

## COOMBE TENNANT, WINIFRED MARGARET ('Mam o Nedd '; 1874 - 1956), delegate to the first assembly of the League of Nations, suffragette, Mistress of the Robes of the Gorsedd of the Bards, and a well-known medium

**Name:** Winifred Margaret Coombe Tennant

**Pseudonym:** Mam O Nedd

**Date of birth:** 1874

**Date of death:** 1956

**Spouse:** Charles Coombe Tennant

**Child:** Daphne Tennant

**Child:** Henry Tennant

**Child:** Alexander Tennant

**Child:** Christopher Tennant

**Parent:** Mary Pearce-Serocold (née Richardson)

**Parent:** George Edward Pearce-Serocold

**Gender:** Female

**Occupation:** delegate to the first assembly of the League of Nations, suffragette, Mistress of the Robes of the Gorsedd of the Bards, and a well-known medium

**Area of activity:** Anti Establishment; Eisteddfod; Law; Politics, Government and Political Movements

**Author:** Graham Lloyd Rees

Born the only child of George Edward Pearce-Serocold and his second wife, Mary Richardson of Derwen Fawr, Swansea. In 1895 she married Charles Coombe Tennant, and they lived in Cadoxton Lodge, near Neath. She became, thereby, daughter-in-law to Gertrude Barbara Rich Collier and sister-in-law to Dorothy Coombe Tennant who married the famous explorer [H.M. Stanley](#).

During World War I she was deputy chairman of the Womens' Agricultural Committee for Glamorgan, and she served as chairman of the War Pensions Commissions for Neath and district. She was appointed J.P. in 1920 and was the first woman to serve on the Glamorgan bench. From 1920-1931 she was an Official Visitor to Swansea Prison and was responsible for considerable improvements in the treatment of prisoners; for example, this remarkable woman fought for permission for prisoners in Swansea to use safety razors and not grow a beard. Consequently this policy was adopted throughout the United Kingdom.

In politics she was a fervent Liberal and greatly admired [Lloyd George](#). In 1922 she was parliamentary candidate for the Forest of Dean, but failed to win the seat. Her connections with [Lloyd George](#) led to her appointment as one of the representatives in the League of Nations - the first woman in Britain to fulfil this role. But Winifred Coombe Tennant became a keen nationalist and prominent in Gorsedd y Beirdd. Under the bardic name ' Mam o Nedd ' she became Mistress of the Robes, and in her will left the Gorsedd a sum of money, and to the National Library papers concerning the Gorsedd. She was chairman of the Arts and Crafts Section in the national eisteddfod of 1918 and in the same year she was appointed to a committee to explore the possibilities of a federal government for Wales. In addition to all this she was the mother of four children, Christopher, Daphne, Alexander and Henry. Daphne, however, lived for only eighteen months, and this shattering blow led her into spiritualism. This posed no problems as another sister-in-law, Eveleen, was married to F.W.H. Myers who, with Henry Sidgwick, founded the Society for Psychic Research. Mrs. Coombe Tennant was welcomed as a very talented medium, but this was unknown outside a small circle of close friends until after her death. For years she acted as a medium to Sir Oliver Lodge and others such as Gerald Balfour, under the assumed name of ' Mrs. Willett '. There are many accounts of her work as a medium in the *Journal of the Society for Psychic Research*, and a collection of post-mortem essays claimed to have been transmitted via another medium, Geraldine Cummings, in the book *Swan on a Black Sea* (ed. Signe Toksvig, 1970).

She was a colourful and warm personality who had sincere personal principles which she defended with vigour. She made a host of friends in her adopted country and had a great interest in Welsh culture, though she never completely mastered the Welsh language. She died 31 August 1956 at her home in 18 Cottessmore Gardens, Kensington. She wished for neither flowers nor mourning at her funeral. On 17 September a memorial service was held in All Saints by the Tower, where [James Nicholas](#) represented the Welsh Baptist Union and [Sir John Cecil Cecil-Williams](#) the Cymmrodorion.

### Author

Professor Graham Lloyd Rees

## Sources

Personal knowledge

*The Times*, 1, 8 and 21 September 1956

Emyr Wyn Jones, Winifred Coombe Tennant: 'Mam o Nedd' mawr ei noddod, *The Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, Vol CLI 1996, pp. [40-53](#), [85-103](#)

## Further Reading

Peter Lord, *Winifred Coombe Tennant: a life through art* (Aberystwyth 2007)

Robert Laker, 'Geneva in Motion: Winifred Coombe Tennant's Experiences at the Third Assembly of the League of Nations', (Unpublished MA: Swansea University, 2020)

Wikipedia Article: [Winifred Coombe Tennant](#)

## Additional Links

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