

Architect of Peace: Sir Percy Thomas, Construction & Story of Wales' Temple of Peace & Health



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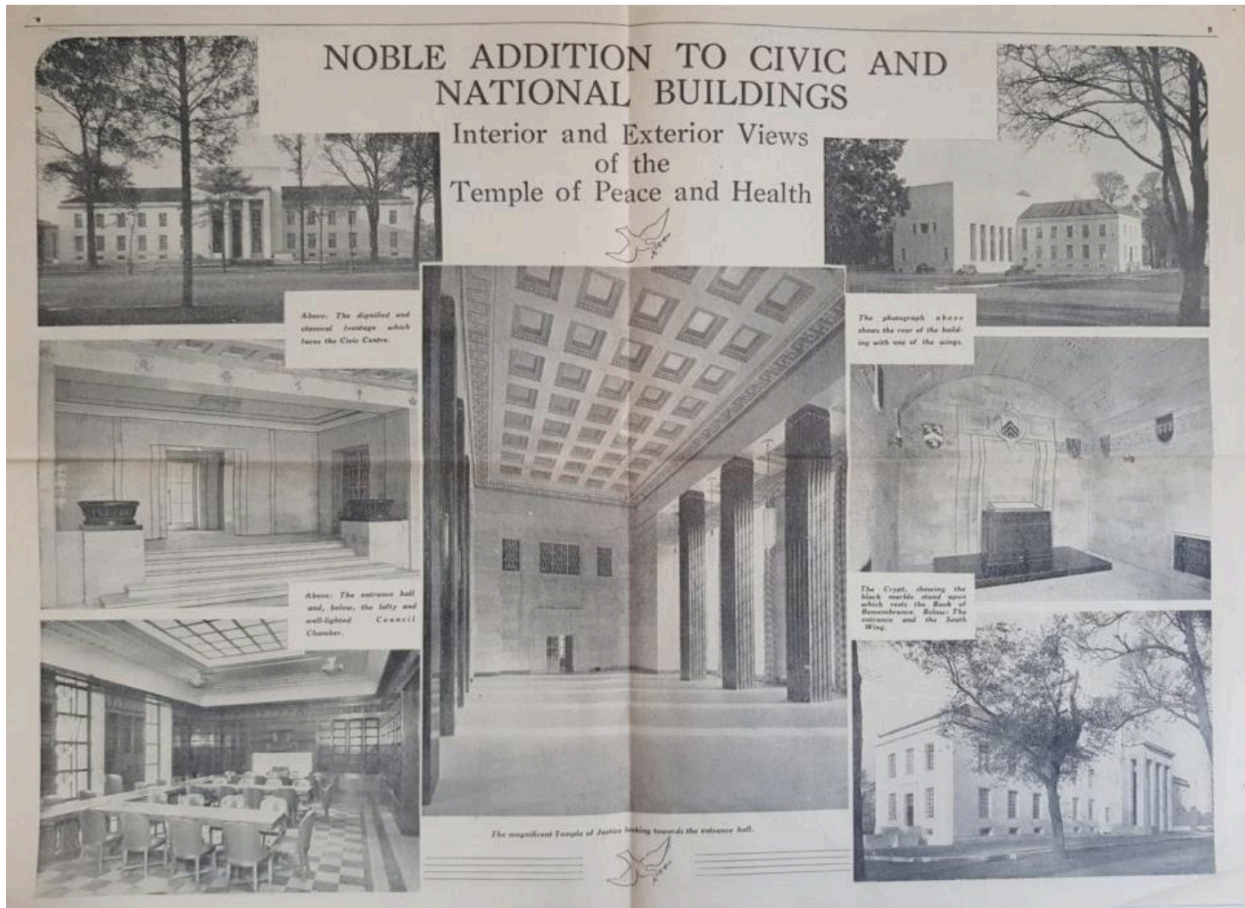
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About the Author

November 1, 2020

By Craig Owen, Head of Wales for Peace at WCIA, written for #Temple82



Centre spread of the 23 Nov 1938 Western Mail supplement, celebrating Wales' new 'architectural gem'.

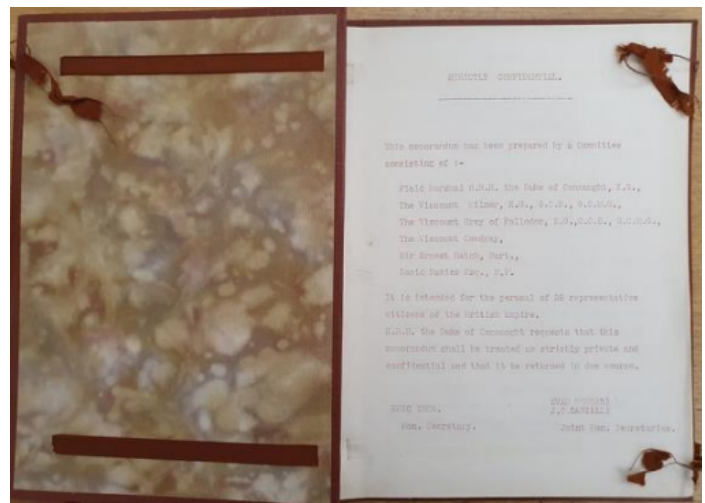
Wales' Temple of Peace has a unique architectural legacy: the only public building, Wales and world-wide, dedicated to the twin causes of peace and health - gifted as a legacy to future generations, by the generation who survived World War 1. The Temple was originally the vision of David Davies of Llandinam – whose experience serving as a soldier in the trenches of France with the Royal Welch Fusiliers so horrified him, as with so many of his generation, that he committed his whole life to peace building. But it was Pembrokeshire and Cardiff Architect Percy Thomas who rose to the challenge of turning this vision into bricks and mortar: to 'create a peace building, for peacebuilding'. It was a challenge that would earn Percy Thomas a Knighthood, and the Royal Gold Medal for Architecture; and would bequeath to Wales a unique legacy of Art Deco era, Neoclassical architecture that has galvanised generations since in pursuit of the mission for peace and health. Through the work of organisations based at the Temple over 8 decades, to the onscreen inspiration for alternate reality worlds - from 'Doctor Who' to 'His Dark Materials' - Sir Percy's creation continues to inspire to this day. For the Temple's 82nd Anniversary, here is the story of its Architecture – and its Architect.



Opening of Wales' Temple of Peace & Health on 23 Nov 1938, with Architect Percy Thomas (RH), founder Lord Davies Davies of Llandinam (middle), and Mrs Minnie James of Dowlais (LH) - who opened the Temple on behalf of 'war-bereaved mothers of Wales and the World', with an engraved gold key presented to her by the Architect.

The Vision: David Davies' Brief for a 'Temple of Peace'

It was as early as 1919 that David Davies first proposed his 'vision' for a Temple of Peace as an appropriate memorial to the fallen of WW1 – for the site of Devonshire House in London. A committee led by the Duke of Connaught and Foreign Secretary Viscount Grey, with 28 representative citizens of the British Empire, considered Davies' radical WW1 memorial, a 'Proposal for the Erection of a Hall of Nations on the site of Devonshire House, 1919' (as shown on the right). The Devonshire House proposition did not reach fruition - with developers acquiring the site in 1920 for a hotel and block of flats, followed by new offices from 1926. However, from 1922 - with founding the Welsh League of Nations Union as Wales' 'campaigning force for global peace' - David Davies followed his more natural 'national instincts' for *Wales to lead the way*.





With the unveiling of Wales' National War Memorial in Alexandra Gardens, Cathays Park in November 1928 - unveiled by Edward, Prince of Wales to mark the 10th Anniversary of the Armistice - Davies again proposed a Temple of Peace, housing Wales' WW1 Book of Remembrance, to be sited directly opposite Alexandra Gardens, as part of the developing plans for Cardiff Civic Centre.

The City of Cardiff Corporation offered the land to enable the 'vision to become a reality' – and so David Davies immediately set about commissioning Percy Thomas to create an **iconic, modern design** that would reflect, in bricks and mortar, a **'peace building for peacebuilding'**.

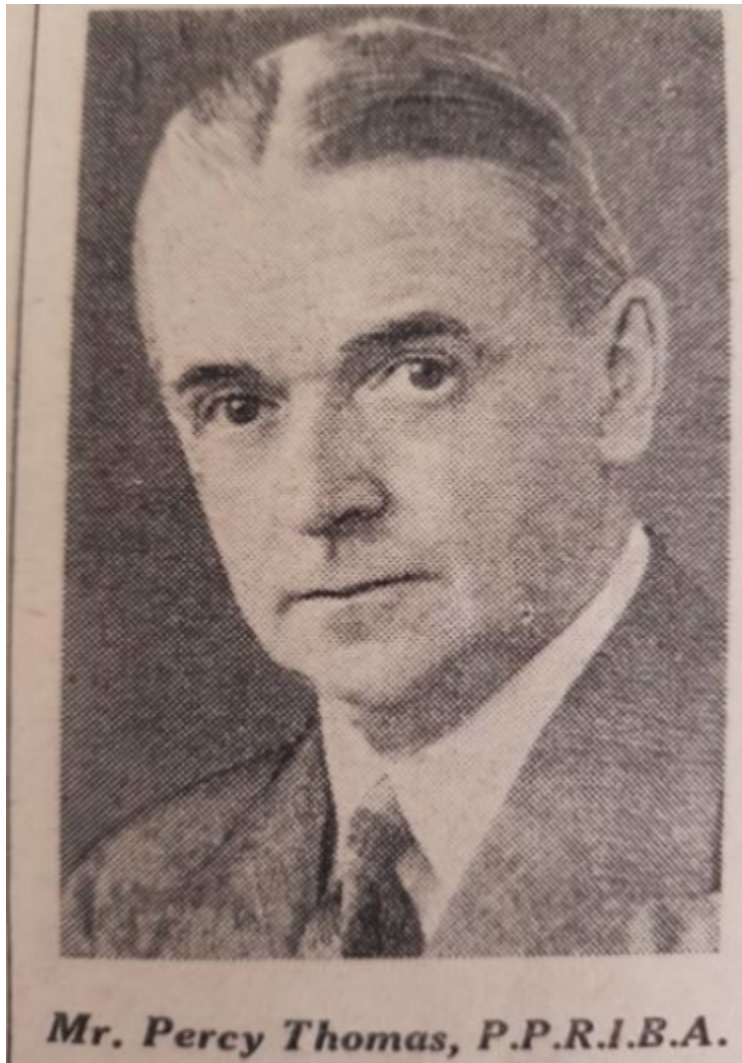
The Architect: Who was Percy Thomas?

Born the son of a sea captain from Narberth, Pembrokeshire, Percy Thomas (1883-1969) grew up initially in South Shields, Northumberland before the flourishing coal trade attracted the family to the flourishing port city of Cardiff. From an early age the young Percy accompanied his father to cities such as St Petersburg, Odessa, Istanbul, Fiume and Genoa, international experiences which were to colour his career. In 1897, his father (Christmas Thomas) died at sea, and was buried in Leghorn (present day Livorno). With support of his mother, Cecilia, the young Percy developed an interest in architecture, and took articles for 5 years in the offices of EH Burton of Cardiff, from 1898.

Aged just 20, he won Wales' national competition for architecture at the Llanelli National Eisteddfod of 1903. Following some years in Lancashire and Bath, having collaborated closely in competitions with fellow architect and long-term friend Ivor Jones – including the 1911 design for Cardiff



Technical College - Percy returned to Cardiff in 1912 to set up in a practice in partnership with Ivor. The imminent outbreak of WW1 led to Percy conscription into the Artists Rifles from 1915, and he was posted to the Somme where he was awarded a military OBE. Released from army



service in 1919, he returned to practice in Cardiff where he quickly rose to prominence as a leading mind at the time that the Art Deco movement was establishing what would become the iconic 'interwar architectural style. Percy Thomas' Partnership won many competitions for important commissions, including design of a new campus for University College Aberystwyth, Swansea's Brangwyn / Guild Hall, and the iconic Temple of Peace – directly commissioned by Lord Davies – in Cathays Park, Cardiff. Sir Percy undertook his most accomplished and celebrated work through the interwar period. Following World War 2, he became a lead figure in reconstruction of post-war industrial Wales, from the Steel Mills of Aberavon and Llanelli to the Power Station of Aberthaw, and the first Severn Bridge, 1960. He had 3 daughters and a son, Norman Thomas, who continued the Percy Thomas Partnership following his passing in August 1969. They continued in practice to 2004, when - following construction of the iconic Wales Millenium Centre in Cardiff Bay - PTP was bought by Capita Construction Group.

The Era: Art Deco, Neoclassicism and Wales' Iconic Twins

The 'Art Deco Movement' - so associated with 1920s=30s visual style, originated in France just prior to WW1 but 'took off' following the 1925 Paris Exposition, influencing design from buildings and ocean liners, to trains and furniture.

In 1930, at the same time Percy Thomas was initially commissioned by David Davies to design a 'Temple of Peace', he and Ivor Jones also won a competition to design Swansea's Guild Hall - the building that Percy himself came to judge as his 'greatest success'. To this day, the Guildhall holds the iconic Brangwyn Panels, themselves commissioned as a national memorial to the fallen of WW1 by the House of Lords.

Painted by Welsh artist Sir Frank Brangwyn - himself a WW1 Belgian Refugee offered sanctuary in Wales - the 'Empire Panels' were ejected by the Lords for being too 'colourful and fantastical'. Swansea Council acquired the 16 panels - 5 years of work totalling 3,000 square feet

- and Percy Thomas literally ‘raised the roof’ of his design for the Guildhall to accommodate the iconic WW1 memorial. Opened 23rd October 1934, the Guildhall has been at the heart of Swansea life ever since.

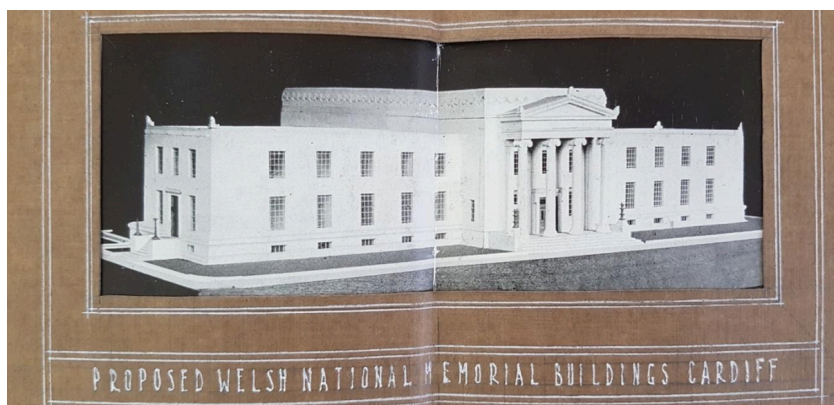


“[The Brangwyn] was awarded an RIBA Bronze medal, and is Listed as Grade 1 by Cadw as ‘the most important building in Wales of its period’. It has an interesting iconographical scheme, with Viking imagery referring to Swansea’s

ancient history. It was a deliberate policy that Welsh national and local associations play an important part in the decorative scheme throughout the building.” Elaine Davey, Cardiff University PHD Thesis, 2014



The Era: Art Deco, Neoclassicism and Wales’ Iconic Twins



The ‘design challenge’ posed by David Davies’ vision for Wales’ Temple of Peace, is perhaps best summated in the words of Percy Thomas himself – as expressed in the opening paragraph of the report submitted to the King Edward VII Welsh National Memorial Association Committee, tasked with overseeing the Temple’s creation.

“The problem which the Architects were called upon to solve, was to design a building which would not only provide accommodation for the Memorial Association Headquarters and League of Nations Union, but would also contain a Temple of Peace, and it was the promoters wish that, as the two main ideas underlying the above institutions are Peace and Health, he desired these ideas expressed in the Architecture of the Building. By this means, he intended to convey to

future generations, the importance of these two ideas and to make the building serve the dual purpose of a reminder of the Tragedy of the Great War - and the lessons to be derived therefrom - and of the determination of the Nation to grapple with the scourge of Tuberculosis. **The accompanying drawings show how these ideas have been expressed both in the external and internal design of the building.**”

The report offers an invaluable insight into the architectural thinking and significance of the materials integrated into Percy Thomas’ conceptualisation for Wales’ Temple of Peace: “The Greek Ionic style has been adopted for the elevations.. the summit of attainment in the Arts of

Peace by the Ancient Greeks... [through a] whole effect of peace and dignity... it is hoped to catch the atmosphere of peace and repose of the ancient Temples.... From the springing of the vaults, sculptured friezes bearing the arms of the nations of the League, terminating in a Memorial Tablet over the Altar, upon which will repose the Book of Remembrance.”

Materials of Meaning

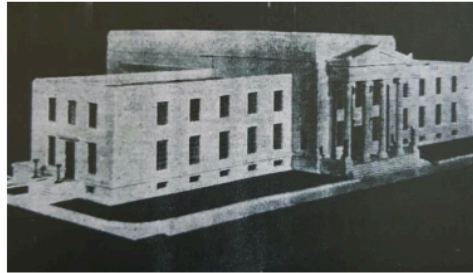
“The ideas of peace and health expressed through the Architecture of the Memorial Buildings should convey to future generations the importance of.. [internationalism] as the lesson of the Great War...” Percy Thomas, 1929 Architects Report

So set out the founders to construct a Temple rich in symbolism, in which every material

had deeper meaning and significance: deliberately chosen from across the globe, with ‘layers’ of provenance honouring the nations of the world.



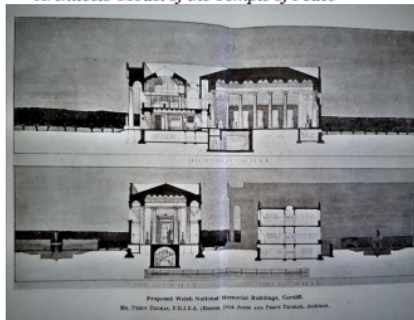
Proposed Memorial Buildings – Cover



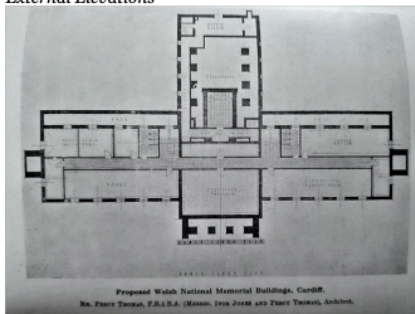
Architects' Model of the Temple of Peace



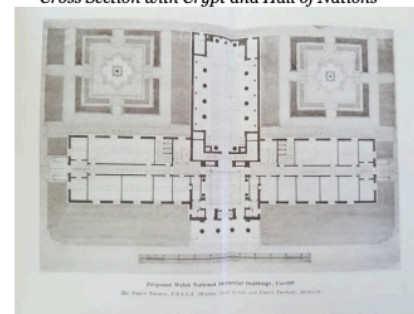
External Elevations



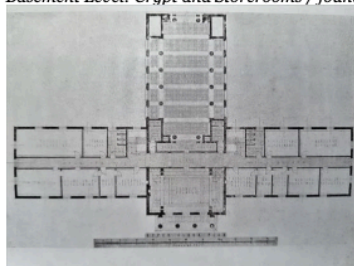
Cross Section with Crypt and Hall of Nations



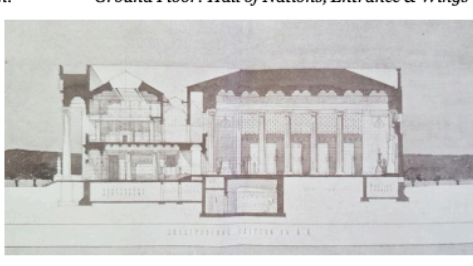
Basement Level: Crypt and Storerooms / foundation.



Ground Floor: Hall of Nations, Entrance & Wings



First Floor Offices and Organ Chamber



Cross-Section

Stone – UK Portland Stone (portico and façade), Italian Dark Red Tiles (roof), Sicilian Volcanic Lava (Temple floor, porous for underfloor heating), UK Bath Stone (crypt vaulted ceiling)

Marble – French Mereuil (entrance floor) and Larrys Mouchette (entrance walls); Italian Roman Travertine (Temple squares) and Trani Mirabelle (Temple walls), Australian Black Marble with Gold (Temple columns), Irish Connemara Marble (skirtings), Belgian Flemish Marble (Book of Remembrance pedestal)

Metalwork & Lights – French Bronze (Book of Remembrance case, Crypt Gates, Portico Windows and heating grills), Birmabright Steel (Temple Gates), Staybright (Sheffield) Steel (organ chamber grill), Austrian glass (windows), Czechoslovakian pendant lights.

Woodwork – Australian Walnut (Library Cabinets), Welsh Oak parquet flooring, Canadian Maple doors and Swedish Spruce window frames.

The Temple is heated through invisible panels buried in the floors and behind the marble wall veneers – an advanced innovation for its time.

THE CONSTRUCTION: Hope amidst the Great Depression

However, no sooner had Percy Thomas presented his architectural vision for Wales' Temple of Peace, than global events reinforced the interdependence of Wales with the wider world. The Wall Street Crash of 1929 quickly engulfed the globe, as the Great Depression of the 1930s created economic downturn and misery throughout the US, UK, Europe and its remaining 'Empires'.

Almost all public construction projects ceased, Cardiff's Civic Centre included. For some time, the Temple of Peace vision seemed set to slide into history. However, in 1934 Lord David Davies – ennobled in 1933 by Prime Minister Ramsey MacDonald for his 'lifelong dedication to peace' –

stepped in to the breach with a £58,000 'sink fund' donation (worth £4.04 million at 2019 values) to enable construction to proceed apace, with match funding (of £12,000) to come from public subscriptions raised through the Welsh League of Nations Union, via initiatives such as 'Daffodil Days' organised by communities throughout Wales.

By 1936, subscriptions reached a point whereby work could start; and construction of the Temple became a symbol of hope for



Clipping from South Wales Argus, Dec 1936

many Welshmen and women, not just amidst the Great Depression – but against the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War, rising European Fascism, and the rise of Hitler in Germany. For many, never had the time for a Temple of Peace been more pressing. Penarth Rd-based building contractors E J Turner and Sons were commissioned to construct the Temple itself over 1937-38, with Percy Thomas overseeing all aspects of the design. As Christmas 1936 approached, young unemployed volunteers were enlisted to help clear the site of the Temple of Peace in Cathays Park – with the reward of ‘logs for Christmas’.



The Foundation Stone: 8 April 1937

To the right hand side of the great bronze entrance doors to the Temple of Peace is the Foundation Stone, laid on the 8th of April, 1937 to great ceremony by then Foreign Secretary Lord Halifax. Deciphering the Art Deco lettering has daunted visitors to Cathays Park for 80 years since.

Many hundreds turned out to witness the hugely symbolic gathering, with speeches on the scaffold and the ‘laying of the great stone’, with a time capsule encased within. The event generated tremendous media coverage, and hope; but in a reflection of the uncertainties of the time, huts in the background were producing sandbags for the war effort.



The Grand Opening

On the wet and windy morning of 23rd November 1938, hundreds gathered to solemnly witness the opening – 20 years after the Armistice – of Wales’ Memorial to the Fallen of WW1; the realisation of David Davies’ vision, the unveiling of Percy Thomas’ architectural creation, and the unlocking of a mission that would fuel hopes and dreams of generations to come. The honour of unlocking this ‘key to the future’ fell to a remarkably ordinary, remarkable woman: Mrs Minnie James of Dowlais, Merthyr Tydfil, who had lost 3 sons in the Great War. Alongside 20 war-bereaved mothers of Wales and the world - from as far afield as Scotland, South Africa and the USA - they led the opening of Wales’ Temple of Peace “in the name of the women of Wales’.

Sir Percy Thomas had a special key engraved for the opening ceremony, which he presented to Minnie James in front of the assembled crowds, stating: “Mrs James... I have pleasure in presenting you with this key and asking you to accept it as a little token of what I know must be a memorable occasion for you.” Minnie thanked Sir Percy for the key, and with a few poignant words into the microphone, turned the key in the great bronze entrance doors - and led the mothers and the people of Wales into their new Temple of Peace.



Lord Davies noted at the ceremony that “to Mr. Percy Thomas we are indebted for the architectural design in which I think he has expressed, with dignity and simplicity, the ideas and aspirations for which this building stands. I am sure everyone will agree that he has added another gem to the galaxy of public buildings in Cathays Park - unique, I believe, in this country, and a monument to the foresight and wise initiative of your City Fathers.” Lord Mayor Alderman Howell responded: “this has been a great day for Cardiff and for Wales, for these twin ideals, so important to the wellbeing of a nation, have been crystallised in the Temple which it is a joy to behold.

The Royal Gold Medal for Architecture

In recognition of his work on the Temple of Peace, Brangwyn Hall and other public buildings of distinction in Wales, in 1939 Percy Thomas was invested with the King's Royal Gold Medal for Architecture – one of the foremost prizes and honours in architectural practice worldwide.

Over the years, some confusions have arisen over whether the Temple's architecture earned a Bronze or a Gold Medal for Sir Percy Thomas. The source of this confusion, is that it earned both! The RIBA Gold Medal, outlined above, was awarded to Sir Percy Thomas in 1939 in recognition of his whole body of work as an architect of international standing – the Temple of Peace having been his latest and most celebrated creation, when the award was bestowed. The RIBA Bronze Medal was also presented to Sir Percy Thomas, specifically “in respect of the Temple of Peace and Health in Cathays Park, Cardiff, as a building of outstanding architectural merit,” at a presentation after cessation of WW2 hostilities, held on Thursday 24th June 1948. A plaque was unveiled in the main entrance vestibule by Lady Henrietta Davies, then widow of Lord David Davies, recording the award of the Bronze Medal.



This plaque is thought to have been destroyed by a 1967 terrorist bomb planted in the Temple vestibule – leading to the confusion in interpretation since.

Temple: Architecture and Spaces

For the Temple's opening in 1938, a series of postcards were produced celebrating Sir Percy Thomas' architectural creation, for sale to the general public – as souvenirs for 'pilgrims' visiting the Book of Remembrance, and participating in 'pledges for peace' through dedicated services. 80 years later, whilst some usages have evolved in the wings of the building, the main spaces remain as striking as Percy Thomas' original designs intended.

The Portico

Fronting on to King Edward VII Avenue, the Portico – with its 31 feet, great square Art Deco columns – is carried in Portland Stone, the scheme tying together all buildings in the Cathays Park Civic Centre. The roofs of the 2 wings are covered in dark red Italian, patterned tiles. The office wings are kept low, simple and severe to contrast the high Temple profile. Three large windows with bronze grilles in antique malachite patina, are capped by 3 striking and symbolic reliefs: Health – the snake, Justice – the scales, Peace – the wheat sheaf. On the frieze above the columns, four discs bear the heraldic arms of England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales.



The Entrance Vestibule

The great bronze entrance doorways lead into the 'Vestibule', lined in Larrys Mouchette marble and floored with Mereuil bordered in golden Travertine. A short flight of steps to the main ground floor level guides the eye of the beholder to the Temple beyond, the 'Hall of Nations', flanked by 2 Black Marble vases. The ceiling, in dark cream and silver, features a frieze of national emblems – such as the lion, shamrock, thistle, leek and daffodil – as well as small



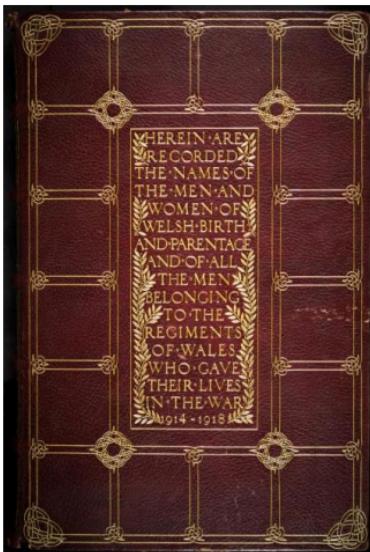
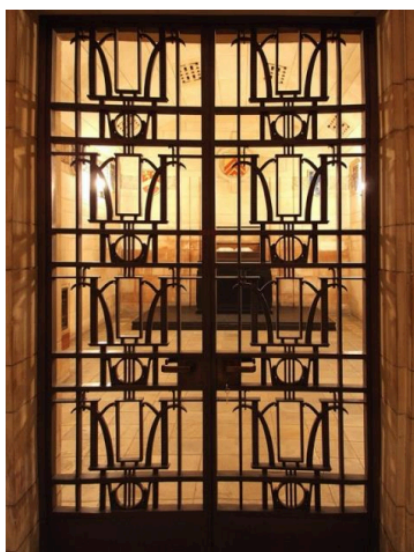
carvings featuring the Poppy of Remembrance, and the Daffodil of Peace. From the late 1960s, a Reception Desk has welcomed visitors to the building; with a Porter's Lodge / Postroom to the left, and a public Cloak Room to the right. From 2010, alongside improved disabled access via chair lift, the entrance hall has included a Public Information Room and provision for heritage interpretation explaining the story of the Temple. Since #Temple80, the 80th Anniversary of the Temple's opening (in Nov 2018), the 'Wales for Peace' exhibition (left) and self-guided Temple Tours use the Vestibule as a starting point.

The Crypt and the Book of Remembrance

To either side of the main hall, staircases lead down to the Crypt, beneath the Temple itself – symbolically, the heart of the building’s foundations. A small chamber with a vaulted roof of Bath Stone, the walls are crested with the heraldic shields of the counties of Wales from which



hailed the 35,000 men and women commemorated in the WW1 Book of Remembrance. Reposed upon a pedestal of Black Belgian Marble and encased in French Bronze – materials of Flanders Fields, where so many of Wales’ sons and daughters fell – sits the Book of Remembrance: the roll call of the fallen, commemorated by Wales’ National War Memorial in Alexandra Gardens. Through 1,100 pages of Vellum Parchment bound in Moroccan leather, each name is individually transcribed in mediaeval revival illumination– a task completed by 4 women working with world renowned calligrapher Graily Hewitt of Lincoln’s Inn, London, between 1925-28.



LH – A massive bronze grille guards the entrance to the Crypt; Centre – Cover of the WW1 Book of Remembrance; RH – Remembering for Peace: Wales’ Health Minister Vaughan Gething with WCIA Chief Executive Susie Ventris-Field, undertake the traditional ‘turning of the page’ for the BAME Servicemen’s Remembrance Service, Nov 2018.

The 'Hall of Nations'

Known over time as the 'Hall of Nations', 'Hall of Justice' and 'Marble Hall', the Temple presents 'a magnificent edifice' with walls faced in Trani Mirabelle marble in Dove Grey, to symbolise the dove of peace. With a length of 73 feet, width of 44 feet and height of 32 feet, eight square majestic Ionic fluted columns in black and gold marble form side aisles, between which hang pendulous Art Deco light fittings in glass and bronze, suspended by heavy green cords. The richly coffered ceiling is picked out in dove grey, emerald green, earth and gold. The floor is paved in Roman Travertine squares of grey and gold. The great hall is invisibly heated by means of panels in the walls and floors, conducted through the marble facings and radiated throughout. Concealed above the entrance to the Temple is a (former) Organ



Chamber overlaid by a Staybrite Steel grille; the Hammond Organ, originally installed in 1938, remains within the basement of the building. Above the main door to the Temple, a bronze bust of Temple founder Lord David Davies, by 1930s sculptor Sir Goscombe John – presented in 1935 in recognition of his contribution to peace and Welsh public life - watches over proceedings.

The Council Chamber

Above the Temple's Entrance Hall and facing out across Cathays Park and Alexandra Gardens, the Council Chamber of 44 feet by 22 feet is a spectacular library in Australian Walnut inlaid with Macassar ebony, the shelves of which hold the Temple's Archives and Collections from over 80 year' work leading the Welsh nation towards peace and health.



Enlightened by the skyward 'laylight' glazed in Thermalux, and warmed from a Hopton Wood Stone mantelpiece at one end, great glass-topped tables and chairs can be configured for gatherings of all sorts; this room is the 'brain' of the building, where movements meet and great plans are scoped. This is the room where United Nations bodies have been shaped; where Wales' NHS was crafted. Displays within the cabinets spotlight some of the Temple's unique artefacts, such as David Davies personal library and writings; UN Youth Volunteers through the years; and the 1923 Welsh Women's Peace Petition to America – signed by 390,296 women.



Peace and Health Wings

The wings of the Temple were devised as offices for organisations leading Wales' work towards Peace and Health – initially, the Welsh League of Nations Union (WLNU) in the 'North' wing, and the Wales National Memorial Association for the Eradication of Tuberculosis (WNMA) in the 'South' wing. Each had separate entrances, with the postbox for the WLNU remaining to this day. The two are joined by the Council Chamber corridor, within which visitors can explore the fascinating 'Timeline of Peacemakers' – a colourfully illustrated history of Wales' peacemakers, moments and movements created to mark the Temple's 80th Anniversary.



The north and south stairwells also feature displays on 'Women, War and Peace,' and Wales' Youth Message of Peace and Goodwill – whilst looking out over Wales National Garden of Peace.

The Purpose: From Vision, to Post-War Mission

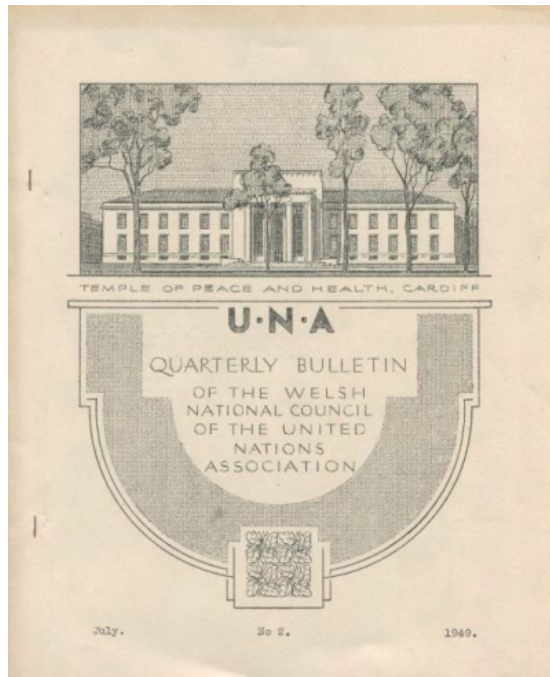
The Temple through World War 2

The Temple had been built as a 'headquarters befitting Wales' leading bodies in the pursuit of peace and health'. In the 1930s – whilst the Temple was under construction - the Welsh League of Nations Union (WLNU) supported 1,015 branches across Wales with over 60,000 members actively campaigning on international issues. And the Wales National Memorial Association (WNMA) was considered one of the foremost bodies in the world leading the fight against Tuberculosis. But the outbreak of World War 2 in September 1939, just 10 months after the Temple's opening, changed the landscape irrevocably. Throughout WW2, the Temple became a 'place of pilgrimage' for descendants of the fallen from WW1 visiting the Book of Remembrance, for 'peace services' honouring the fallen, inspiring the those living through WW2, and gathering 'pledges for peace' towards rebuilding a better world out of the conflict. But the functioning of the WLNU and WNMA, and their offices in the peace and health wings of the Temple, became essentially 'mothballed' - as staff, as well as members Waleswide, were conscripted for service, and community organisations ceased activity.

Peace

Leading figures in the WLNU – having been campaigning for peace for over 2 decades previous – were to play an unexpected 'peacebuilding' role the war itself.

- Temple founder David Davies – now beyond the age of military service – plunged himself furiously into writing books and influencing articles (through the Manchester Evening Guardian) to shape public opinion (and decision-makers) on the international ‘apparatus of organisations’ that should be created to safeguard the world from future conflicts – propositions that led to founding of the United Nations and its agencies – with particular elements of his proposals recognisable today through UN Peacekeeping, the UN Security Council, and UN Development Programme (UNDP). Tragically however, Lord Davies did not live to see the fruits of his labours – passing away in 1944 from Cancer, discovered as he launched one of the very radiography vehicles he funded through the WNMA just 3 months before he died.



- WLNU Director Gwilym Davies, was ‘seconded’ in to drafting a model constitution for an International Scientific, Education and Cultural organisation that could emerge out of the ashes of war. His model, progressed through a series of policy papers and conferences from 1941-45, was adopted and led to the founding of UNESCO in 1946.

- Following cessation of hostilities from VE Day on 8 May 1945, and with proposals advancing towards creation of a new ‘United Nations’ global body, in September 1945 the Welsh League of Nations Union met for the last time – morphing with immediate effect in to the United Nations Association (UNA) - Welsh National Council (WNC). The educational arm of the WLNU became CEWC, the Council for Education in World Citizenship, in order to create a clear distinction between ‘world education’, and the far more

political campaigning work of the UNA – which had caused challenges through the 1930s

Health

The WNMA was in for even bigger changes after WW2. With the landslide election in 1945 of a UK Labour Government under Prime Minister Clement Attlee - and the radical vision of his Tredegarraised Health Minister Aneurin Bevan - the founding of a National Health Service for Britain was to be the cornerstone achievement of the government’s post-WW2 reconstruction and social policy programme. With the WNMA already well-established as one of Wales’ leading health bodies, with a staff and network of world-leading professionals and a headquarters befitting the National Health mission, they were immediately co-opted into leading the shaping of the NHS in Wales.

From 1945, the WNMA became the NHS Transitional Authority for Wales; and from ‘the appointed day of 5th July 1948’, the south wing of Wales’ Temple of Peace and Health itself transitioned from being a ‘transitional authority’, to the new Welsh (Regional) Hospitals Board, or WHB (view National Archives records) – one of 14 headquarters across the UK, coordinating regional primary care provision. With further NHS restructurings, the WHB evolved into – and the Temple of Peace became the new headquarters for – the South Glamorgan Health Authority, from 1974-1999; and from 1999 to 2016, Public Health Wales.

Evolution: Changes in the Temple Over Time

Private to Public Sector

The changes in post-WW2 purpose, set up a curious ownership scenario that has carried through for generations of Temple occupants. The building was 'bequeathed to the nation' by David Davies under a 999 year covenant for the twin purposes of peace and health, vested initially in the WNMA and WLNU – in the 1930s, both charitable associations. Whilst the Temple was very clearly always intended to be a public space, 'interpretation' – sometimes creative - of what that entailed or constituted has generated considerable debate (not to mention solicitors fees) for successor organisations over the decades. The NHS structures established after WW2 were very clearly part of the State; whilst the UNA (United Nations Association) remained a charitable body. The founding covenants anticipated the potential for funding imbalances between the two missions, by vesting in WLNU / the 'Peace' body the ability to develop an income stream through hire of the Hall of Nations and meeting rooms for public gatherings, and for maintaining the Library Collections; whilst WNMA / the 'health' body held primary 'ownership' and maintenance responsibilities for the building, and primary use of the Council Chamber. Consequently, ownership of the Temple straddled the state (public) and charitable (private / third) sectors for many decades; and coordination over residency and operational arrangements between successive peace and health bodies has led to some 'reassignments' of usage over time. Since 2009, the WCIA has organised Venue Hire arrangements for the whole building.

Terrorist Bombing, 1967

In the small hours of the morning of 17th November 1967, the silence of Cathays Park was shattered by a huge explosion – a bomb planted by Mudiad Amddiffyn Cymru, in protest at the Investiture of Prince Charles as Prince of Wales, for which a planning committee meeting was due to be held later that day in the Temple of Peace. The bombing was widely felt to have backfired against the nationalist cause, with the symbolism of targeting both the nation's 'memorial to the fallen' and the home of civil society (rather than government) organisations considered to have been deeply inappropriate to many across Wales' population. The bomb destroyed much of the reception vestibule of the Temple, damaging the marble veneered walls and the great copper windows and glass. A public fundraising campaign ensued in 1969-70 to repair and rebuild the entrance, which was reopened in 1971.



The scene inside the entrance hall of the Temple of Peace, Cardiff, yesterday after the bomb explosion.



Founding of the Welsh Centre for International Affairs, 1973

With a widely perceived loss of interest by successive UK governments in political engagement with Wales' population on questions of international cooperation and foreign policy, from the late 1960s a campaign gathered momentum – spearheaded particularly through the pages of the Western Mail – to establish a 'Welsh Centre for International Affairs': 25 “This exciting concept will... encourage Welshmen to look beyond the confines of Wales and Britain to extend their knowledge and understanding of the rest of the world”. Western Mail Editorial, 1968 The idea of the WCIA was to bring a renewed focus to efforts between civil society, communities, local and national government, to shape Wales' distinct contribution to international affairs. IN October 1970, to mark the 25th Anniversary of the UN, Secretary of State for Wales George Thomas MP established a committee to set up the Welsh Centre; and on 11th October 1973, the new WCIA was formally opened by Lady Tweedsmuir, Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), at Wales' Temple of Peace & Health. Hywel Francis, Historian and former MP for Aberavon, once said in the House of Commons: “The Welsh Centre for International Affairs... has for decades played a vital role. Its quiet, educational voice of tolerance and reason needs to be listened to and valued in Wales and beyond. It deserves our full support and we should be proud of its work.”

Home for a Welsh Assembly



In the early 1970s, campaigns for political devolution to Wales reached a point where plans started to be made for a prospective headquarters of government, ahead of a putting the question to a public referendum. The Temple of Peace was for some time considered a 'leading candidate' for the headquarters of a new Welsh Assembly or Parliament; and detailed feasibility surveys were undertaken in 1975 (held in the National Archives, Kew) of changes that might be made to effect this change in purpose. In the course of events, the 1979 public referendum across Wales rejected devolution by 4 to 1; and with it, the prospects of the Temple of Peace becoming an iconic centre of government on the world stage.

Plans for the World War 2 Book of Remembrance, 1990s

In the early 1990s, following the Temple's 50th Anniversary celebrations, discussions around displaying the WW1 and WW2 Books of Remembrance 'side by side' advanced to a point where Honorary Architect I. Dale Owen of Percy Thomas Partnership was commissioned to design a new, bespoke marble and bronze casing for the Hall of Nations.

For reasons now lost to time, these plans did not go ahead, and the WW2 Book of Remembrance remains hidden from public view within the vaults of the National Museum of Wales.

Accessibility Improvements, 2010

WCIA led a successful funding bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), in partnership with Public Health Wales, to undertake works to modernise the building to improve disabled access and public usage of the Temple of Peace from 2010:

- Disabled access ramps to the frontage of the Temple Portico
- Installation of a chair lift in the Reception Vestibule (RH side)
- Installation of a Stena stair lift to the Crypt and Book of Remembrance.
- Installation of a public lift between the 4 floors (basement, ground, first and attic floors)
- Creation of a public information room in the Temple Entrance
- Creation of external interpretation signage boards facing Cathays Park, summarising the heritage of the Temple, the work of WCIA, and the National Garden of Peace.
- Improvement of the National Garden of Peace, through a UNA Exchange organised international youth volunteers work camp.

The Temple of Peace as an Icon of Screen

The Temple's unique and iconic 'Art Deco' architectural look has lent it to popular adaptation for stage and screen, starring in series ranging from Dr Who and Sherlock Holmes to the recent fantasy blockbuster 'His Dark Materials'.

Doctor Who, 2004- Recent



Sherlock Holmes: The Blind Banker, August 2010



His Dark Materials, 2018-19



The Temple Today: The Mission Lives On

Temple 25th Anniversary: One Man and his Monument

In 1963, to mark the 25th anniversary of the opening of the Temple of Peace, John Griffiths for the BBC produced 'One Man and His Monument', a radio broadcast celebrating the life of Lord Davies - including interviews with many of the people with whom he had worked (and even the nurse who looked after him in his final days). This invaluable resource and insight into the time - the script for which remains in the Temple of Peace archives - was reviewed in 2017 by WCIA Volunteer Maggie Smales, who published this blog: 'One Man and His Monument'.

Temple 50th Anniversary Appeal: founding of National Garden of Peace

In 1988, to mark the Temple's 50th Anniversary, a public appeal and series of landmark events were held which culminated in the creation of Wales' National Garden of Peace - created by UNA Exchange International Youth Volunteers over the course of a summer workcamp, under the guidance of founder Robert Davies. The Peace Garden now hosts over 50 memorials to peacemakers past, present - and future.

Temple75: Cardiff Peace Trail

In 2013, WCIA led a programme of family fun events over the summer that included the launch of the Temple75 'Cardiff Peace Trail', starting from the Garden of Peace.

Voices of Temple80

In 2014, as the culmination of WCIA's HLF-funded 'Wales for Peace' programme marking WW100 the centenary of WW1, WCIA staged an ambitious, month-long programme of 43 events celebrating the work of Temple organisations and individuals past, present and future - alongside an exhibition, Temple80 gala night performance, and production of the documentary film 'Voices of Temple80'.

WCIA

'Grandchild' of the Welsh League of Nations Union (WLNU) for whose peace building work the Temple was constructed - via the post-WW2 United Nations Association (UNA Wales) Welsh National Council - the WCIA has continued the work started by Lord David Davies and Percy Thomas, from its founding in 1973 to the present day. In 2023, WCIA will celebrate its 50th Anniversary of working from Wales Temple of Peace, continuing to work alongside partners and to champion:

- Global Learning - CEWC (Council for Education in World Citizenship), Cyfanfyd (Development Education Association), WAGE (the Wales Alliance for Global Education),
- Global Action - UNA (United Nations Association), Freedom from Hunger Campaign; IYS (International Youth Service) - now UNA Exchange; Fairtrade Wales.
- Global Partnerships - UNA Exchange, Freedom from Hunger, WISEN (Welsh International Sector Networks), Hub Cymru Africa, Wales for Africa, Size of Wales, Dolen Cymru (Wales Lesotho Link).

Since 2014, these 3 core programmes have been underpinned by WCIA's Peace Heritage work, emerging out of the Heritage Lottery Funded WW100 'Wales for Peace' project, which culminated with the Temple's 80th Anniversary celebrations in November 2018.

Cardiff University

The Temple of Peace has always stood in the heart of Cardiff University's 'campus' spanning Cardiff's Civic Centre in Cathays Park. When Public Health Wales – successors to the original 'health' occupants, WNMA - took the decision to sell their ownership of the Temple in 2016, it was a logical step for Cardiff University to acquire the iconic building at the heart of campus. From December 2017, Cardiff University owns the Temple of Peace, with the WCIA retaining occupancy under the 999 year covenant from the founding of the building.

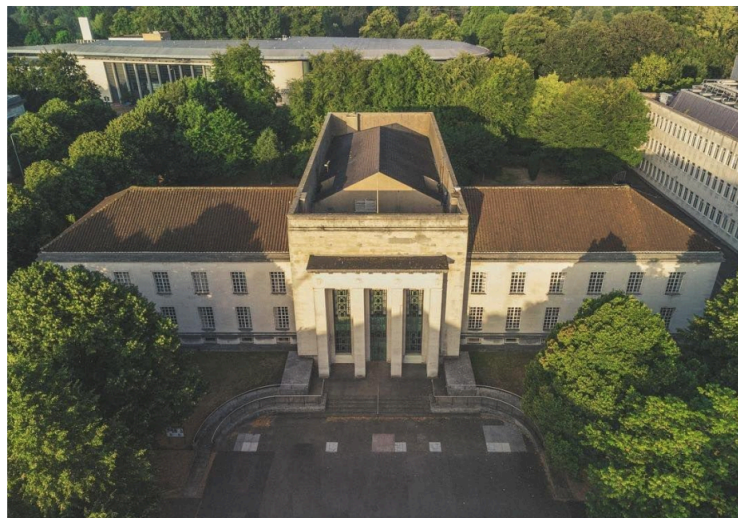
Although the COVID crisis has hit University's and Third Sector organisations hard, there is shared hope and enthusiasm that WCIA and Cardiff University will be able to work together to establish a future shared purpose for the building - linking civil society and academia in the ongoing pursuit of the founding missions to advance global peace and health.

Temple Tours and Venue Hire

WCIA's Peace Heritage team offer regular Temple Tours and Open Doors Days, public access to the Temple's Archives and Collections, and maintain a wide range of digitised materials and heritage interpretation supported by volunteers and research projects. Wales' Temple of Peace and Health has a range of rooms and facilities available for public and private use through WCIA's Venue Hire team, for:

- Meetings and Conferences
- Weddings and Ceremonies
- Parties and Celebrations
- Filming and Photoshoots
- Poetry, Pop and Politics - Cultural Events

All Temple venue hire proceeds go towards WCIA's ongoing work – and the Temple's founding mission – to advance peace building and internationalism through funding global learning, global action and global partnerships between Wales and the world. View and find out more through WCIA's dedicated venue website, www.templeofpeace.wales, or our social media feeds on Facebook / Instagram / Twitter / [venuewithaheart](#).



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