!' TR

'Before I began my bursary placement for the project, between the 16th and 29th of May 2022, I was regularly involved as a volunteer researcher for the project since spring 2020. During this time, I engaged directly with Kate Sullivan via email, to organise and discuss topics of interest which I wanted to contribute to the project. These initially grew both out of research which was being undertaken for my MA dissertation focusing on the Irish Connections between Mid-Wales and Ireland This project gave me the opportunity to explore other aspects of my wider research

and to then publish these findings via the project's blog page. The research, which was published on the blog, has also given me the opportunity to share this work with a wider audience, be that academic historians or the wider general public. The project has also held film screenings of wartime films at the National Library of Wales, of which I was lucky enough to attend one of these showings in November 2021. This was of particular interest, as the project were holding a film screening of *The Halfway House*, ... which had been of interest in the initial research I had undertaken about the perceptions of Irish Neutrality from the war itself to the present day. Overall, I am extremely thankful to the project for the opportunities it has provided me with, be that the opportunity to further research topics which are of interest to me and then have a place to publish and share this research' CB

'I attended all available training sessions. The LLGC [NLW] talk which explored the photographs available to support research was particularly informative, along with the talk by the curator at the Ceredigion Archives. I travelled from Pembrokeshire to Ceredigion Archives and.... compiled research drawn together, from across the many Ceredigion WI branch records, to form coherent blogs. The activities undertaken within the 'People's Voices in a People's War: Aberystwyth 1939-1945' project have been wide-ranging and have enabled us, as volunteers, to unearth, draw together and showcase buried community history. This has been a wall-to-wall positive experience. The enthusiasm of the project leader, and that of fellow researchers, throughout this initiative has been completely inspiring and enabling. Thank you.' AE