

Snippets talk 19th February 2026

Speaker: Diane Williams

Subject: Women of Conwy

This was a short talk on some of the women who lived, worked or are closely associated with the town of Conwy. The talk began with a summary of the life of Aline, Lady Burnell who was a custodian of Conwy Castle for a short period in the 14th century. We then moved on to the 19th century where the life of Sarah Dutton, the owner of the Castle Hotel, was examined. Sarah leased and then owned this famous coaching inn on the High Street in Conwy for over 50 years. During that time, she extended and re-modelled the premises.

Moving forward in time we then looked at the life of Agnes Twiston Hughes who was the first female solicitor in Wales, taking over the firm of J. W, Hughes when her father retired. Agnes was also the first female mayor of Conwy.

Two more 20th century women followed: firstly Margaret Williams, a great local character who was described as “a woman in a mans world.” Margaret was a “jackdaw” (born within the walls of Conwy), a journalist, author and speaker. She inherited the Smallest House on the Quay and could often be seen outside it in full Welsh costume.

Finally, in our look at the lives of remarkable women, we examined the life of Betty Pattinson, a redoubtable campaigner and public servant. Betty served as a Town Councillor for 21 years and as Mayor in 1976 and 1989. Her legacy includes helping to save Thomas Telford’s suspension bridge from possible demolition and ensuring that the Conwy tunnel was built rather than the A55 going through the town.

In the final part of the talk, we looked at the effect that women leading ordinary lives can have on world events. After the carnage of World War 1 there was a deep-seated desire for peace and co-operation. In Wales nearly 400,000 women signed the Peace Petition 1923 which was sent to the women of the United States. Its objectives were a plea for peace and a call for American women to influence their government to join the League of Nations. In the county of Conwy, in every town, village and hamlet, nearly 14,000 women signed the petition – ordinary women taking action for “a warless world”