

# A Stitch In Time

THE STORY OF MRS GERTRUDE DONOVAN (NÉE WALTERS)



PONTYPOOL W.A.R.M. PROJECT, 2014

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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*THE HEATHER*



MRS. DONOVAN

## INTRODUCTION

Our research group, based at the Torfaen Mind Wellbeing Centre in Pontypool, first met in March 2014. We are a branch of W.A.R.M. (Widening Access, Research and Mentoring) which is based in Chepstow. Pat Powell of the Torfaen Voluntary Alliance and Sheree Williams of the Wellbeing Centre arranged for the group to be set up and a room made available for us on Wednesday mornings. The first few weeks were spent discussing possible subjects for research.

One of the group members mentioned a Singer sewing machine that she had in her possession. It had been in her family since it was purchased from Mr Don's second-hand furniture shop in Newport in the 1970s and had an engraved plaque attached to it. The plaque stated that the sewing machine had been given to Miss Gertrude Walters in 1924 by the community at Heathfield House 'in pleasant remembrance of the years spent by her in that school'. A Latin inscription - Numquam otio torpuit neque torpebit - roughly translates as 'Never idle leisure nor laziness'.

The group member who owned the sewing machine expressed an interest in finding out who Miss Walters was and where the school was located. Also, it was suggested that the sewing machine could be passed on to the school or perhaps relatives of Miss Walters, if they were interested. The rest of the group agreed that this would make a good project.

Our research began with online genealogy websites, such as FindMyPast, Ancestry.com and RootsChat. It quickly became clear that there were quite a lot of women in the records with the name Gertrude Walters. Research also turned up more than one Heathfield House.

The project got underway, with people assigned different tasks according to their interest and ability.

What follows, then, is an exciting account of our journey which rediscovers not just the how the Singer was presented. Our journey recounts the full extent of Gertrude Walters, her life and her experiences.

## GERTRUDE DONOVAN (NÉE WALTERS) TIMELINE

n.b. There is some uncertainty over the birth year of Gertrude Walters. Some sources say 1890, while others imply 1889.

**1890** - Gertrude Walters was born on the 8th of December to William and Elizabeth Walters in Llantarnam, Cwmbran.

**1891** - The family, which includes Gertrude's sister Daisy, born 1889, were living at the Post Office in Post Office Road, Llantarnam, Newport (as it was then known). William (Gertrude's father) listed his occupation as grocer and sub-post master.

**1901** - The family, now 8 children (including Gertrude), were living in Llanvihagel, Llantarnam in the parish of St. Michael's. Her father was still a grocer (and probably still sub-post master) 'living off his own account' and her mother was a sub-postmistress.

**1904** - Gertrude attended Notre Dame secondary in Southwark, London (until 1909).

**1905** - Junior Oxford exam taken.

**1907** - Senior Oxford exam taken (passed with honours).

**1908** - London matriculation exam taken.

**1909** - Preliminary certificate taken (distinctions in English and Maths). Also in this year, Gertrude started at Liverpool Mount Pleasant training college.

**1911** - Final certificate taken (distinctions in Maths, Theory of Music and Singing). Also in this year, she took her first teaching post on a temporary basis from October to December at Kilwinning R.C Elementary school in Scotland.

**1912** - On the 15th of April she started her probation period at Heathfield House school in Cardiff.

**1913** - Exactly one year later, on the 15th April, Gertrude took up a permanent position at Heathfield House.

**1924** - On the 19th of December, she was presented with a **Singer sewing machine** on the occasion of leaving Heathfield House. In fact, her teaching record states that she was leaving the teaching profession entirely. The reason for this seems to be her impending marriage to Michael Donovan in Newport. This took place at the end of **1924** or the beginning of **1925**.

**1925** - Gertrude, now Mrs Donovan, was re-appointed on a temporary basis at Heathfield House from March to July.

**1926** - She was re-appointed in September, part time, then became full time in October. After this she seems to have remained on the staff until 1955, rising to become Deputy Headmistress. She specialised in maths and music.

**1949** - Mrs Donovan had a bad year, with many absences from the school due to an unspecified illness.

**1955** - On the 22nd of July, Gertrude Donovan retired from Heathfield House school after 43 years of teaching there. She was presented with a television set.

1962 - On the 27th of December, Gertrude Donovan died at 73 years of age at the Lord Ninian Hospital, Cathedral Road, Cardiff. On the 31st of December, she was laid to rest in Thornhill Cemetery, Cardiff after a service at St. Peter's church, Cardiff.

1963 - Probate for Gertrude Donovan, late of 22 Balaclava Road, Cardiff, was granted to Daisy Walters, spinster (Gertrude's older sister). Effects £4559 17s.

1964 - Michael Donovan was buried in the same plot as his wife at Thornhill Cemetery on the 19th of March. He was 81.

## A SHORT HISTORY OF 'GERTRUDE'.

The name Gertrude, meaning 'spear of strength', is derived from the Germanic elements *ger* (spear) and *brub* (strength).

One of the earliest known references to the name is Saint Gertrude of Nivelles (Santa Gertrudis), who was born in Belgium in the 7th century. She is Patron Saint of cats, gardeners, travellers, those with mental illness and those with a morbid fear of mice and rats.

Amongst other notable Gertrudes in Catholic history, Saint Gertrude the Great was a 13th century nun and mystic writer. She was born in Eisleben, Thuringia, which was, at the time, part of the Holy Roman Empire. Thuringia is now a federal state of Germany.

The name was probably introduced to England by settlers from the 'Low Countries' of north-western Europe sometime in the 15th century.

In Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, written between 1598 and 1602, Gertrude is the name of Hamlet's mother. The name crops up in other works of literature in the 20th century, such as D.H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* (1913).

The new born Gertrude Walters was probably given that name due to its Catholic associations, to some extent determining her future as a devoted, lifelong Catholic.

The most well-known woman with the name, at least in the West, is probably Gertrude Stein, the prolific American writer who died in 1946.

In 1894, Gertrude Baines was born in Georgia, USA. In January 2009, she became the world's oldest recognised living person, at the age of 115 years and 158 days, until her death in September 2009.

In 1907, 1,048 girls in England and Wales were given the name Gertrude. One hundred years later, none were. During the mid-to-late 20th century, the name began to take on 'old maid' connotations as the last of the 'Gertrude generation' entered old age. Recent surveys have suggested that 'Gertrude' is virtually extinct. The name lives on in the still relatively-rare derivations 'Trudy' or 'Trudie'.

## THE FIRST 100 YEARS OF THE SINGER SEWING MACHINE COMPANY

Isaac Merrit Singer formed the company in 1851 in New York, having noticed the impracticality and bad design of existing sewing machines. Within two years, Singer was the leading manufacturer of sewing machines in the USA. The first machines cost \$100 each.

1855 - Singer was the world's largest sewing machine company.

1858 - The company were selling 3,000 units a year.

1867 - Singer opened their first factory outside of the USA in Glasgow.

1870 - Singer sold 170,000 machines in one year.

1875 - I.M. Singer died in Torquay at the age of 63.

1880 - Worldwide sales exceeded 500,000 units.

1883 - Singer opened a huge new factory in Kilbowie, Scotland.

1889 - Singer produced the first electric sewing machine.

1890 - The company had 80% of world market share in sewing machines.

1900 - 40 different models were on sale.

1913 - Worldwide sales reached 3 million machines a year.

1958 - Annual sales were \$507 million.

Mrs Donovan's sewing machine, a '66K class' domestic machine with 'Lotus flower' decals, was manufactured in Scotland, probably at the Kilbowie factory, in 1923, one of 60,000 of that model produced between 1907 and 1948 in the UK. It features an oscillating, horizontal hook, drop-in bobbins and a stationary bobbin case.

She was presented with the machine in December 1924 when she left Heathfield House - temporarily, as it turned out.



## A REVOLUTION IN TECHNOLOGY

During the course of Mrs Donovan's life, the world underwent nothing less than a revolution in every area of technology. The following list represents a selection of these world-changing inventions and discoveries.

1893 - First demonstration of wireless radio communication by Nikola Tesla.

1895 - Diesel engine invented by Rudolph Diesel.

1895 - Wilhelm Roentgen discovers X-rays.

1900 - The first Zeppelin flight.

1901 - Vacuum cleaner invented by Hubert Cecil Booth.

1903 - Powered aeroplane invented by the Wright brothers.

1906 - First radio broadcast of live music by Reginald A. Fessenden.

1907 - Helicopter invented by Paul Cornu.

1908 - Electric clothes washer invented by Alva Fisher.

1908 - The first Model T Ford produced.

1909 - Bakelite invented by Leo Baekeland.

1913 - Fred Wolf invented the first electric refrigerator.

1926 - First demonstration of a television system by John Logie Baird.

1936 - The Spitfire first seen in public at an RAF Hendon air display.

1937 - Jet engine invented by Frank Whittle and Hans von Ohain.

1938 - Ballpoint pen invented by Laszlo Biro.

1946 - Microwave oven, invented by Percy Spencer, goes on sale.

1951 - Nuclear power reactor invented by Walter Zinn.

1951 - Introduction of England's first commercial computer.

1952 - First jetliner flight with fee-paying passengers on board a de Havilland Comet.

1958 - Silicon chip produced by Jack Kilby and Robert Noyce.

1960 - Laser invented by Theodore Harold Maiman.

## HEATHFIELD HOUSE

In April 1867, a small Catholic school was opened in David Street, Cardiff, by the Sisters of Providence of the Institute of Charity (also known as the Rosminian Sisters of Providence). They had arrived in Cardiff from Italy eleven years earlier. Father Fortunatus Signini of the Institute of Charity, who had worked as secretary to Father Antonio Rosmini (beatified in 1997), had been keen to open a grammar school in Cardiff. And so St. Joseph's was born.

Ten years later, the school moved to a new site on Richmond Road. The building was known as Heathfield House, which then became the name of the school.

From 1904 to 1927, the school housed a pupil teachers' centre, to train pupils and thereby solve the problem of the serious shortage of Catholic teachers in Cardiff.

Miss Gertrude Walters began her probationary period at the school on the 15th of April 1912 and became a permanent member of staff exactly one year later.

By 1926, Heathfield House was an efficient grant-earning secondary school.

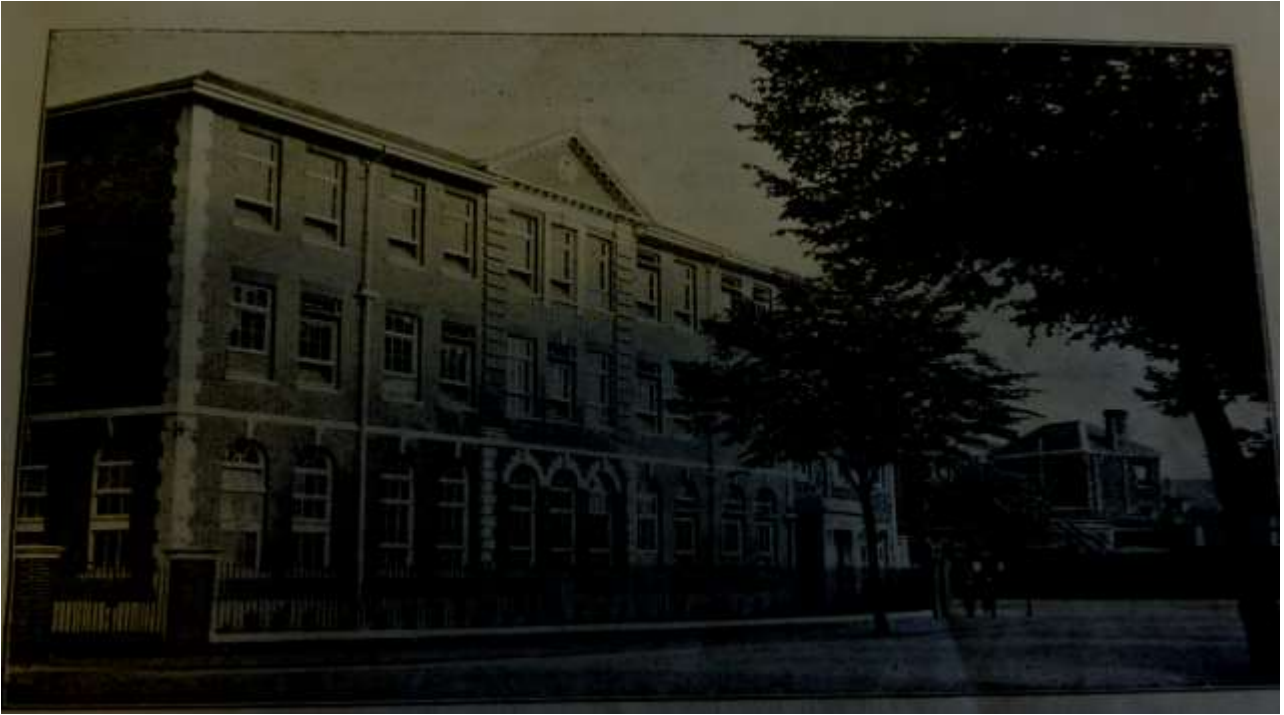
In 1953, it became a voluntary aided grammar school, by which time Miss Walters had become Mrs Donovan and had attained the post of Deputy Headmistress. She retired 2 years later, having been on the staff for 43 years.

The school became a comprehensive in 1968 and a sixth form college in the 1970s, having moved to a new location on Ty Gwyn Road.

In 1987, Heathfield school (at Ty Gwyn Road) merged with St Illtyd's Boys' School in Newport Road.

The vacated Heathfield campus then became St. David's college.

The building known as Heathfield House, at the corner of Richmond Road and West Grove, is now the location of Kings Monkton school, a co-educational establishment for 2 to 18-year-olds.



Heathfield House in the 1940s



Kings Monkton School in September 2014

## THE 1930s AND 1940s

Information on the 1930s and 40s primarily came from copies of the school logbooks and the school magazine, the Heather, both of which are kept at the Glamorgan Archives in Cardiff. The following are excerpts from these records.

### Logbooks

#### 1936

*27th January - A letter was received from the Director giving permission to close the school on the following day, on account of the funeral of King George [George V, son of Edward VII, and grandson of Victoria]. Mrs Donovan was absent.*

*10th February - Mr Morgan came to inspect the music. At 9.40 the girls of Upper II & Lower II assembled in the Hall & he heard them sing & also took the class himself. After about half an hour Mrs Donovan took Lower II in their form room for a theory lesson. After break he heard the upper forms, Upper & Lower V & Upper IV. He expressed satisfaction with the work that was being done.*

*24th September - Miss Parry H.M.I. called with a questionnaire from the B.O.E. about the teaching of music in the school. Mrs Donovan, who takes the music, gave the required information.*

*[On the 11th of December, Edward VIII abdicates and George VI, father of Elizabeth, becomes King]*

#### 1939

*25th April - School reopened.*

*9th May - The practical needlework examination was held from 2.20 to about 4.30. It was conducted by Mrs Lloyd. Three candidates sat. The School Choir started their practices again under Mrs Donovan.*

*[1st September - Germany invades Poland. The UK declares war on Germany two days later.]*

Although Cardiff is heavily bombed during the war, Heathfield House doesn't sustain any damage. In 1941, two nearby incendiaries are extinguished by the fire-watchers. Lessons and exams are regularly disrupted by air raid warnings. Some pupils miss school to catch up on sleep, having endured air raids the previous night. Two pupils are killed with members of their family during air raids. Some pupils are evacuated to Ferndale, in the Rhondda Valley.

## The Heather

### 1945

*1st March - The combined efforts of **Mrs Donovan** and Mrs Cook produced the finest choir Heathfield has had for a long time. The rest of the staff helped to organize our first Eisteddfod, in art, music and literature, and we hope to have even better results next year.*

### **Victory Choir**

*Monday, April 30th brought exciting news to many of us at Heathfield, for after a sudden summons to the school Assembly Hall by our music mistresses, we knew there was bound to be some unusual news given out. Just imagine us, sitting there brimming over with impatience. Yes, twenty-five faces full of curiosity, staring at **Mrs Donovan** and Mrs Cook waiting for one of them to speak. Finally the cloud of mystery which hovered about the hall was broken. We were told we were to be included in a choir of two hundred and fifty Cardiff schoolchildren who were to broadcast on VE Day, and that we were to go immediately to the Cardiff High School Hall for a preliminary practice.*

[VE Day, on the 8th of May 1945, marks the end of the war in Europe. The Second World War officially ends on the 2nd of September 1945.]

*25th July - Many smiles showed that to-day was the last day of the C.W.B. [Central Welsh Board] exams. There were celebrations all over the school except in the VIth where they waited until the July 26th for their farewell party. Several of the mistresses thoroughly enjoyed the games and "Pauline's Special." This party was a reward for a grand performance of the School Choir in the Music Festival; another proof of the capabilities of **Mrs Donovan** and Mrs Cook. Miss Collins' efforts were well-rewarded by the Second Form's Shakespearean scene.*

*On the 14th of September, all Cardiff schools are closed to celebrate the 'Victory Visit' of the King and Queen [George VI and Elizabeth, later to become the Queen Mother].*

### 1949

*14th November - We were glad to welcome back **Mrs Donovan** after her illness. We wish her better health for the future. [She had been absent from the school since June]*

## BALACLAVA ROAD

From at least the mid-1930s until shortly before her death, Mrs Donovan lived at 22 Balaclava Road in Penylan, Cardiff, with her husband Michael.

The road name comes from the Battle of Balaclava of 1854, during the Crimean War. Lord Tredegar was part of the famously disastrous Charge of the Light Brigade during that battle. He subsequently donated large areas of land to the city and the street names reflect some of the battles in which he was involved.



Number 22 is on the right

## ST. PETER'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

St. Peter's church was a central part of Mrs Donovan's life. The oldest surviving Catholic church in Cardiff, served by the Rosminian Order of Priests, is located on St. Peter's Street, within sight of the former Heathfield House school on Richmond Road.



1854 - Members of the Institute of Charity were sent to Cardiff, from Italy, by Antonio Rosmini (later the Blessed Antonio Rosmini-Serbatì, beatified in 2007).

1858 - A site for a new church was found off Plwcca Lane (later City Road) and secured on a 999 year lease.

1860 - The Foundation Stone was laid on the 20th of August.

1861 - The church was opened on the 24th of September.

1878 - The Sisters of Providence, the female branch of the Rosminian Order, arrived at Heathfield House. They were based in a convent behind the school.

Mrs Donovan attended the church regularly and her Requiem Mass was held there at 10 a.m. on the last day of 1962. She is described by those who remember her as a small grey-haired lady.

She is listed in one of the 'Liber Defunctorum' books, a record of church members who had passed away. Written in Latin, the record confirms her address, date of death and date and place of burial.

## SCHOOL LOG BOOKS

### **The last 6½ years of teaching.**

Due to her age and experience, Mrs Donovan had, by the later years, attained the position of Deputy Headmistress of Heathfield House School. However, 1949 was not a good year for this beloved teacher, who was absent from the school for much of the year due to illness. 3 supply teachers covered her absence.

### **1949 - Spring Term.**

*20th January - Mrs Donovan absent owing to severe cold.*

*24th January - Mrs Donovan resumed duties.*

*15th March - Mrs Donovan was absent today owing to illness.*

*4th April - Mrs Donovan resumed duties.*

### **1949 - Summer Term.**

*1st June - Mrs Donovan absent through illness.*

*2nd June - Mrs Donovan resumed duties.*

*10th June - Mrs Donovan was absent owing to illness.*

*13th June - Mrs Joan Lewis B.Sc. commenced duties this morning as a supply teacher for Mrs Donovan.*

*20th July - The school broke up for the summer holidays in the afternoon. The following mistresses resigned: - Mrs Ryan, Miss Davies, Miss Hennessy, Miss Miller and Miss [sic] Joan Lewis who had been doing supply work for Mrs Donovan. Miss M. Shen (Sr. M. Philip) and Miss O'Flaherty (Sr M. Agatha) also resigned.*

### **1949 - Autumn Term.**

*7th September - School re-opened for the new academic year. Six new mistresses joined the staff - Miss Kay Law in place of Mrs Ryan, Miss J. Lewis in place of Miss Hennessy, Miss E. Clubb in place of Miss Miller, Miss J. Williams in place of Miss Davies. Sister Mary Adrian (Miss M. Goodley) in place of Sr M. Philip and Sr Mary Anthony (Miss R. Popple) in place of Sr M. Agatha.*

*8th September - Miss P. Griffiths began supply work for Mrs Donovan who is still absent.*

*7th October - Miss P. Griffiths ceased duties as supply teacher for Mrs Donovan.*



*17th October - Mrs E. M. Keane commenced duties as a supply teacher for Mrs Donovan, who has been absent since June.*

*11th November - Mrs. E. M. Keane terminated duties as temporary supply teacher for Mrs Donovan.*

*14th November - Mrs Donovan resumed duties.*

Mrs Donovan didn't experience any sustained health problems during 1951 or 1952, except for a period of absence during much of June 1952. Otherwise, she seems to have been fully involved in school activities.

*On the afternoon of the 18th of July 1951, the whole school walked to the castle grounds to meet Her Majesty the Queen (later to become the Queen Mother) as part of the Festival of Britain celebrations. The King (George VI) was unable to attend due to ill health. Children danced and sang before the royal platform.*

The King died on the 6th of February 1952 at Sandringham House, Norfolk.

*On the 8th of February, at 10:40 am, all of the pupils and staff set out for the City Hall to hear the Lord Mayor make the proclamation of the accession of Queen Elizabeth II. The proclamation was made at 11:30. The rest of the day was a holiday.*

*On the 15th of February, the day of the King's funeral, two minutes silence was observed in the school at 2 pm as a mark of respect for the late King's memory.*

## **1953.**

*7th January - A group of sixth form pupils, Mrs Donovan and the headmistress attended the requiem mass for Father Hurley in St. Peter's this morning. Father Hurley had been chairman of the school for many years. [Rev. J. Hurley is named as Rector of St. Peter's in 1935]*

*6th May - This afternoon Mrs Donovan attended a meeting held in the Jackson Hall regarding road safety for children.*

*On the 2nd June, the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II took place at Westminster Abbey.*

*9th July - This morning the pupils and staff took up their positions on City Road to welcome Her Majesty the Queen and HRH the Duke of Edinburgh on the occasion of their visit to Cardiff.*

*14th November - During the dinner hour a car, owned by Mr Woolfson of 91, Lake Road West and driven by his daughter skidded, breaking down the wall and railings in front of the school. The matter was put in the hands of Mr Thomas of Williams and Pritchard (solicitors).*

The log books don't record any absences for Mrs Donovan in 1954, but at the start of her

penultimate term in January 1955, her health was again an issue. A fourth supply teacher was employed for a short time.

## **1955.**

*26th January - Mrs Donovan was absent from school today through illness. Mrs Bridget Feeney began supply work for Mrs Donovan this afternoon.*

*4th April - The school broke up for the Easter holidays in the afternoon. Mrs B. Feeney terminated her duties as temporary supply teacher for Mrs Donovan.*

*19th April - School reopened for the summer term. Mrs Donovan and Miss Massa resumed duties.*

*6th May - Mrs Donovan was absent this morning, having obtained leave of absence to attend the Infirmary for an x-ray examination.*

*4th July - This morning a fourth form pupil, Maxine Rees, was knocked from her bicycle and killed on the way to school. Staff and pupils were shocked to hear the news and prayers were recited for her at once.*

*8th July - This afternoon, the headmistress, five members of the staff and about 60 pupils attended the burial service of Maxine Rees, the pupil who was killed in an accident earlier this week [records indicate that Maxine Rees was born in 1940, so was 15 when she died]*

*13th July - In the afternoon Mr Presswood, the Director of Education visited the school to say goodbye to Mrs Donovan who will be retiring at the end of the term.*

*22nd July - At the morning assembly, Mrs Donovan who was retiring after 43 years' service on the staff was presented by current and past pupils, staff and sisters with a beautiful television set. Mrs Donovan received a great ovation from all those present; short speeches were made to which she replied suitably. Presentations were also made to Mrs Brown and Miss Hunt who were leaving. Sports prizes were then distributed.*

*In the afternoon the school broke up for the summer holidays. Mrs Donovan, Mrs Brown and Miss Hunt terminated duties.*

*13th September - Miss Janet Hopkins, B.Sc. Reg No. 49/19931 commenced duties today in place of Mrs Donovan.*

## THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

### Introduction

During Gertrude Donovan's lifetime, there were 6 Monarchs, 20 Prime Ministers, 13 Presidents and 6 Popes.

She witnessed the end of Victoria's reign and the beginning of John F. Kennedy's presidency.

She began her probationary year at Heathfield House School on the very day that the Titanic sank, 15th April 1912. She lived through two world wars and was alive to see the world taken to the brink of a third.

Mrs Donovan seems to have been born in 1889, though other sources state 1890 as her date of birth. Her teaching record says 1890, though her gravestone says she was 73 at the time of her death in 1962.

### **Monarchs (6)**

Victoria (1837 - 1901)

Edward VII (1901 - 1910)

George V (1910 - 1936)

Edward VIII (1936 - 1936)

George VI (1936 - 1952)

Elizabeth II (1952 - )

### **British Prime Ministers (20, but 15 different men)**

Robert Gascoyne-Cecil (1886 - 1892)

William Ewart Gladstone (1892 - 1894)

Archibald Primrose (1894 - 1895)

Robert Gascoyne-Cecil (1895 - 1902)

Arthur Balfour (1902 - 1905)

Henry Campbell Bannerman (1905 - 1908)

Herbert Henry Asquith (1908 - 1916)

David Lloyd George (1916 - 1922)

Andrew Bonar Law (1922 - 1923)  
Stanley Baldwin (1923 - 1924)  
Ramsay MacDonald (1924 - 1924)  
Stanley Baldwin (1924 -1929)  
Ramsay MacDonald (1929 - 1935)  
Stanley Baldwin (1935 - 1937)  
Neville Chamberlain (1937 - 1940)  
Winston Churchill (1940 - 1945)  
Clement Attlee (1945 - 1951)  
Winston Churchill (1951 - 1955)  
Anthony Eden (1955 - 1957)  
Harold Macmillan (1957 - 1963)

### **American Presidents (13)**

Benjamin Harrison (1889 - 1893)  
Grover Cleveland (1893 - 1897)  
William McKinley (1897 - 1901)  
Theodore Roosevelt (1901 - 1909)  
William Howard Taft (1909 - 1913)  
Woodrow Wilson (1913 - 1921)  
Warren G. Harding (1921 - 1923)  
Calvin Coolidge (1923 - 1929)  
Herbert Hoover (1929 - 1933)  
Franklin D. Roosevelt (1933 - 1945)  
Harry S. Truman (1945 - 1953)  
Dwight D. Eisenhower (1953 - 1961)  
John F. Kennedy (1961 - 1963)

## **Popes (6)**

Leo XIII (1878 - 1903)

St. Pius X (1903 - 1914)

Benedict XV (1914 - 1922)

Pius XI (1922 - 1939)

Ven Pius XII (1939 - 1958)

John XXIII (1958 - 1963)

## **The Last 7 Years, 1955 - 1962.**

During the final 7 years of Mrs Donovan's life, spanning 1955 to 1962, the world as she'd known it began to change in surprising, exciting and saddening new ways. The old certainties of life and familiar daily routines were falling away and changing beyond recognition. Not least of these changes was the fact that she'd had to retire from the teaching profession at the end of the summer term in 1955. A job which she'd dedicated her life to for the past 43 years had come to an end; a happy end, but an end nonetheless. Now, the only real constants in her life were Cardiff, Catholicism and her husband, Michael. The changes began slowly, but as the mid-50s led on to the early-60s, the country was on the verge of a second baby boom and life looked very different.

There were many notable births, deaths, events and first appearances during this era that would go on to change the world in innumerable ways in the decades to come.

## **1955**

13th July - **Ruth Ellis** is hanged for murder, becoming the last woman to face judicial execution in the UK.

16th July - **Stirling Moss** wins the British Grand Prix, his first Formula One victory and a boost for the popularity of the sport, which began in 1950.

22nd July - **Gertrude Donovan** retires from teaching after 43 years.

15th August - 5th birthday of **Princess Anne**.

30th September - **James Dean** killed in a car accident.

14th November - 7th birthday of **Prince Charles**.

20th December - The British government declares that Cardiff is now the capital of Wales.

## 1956

February - **Shirley Bassey's** first single, *Burn My Candle (At Both Ends)*, released.

23rd March - **Elvis Presley's** self-titled debut album released.

## 1957

24th April - First broadcast of *The Sky At Night* with **Patrick Moore**. He continued to present the programme for the next 55 years, only missing one programme through illness.

## 1958

6th February - Munich air disaster kills 20 people, including 7 Manchester United football players known as 'Busby's Babes' after manager **Matt Busby**. 3 people die later from their injuries.

7th June - birth of musician **Prince**.

18th - 26th July - British Empire and Commonwealth Games in Cardiff.

1st August - premiere of first *Carry On* film, *Carry On Sergeant*.

16th August - birth of **Madonna**.

29th August - birth of **Michael Jackson**; **Cliff Richard's** first single, *Move It*, released.

16th October - first broadcast of *Blue Peter*.

28th October - the reign of **Pope John XXIII** begins.

## 1959

3rd January - Alaska becomes the 49th state of the USA.

3rd February - death of **Buddy Holly, Ritchie Valens** and **The Big Bopper**.

16th February - **Fidel Castro** sworn in as prime minister of Cuba.

21st August - Hawaii becomes the 50th state of the USA.

26th August - the first *Mini* goes on sale.

8th October - election of new Conservative MP for Finchley, **Margaret Thatcher**.

## 1960

19th February - **the Queen** gives birth to her third child and second son, **Andrew**.

6th July - death of **Aneurin 'Nye' Bevan**.

29th October - **Cassius Clay** (later **Muhammad Ali**) wins his first professional fight.

2nd November - Penguin Books found not guilty in *Lady Chatterley's Lover* case.

8th November - Senator **John F. Kennedy** is elected President.

2nd December - The **Archbishop of Canterbury** has a historic meeting with **Pope John XXIII** at the Vatican, the first time the head of the Anglican Church has met the Pope.

8th December - Epic historical film *Spartacus* released.

9th December - first episode of *Coronation Street* is broadcast.

## 1961

7th January - first episode of *The Avengers* is broadcast.

20th January - **John F. Kennedy** is sworn in, the first Catholic to become President.

3rd April - the *Jaguar E-Type* goes on sale.

12th April - **Yuri Gagarin** becomes the first man in space.

25th May - **John F. Kennedy** calls for an ambitious new space programme that includes putting a man on the moon by the end of the decade.

1st July - birth of **Diana Spencer** (later **Princess of Wales**).

4th August - birth of **Barack Obama**.

13th August - construction of the Berlin Wall begins.

1st October - first broadcast of *Songs of Praise*.

25th October - first issue of satirical magazine *Private Eye*.

4th December - birth control pills made available on the NHS.

11th December - US aircraft carrier 'Cole' arrives in Saigon, Vietnam with 33 helicopters and 400 air and ground troops. There has been no official declaration of war but the conflict will continue for the next 14 years. The seeds of the conflict had been sown as early as 1950.

## 1962

2nd January - first episode of *Z-Cars* broadcast.

5th January - pilot episode of *Steptoe & Son* broadcast.

March - the start of discussions at the BBC that eventually lead to the first series of *Doctor Who* in 1963.

19th March - **Bob Dylan**'s first album released.

12th - 14th June - **Frank Sinatra** records *Great Songs from Great Britain* in London.

12th July - **The Rolling Stones**' live debut at London's Marquee Club.

5th August - **Marilyn Monroe** found dead from suspected overdose.

21st September - first broadcast of *University Challenge*.

4th October - first episode of *The Saint*, starring **Roger Moore**, broadcast.

5th October - **The Beatles'** first single, *Love Me Do*, released; first Bond film, *Dr. No*, released.

11th October - the opening of the Second Vatican Council, the primary purpose of which is to resolve apparent conflicts between Catholic church doctrine and the modern world. It would continue until late 1965. Four future Popes are among those involved in the council's opening session (including Bishop Karol Wojtyła (**Pope John Paul II**) and Father Joseph Ratzinger (**Pope Benedict XVI**)).

14th - 28th October - The Cuban Missile Crisis threatens to develop into nuclear war, but is averted through JFK's diplomacy.

7th November - **Nelson Mandela** is convicted and imprisoned by the apartheid South African regime for incitement and leaving the country without a valid passport.

24th November - first broadcast of satirical tv show *That Was The Week That Was*.

27th December - death of **Gertrude Donovan**.

31st December - **Gertrude Donovan** is buried at Thornhill Cemetery, Cardiff.



## THE END

Some time after retiring from Heathfield House, Mrs Donovan left 22 Balaclava Road and was admitted to Lord Ninian Hospital at 18 Cathedral Road. She died there on the 27th of December 1962.

Her sister Daisy Walters, a spinster, was granted probate. Mrs Donovan's effects amounted to £4,559 17s.

She was buried at Thornhill Cemetery on the 31st of December 1962, in Plot B275.

**DONOVAN.**—On Dec. 27, Gertrude, dearly beloved wife of Michael Donovan, 22 Balaclava Rd., Penylan, Cardiff. Residing at the Chapel of A. J. Stone Ltd., 377 Cowbridge Rd. East, Cardiff, until reception in St. Peter's Church, Sunday evening, 7.45 p.m. Funeral Monday. Requiem Mass at 10 o'clock. Interment following at Thornhill Cemetery. No flowers by request.—R.I.P.

Notice in the South Wales Echo

### Visit to Thornhill Cemetery - 23rd September 2014

At the Enquiries office, we asked about the location of the grave and were given the plot number and directions. Disappointingly, there was no stone. However, a worker in the



grounds dug down into the turf...

The inscription on the stone reads: Pray for the repose of the soul of Gertrude Donovan. Beloved wife of Michael. Died Dec 27th 1962. Aged 73.

Mrs Donovan's husband, Michael, was buried in the same plot - despite his details being absent from the stone - on the 19th of March 1964. He was 81.

### **28th October Visit**

We returned to the grave in order to place a wooden border around the stone. This was in order to keep the mud off and to make the stone more noticeable and less likely to be forgotten again.



Gertrude Donovan. R.I.P.

## **REFLECTIONS**

### **Michael Lewis**

Working within the group environment has shown me what it means to be part of something. These past months have been a huge benefit in dealing with my mental health issues.

### **Steve Nias**

Initially, I thought that this would be a short-term project, possibly lasting no longer than 6 weeks - which turned out to be a massive underestimate. It was my first experience of leading a group, or perhaps more accurately, steering it in certain directions and arranging visits etc... It's remarkable how much we've achieved as a group. We have noticeably gained in confidence and pushed back the boundaries of what's possible with research. Although there were occasional setbacks and a loss of momentum at one point, I think we can all be proud of this project.

### **Deri Teague**

When we first started the project, I didn't know what to expect, but as we progressed I found that I was very surprised at how engrossed I became. It was something I found very interesting and something I want to carry on with.

### **Janine Williams**

When we first started this project, I thought it would be a case of straightforward fact-finding - i.e. who this person was, where she was born and so on, but it was much more. I got so involved that I felt Gertrude was someone I actually knew. I got interested in everything we found out about her. We travelled to many different places, archives, St. Peter's parish, libraries and her grave. I didn't realise what impact it would have on my life. I have loved every minute of this research project and how we worked as a group and surprised myself with what we could actually achieve.