

A close-up portrait of Stephen Crabb, a man with dark hair, a beard, and blue eyes, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and red tie. The background is a plain, light grey.

# the welsh agenda

**Stephen Crabb  
talks to  
David Cornock**

**&  
David Marquand  
Jasmine Donahaye  
Adam Price  
Beti George  
Leighton Andrews**

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# The boiling frog

**It may not withstand scientific scrutiny but the anecdote of the frog placed in boiling water could well be a metaphor for the state of the media in Wales. The frog dropped into hot water will immediately jump to save its life, but the frog placed in cold water, which is being gradually heated, will not react as it is slowly boiled to death.**

The difference in the data presented in the IWA's new Media Audit with that in the IWA's last audit in 2008 leaves one reaching for the thermometer.

Seven years ago it was clear that the media landscape in Wales was significantly sparser than in either Scotland or Northern Ireland. The 2008 Audit concluded: "Of the three, Wales has the weakest print environment, the weakest commercial radio sector, is the only country where none of its commercial radio stations is indigenously owned, is the only one of the three whose ITV franchise holder was absorbed into ITV plc, and the country where the BBC is most dominant in both radio and television."

While the availability of digital communications has, for the most part, significantly improved, the position regarding content for audiences in Wales is considerably worse.

The total spend by BBC and ITV on English language television output for Wales has declined consistently. The amount of money spent by the BBC on programmes for Wales in English has fallen by 25% in the last decade, as has the number of hours of television it produces.

S4C suffered a 24% cut in its central funding and ITV Wales now only produces 90 minutes of English language television a week on top of its news output - in sharp contrast to the independently-owned ITV service in Scotland (STV) which has actually increased its output.

There's not only less broadcasting about Wales available for people in Wales, but, inevitably, the range is also much narrower. Genres such as light entertainment, the arts and drama are minimally represented or, in some years, not at all.

The decline in the press meanwhile has been dramatic, Circulation of the Western Mail has fallen by 53%. It now officially sells just 17,815 copies a day, fewer than the South Wales Echo (18,408 - a 60% drop), the Daily Post (24,485 - a 33% drop), and the Evening Post (27,589 - a 46% drop). Moreover, the number of journalists employed in south Wales has fallen from almost 700 in 1999 to just 108 in 2013.

But, all is not lost. Online journalism seems to be flourishing. Wales Online has an impressive daily audience of 257,813 unique users and patches of 'hyperlocal' reporting give some grounds for optimism. Can analytics led journalism serve the needs of a nation with a weak civic society (as Rebecca Rumbul describes in her piece in this issues), and a static political culture (as Adam Price discusses)?

There's no doubt that there are challenging commercial, technological and political pressures on the media landscape. The individuals on the front line are doing their best to adapt, but the IWA's Media Audit seeks to set out the bigger picture and provokes us at to reflect and respond.

**Lee Waters, Director, IWA**

## Can you help us make Wales flourish?

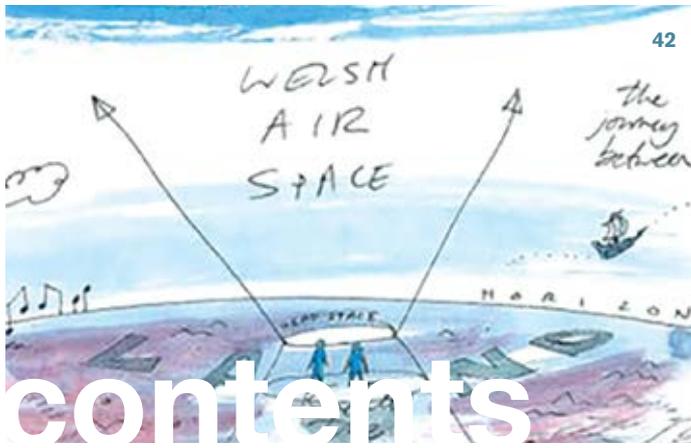
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Photo: David Wilson

# Crabb's Journey

**David Cornock** talks to the Welsh Secretary about his route from Pembrokeshire to Parliament, his view on the word 'Principality' and what the future may hold

Stephen Crabb's first political memory is a hazy but historic one: the 1979 general election that brought Margaret Thatcher to power. He insists he wasn't a precocious political anorak but remembers his mother voting because she took her sons to visit Haverfordwest Castle that day.

Thirty-six years later, he finds himself sitting around David Cameron's cabinet table after an apprenticeship served in the whips' office in both opposition and government. We meet in his ministerial office, reached by several flights of stairs deep inside the Palace of Westminster. It is small but well located, next-door-but-one to Michael Gove's. The shelves contain a mix of family and cabinet photographs, a model of a (Pembrokeshire) Mansel Davies & Son truck and his ITV Wales Politician of the Year award.

Crabb grew up in the 1980s; he is one of Thatcher's children. His political awareness grew during his teenage years, not just because of the political drama of Kinnock versus Thatcher but because of what was happening in the street he lived in: the right-to-buy. 'For the families living there, that was a big deal actually. I can remember lots of discussions going on amongst neighbours, informal gatherings at each other's houses about what kind of discounts people were getting on

their homes and the hurdles that people would have to clear to be able to buy their homes.

'It just so happened that my mum wasn't in a position [to take advantage of right-to-buy]. She was raising us on her own, me and my two brothers. She was never in a position to buy her home through that route but it made a huge impact on me. Visually the street I grew up in changed as soon as these purchases started getting made.'

Crabb is an enthusiast for welfare reform. But doesn't his mother's experience show the system works? 'For me, looking back, what I remember is the welfare system for us was about providing a genuine safety net at a time of crisis and severe need for my mother and her family, but what it didn't do was lock us as a family or a household into worklessness. I had a mother who, as we got older, moved progressively from a position of complete welfare dependency to being fully economically independent,

working full-time. And that has to be the model of the way the welfare system should work.'

Crabb went to Bristol University and attained a First in Politics but his sole experience of student politics lasted just ten minutes. 'I felt completely out of place if I'm honest with you.' He only joined the Party after graduation when he was living in the 'unwinnable, no-hope' seat of Southwark and North Bermondsey. The defeated Tory candidate in the 1997 Blair landslide, Grant Shapps (Tory chairman in the 2015 election), and Crabb have been 'good mates ever since.'

By 2001, he was a candidate back home in Pembrokeshire, winning the seat from Labour in 2005. Two years later, long after the Assembly group had embraced devolution, Crabb wrote an article for the Conservative Home website in which he declared he was still a 'devo-sceptic' and warned about the 'constitutional vandalism' of a settlement leading to 'socialism and separatism.'

I ask when he gave up being a devo-sceptic. 'Good question,' is the initial response. He admits he was 'slower than some' to recognise that devolution wasn't going to go away. 'I wouldn't use that term [devo-sceptic] any more, no. And I wouldn't subscribe to some of the sentiments in that article any more. I think the phrase "constitutional vandalism" [was not] right. I was crudely expressing concerns and risks as I felt it around devolution. But in terms of where the turning point came, certainly by 2007 I was recognising that devolution was here to stay.

'I guess in terms of what's warmed me up to it is... after the 2010 election I took a bit of time to go back and read a load of books about Welsh history which I'd never read when I was doing history at school.' His 'remedial work' included John Davies' *History of Wales* and *Gerald of Wales*, among others.

'Waving your flag and beating your chest at Six Nations matches, wearing a daffodil on March 1st, is not strong enough. The reality of Welsh nationhood goes way back beyond the foundations of the United Kingdom, back before the English actually, which is why the future

## He is keen on another P-word too: he wants the National Assembly to become a parliament and the next piece of Welsh legislation will allow it to do so.

of the United Kingdom is too important to leave to the English.'

For all the talk of Welsh nationhood, he doesn't object to the P-word. 'I don't have any qualms about calling it a principality and neither does our national rugby stadium. I was quite surprised when that controversy got raised. It is controversial in some quarters to use the word "principality" but we have a Prince of Wales so I don't see any qualms if people want to call it a principality from time to time but that doesn't detract in any way, shape or form from recognising the reality of Welsh nationhood.'

He is keen on another P-word too: he wants the National Assembly to become a parliament and the next piece of Welsh legislation will allow it to do so. 'This is what the Assembly is destined to become and it's destined to become that because the people of Wales have willed it so. [In] the 2011 referendum they voted for the assembly to have full law-making powers.

'What I think we were all surprised by was the margin of difference. I was slightly wrong-footed by this. I didn't anticipate that people in Pembrokeshire were going to vote for full law-making powers for the Assembly in quite the way they did and what that says is there has been a major shift in Welsh public sentiment about devolution since that very first referendum.'

Crabb's political wishlist for the coming year is topped by a desire to force Labour from power in Cardiff Bay. 'I don't think you're going to see the spectacular collapse that we've seen in Scotland, but I think some of the same conditions are there... so I'm optimistic that change is possible. We are living in an age when the frequency of political earthquakes seems to be increasing: Scotland, Corbyn. In the absence of that major seismic event that will propel one party to a majority we need to be thinking about the C-word - coalition. I

want the other parties in the Assembly to think in different ways about how to achieve a non-Labour alternative.'

Stephen Crabb is the eleventh Secretary of State for Wales during my 27 years in pursuit of Welsh angles at Westminster. He shares some characteristics with his predecessors: the pragmatism of David Hunt, the humble background and faith of Paul Murphy, the media-savvy of Peter Hain and the ambition of William Hague.

Crabb's ambition has not gone unnoticed in Downing Street. Hosting a St David's Day reception earlier this year, David Cameron traced his own Welsh roots to a tinplate worker Llewelyn Llewelyn before joking: 'This does not mean I want to be Welsh Secretary in your government, Stephen...'

So, Crabb for leader? 'I don't think I have an ambition to become leader, really. It doesn't feel that long ago in my life that the thought of becoming an MP seemed outlandish and unrealistic, so to find myself a few years ahead sitting at the cabinet table doing a job for Wales, I just feel incredibly blessed with that really.

'Of course there are other jobs in government that have UK-wide implications. Would I want a shot at doing something UK-wide? Sure I would, yeah, so long as I have the opportunity to bring my own values to bear and my own thinking, that's what I love about the job of being Secretary of State for Wales.'

Friends say Transport or Work and Pensions would appeal. Not that Crabb says he spends much time plotting his next job. 'The kind of people who do spent a lot of time thinking about their careers around here are the ones who sit on the backbenches, unfortunately.' Mr Crabb has no plan to change his seating arrangements any time soon.



**David Cornock** is the BBC's Parliamentary Correspondent for Wales

# Jez We Will?

**Roger Scully** considers what the recent polling might tell us about 'the Corbyn effect' on politics in Wales

What many would have thought impossible a few months ago has happened – and how! But now that Jeremy Corbyn is Leader of the Labour party, thoughts must begin to turn to the consequences of his becoming leader. With the party in Wales facing a potentially tricky Assembly election here next year, what difference might Mr Corbyn make to Labour's electoral prospects in Wales in May 2016?

After his landslide victory in the party leadership contest, Jeremy Corbyn was allowed little time to settle into his new job. Both his Conservative opponents and much of the media went straight onto a full-frontal attack. Perhaps in part because of this, Britain-wide opinion polls have thus far shown little positive impact of Mr Corbyn on his party's ratings. The 'honeymoon' period granted to most opposition leaders has been conspicuously absent. However, the first Welsh Political Barometer poll since his ascent, published in September, did seem to show at least some 'Corbyn bounce' for Labour. It also showed the new leader himself enjoying quite strong personal ratings from the Welsh public.

So what is Jeremy Corbyn's potential impact in May? A few points seem pertinent.

First, research does suggest that British-wide politics tends to have a greater impact on devolved elections in Wales than in Scotland. For instance, a direct comparison



of data on voting behaviour in 2011 showed that attitudes to UK party leaders, and to the performance of the UK government, were substantially more closely related to voting choices in the Welsh Assembly election than in the simultaneous election to the Scottish Parliament. Wales remains more fully part of the British political and media space than Scotland is these days. So there is therefore certainly considerable potential for attitudes towards Labour's UK leader to have an impact on Welsh Labour's electoral fortunes.

Second, and notwithstanding the September Welsh Barometer poll, the general trend in Labour support in Wales since 2012 has been clearly, and quite substantially, downwards. True, the trend in Labour's support everywhere has been downwards. But the line has been sloping down more drastically in Wales than England. In part, Labour's troubles here

appear to be related to evaluations of Labour's performance in government. Many people in Wales remain pretty hazy about what responsibilities are held by devolved government. But there is a general sense of rather moderate performance – broad public evaluations of the performance of government and major public services in Wales are not very strong or positive. We can see this, for example, in polling that Lord Ashcroft did on health some months prior to the general election. Across a range of different indicators there was a consistent pattern: public evaluations of NHS performance were the most positive in Scotland, less so in England, and consistently the worst in Wales. Labour's opponents will doubtless spend much of the Assembly election campaign energetically reminding people of who has been in charge of the NHS in Wales for the

last few years. So the Labour party here could do with any boost it can get.

Third, whatever its troubles, Labour in Wales does have some significant things running in its favour. The most obvious and probably most important is the lack of a single, strong challenger. The opposition to them is split – in a way which certainly makes it difficult to envisage a non-Labour government in the Assembly after the election, but which may also lessen the impact of that opposition in the election itself. Welsh Labour at present faces no political force fighting against it that is remotely comparable to the SNP. A second, and not insignificant advantage for Welsh Labour is the popularity of their own leader, Carwyn Jones. Although the First Minister's public profile remains lower than you might expect for someone who has been in his job for nearly six years, those who do know who he is tend to have quite a favourable view of him.

However, given the continuing impact of British-wide politics on Wales, Jeremy Corbyn is likely to have some impact on next May's election.

We need to avoid over-interpretation of the latest Barometer poll. It is only one poll, and one taken not long after Mr Corbyn's election. Although he doesn't appear to have been given much of a honeymoon, Mr Corbyn will still be benefitting from the 'benefit of the doubt' that many voters give to new leaders at the start. So while he seems to have made a decent start with the Welsh public, more difficult days probably lie ahead. Only the very best opposition leaders see their support trending upwards over even the medium-term.

Other evidence, from British-wide polls, show that the public perceive Jeremy Corbyn to be well to the left of centre. This perception could help Mr Corbyn with some elements of the traditional working-class Labour support in Wales that did not respond well to Ed Miliband. But the far left – which, fairly or not, is where the average voter places Mr Corbyn – is not generally the place where elections are won. Moreover, such perceptions, as well as the attacks on his patriotism he has already suffered, will also make it very difficult

for a Corbyn-led Labour party to win back the more socially conservative elements of Labour's traditional working-class base that have in recent times shifted to UKIP. The continuing prominence of the refugee crises, which exacerbates public concerns about migration, also does much to shore up UKIP support amongst such voters.

After an extraordinary campaign that, against all expectations, delivered him the Labour leadership, Jeremy Corbyn now faces some very new and unexpected challenges. He has shown that he can generate enthusiasm within the Labour party. But winning elections requires a political leader to extend an appeal much more broadly. The first polling evidence here suggests that Wales may offer some more promising territory for Labour under Corbyn. But he, and his party, would be wise to expect even tougher times ahead.



**Roger Scully** is Professor of Political Science in the Wales Governance Centre at Cardiff University.

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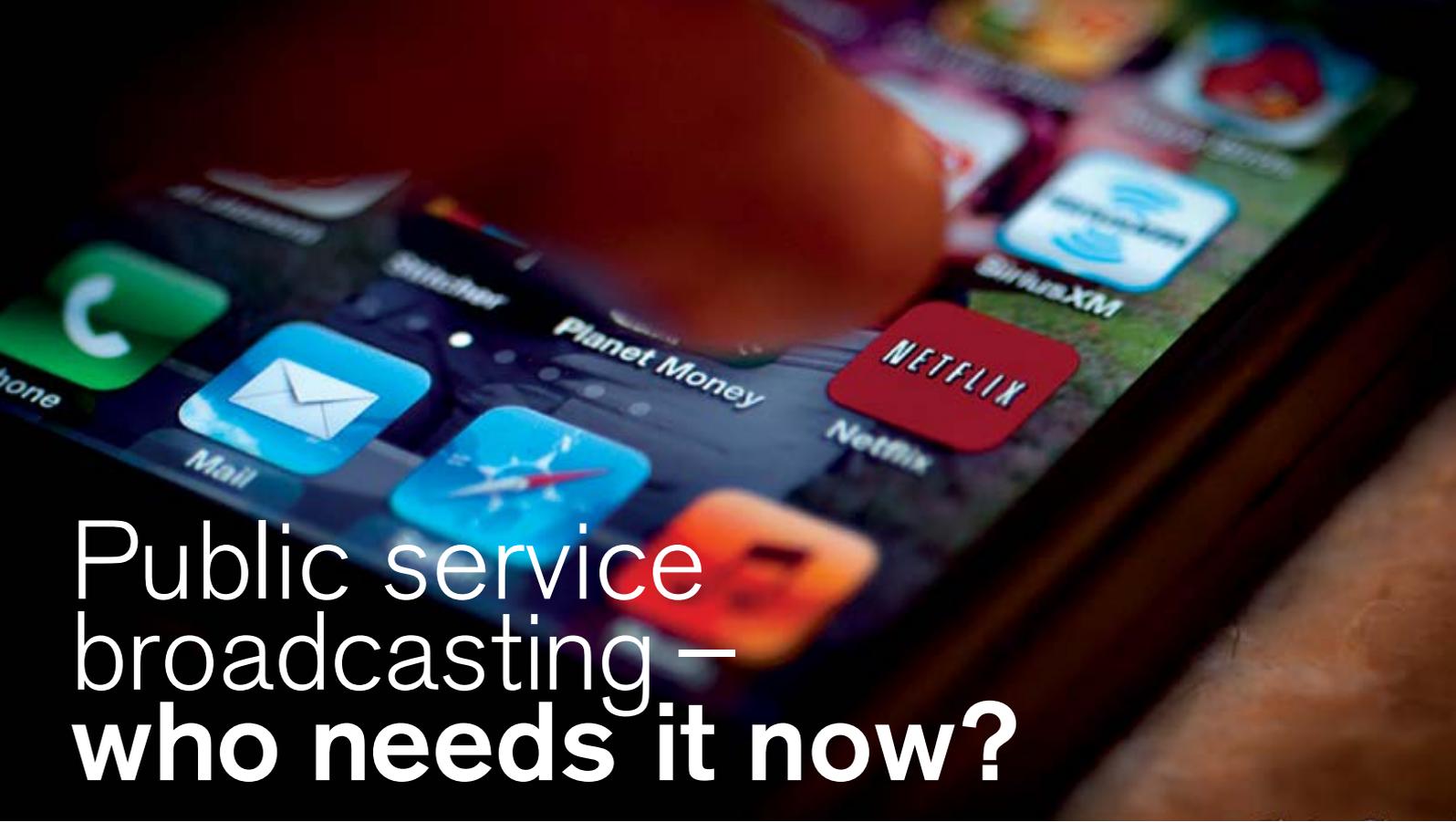
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# Public service broadcasting – who needs it now?

As the IWA launches its Wales Media Audit at an event in Cardiff on November 11th, **Glyn Mathias** considers where broadcasting in Wales may be heading.

For many people in Wales, the concept of public service broadcasting no longer means much. There is such a range of choice these days. On free-to-air television, you can get almost 100 channels; you can subscribe to Sky or BT and get hundreds more. With the spread of faster broadband services, you can subscribe to new services provided by new entrants such as Netflix and Amazon Prime. You don't even have to possess a TV set these days – a growing number of people are watching on a variety of devices, from tablets to smartphones.

It is not surprising that the younger generation is leading the take-up of these new modes of watching what is not really television any more. There has been a marked decline in the numbers of 16-34 year olds who watch a traditional TV set. Research by Ofcom in 2014 estimated that more than a quarter of the UK population were using tablets and mobile devices to watch programme content. And it is no different in Wales. In just one year, there was a 40% increase in the numbers of people watching catch-up and on-demand services, and a 25% increase in those

watching audio-visual content on other screens (*Ofcom Communications Market Report for Wales 2015*).

Does public service broadcasting still have any relevance within this plethora of digital choice? It was, after all, a concept invented in the days when there was just one television channel - the BBC, whose Reithian objective was to inform, educate and entertain. The current five public service broadcasters across UK television receive benefits such as guaranteed access to the airwaves, prominence on electronic programme guides and, in the case of

the BBC, funding from the licence fee. In exchange they commit to providing services that give a benefit to the public. It is that concept of the public benefit which I would argue remains crucial across the UK - and especially here in Wales.

It is not just the news and current affairs programmes which seek to inform citizens about their society; it is also the drama, the entertainment, the cultural programmes which seek to reflect a society to itself. Netflix or Amazon Prime, for all their inroads into the market, are not remotely concerned about such matters - merely

**It is not surprising that the younger generation is leading the take-up of these new modes of watching what is not really television any more. There has been a marked decline in the numbers of 16-34 year olds who watch a traditional TV set.**

## The universality of access to the public service broadcasters is under threat from the rapid growth of on-demand services, which increasingly do not provide content originated on PSB.

seeking a global market for their business. And which of the multitude of channels is concerned to reflect (in varying degrees) the society of Wales, with its very young democratic institutions? Answer: only the public service broadcasters, BBC Wales, ITV Wales and S4C.

This is not meant to be a lament for times past. It is an argument for ensuring that the concept of public service broadcasting is redefined and developed to match the digital age. This is going to be a challenge: how do the policy makers maintain the rules that guarantee access to public service content? The prominence granted to the public service broadcasters on the electronic programme guide is already being submerged by other content on smart TVs. The universality of access to the public service broadcasters is under threat from the rapid growth of on-demand services, which increasingly do not provide content originated on PSB. And online, the discoverability of British (or Welsh) public service content is at the mercy of multinational corporations based abroad.

The challenge for the public service broadcasters in Wales is particularly acute. The BBC at UK level may, thanks to its worldwide reputation, be able to hold its head above the online water, but how does BBC Wales maintain a distinct and separate presence? The proposal for a new interactive online BBC service for Wales, with a separate news-site, may go some way to meeting that challenge. In the world of video on demand, BBC Wales must upgrade its offering on iPlayer, if necessary creating a separate service for Wales – perhaps linked to the main BBC iPlayer. ITV Wales will also have to further upgrade its service for the world of on-demand viewing.

Broadcasting remains a non-devolved matter, so it is down to Parliament at Westminster, as well as the regulator, Ofcom, to be far more proactive in redrawing the rules to ensure that public service broadcasting can remain as universally available as possible in the digital age. Nobody can be sure about the pace of future change away from traditional viewing of linear TV, but it is better to be ahead of the curve. The principle of public benefit needs to be maintained - and this is not an issue that will wait.



**Glyn Mathias** is former Political Editor for ITN and BBC Wales; he is a member of OFCOM's Advisory Committee for Wales

The **Cardiff Media Summit** is being held on **November 11th 2015** at the Wales Millennium Centre in Cardiff. Hosted by the Institute of Welsh Affairs and supported by the BBC, the event will discuss the findings of the IWA's Media Audit that will be launched ahead of the conference.

The Audit is a major survey of the media in Wales – across print, broadcast and online and in Welsh and English – carried out by the IWA's media policy group and academics, and will include data and commentary on the state of the Welsh media. The IWA has published the draft Audit online at [clickonwales.org](http://clickonwales.org) to allow for feedback before its final publication at the summit.

BBC Director of Strategy, the former Culture Secretary, **James Purnell**, will be delivering the keynote address on the challenges facing the BBC ahead of Charter Renewal and the future of the licence fee.

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# A 'National' Health Service?

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Shane Doheny looks at the different paths being followed by the NHS in England and Wales

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There has been a lot of comment on how well the NHS in Wales compares with its English counterpart. While there are good reasons for making comparisons, many people point to the difficulties of comparing these organisations. The most obvious differences are that the NHS in Wales serves a vastly smaller population than the NHS in England, and that people living in England are, on average, wealthier, younger and healthier than people in Wales. But that is not all. The NHS in England and Wales are now remarkably different organisations. But just how different are these organisations, and what difference do these differences make?

Talking about the divergence between NHS in England and Wales suggests that there was a time when the NHS was the same in each country. But even under the old Welsh Office, the NHS in England and Wales were different. For instance, because of the culture and geography in Wales, the market reforms introduced by the Conservative Governments of the 1980s were not implemented in Wales (or Scotland) to the same extent that they were in England.

Since devolution, each healthcare system have been moving in very different directions. Whereas UK Governments have worked to develop and expand the role of the market in the NHS in England, Welsh Governments have worked to reduce and eliminate market mechanisms from the NHS in Wales. These differences have become more striking since the UK Coalition Government passed the Health and Social Care Act 2012.

## > The NHS in England

Famously, in 2010, the Chief Executive of the NHS in England said that the Coalition Government's reforms involved 'such a big change management, you could probably see it from space.' The subsequent Health and Social Care Act 2012 fundamentally changed the way the NHS in England is organised and operates. This Act abolished Primary Care Trusts, Strategic Health Authorities and the NHS Executive. In their place, the Act created GP led Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs), overseen by a national commissioning board (NHS England), and expanded the role of Monitor in the regulation of the internal market.

Commissioning was a central part of the system inherited by the Coalition Government in 2010, but NHS commissioning was criticised as weak. The government sought to address this by creating GP led CCGs. The idea is that through CCGs, GPs can use the knowledge they gain from guiding their patients through the healthcare system, to commission care on behalf of patients.

Alongside changes to commissioning, the Coalition Government also reorganised healthcare providers. The rules governing community health care were liberalised so that any willing provider could enter this market. In secondary care, the Coalition Government's aim was that all NHS Trusts would become Foundation Trusts by April 2014. This meant moving secondary care providers away from their financial accountability to government, and towards the Foundation model where they would become free (within certain limits) to make their own financial decisions.

For patients, the Coalition Government increased the patient's choice and control over which provider administered their treatment. To support this increase in patient choice, the sector regulator's role was expanded

to become an economic regulator. This regulator, Monitor, is there to ensure the health sector provides a quality service by ensuring that Foundation Trusts are properly managed and that essential services continue to be provided when there is serious difficulty.

*Commissioning was a central part of the system inherited by the Coalition Government in 2010, but NHS commissioning was criticised as weak.*

Perhaps the biggest change introduced by the Health and Social Care Act was establishment of a division between the roles of NHS organisations and ministers. Following the Act, the Secretary of State has no involvement in the day to day running of the NHS. The Minister's involvement is limited to an annual mandate issued by the Department of Health to NHS England focusing on outcomes. The NHS in England has, therefore, been restructured so that the system operates much more like a market, with its own economic regulator, and little ministerial involvement.

### > The NHS in Wales

The contrast with the NHS in Wales is really quite striking. While commissioning was used in Wales following reforms introduced in 2002, in 2009 the Welsh Government replaced this system with a simpler structure that unifies the planning and delivery of primary, secondary and tertiary care.

The 2009 reforms in Wales merged 22 Local Health Boards (LHBs) with seven NHS Trusts, to form seven LHBs that both plan and provide hospital and community services, and commission primary care. Specialist services are commissioned both by LHBs and by national boards (mainly the Wales Health Specialised Services Committee). Following these changes, three NHS Trusts provide specialist and all-Wales healthcare functions: providing ambulance services, cancer care, and public health services.

In many ways, these organisational changes reflected an even bigger change introduced in 2009, which was the decision to remove commissioning and to rely on planning. Instead of a having a buyer (or commissioner) purchase services from market based providers, providers work with professionals and service users to decide on the extent and range of services that would be provided.

By organising the NHS around planning processes, the Welsh Government introduced a very different organisational culture in Wales. Removing the split within the NHS between purchasers and providers meant removing money as the main currency that signals problems with, or preferences for, particular services. Instead the NHS has to rely on communication and power. On the one hand, planners have to work closely with patients, residents, social services, local authorities and the government to develop effective plans. But ultimately, the Minister for Health and Social Services is responsible for the provision of health care services in Wales, and so can be called to account for any problems or failures. This means it remains important for the Minister to be able to call

*By organising the NHS around planning processes, the Welsh Government introduced a very different organisational culture in Wales.*

managers to account for their actions.

So what difference do these differences make?

In some ways these different arrangements suit their different places and cultures. Healthcare markets seem suited to the largely metropolitan areas of southern England, while Wales' bureaucratic system suits its more challenging and dispersed geography.

But the difference has more fundamental implications. The UK Government's reforms have led some commentators to conclude that the NHS in England is now little more than a funding stream and a logo. The separation between the Minister and the health service, the use of an economic regulator, and the expansion of commissioning means that the healthcare system in England is no longer subject to ministerial oversight and is open to far more involvement from private companies. Any problems that arise are a matter for commissioners and providers to sort out, as the minister no longer has a duty to provide or secure comprehensive health care.

In Wales, the 2009 reforms strengthened the Minister's control over healthcare provision, while simplifying the provision of healthcare by using integrated organisations. In theory, the chain of accountability through these organisations is simpler and clearer. Accountability extends from the frontline all the way to the Minister who can be called to account to the public in the Senedd and by the Assembly's Health and Social Care Committee. The NHS in Wales still belongs to the people of Wales, in a way that can no longer be said for the NHS in England.

**Dr Shane Doheny** is a Research Associate at the Institute of Medical Genetics, Cardiff University

# Bigger isn't always better

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**Simon Parker** argues for 'small' not to be forgotten within the 'big' of local government reorganisation

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The late E.F. Schumacher famously wrote that 'small is beautiful', but in today's debate about Welsh local government it appears that the opposite is true. Leighton Andrews plans to create fewer, bigger councils. The current 22 local authorities could be reduced to as few as eight. With Welsh councils starting to feel the pinch of austerity, creating fewer, larger authorities is a move that could free up money to maintain frontline public services.

Experience east of the border tells us that this sort of reorganisation can work. It is possible to save money by reducing the number of senior officers, cutting back office staff and reducing duplication. The savings are seldom game changing, usually smaller than expected, and they often take a while to come through, but they are real. But local government is not just about efficiency; democracy and identity matter too and it is all too easy to lose sight of this fact in the quest for productivity.

Schumacher's book, *Small is Beautiful: a study of economics as if people*

*mattered*, was written at a moment of public sector gigantism. He himself worked for the Coal Board and had seen firsthand the way that huge bureaucracies which were supposed to secure social justice could actually trample over the needs of the individual and community. But he was not a simple-minded localist. Instead, he argued for a better balance between the big and the small. His answer to the question of scale is encapsulated in his idea of 'smallness in bigness'. How do we create organisations and governance on a large enough canvas to provide economies of scale for those things that need to be big, providing the right support to local people to take control of their lives

Perhaps the most exciting option for matching smallness with bigness comes from a set of ideas I have called 'the democracy of doing'.

and communities? Assuming Leighton has his way, this will be the challenge that austerity poses both to him and to the new megacouncils.

There are three broad ways to address the challenge of smallness in bigness. The first is to create formalised

local governance structures. Wales is already carpeted in town and parish councils which provide the first tier of decision making for local people. Their quality varies considerably, but with the right support they can become vibrant local organisations. Some larger parishes are taking on responsibility and revenues from assets like car parks and arts centres to fund the development of their towns. English parishes have started to develop their own improvement regime to increase their capacity. By encouraging parishes – perhaps even giving them a formal role in consultations and planning – the new megacouncils can ensure that grassroots democracy is not neglected.

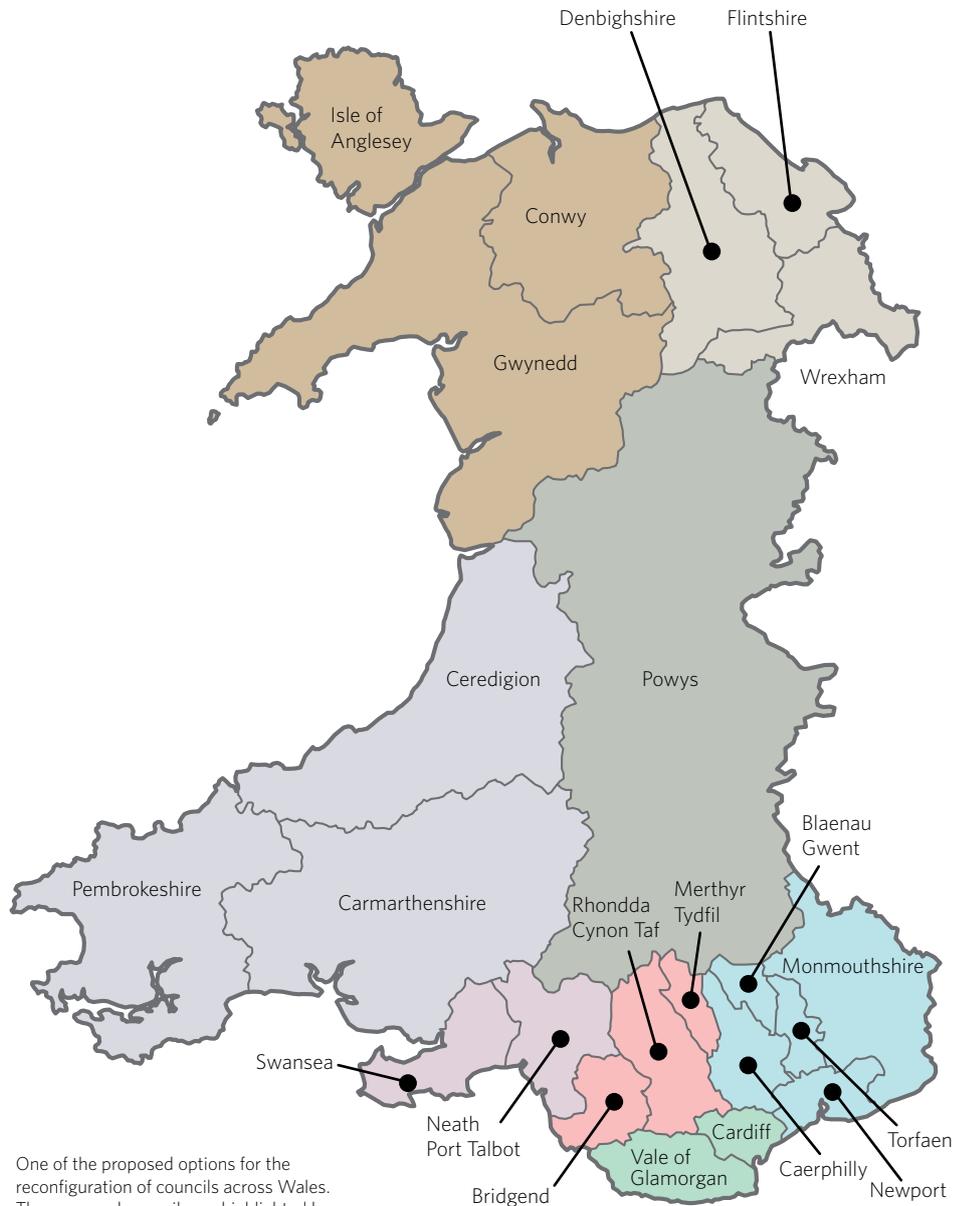
But there is much more to democracy than parishing. The bigger councils get, the more they need to focus their efforts on local consultation and the creation of local forums. Wiltshire County Council, which moved from its old two tier structure into unitary status towards the

The most democratic thing a council can do in this environment is to support local people to solve their own problems.

end of the last decade, has built a strong tier of areas boards to ensure local people remain involved. These bring a cabinet member together with local people, ward councillors and local service providers such as the NHS and police. The goal is to find locally-based solutions to problems like litter, road repairs and facilities for young people.

Perhaps the most exciting option for matching smallness with bigness comes from a set of ideas I have called 'the democracy of doing'. This reflects the idea that in the 21st century, the most important way that individuals can contribute to a stronger civil society is not by talking, but by acting. Britain is currently buzzing with new forms of social activity - look at the explosion in the number of co-ops over the past five years, or the success of social enterprises. The most democratic thing a council can do in this environment is to support local people to solve their own problems.

What does that mean in practice? It suggests that the new megacouncils need to pay a huge amount of attention and a decent slug of money to investing in building social capital and mutual aid, leading to the creation of new community groups and businesses that can care for green spaces and bring neighbours together to provide low level care to one another. Lambeth's Open Works project provides a key example. Set up as a shop



One of the proposed options for the reconfiguration of councils across Wales. The proposed councils are highlighted by the different colours

on a local high street, it attracted 300 local members and helped them start up projects they cared about - these include a trade school where people barter for lessons and a communal cookery club. These things sound small, but they provide a sort of anarchist infrastructure for community self-organisation.

Smallness and bigness sound like opposites, but Fritz Schumacher's great insight was that any sensible person

should want the best of both: a world in which large organisations provide the infrastructure to support the small, the local, the human-scale. Bigger can be better, as long as it enables people to take more control of the places where they live.



**Simon Parker** is Director of the New Local Government Network

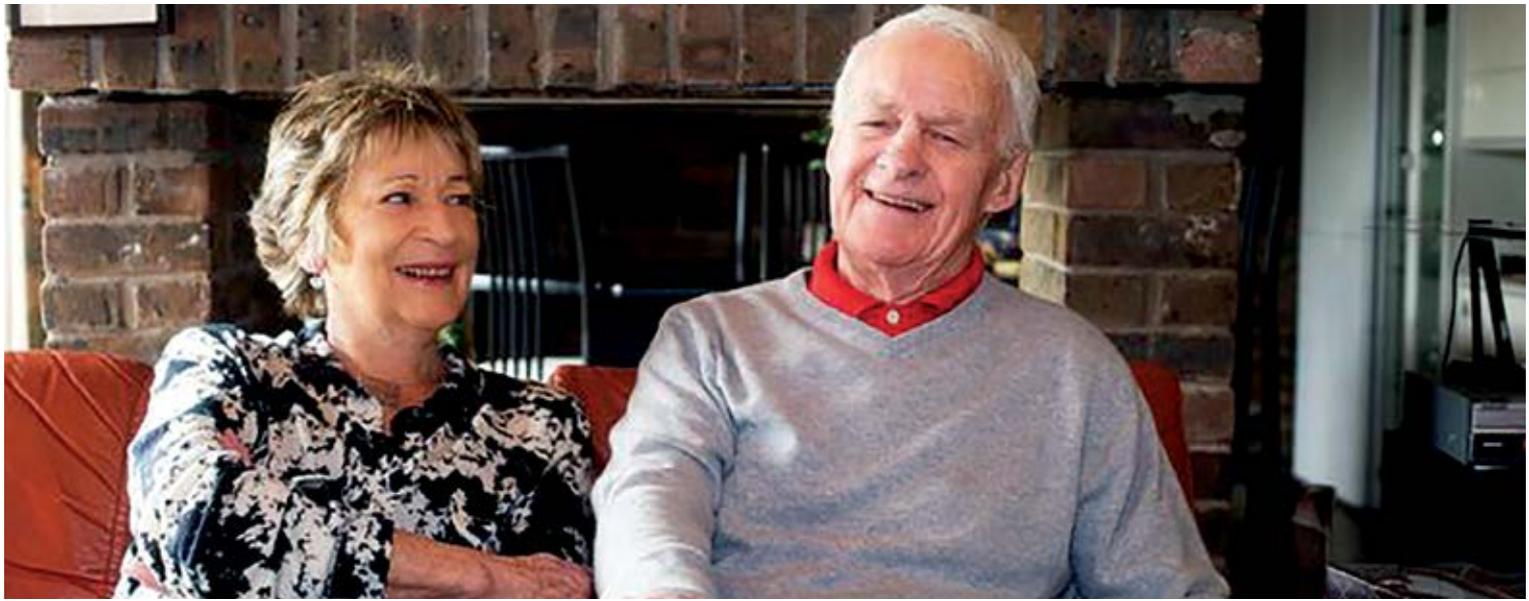


Image: Warren Orchard

# Dealing with Dementia

**Beti George** gave this year's IWA Eisteddfod Lecture, *Taclo Dementia: Allwn ni ddim fforddio peidio - Tackling Dementia : we can't afford not to*; here she outlines the challenges from her perspective as her long term partner's carer

David was diagnosed with Alzheimer's six years ago. Since then it has been a voyage of learning and discovery, highs and lows, laughter and disappointment. He sometimes sits with his eyes betraying his troubled thoughts. Like the other 50 million people worldwide living with dementia he is still able to think!

Since David received the diagnosis, awareness of the disease has risen. Newspapers are full of mentions these days and social media, too, sometimes carries the latest 'breakthroughs', though oftener than not these merely raise false hopes. Opinion polls show that those over 50 now fear such a diagnosis more than cancer.

But understanding has changed little. 'Dementia' has replaced the words 'losing memory', but people refuse to have their memories assessed: the headed notepaper inviting them to go for the test will often have been sent from a centre for mental health.

Many of David's erstwhile friends

keep their distance because they cannot cope. One or two call but will spend the time talking to me not him. Some share his fondness for books and are ready to go through one or two of the hundreds piled up on the bookshelves, some written by David himself. He has completely forgotten that he wrote about 15 books, mainly on rugby, and that he was once a successful commentator on the game. People ask whether he recognises me - which he does - and also whether he can be left on his own. Again the answer is Yes; and No, he does not wander. Those represent the clichéd recognition of the disease.

Help is sparse. The individual is diagnosed. He or she is sent home and if there is a carer - wife or husband, daughter or son - from then onwards these carers are on their own. Sufferers who have nobody to turn to, however, are truly on their own. Hundreds if not thousands in Wales will have to give up their homes to live in the unfamiliar surroundings of a residential care place. Were it not for my caring for him, this would also be David's fate - and that scares me.

Governments speak of care in the community. It's easy to see why. It is far cheaper for them as they depend on unpaid carers - family members. There are almost 700,000 unpaid carers looking after people with dementia in the UK, saving

the state £11bn pounds, the Alzheimer's Society tells us. Voluntary bodies - such as the Alzheimer's Society and Age Cymru - provide support. But carers have to spend time and effort to find whatever help there is. Time and effort are precisely what we cannot afford, as we need them for caring.

In Scotland the government has guaranteed that everyone diagnosed with the illness will receive a year's support from a link-worker. They also help to plan for the future, including financial issues.

Recently, Welsh Health Minister Mark Drakeford announced £800,000 would be available to appoint 32 support workers who will offer advice and face-to-face assistance. But they will have to help at least 45,000 individuals living with dementia in Wales. Nobody has come to our aid. Our GP is not sure how their practice will benefit. According to the Alzheimer's Society, one in five of those with dementia and their carers complain about a lack of support and services.

There needs to be a revolution in dementia care because the traditional way of caring for the frail, unhealthy, elderly person is not ideal for the completely different needs of dementia patients. A social prescription could be more beneficial than a medicinal prescription: writers, poets, artists, musicians to stimulate the mind and the brain. David responded well to an hour spent with John Killick, a poet who specialises in this area, and spoke about it for days. Weekly sessions of physiotherapy and keep fit should be deemed an essential part of the care

## *There needs to be a revolution in dementia care because the traditional way of caring for the frail, unhealthy, elderly person is not ideal for the completely different needs of dementia patients.*

package and are also essential to hold at bay problems with walking owing to the under-use of leg muscles.

The problem is the division of 'care' and 'need' into social and health categories. If you have brain cancer, care is free under the NHS at the point of delivery. If you have dementia, where the brain is diseased, just as in cancer, services have to be paid for. Most of those affected by dementia live in the community but hidden away, and the condition is dealt with (or not dealt with!) by financially-pressed social services departments. There are some allowances but they are limited. David gets an attendance allowance, which will pay half the cost of a domiciliary carer who will come in while I'm away. I am also grateful to David's children and friends who provide caring at other times when I cannot do so.

Dementia costs Wales £1.4bn pounds a year: almost a quarter of the total health and social care costs our government has to face every year. But those with dementia and their families have to bear two thirds of that cost: £298m on private care and the equivalent of £622m of unpaid care. Social care needs a more generous share of the pot of money available for health care and this would eventually lead to savings for the health sector.

Finding a way of unifying services is essential, however. The UK Government has itself admitted as much, pointing out on one of its websites that the provision of care by several different health and social care professionals, across different providers, results in health and social care services that are fragmented, difficult to access and not based around their (or their carers') needs. It acknowledges that good integrated care can reduce confusion, repetition, delay, duplication and gaps in service delivery, and people getting lost in the system. So, combining health and care budgets makes sense. One pot of money to

be distributed according to greatest need. And, the people providing the care to work closely together.

What is stopping us in Wales from delivering this kind of care? A reduction in the number of local authorities would lessen conflict – just seven local councils to work with the seven health authorities. That could lead eventually to elimination of the present division between the two sectors, and pave the way for all the care to be delivered by one service.

In the meantime, every one in the public, voluntary and private sector needs to work together, and offer greater consistency in the strategy and the provision of dementia care throughout the country. Provision must be available everywhere, too, for those who speak Welsh.

It is time, too, that the NHS employed Admiral nurses in Wales. In England Admiral nurses already offer excellent care - similar to the service offered by Macmillan nurses for cancer patients. An NHS pilot scheme in Norfolk saved £44,000 in its first ten months. There are already nurses specialising in Parkinson's and Multiple Sclerosis too.

Dementia-friendly or supportive communities are now being encouraged. This is to be welcomed, and they seem to be successful in many areas where there are dedicated people leading campaigns. For those with dementia who are independent and can still enjoy visiting shopping centres or cafes or post offices, knowing they have the support of the community makes life easier for them.

Countless reviews on dementia and dementia care are commissioned but it is difficult to gather and collate data that will give us a true picture. Clearly, however, we cannot rely completely on the state for support any more and this is why Wales should be at the forefront of dementia care. We have traditionally been a nation of close-

knit communities. Chapels - those that still exist - are important social centres. Schools can take part. Various societies, such as Merched y Wawr, the Women's Institute, and Round Table, could rally around.

As the Alzheimer's Society revealed in a report a year ago, in the UK, people with dementia and their carers are left footing a £5.8bn social care bill. Families provide £1.3bn worth of unpaid care. I am one of the 43% of carers who receive no help in our role.

Dementia friends or dementia supportive communities can not lessen that burden. With the scale of this disease and the cost soaring, and to remove the inequity and unfairness, the State must play a bigger part in the caring role, just as they do for those with cancer and heart disease.

Very importantly, too, Wales is at the forefront of research into the disease. At Cardiff University School of Medicine, invaluable research is being done and Professor Julie Williams' work on Alzheimer's is recognised worldwide. Professor Bob Woods, leading a team in the psychology department of the University of Bangor, has been given international recognition for his work in this field. So too has a Caerphilly project that followed the lives of a significant number of men in the area, showing that leading healthy lives decreases the risk of developing dementia.

Let Wales show we are capable of dealing with a disease that will affect the majority of us within a few years, unless we tackle it now. We cannot afford not to do so.

'I'm dead', I once heard David say, and there are, indeed, people who use the term 'living dead' about people with dementia. It is not like that at all. The next minute he was opening the door of my walk-in wardrobe and proclaiming, 'Wow - Amazing!' That proves he is still David and very much alive. And I want to make sure that he will continue to be so. And with greater support, I'm sure I would succeed.



**Beti George** is a broadcaster and journalist. The full lecture will be available to download from our website soon: [www.iwa.org.uk](http://www.iwa.org.uk)



# IWA Energy Roundtable

In June the IWA convened a roundtable to discuss our proposal to make Wales a net exporter of renewable energy. The seminar, sponsored by RWE Innogy UK, brought together leading figures from politics, academia and industry. **Tom Bodden** reports.

Wales has a potentially significant advantage in the quest to move away from fossil fuels towards renewable energy with a raft of resources both onshore and offshore. But big questions remain over the ability to use those renewable resources to re-energise the economy and communities across Wales. Any strategy has to contain a big programme of energy savings at its heart, with a target of a 35% decrease in total energy use.

## Ambitious targets

Prof Gareth Wyn Jones, a former Professor of biological and agricultural and forest sciences at University of Wales Bangor, set out the recommendations on energy from the IWA Economy Report. He noted that many of the potential resources in Wales were small-scale and dispersed: often a disincentive for large developers. 'An energy strategy has to have energy saving at its heart. We should be aiming at 35% decrease in total energy use,' he said, a figure that is 'attainable' but 'a long way off at the moment'. To get there, an 'integrated mindset' is required of government, with consideration of the energy implications of all policies. Making the change happen requires a number of barriers to be overcome: public perception, financing, planning and the speedy reaction of governments.

'The sooner we mitigate [for CO<sub>2</sub>], the

less we will have to adapt, but we have to adapt,' he said. 'There's no coherent energy strategy for Wales.' Wales needs a demand management strategy, an energy savings strategy, a look at generation linked with storage and smart, localised grids as well as overcoming the challenges posed by special interest groups and the lack of involvement of communities and individuals.

## Engaging communities and changing perceptions

Llyr Gruffydd, Plaid Cymru AM for North Wales and shadow minister for sustainable communities, energy and food, argued that having a direct ownership element in communities was key. He suggested one way to tackle this was a 'solar schools' approach where local people came together to install solar on school buildings, which often led to questions about whether this could be done at home too. The Assembly environment committee had visited Baden Wurttemberg recently to see a huge shift in energy policy in the Lander. 'They used to have the big four companies there. Now in Germany they have over a million entities, individual's homes, football stadia, small businesses. That's where we want to get to.'

RWE Innogy's Mike Parker said that there was a lack of transparency about what numerous types of renewable projects

entailed. People can often see the 'visual impact' but not the cost benefit of a project. 'There needs to be a thorough understanding of the choice a community has. Where I want politicians to move to is to force developers to do some of this stuff. What developers should have is an incentive to really think about this, deliver community action.'

The Welsh Government had spent tens of millions of pounds on planning consultants and inquiries in recent years battling to get large schemes through the system, said Alun Davies AM. The former Minister for Natural Resources argued that there was a lack of coherence in government. 'At the moment we've got the brochures but we haven't got the content,' he said. The priority was a clear policy, which reduced the risk for investors and took down barriers. Setting a target to create a 'renewable Wales' was far too vague.

Economist and IWA Trustee Gerald Holtham addressed the issue of how schemes that would not make a profit for communities could be paid for. 'You can't say to people we will put the wind farm nearby but we will give you a share of the profit because unless the thing is subsidised there isn't any profit anyway.' The Swansea Bay Tidal Lagoon project encouraged local people to become shareholders, noted Heather Stevens, founder and chair of The Waterloo

Foundation. 'People can be involved and that's a step in the right direction,' she said. 'But so much comes down to planning delays at every stage.' Llyr Gruffydd gave the positive example in Wrexham where the local authority decided all council houses would have solar panels and 'all of a sudden everyone else on the estate was saying, 'I'll have one of those' and that's the type of cultural buy-in you need from communities.' Much progress depends on political leadership, which Plaid Cymru's spokesman on energy said has been 'woeful' in Wales.

Rita Singh, director of policy at Cynnal Cymru, said that the government didn't seem to see the energy potential in its economic policy: 'In many ways Wales is subsidising renewable energy in Scotland and England because we don't have enough in Wales.' Holtham questioned whether public investment, as a loss leader, into something like a pilot of a super smart grid could allow communities to make a profit by linking into the large network. 'You have got to be looking for that way of generating a surplus,' he argued.

### Overcoming barriers to delivery

The bureaucracy faced by community groups aiming to set up as producers is daunting.

Llyr Gruffydd said that in Wales the process involved reams and reams of paperwork, whereas in Germany it is a three-page document. But Gareth Wyn Jones highlighted a successful small hydro scheme in Abergwyngregyn in the Snowdonia National Park. That has worked because it has some people who are extremely experienced, senior university staff, helping to get it off the ground.

The biggest problem for many small hydro schemes is the connection fee; one was

going to be charged £6m for a connection to the grid. 'This is something the Welsh Government should be nailing the DNOs (Distribution Network Operator Companies) over.' RWE's head of Onshore Wind, Mike Parker, said that larger developers could take the brunt of those costs: 'If we are there first we can create the infrastructure that's needed, but that infrastructure should have additional capacity to then allow community schemes to bolt on at a lower cost.' Investors need to be incentivised to build community support, he stressed: force them to do community investment through policy and planning but then reward them for it through the decision-making process.

IWA Director Lee Waters asked what practical measures could be called for to bring down barriers. Some contributors put some faith in the new Planning Bill but others were more sceptical. Llyr Gruffydd said if there was to be a national planning framework, never again should there be a situation where a TAN 8 (area designated for wind energy developments) is identified without provision for ensuring the infrastructure is in place to deliver. The framework within the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act should overcome some of those planning issues, involving people at the very beginning of the process, Rita Singh said.

But Llyr Gruffydd was critical of the Act. 'It's about a healthier, wealthier, greener Wales which everyone agrees with, but if you really want legislation that changes culture then pass legislation that says no public building will be built in Wales if it increases our carbon footprint.' Mike Parker argued that policy and planning was fine but ultimately useless if you had no fiscal control over

how things were delivered. Gerald Holtham suggested government could borrow a 'shed load of money' and say 'we are coming with you and you get the first X% of the return, that's a loss leader investment. If you think it is going to trigger other economic advantages or other benefits, you may be prepared to lose money on a particular investment'. Heather Stevens called for more debate about individuals 'turning off the light bulbs'. Alun Davies suggested an Energy and Climate Change Department created within the Welsh Government that would bring people together in with a clear agenda for both energy efficiency and energy generation.

### Additional tools?

Alun Davies highlighted the need for a focus on energy ahead of next year's Assembly election, adding: 'We've spent too long grizzling about powers available to us and not sufficiently about using the powers that we do have.' Gareth Wyn Jones said that 'the physical reality is we have to de-carbonise', the essential problem being how to marry this imperative with the economic reality that renewables do not, yet, always pay. Gerald Holtham said one place to generate a surplus is in energy saving. The Welsh Government controlled two big taxes: council tax and business rates. 'There is no reason why there couldn't be incentives via those taxes for energy efficiency.' An energy efficient house could be worth more, with the additional benefit of a slightly lower council tax. 'So get on with it and stop whinging.'

**Tom Bodden** was *Daily Post* Welsh Affairs correspondent from 1992-2014.



All pictures by Natasha Hirst.

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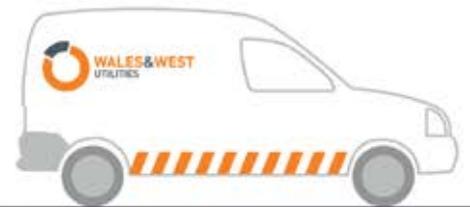


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Competitiveness and policy autonomy:

# What can Wales learn from the Basque Country?



**James Wilson** moved to the Basque Country in 2007 to work for Orkestra, the newly-established Basque Institute of Competitiveness. The Basque experience offers much food-for-thought for other regions and nations operating with a significant degree of political autonomy within a State. Here he outlines what Wales could learn from one of Europe's success stories.

The Basques arguably enjoy greater policy autonomy than any other sub-national region in Europe. Apart from defence, foreign policy, customs, economic regulation, social security and some large infrastructure projects, which are centralised in Madrid, the Basque Autonomous Community exercises control over all areas. Yet as in most places the story is not a simple one, and the reality is that Basque policy-making takes place in an extremely complex multi-level scenario. Three sub-regional provinces have tax-raising powers, alongside considerable policy competences of their own, and the funding for regional government activities is transferred from the provincial governments. A transfer also goes to the Spanish government to support the areas where they retain policy competences, and local municipal authorities play a key role

too in many areas, in particular around the development of the three main Basque cities, Bilbao, Vitoria-Gasteiz and Donostia-San Sebastian.

This complexity of policy-making levels requires considerable coordination and has necessitated innovative governance solutions that are not without their problems. Yet that the Basque Country is seen as a long-term success case in economic development within this context suggests that there are interesting lessons to be learned. In particular, policy has been instrumental in driving a transformation of the economy: from the industrial decline and high unemployment of the late-1970s and early-1980s to industrial renaissance in the 1990s and from there to the consolidation of a diversity of industries that form the base for today's innovation-

While a whole range of policy tools across health, education, culture, employment, environment and other domains have combined to foster a strong Basque economy and society, it is the policies supporting the transformation of Basque industry that have drawn most attention internationally.

oriented policies. It is in this context that the Basque economy has proved far more resilient to the present economic downturn than other Spanish regions.

While a whole range of policy tools across health, education, culture, employment, environment and other domains have combined to foster a strong Basque economy and society, it is the policies supporting the transformation of Basque industry that have drawn most attention internationally. A cornerstone was the early commitment of the newly autonomous government to support an 'industrial reconversion', at a time in the 1980s when it was unfashionable to talk about industrial policy. While much of the finance for the reconversion came from central government, it was regional government leaders who worked closely with Basque business leaders to ensure a real commitment to change that would lead to other cornerstones being laid that together would support the progressive upgrading of the competitiveness of Basque industry. For example, as pioneers of cluster policy in the 1990s, a culture of strong public-private partnership was fostered to address specific areas of weakness and to build on strengths. This was coupled with a targeted and evolving science, technology and innovation policy, built initially around technology centres and later around a wider range of institutions that today form the Basque science, technology and innovation network. Throughout, there has also been strong concern with internationalisation, and in particular with supporting the export activity of Basque firms and encouraging inflows of talent.

So, what are the key lessons that can

be drawn from these experiences, and from which Wales might learn? For me, three stand out.

Firstly, the boundaries between which policies work best at different levels are by no means clear-cut. Finding the right mix is a practical question that is highly context specific, but one that also can not easily be separated from the emotional attachment to territory that lies behind a desire for greater autonomy. Science and technology policy provides a good illustration. Regional autonomy has contributed to dynamism and agility in the development of innovative policies that have supported clear regional priorities, in part because different agents have pulled together behind the 'project' of the territory. Yet there are scale issues too that make certain regional priorities difficult to sustain in times of crisis and imply that certain infrastructure-intensive projects are more suited to national or European support. The exploitation of synergies across places is also a key consideration, especially if 'lock-in' is to be avoided. This means that it is not just a case of having policy autonomy at regional level, but also of how this policy is coordinated with that of other regions; an area where there is considerable room for improvement.

Secondly, the desirable level of policy autonomy cannot be divorced from the level of policy capability (including quality of institutions and stability), or from the desire to exercise that autonomy (which is strongly related to socio-cultural identity). In this respect, the Basque Country has counted on political stability, on strong leaders, and on capable people in government, which has enabled a long term strategy to be followed,

guided by certain visionary policies (cluster policy, for example) and supported by strong institutions. Private-public partnership, and in particular the presence of government leaders capable of engaging business and building networks, has been critical. Moreover this has clearly been helped by the economic development of the Basque Country being seen as part of a wider cultural project of identity, with much of the multi-agent commitment being built around Basqueness.

Finally, perhaps what the Basque experience demonstrates above all is that effective economic competitiveness policy goes hand-in-hand with a coherent strategy. Policy supporting the competitiveness upgrading of the Basque economy has been developed in the framework of a long-term and flexible strategy, which has evolved over time and continues to do so. Moreover, the role of leadership in such strategy, emerging in parallel from different sectors of society - government, business, education and so on - illustrates again the importance of the often-forgotten human element in our understanding of what makes for successful economic development.

*This article is based on a presentation made to a Learned Society of Wales international symposium in Portmeirion in April.*



**James Wilson** is Senior Researcher at Orkestra-Basque Institute of Competitiveness, Deusto University.

# The Centre-Periphery Game

The story is told of an elderly woman in North Wales who, when asked if she had been to London, said, 'Oh, no. It is so far from everywhere'.

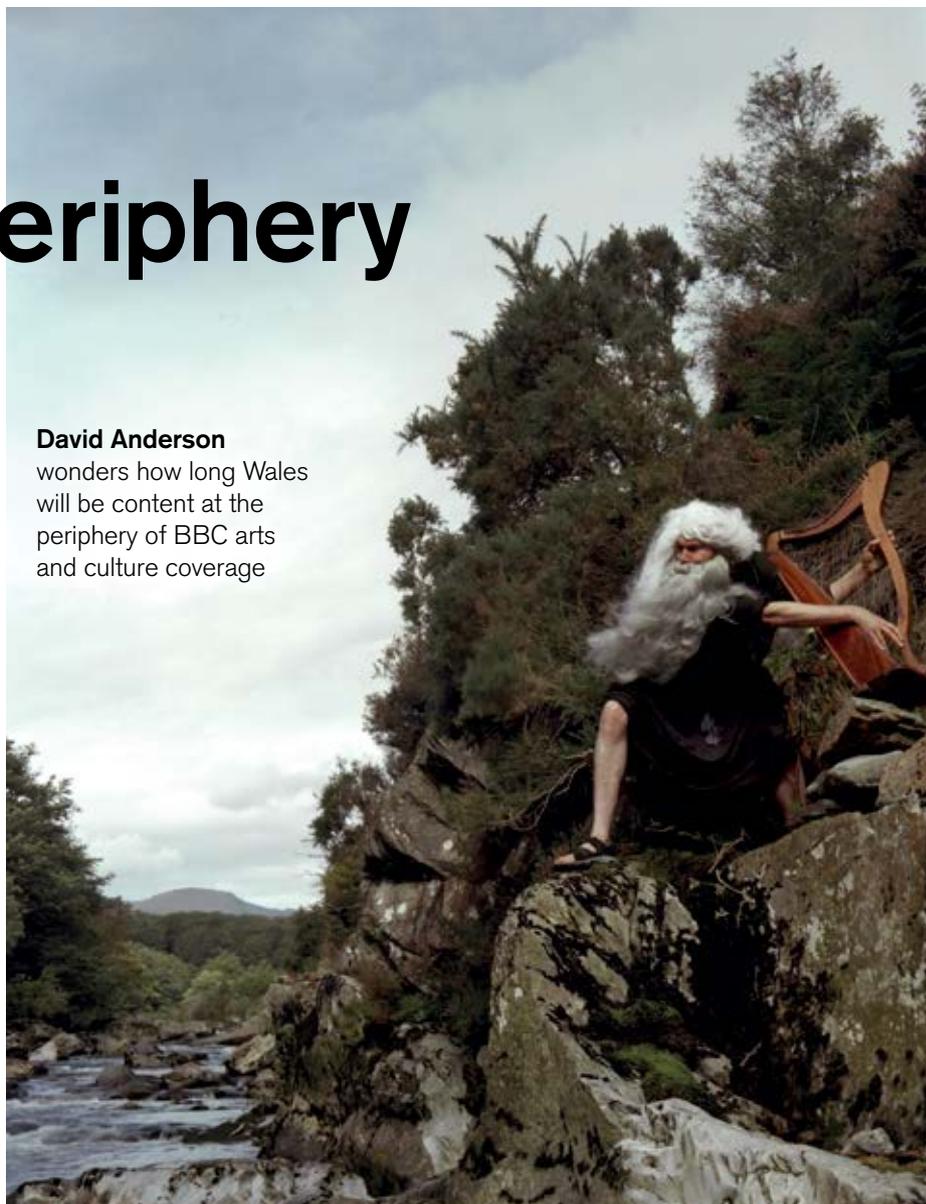
Last year, BBC Director General Tony Hall came to Cardiff, and spoke at the Pier Head Building. He was refreshingly frank in admitting some of the deficiencies of BBC coverage in Wales. 'We must acknowledge that English language programming from and for Wales has been in decline for almost a decade,' he said, adding that, 'comedy, entertainment and culture are not sufficiently captured through our English language output.' He then invited us to 'Just imagine for a moment Wales without the BBC. Where would a nation find its voice in both languages? Where would it be able to explore its identity, its geography, its people? How would a nation come together to share its common heritage? Or debate its shared challenges? Or celebrate its national successes?'

In effect, Tony Hall neatly put the onus on us, his audience. Rather than offering us a clear and frank analysis of the reasons why Network BBC has failed Wales in so many important ways, and outlining a plan for change, he made monopolistic claims for the BBC's current contribution to national life. In effect, he was saying we should be grateful for what London chooses to give us, and not complain.

It would be unfair to suggest that this went without challenge. The Welsh Assembly's Presiding Officer, Rosemary Butler, demanded that the media, including the BBC, address the democratic deficit in its coverage of public policy in Wales. But, by and large, we in the audience (and I include myself in this) let Tony Hall off without the critique his considered speech deserved.

We might have pointed out to him that Wales existed, with its languages and

**David Anderson** wonders how long Wales will be content at the periphery of BBC arts and culture coverage



'Bard Attitude', a piece by Bedwyr Williams (courtesy Artes Mundi)

identities, long before the BBC. We might have asked him, in turn, to imagine a BBC without the Celtic nations. We might have challenged him to conceive of a BBC that is not dominated by a London-centric perception of the world, and that better reflects Wales' arts and cultures, and its values and debates. And we might have reminded him that there is more to the arts in Wales than the Hay Festival, where buses are mostly timed to meet the London trains.

In 2013, Derry/Londonderry was host to the UK City of Culture. The programme brought a deserved and much needed profile to the city, but was criticised for including so few Northern Irish artists, and for the

variable quality of the works that had been selected. One evening, I joined a tour of the installations across the city, led by a representative of the City of Culture, over from London. During the tour, when asked about the local community's response, she said, 'Of course, these people have never seen anything like this before.'

Do 'these people' in Northern Ireland really not see, or create, contemporary art of quality and significance? Or did the prejudices and assumptions of the London organisers blind them to the talent that lay beyond their own cultural and artistic horizons?

It is worth comparing the BBC's coverage of Artes Mundi and the Turner

Prize. For some years Artes Mundi - an international competition that engages with social concerns - has been recognised by international contemporary art critics as a far more significant event than the Turner Prize. In 2014, the Artes Mundi winner was Theaster Gates, a Chicago-based artist with a global reputation. Yet the BBC's arts editor Will Gompertz (who previously worked at the Tate) again gave blanket coverage over several months to the Turner Prize, and made only one short report on Artes Mundi.

These are not isolated examples. I could have given many more from my own personal experience since I arrived in Wales from London in 2010. I suspect that almost anyone working in the arts in Wales could do the same.

Where do these attitudes come from? Who are those who decide what is culture and what it is not? The Sutton Trust has mapped the backgrounds of people in the top jobs in the media, the UK parliament, the law and other professions, and has identified the extreme and still growing advantage that parental influence and education at the wealthiest public schools and universities ensures. The nine circles of privilege ripple out from the Docklands, Westminster, Islington, and White City.

Of course, some who achieve senior positions do not have privileged backgrounds but, if they want to succeed, they are forced to become part of the dominant networks or be marginalised. As Ian Pindar writes in his poem, *The Spiders*:

They tell us how lucky we are  
to be ruled over by spiders  
and how our enemies  
are envious. . . .  
We don't like spiders  
But we are resigned to becoming spiders.

It is now nearly two decades since Wales voted for devolution, including the transfer of responsibility for culture to the Welsh Government. The BBC could have played a constructive role in this change. Instead, its attitude to Wales demonstrates how limited and ill-considered that transfer of power and decision-making has been.

The cultural infrastructure of any nation is an ecosystem, made up of a number of mutually dependent parts. As

well as arts and cultural institutions, these include the print and broadcasting media, the Lotteries and other public and private funders, the education sector, the tourism industry and - last but not least - the creative industries and creative professionals.

Wales has very great resources of creative talent. Despite deep cuts in funding as a result of austerity, the last few years have seen an extraordinary renaissance of many of Wales' national performing arts companies and cultural institutions.

Yet Wales does not get its fair share of resources. Funding of the arts, employment in the arts, public access and participation in the arts, and control of the arts in the United Kingdom are scandalously unequal. Research by Arts and Business has shown that 71% of arts and cultural funding from UK trusts and foundations, corporate donors and private individuals goes to institutions in the English capital, mostly located in just a few central London boroughs.

We are in the second decade of the 21st century, but we still operate with a highly centralised, nineteenth century, semi-colonial model for the arts - one which assumes that London is synonymous with excellence, and that to fund London is to serve Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the regions of England. It is as if the music stopped in 1910.

As the Artes Mundi example demonstrates, the arts in Wales do not get the coverage from the UK media that their quality deserves. This lack of recognition and publicity from the London-based newspapers and broadcasters - with the credibility that comes with it - makes it still harder for us to attract the private funding we so badly need.

We in Wales should give full credit to the BBC for its significant investment in Roath Lock and its drama productions, which have given a great boost to our creative economy. But BBC Wales - unlike its equivalents in England and Scotland - does not have a Centre of Excellence in the arts.

This is another reason why coverage of the richness of our arts - even within Wales - is so very limited, and on BBC Network is almost non-existent. This reality undermines the principle, embedded in law, that culture is a devolved responsibility. We lack the voice that Tony Hall claims we have.

Perhaps this is not an accident. At the time of the 2015 General Election, when the scale of the SNP landslide in Scotland became apparent, two of my acquaintances - one a Scottish nationalist, the other a leading Tory publicist - texted the words 'Win, win' to each other.

It is into this political pool that the BBC has recently lobbed its thinking on its future, in a document entitled, 'BBC: British, Bold, Creative'. This commits to providing the public with 'the best of British ideas and culture' but proposes nothing specific to address the deficiencies in Network BBC's representation of Wales. Without additional funding, it says, the BBC cannot increase net expenditure in the Nations. So nothing will change.

Is this a deliberate choice, based on a cold analysis that the BBC's interests during the negotiations on the renewal of its Charter lie with Westminster, not Cardiff, Edinburgh or Belfast? If so, it may be miscalculation. In a hostile neoliberal world, the BBC needs friends wherever it can find them. Instead it has alienated many in the Nations who would otherwise have been amongst its strongest supporters.

The United Kingdom is now a state in a condition of profound dis-ease. On 20 September 2014, immediately after the Scottish Referendum, Irvine Welsh excoriated 'Britain's tired and out-of-touch elites' who are responsible for "ripping apart . . . the big, inclusive postwar building blocks of the welfare state and the NHS". He spoke for many in Scotland. He might have added the BBC to the list.

The unreformed BBC, like the Britain it purports to represent, is dysfunctional and apparently incapable of adapting to the changing civic landscape around it. Who is the more provincial - the old lady from North Wales who had never been to London, or Tony Hall?

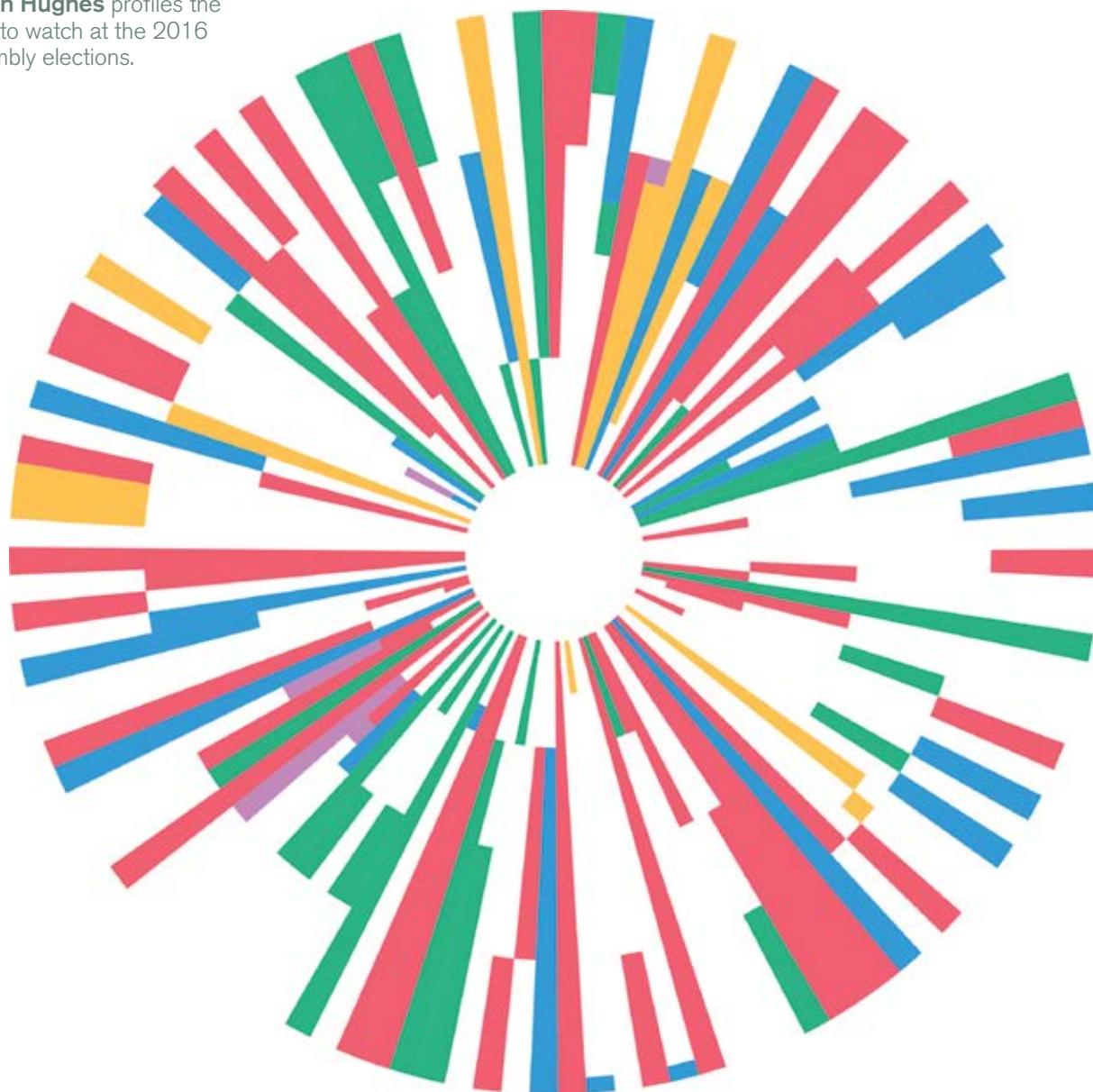
Why then are we so polite? Why do the arts organisations in Wales not unite to demand better? And for how much longer will Wales be content to play the role of Periphery, in the age old Centre-Periphery game?



**David Anderson** is Director General of Amgueddfa Cymru and former Director of Learning at the Victoria & Albert Museum, London.

# The makeup of the next Assembly

**Gareth Hughes** profiles the seats to watch at the 2016 Assembly elections.



The graphic shows every Assembly Member since 1999. The section closest to the middle shows the first Assembly from 1999 to 2003 and then moves outwards in time. Start at the top with Leighton Andrews; he's been a Labour AM since 2003. Then it's Mick Antoniw, who only joined the fourth Assembly, from 2011. (Graphic courtesy of Deryn, [www.deryn.co.uk](http://www.deryn.co.uk))

With one election done and dusted, another is on the horizon. Next May Wales goes to the polls to elect its fifth assembly.

Elections in Wales are more akin to the old Soviet Union than a Western democracy – there’s not much doubt as to who will govern, the only question mark is over whether they will do it alone or have to rely on a little help from another party. Yes, I’m talking about the most successful electoral machine in modern Welsh history – the Labour party.

As a party they have returned a majority of Members to the UK parliament since 1935, albeit with a declining share of the popular vote. But it is devolution that has given them real power. Labour have run the Welsh roost since 1999.

But never has the party achieved an overall majority; the Assembly’s proportional system mitigates against this.

Labour has been blessed with having a fragmented opposition that can never agree a programme of government. The nearest the three anti-Labour parties came to such was in 2007 when a ‘rainbow coalition’ was almost agreed. Eventually it came to nothing and Plaid Cymru decided

to throw in their hand with Labour.

For the political anorak here are the results for all the Assembly elections:

In 1999 Labour had 27 constituency seats and 1 list seat, which led to them forming a coalition with the Liberal Democrats.

Four years later in 2003 Labour won 30 of the 60 seats, all in constituencies. This allowed the party to form a government on its own.

2007 was the nearest Labour came to being kicked out of office. They were down to 26 seats, 24 constituency representatives and 2 from the regions. After much wrangling, the ‘One Wales’ deal was reached with Plaid Cymru and the second coalition in Assembly history was birthed. Rhodri Morgan was First Minister and Ieuan Wyn Jones from Plaid Cymru became Deputy First Minister.

The last election, in 2011, saw Labour back in the driving seat, ruling on their own. They had 30 Assembly Members, 28 in seats elected by the first past the post system and two elected from the proportional regional list.

Carwyn Jones’ administration cut

the occasional deal to get their budget through but apart from that the Labour ship of state sailed serenely on. The only change was in the ranks of the Opposition: here the Tories replaced Plaid Cymru as the Official Opposition.

So that’s the history, now for the crystal ball. What’s going to happen next? Mystic Gar makes the following prediction: Labour in government.

Granted, it doesn’t require a degree in political science to make such a prediction. It would take a very foolish punter to put money on any other outcome.

Now the crystal ball doesn’t predict that Labour won’t lose seats, but it’s unlikely that there will be a rout that sees them lose their perennial position as the Assembly’s largest party.

In which seats are Labour vulnerable? The starting point is to look at seats held at Westminster by parties other than Labour. Clearly, if the punters have elected another party to represent a seat in the UK parliament, then the Labour AM in that very same seat will be feeling a little uncertain.

So which are the seats with the fickle voters?

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## Cardiff North

Until 1997, Cardiff North was always regarded as a safe Conservative seat until it fell to Labour's Julie Morgan in the Blair landslide. The Tories suffered a double whammy two years later in the first Assembly elections. Sue Essex won the seat for Labour. On her retirement, the seat turned blue once again under Jonathan Morgan. He served one term. Julie Morgan gained back the seat having in the previous Westminster general election been given her P45 by the electors.

At the last Westminster election it was one of Labour's key target seats. A key indicator of the overall result, they failed to win it back; indeed the Tories increased their majority.

For the Assembly election the Conservatives have chosen a popular local councillor, Jane Cowan, to challenge Julie Morgan. A popular councillor taking on the stalwart politician makes for an intriguing contest. It will be close, but the Tories have a very effective machine in the constituency and could pull off an upset here.

## Gower

In May, Labour lost the Gower constituency for the first time in its 109-year history. Byron Davies won the seat with the barest of majorities: 27 votes. Hard work and the changing nature of the seat saw Labour toppled.

But will the Conservatives carry the success through until next May? Edwina Hart, the current Assembly Member, is standing down, so fresh faces will fight for the seat.

To borrow a footballing cliché, this is very much a seat of two halves. The north-eastern section, which covers the more industrial towns of Pontarddulais, Gorseinion and Clydach, has a declining population, eroding the Labour vote.

The western side of the seat covers the largely rural and beautiful Gower peninsula. Here population is increasing, many choosing the area as a place to retire – fewer Labour voters amongst them. The seat will be decided by whether or not the newcomers will bother voting in an Assembly election. They haven't in the past.

## Vale of Clwyd

The Vale of Clwyd was again a surprise defeat for Labour last May. No one saw it coming, but with hindsight it seems understandable. The reason – health. More specifically, the inadequacies of provision in Ysbyty Glan Clwyd have caused much public protest. Voters wanted to punish Labour and they did. Chris Ruane lost his seat to Conservative GP James Davies. The diligent and hardworking Assembly Member Ann Jones will have a real fight on her hands if she is to hold the seat.

The controversies surrounding the Betsi Cadwaladr health board may affect the Labour vote in other North Wales seats, such as Delyn and Clwyd South so there may even be more shock results on election night – although there is potential consolation to Labour: if they lose one or more seats in the constituency section in North Wales they are likely to gain a seat on the regional list.

## Vale of Glamorgan

Conservative Alun Cairns has represented the Vale of Glamorgan Westminster seat since 2010. But Labour cabinet minister Jane Hutt has held on to the seat for Labour since the Assembly's inception in 1999 (albeit with sometimes thin majorities: 926 in 1999 and 83 in 2007). Will next May be when the Tories finally win the prize?

In large tracts of the area, you might be forgiven for thinking that you were in a seat in Southern England. But it has a very working class area in the former coal port of Barry. Labour depends on the Barry voters turning out on election day. Perhaps here is an example of a seat where the election of Jeremy Corbyn as leader might help, by motivating the Labour vote.

## Brecon and Radnor, Ceredigion and Ynys Mon

Another seat to watch, but not one that affects Labour, is Brecon and Radnor. Here the seat in the Assembly is held by Liberal Democrat leader Kirsty Williams but her fellow traveller Roger Williams lost his seat to the Conservatives' Chris Davies last May. Will the Tory machine do for Williams?

Unlikely, but definitely a seat to watch.

Two other seats with different MPs to AMs are Ceredigion and Ynys Mon – but here the two Plaid Cymru AMs concerned, Elin Jones and Rhun Ap Iorwerth, should hold their seats.

## Llanelli

Other seats that Labour have lost and held since the Assembly was established are Rhondda, Islwyn, Preseli Pembrokeshire, Carmarthen West and Llanelli. Of these it's the Llanelli seat that's the most volatile.

Although Llanelli has been a safe seat for Labour in Westminster, the seat has changed hands between Labour and Plaid Cymru at every Assembly election since 1999, earning it a reputation as the most volatile of the 40 constituency seats in the Assembly. Plaid won the seat in 1999 with a majority of 688 over Labour; Labour took it at the 2003 election with a majority of just 21. Plaid retook the seat in 2007 with a majority of 3,884, and finally Labour snatched it back from Plaid in 2011 with a majority of just 80 votes.

Where it will go at the next Assembly elections is anyone's guess. The Plaid AM for the 1999-2003 and 2007-2011 sittings was Helen Mary Jones and she stands again. Labour AMs were Catherine Thomas for the 2003-2007 whilst the incumbent is Keith Davies, who is standing down. To stand against Helen Mary Jones, Labour has chosen a certain Lee Waters – a person familiar to the readers of *the Welsh agenda*. The latest Welsh Political poll shows it moving back to Plaid Cymru.

In an uncertain world, clearly the Welsh voter likes the predictability of one party rule. Whether there is drama during the election is uncertain but there will be plenty afterwards. It will begin when Labour decides whether or not to seek a junior partner to help them run the fiefdom that is Wales.

**Gareth Hughes** is a political commentator and a Fellow of the IWA.

# The Manifesto Makers



Behind closed doors, it's the busiest time of the political year; manifesto makers are meeting to decide on policy proposals and parties are putting together their election strategies. **Liz Silversmith** gives an insight.

Andrew RT Davies and Leanne Wood arguing over 'rainbow coalitions' this early in campaigning is no bluster. The Welsh Conservatives know, as do Plaid, that their best chance of government is in partnership with another party, either with each other or with Welsh Labour. Unless Labour manage a positive swing, they will need either a coalition or another minority government where budgets are passed with the assistance of an opposition party. It is against this backdrop that manifestos are being put together. Even if the parties don't admit it in public, the policies may be subject to coalition negotiations, which certainly makes it more likely that different kinds of pledges may be in the next Programme for Government.

For Welsh Labour, the Manifesto Coordinator is Ken Skates AM. A Deputy Minister who has held the Skills & Technology brief and now the Culture, Sport & Tourism portfolio, Skates is working with Campaign Coordinator Huw Irranca-Davies MP and the First Minister with his 'Carwyn Connects' town hall events to put together a winning manifesto. Embarking on a public consultation, Labour have a slightly confusingly titled '*The Wales We Want*' document which outlines key themes: a 'Prosperous and Secure Wales', a 'Healthy and Active Wales', an 'Ambitious and Learning Wales' and a 'United and Connected Wales'. It is

confusing because there was another public consultation undertaken earlier in 2015 called '*The Wales We Want*' in order to inform the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act. The categories are also very similar to the 'Wellbeing Goals' that are prescribed under the Act. However they do cover policy areas, as they are matched, respectively, to the economy, health, education and having a 'long-term vision' for Wales.

The document very much echoes Ministerial dialogue over the last few years and outlines policy initiatives already achieved; interestingly it also uses the term 'Welsh Parliament' instead of 'Welsh Assembly' throughout, indicating a forthcoming change in political nomenclature. It does not allude to many new policies, and forms more of a reiteration of Bills from the last Assembly. The only hint of tax policy is that it needs to be for 'values of fairness and sustaining public services provision' and 'not a low tax regime that leads of further cuts in public services.' This consultation closes in October, with the National Policy Forum meeting to discuss it on 22nd November. Perhaps more concrete policy will emerge then.

The Welsh Conservatives have a different approach. They've been holding roundtable meetings with organisations and are currently honing in on a policy focus. Suzy Davies AM has been

coordinating and they've emphasised that they are, unsurprisingly, focusing on health, education and the economy (the main areas where the Welsh Government drives direction, rather than needing UK Government approval). The party have said they want to hear ideas that demonstrate a commitment to co-production rather than any extra spending by the government. 'Localism' and a more flexible balance between public, private and third sectors is likely to feature throughout their manifesto.

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In terms of individual policies, the party spokespeople in the Assembly have been holding meetings within their own portfolio areas. The final document will be ready by the end of the year to go through internal party processes. In lieu of a Welsh Conservative autumn conference, Andrew RT Davies AM and the Secretary of State for Wales, Stephen Crabb, addressed the final day of the UK conference, and both men will have a focus on planning for the Assembly elections over the next few months.

Plaid Cymru has Elin Jones AM as Director of Policy coordinating their manifesto. They have launched their own consultation document, '*A Road Map for Wales*', and held some

public events in a roadshow with their Cabinet spokespeople. Emphasising the accessibility of Leanne Wood, they encourage discussions at events and on a one-to-one basis. Wood has also said Plaid would want the health and education portfolios in Welsh Government, indicating that these may be her 'red lines' in any coalition negotiations.

Plaid's policies are categorised into 'Getting Wealthier, Healthier, Smarter, Greener' and 'Being Compassionate and Fairer'. They've already made a fair few policy announcements such as establishing an arms-length company to run Welsh railways with public control and profits reinvested into lowering fares; a 'Build 4 Wales' scheme for infrastructure; a Welsh Development Bank; a £50m Drugs and Treatment Fund; a 10 year NHS workforce plan; integrated health and social services; a Green Skills College; 100% of electricity from renewables by 2035; rent controls;

and a publicly owned energy company.

The Welsh Liberal Democrats have a job to do in carving out their own identity to the electorate at large, so they can distance themselves from the failures of the UK Liberal Democrats. But they do have more say at the Assembly level, with their budget negotiations resulting in a policy of concessionary fares for 16-18 years olds becoming a reality in September. Coordinated by Peter Black AM, the party carried out a manifesto consultation over the summer and also held meetings with organisations. They will bring forward a motion at their one-day November conference over its key principles; these papers are already online and involve detailed suggestions on taxation policy, expanding the Pupil Premium, more investment in student hardship funds, grants and bursaries as well as improving standards for tenants and capping letting agency fees.

Finally, the Green Party and

UKIP. The Greens are putting together a document called a 'Policy for a Sustainable Society in Wales'. This will then be agreed at their November AGM and key parts of it used in their Assembly manifesto. For UKIP, former MP Mark Reckless is leading the way in terms of policy development. He's also been confirmed to be going forward as an Assembly Candidate, spearheading the campaign alongside head of UKIP Wales, Nathan Gill. Given their anti-devolution stance, it will be interesting to see what they propose to do with devolved powers.



**Liz Silversmith** has a background in working for Welsh MPs in Parliament and AMs in Cardiff Bay, as well as running campaigns. She currently coordinates the housing campaign Let Down in Wales.

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# The One-And-A-Half-Party state

Adam Price gives a pre-election rallying cry that reverberates far beyond the confines of his own party

It's time to state some inconvenient truths. Indeed, in Welsh politics, perhaps even the truth that dare not speak its name: devolution has failed. At least according to the terms it set itself. Yes, we do have a functioning system of government – which, when we eye developments in Belfast, is something we should never take for granted. There have been plenty of praiseworthy initiatives and innovations, many of which have graced the pages of this publication – from the Welsh Baccalaureate to the plastic bag tax. Yes, the Assembly has sheltered us from the worst banalities of Westminster government – Tory, Lib Dem and Labour. But devolution was meant to be so much more than a dented shield. When it comes to the fundamentals, improving our public services and our economy, the system has failed the people of Wales. And in this, our failing democracy, they are the only ones that can fix things.

The word crisis is bandied about too liberally in the political lexicon, of course – and on the streets, in the bars and cafes of any Welsh town there is certainly nothing like the air of popular insurgency that first swept the SNP to power and then brought a nation to within a 5% swing of freedom. Satisfaction with the Welsh Government is just above average – which is probably a fair assessment. Devolution has not been the unmitigated disaster that its detractors predicted. But neither has there been the devolution dividend – in health, education or the economy – that was promised. In terms of the national mood, in culture and sport there has been plenty to cheer. But there isn't that palpable sense, all-pervasive at the Assembly's birth, that a democratic

wave was going to usher in a new era of transformative change, that though a small country, we could dare to think big.

Let's ditch the hyperbole and check the facts for those three core determinants of happiness, how well we learn, live and earn. Education is an area that we might have expected would flourish with devolution. Wales has a long history as a pioneer: the first to create local education authorities, a national system of inspection and the first comprehensive school. By the beginning of the Assembly, despite the added challenges that higher levels of poverty represented, Wales still had a record of pupil achievement at 15 years of age almost identical to that of England. Since then our level of pupil achievement, relative to England and other comparator countries, has gone backwards – so much so that a former Welsh Education Minister, was forced to admit a 'systemic crisis.'

Because of differences in qualifications and changes in the way that education statistics are gathered it is difficult to compare Wales to the other nations of the UK consistently over the last twenty years. But using figures for the percentage achieving A\* to C grades from 1998/99 to 2005/06 we see Wales swapping a position of level-pegging at the start of devolution, to one of almost 6 percentage points by the middle of the last decade.

The gap in this set of statistics closed though the major reason is likely to be a widening of the definition of what constitutes 'vocational equivalents' to GCSEs in Wales from 2006/07 onwards. Using the slightly stricter data set of 5 GCSE A\*-C grades, including English/Welsh or Maths we see the gap widening

to almost 5 percentage points by 2012/13 (again differences in definitions following changes introduced in England make more recent comparisons difficult) (see Chart). A parallel gap in the proportions of students in Wales achieving A or A\* grades at A Level compared to England and northern Ireland was noted by former Secretary of State for Wales, Paul Murphy, as part of an inquiry into the steep decline in admissions to Oxbridge from Wales.

Perhaps the most damning evidence of all is the slide in the international rankings of Welsh 15 year olds abilities' in Reading, Maths and Science produced by the OECD. Wales has been tested three times since 2006 and we have slid ever further down the league table, now languishing well below the PISA average and significantly below the other UK nations. The Welsh education system is failing at both ends of the ability spectrum, according to the OECD, with 'a high proportion of low performers and a low proportion of high performers.' So much so that a country once synonymous with educational excellence has now become a laggard. If the Welsh Government was subject to the kind of rigorous assessment that schools and local education authorities are subjected to then it's hard to escape the conclusion that its Education Department would long ago have been placed in special measures.

As the birthplace of the NHS, health is also an area in which we might have expected to excel. The picture here, however, is equally troubling. The 'Gold Standard' in comparing the effectiveness of national health systems worldwide is 'avoidable deaths' (i.e. those deaths that

could be prevented through healthcare or public health interventions). The number of avoidable deaths continues to decline in Wales as is universally the case among developed countries. But the proportion of avoidable deaths in overall deaths remains significantly higher than England. The preventable mortality rate has also declined more slowly in Wales – 2% less overall over the period 2001-2013. If these seem like small numbers then it's worth noting that if Wales had kept pace with the region in England with the most similar health profile – the North East, which has declined by 36% compared to Wales' 28% over the same time period – then more than 800 people in Wales every year would avoid unnecessary deaths. As this is a cumulative failure, it amounts to thousands of avoidable deaths over the course of the last decade and a half.

Though many of the interventions necessary to save these lives are in the area of public health – an area where Wales, in the 1980s, was seen by the WHO as something of a world leader – it's likely that Wales' appalling record on waiting times is also contributory factor. By the end of July of this year, 27,313 patients had been waiting more than 36 weeks for their treatment, the highest number on record ever, and an almost fourfold increase since 2011. This cannot be so easily dismissed as Daily Mail propaganda. The Nuffield Foundation confirmed in a comprehensive study last year that waiting times for hip and knee replacements in Wales were on average 100 days longer than in England or Scotland – and waiting times for life-saving coronary bypasses or sight-saving cataracts had also declined. Figures provided by the Wales Audit Office in its systematic analysis of the problem earlier in the year showed that the median waiting time for a patient in Wales was about five to six weeks longer than in England, but, for those waiting the longest – the 95th percentile – it was 33 weeks in Wales, compared to 19 weeks in England.

Turning to Wales' dismal economic performance, it is fair to say it has been referenced so often in these pages there's little need to dwell on it again. But given the emphasis in Labour's case for devolution

in 1997 on the economic dividend it is at least worth pointing out that relative to the EU and to the UK, we are worse off now than we were then – down from 85% of the EU-28 per capita GVA in 2000 to 74% in 2011, and from 73.8% of UK average income in 1997 to 72.2% in 2013 (see Charts). The payback for Welsh voters' twenty-year-long loyalty to Labour it seems has been a decidedly negative return on their investment.

It's important to remember that behind these statistics lies the human cost of reduced earnings, lower grades and shorter lives. Individual explanations of failure will differ according to ideological prejudice. Is the failure in education due to an accountability gap – the decision not to test and publish league tables, or the lower amount of school funding per pupil? Is the failure in health the result of shutting out the private sector, or the decision post-austerity to cut health spending in real terms? I think if we really want to

## Welsh democracy is a 'one-and-a-half-party state' as the Labour Party is perpetually in government – though never yet as a majority government.

understand these multiple failures (which are repeated across other areas of policy not covered here) then we have to look for a deeper, more systemic cause.

By the time of next year's Assembly elections the Labour Party will have governed Wales at a national level for an unbroken nineteen years. This makes it the longest serving administration of any country in the whole of the European Union. It's not hard to realise why this might lead to problems. Every democracy needs the genuine possibility of political change. The pendulum swing of an alternative government brings with it new ideas and new leadership, the lifeblood of renewal. The opposite is stasis, inertia, fatigue. Croeso i Gymru.

Welsh democracy is a 'one-and-

a-half-party state' as the Labour Party is perpetually in government – though never yet as a majority government. A dominant minority-party may sound like something of an oxymoron, but it uniquely describes the peculiarities of the Welsh political system. It also perhaps represents the circuitry of power in Wales, neither fully closed nor fully open and always eventually leading back to Labour. It's a lesson that coalition parties – the half-parties co-opted through necessity – have had to learn to their cost.

There are, of course, plenty of examples of one-party dominated democracies – Gaullist France, LDP-led Japan or Swedish social democracy – that proved very successful, for a time. One of the reasons for this was that they created key institutions beyond the central state: France's ENA training ground for technocrats or Japan's MITI industrial policy powerhouse, for example. In Wales, we did the opposite, shutting down one of the few capable institutions we had, in the

form of the Welsh Development Agency, in a fit of political hubris.

Even the smartest of single-party hegemonies eventually run out of steam. Starved of the oxygen of new ideas, dominant parties become sclerotic, an ugly word for an ugly phenomenon: the furring of the arteries of a political system. I don't think it's uncharitable or sectarian to suggest that we are long past that point in Wales.

The problem has not been, as is sometimes said, a lack of ambition. The targets that have been set from time to time have been bold and laudable: achieving a GVA of 90% of the UK average by 2010, being among the top 8 European countries for cancer survival by 2015 or the top 20 worldwide in the PISA education rankings by next year. The problem was not the aim,

but the lack of a coherent vision and the kind of collective leadership necessary to achieve them. When ministers and priorities changed, the targets were quietly dropped.

Those with a sentimental attachment to the Labour Party may hold out hope that it will be possible to renew Welsh Labour from within. I genuinely wish them luck, but political history suggests this can only be done seriously in Opposition. It's precisely that opportunity for reinvention that Jeremy Corbyn has grasped at the UK level. But it's difficult to see Corbynism as a constructive challenge to the policies of Welsh Labour. Indeed, the new Leader has gone out of his way to praise Carwyn Jones' government as a model for the UK. Neal Lawson of Compass has described the big divide in modern politics being between incumbent Black Cabs, the mainstream establishment in power for years, fighting off the challenges of insurgent Ubers. When Jeremy, the Uberista, pitches up at Cardiff Central, it's a Black Cab he'll find waiting to take him to down to the Bay.

As a Plaid Cymru candidate for the Assembly, it's no surprise that my hope lies in the kind of 'velvet revolution' we saw in Scotland in 2007. Nothing would shake up the complacency of our policy and political establishment that, let's face it, have failed to deliver on so many fronts, than these four words: First Minister Leanne Wood. If you think this is a little optimistic then take a look at Alberta, which in May this year, saw a 44-year unbroken term of office by the Conservatives overturned by a New Democratic Party caucus that went from four seats to 53. Change sometimes comes like an avalanche.

That's not to say we should replace one party's dominance with another. Part of the very essence of what we were meant to be creating in the National Assembly was a new way of doing politics - open and collaborative, inclusive and diverse. There were signs of that in the first Assembly - the inter-party collaboration that despatched Alun Michael, the power of the Assembly Committees, the first coalition. But the adoption of a Westminster-style system of Government and Opposition has meant importing its values and its culture.

Two scenarios that cannot possibly

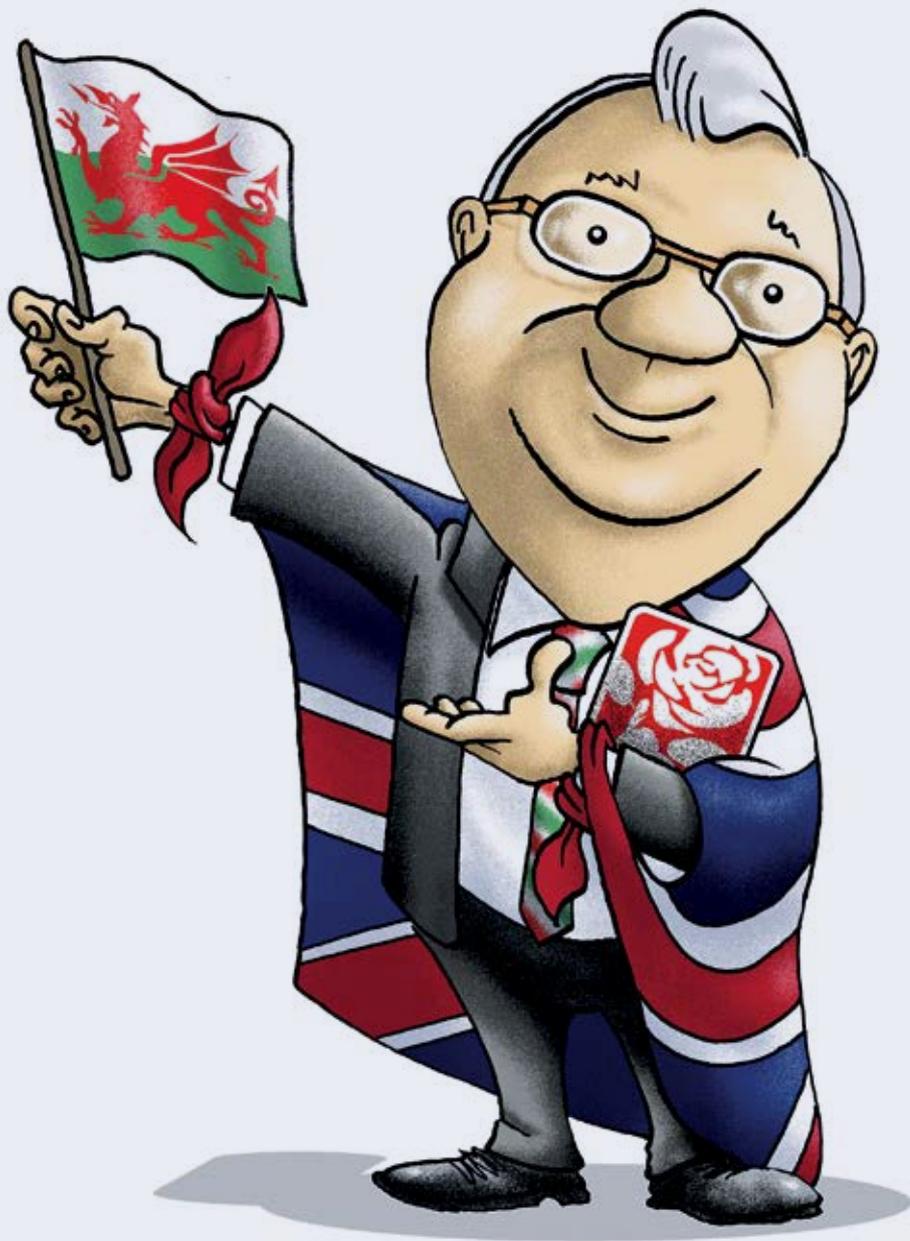
deliver the change we need we can comfortably take off the table: a simple repeat of the One Wales government with Plaid as a junior partner or a Rainbow Coalition with a Conservative Party that has moved far and fast to the right. Either of those options would simply entrench the political establishments in Wales and Westminster. But other forms of cooperation between and beyond party should be explored to the utmost. In Wales such is the extent of the challenges we face, we need a 'government of all the

talents' like never before. We need to press Ctrl-Alt-Del in Cardiff Bay and create a new high bandwidth democracy. One that recognises that no single party can have a monopoly on the truth, and that our collective intelligence consists of three million citizens, not sixty.

**Adam Price** is Plaid Cymru candidate for the Carmarthen East and Dinefwr seat at the next assembly election, in 2016.

*mumph*





# A New Union Mentality

Leighton Andrews makes an impassioned plea for a constitutional convention

It is 1995, and I am working in London, at the heart of Britishness, as the BBC's Head of Public Affairs, looking after relations with the Westminster Parliament and the European Parliament. That is the European Parliament recently expanded to represent

fifteen nations rather than twelve. That is a Westminster Parliament headed by a Prime Minister who has just called and won a party leadership election in which 89 of his colleagues voted against him.

There is no Scottish Parliament, no Legislative Assembly in Northern Ireland and no National Assembly for Wales. Princess Diana has not yet given her *Panorama* interview to Martin Bashir. The Joint Communique between the UK and Irish governments on the twin-track process on peace negotiations and decommissioning of weapons is a couple of months away. Divorce has not yet been approved in Ireland though a referendum is coming up. Jack Charlton is still Ireland's football manager.

Ireland's Culture Minister Michael D. Higgins has recently published his Green Paper on Broadcasting – the only Government consultation document I have ever read which quotes the German philosopher and sociologist Jurgen Habermas. I wonder what Mr Higgins is doing now! Frank Bruno has just won the WBC World Heavyweight Championship. David Trimble will be elected Ulster Unionist Leader in two days time – no doubt an equally pugilistic role. The Scottish Constitutional Convention's document, Scotland's Parliament, Scotland's Right is two months from publication. The SNP has recently won the Perth by-election and the deep-fried Mars Bar has just been invented in Stonehaven.

In Wales, Tower Colliery has been re-opened as a workers' cooperative. Richey Edwards of the Manic Street Preachers has just disappeared and Neil Kinnock has just resigned from Parliament to become a European Commissioner. Wales were knocked out of the Rugby World Cup after only three games following a narrow defeat by Ireland.

Meanwhile Eric Cantona is still suspended after his Kung Fu attack on a Crystal Palace supporter and Dennis Bergkamp is the most expensive football transfer in British history. At £7.5 million.

Now, does that all feel like a different world to you? It does to me. The following year, 1996, I got married in Cardiff, left the

BBC and returned to Wales to live for the first time since I had left shortly after our referendum defeat in 1979.

I list these things simply to say that in the UK I think we need to take stock. Not to slam on the brakes, but to appreciate how far we have come, and that just maybe, before we find we have set off in different and incompatible directions, having a map of where we want to get to might be helpful. We need a cultural change in Westminster and Whitehall. A move to a New Union mentality, away from a centralist mentality which sees Westminster, Whitehall and English practice as the norm and all others as deviant. The UK itself should recognise the profundity of constitutional change post-devolution, post the creation of the Supreme Court, and indeed post our joining the European Union in the 1970s. I believe that the notion of traditional Westminster Parliamentary sovereignty is now redundant.

In Wales, we wonder sometimes whether Whitehall and Westminster have realised that the constitutional world is different from 1995. The problem, I fear, starts at the top. Whitehall Ministers carry on with their jobs, often without the basic realisation that post devolution there are three kinds of UK Minister: those with genuinely UK-wide responsibilities such as the Defence Secretary and Foreign Secretary; those with GB responsibilities such as the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, who have to work through devolved structures in Scotland and Wales if their goals are to be achieved, for example in skills and training; and finally, those Ministers such as Education and Health who are largely now Ministers for England.

How many of us honestly thought it likely, twenty years ago, that the Union would come within a whisker of ending? The landscape in Scotland is, to use a phrase familiar to Irish colleagues in this 150th anniversary year of W.B. Yeats' birth, 'changed utterly.' My party knows better than most.

There is a seeming inability to address constitutional issues in the round. The Vow in the latter part of the Scottish

referendum guaranteed the endurance of the Barnett formula, without reference to Wales, Northern Ireland or the English regions, all of whom were affected. Constitutional issues are addressed on a bilateral basis between, say, Westminster and Scotland or Westminster and Wales, without wider consideration. Some issues are proposed for change without effective advance consideration of the constitutional implications – such as the proposals around reform of the Human Rights Act, which require agreement with both Wales and Scotland. Now my good friend Michael Gove has never been afraid of a fight, but even he I think will find this one a challenge.

There are proposals for a form of English votes for English laws within a single Parliamentary institution, with the Speaker as the final arbiter of what is an England-only bill. I have great confidence in Mr Speaker Bercow, whom I employed for five years from 1988-93, but this means that in Westminster, it is the institution's Presiding Officer who decides the competence of an England-only Bill, whereas ultimately for Wales it is the Supreme Court which may decide whether a Welsh Bill is within competence. Could the Speaker come into conflict with the Supreme Court? We shall see.

There are proposals for devolution to major cities in England without the requirement for referenda that the people of Wales and Scotland and Northern Ireland had to face. So why does Wales have to jump through hoops of referenda and repeated legislation while English regions gain substantial powers at the say-so of the Chancellor of the Exchequer without any meaningful public or parliamentary consultation?

The second chamber, wholly unrepresentative, the largest second chamber in the world outside China, has been expanded yet again. As usual, this only took account of winner-takes-all politics and had no regard for geographical or devolved interests and the long-term shape of the Union. Why should there be an expectation of entitlement to continue in an unelected legislative role just

because someone, like Othello, has 'done the state some service'?

A referendum on our relationship with the European Union is pending – which, as everyone knows, has potential to wreak havoc on the UK's own constitutional balance.

The Wales Bill will be published in draft this autumn. There is agreement in general on a reserved powers model – but there's a suggestion that Whitehall wants an enormous catalogue of reserved powers – which actually undermines the whole purpose of the model.

The Supreme Court's judgements in certain areas, notably the Agricultural Wages (Wales) Act and the Bylaws (Wales) Act have already widened the scope of understanding of the post-2011 Welsh devolution settlement. It would be intolerable and illegitimate – and contrary to the expressed wishes of Welsh voters – if the UK Government were now to try and trim back on powers already held by the National Assembly for Wales and the Welsh Government.

The development of the UK Constitution is a bit like watching a drunk getting dressed in the dark. Nothing seems to fit. And we don't know where they'll stumble next. That is why the First Minister of Wales called, three years ago, for a UK constitutional convention. I believe that such a convention is now the only way to preserve the United Kingdom. I appreciate that is not everyone's goal, but for those of us who wish to see the UK preserved, modernised and developed, albeit in something of a looser arrangement, this hell-for-leather slalom needs to stop before some parts fall off.

I see little evidence from the political classes in London that anyone is giving much serious thought to the future shape of the Union. At best, we have an ad hoc jumbled response. Successive UK Governments claim they'd like to see a definitive end to constitutional tinkering. So would I. The only way to achieve that is through a cohesive and comprehensive process looking at all aspects of future UK constitutional practice. The longer we avoid that, the longer we'll keep tinkering.

Some time after the devolution defeat

# 'Who will join us in making the case for a modern, creative, mutually supportive union of nations?'

in the 1979 referendum, the great Welsh historian Gwyn Alf Williams, fulminated that: 'We Welsh look like being the last of the British. There is some logic in this. We were, after all, the first.' Maybe our nostalgia for the union is based on something deeper than the union of the Crowns and Parliaments. After all, there was a time when a form of Welsh was spoken throughout this island. No doubt it will be surprising to some here to learn that the oldest poem written in what we now call Welsh - 'Y Gododdin' - was actually written in Edinburgh - *Caer Edin* - about a battle in Yorkshire. So, the oldest poem in Welsh is arguably also Scotland's oldest poem.

When we look back in twenty years

time, will the Scots still be with us? Will the English have tired of all of us? Where will Northern Ireland be? Will it be simply the Welsh who believe in a union bigger than themselves? Who will join us in making the case for a modern, creative, mutually supportive union of nations?

The UK urgently needs a UK Constitutional Convention - every year lost cedes further ground to nationalists and separatists. It should be open and it should seek to engage people beyond existing legislative institutions.

We are moving towards a system based on popular sovereignty - and the people sometimes show their sovereignty by spectacular indifference to and

resentment of elected politicians. The National Assembly was created by a free vote of the Welsh people - narrowly in 1997 but more emphatically in 2011 - and should only be capable of dissolution on the same basis. The Union is a union of four nations - let's be grown up about that and develop a constitution which properly reflects that reality.

Last year Scotland accepted that the United Kingdom was 'Better Together'. I prefer the slogan of the Football Association of Wales, on the eve of our home game against Israel - 'Together, Stronger'. But do others still believe that, or care enough to ensure it - or will insular Westminster party games and metropolitan provincialism kill the union?

I think we have a choice. But time is running out.



**Leighton Andrews AM** is  
Welsh Government Minister  
for Public Services.

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# Return of the Native

David Marquand revisits his Welsh roots and celebrates having come home to an unsettled political community



Young David Marquand with his mother

I was born in Cardiff 81 years ago and, though most of my life has been spent in England, my Welsh roots matter more and more to me the older I get. I begin with a brief look at them. Like me, my father Hilary Marquand was born in Cardiff, as was his father Alfred Marquand. His grandfather, my paternal great-grandfather, another Hilary Marquand, was born in 1825 in Guernsey. He worked briefly in a lawyer's office after leaving school, but the call of the sea was irresistible. As a cabin boy of 14 he sailed to Havana and thence to Trieste; on the return voyage the ship was chased by pirates off the coast of North Africa, and the captain succumbed to a severe bout of insanity. Undeterred, Hilary stuck to his chosen career, rising to become a Master Mariner. In 1867 he retired from seafaring and settled in Cardiff. He and a friend John Martin set up a shipping firm, Martin and Marquand, to take part in the burgeoning coal trade which was making Cardiff an El Dorado.

My great-grandfather Hilary died of smallpox, aged only 46, in 1872, but the firm continued to prosper. Though my grandfather Alfred was the least successful of great-grandfather Hilary's sons, he shared the instinctive, anti-intellectual Toryism of his more successful brothers. My father Hilary broke dramatically with the family tradition. He used to sell the Daily Herald, then a rumbustious, far-left socialist paper, outside the dock gates, and joined the Labour Party in 1920, aged eighteen. He won a scholarship

to Cardiff High School, and another to the University College of Cardiff in what was then the federal University of Wales. After graduating, he spent a year in America as a research fellow and then taught at Birmingham University. He was professor of industrial relations at Cardiff throughout the 1930s. He published a pathbreaking study, *South Wales Needs A Plan*, which still resonates today. He was drafted into the civil service at the start of the Second World War. In 1945 he was elected Labour MP for Cardiff East, and held a variety of ministerial posts in the post-war Attlee government.

Far more important than any of this was his marriage to Rachel, née Rees. She was born in 1903, in what was then the mining village of

Ystalyfera, in the upper Swansea Valley. She and my father met accidentally in the University Library in Cardiff; long after my father's death my mother told me that the first thing that struck her when she saw him was: 'he's beautiful'. Her family history could hardly have been more different from his. Her grandfather Ebenezer, my Rees great-grandfather, was born in western Monmouthshire, in 1848. He was illegitimate, and brought up by his mother's relatives in the village of Cwmtwrch, a few miles from Ystalyfera. He went down the pit at the age of seven. As a young man he was blacklisted as a trouble-maker and trade unionist. He emigrated to America with his wife Jane (who had taught him to read and write). Somewhere along the way, he learned printing; and when Jane's mother died, they went back to Ystalyfera and started a small printing business. In 1898, Ebenezer founded the first socialist newspaper in Wales, *Llais Llafur* ('Labour Voice'). It preached a blood-red socialism that would make Jeremy Corbyn look pale pink. It was both an emblem and a catalyst of a mood of insurgent popular defiance that swept through the South Wales coalfield in the early twentieth century.

As a child I wasn't conscious of this heritage. My grandfather Alfred Marquand died during the First World War, long before I was born. Though his widow Mary survived him, I can't remember her. But my mother's parents, David James and Roberta



Young David Marquand with his father

Rees, played a major part in my young life. During the War, their house in Ystalyfera was a haven of continuity for me and my siblings. Our family home in Llanishen may have been requisitioned; in any case we didn't live in it between 1940 and 1944. For most of the time, my father's job was in Cardiff, and we lived in a bewildering variety of places in the Vale of Glamorgan: a farm house called Maes Mawr; a disused railway office near Miskin; Radyr; and Porthcawl, then full of American soldiers training for the Normandy invasion. Then, in the autumn of 1944, we went back to Llanishen. I think of the year 1944 to 1945 as my first Cardiff incarnation. I travelled by train every day to school in Penarth (why Penarth I have no idea); I used to go swimming in Cardiff; and I have a hazy memory of going to an open-air play, on a warm summer evening, in the grounds of Cardiff Castle. I have a very clear memory of Sir Stafford Cripps speaking at a packed election meeting in the Cory Hall.

My second incarnation came nearly 20 years later. In late 1963 I was selected as Labour candidate for Barry. The actual election came ten months later. I lost, of course. The incumbent Conservative MP, Raymond Gower,

made Barry a safe Conservative seat.

But despite failing to unseat Gower, I learned a lot about the constituency – and a fair amount about Cardiff which the constituency encircled, like the outer ring of a doughnut encircling the hole in the middle. Despite its magnificent civic centre, I have to confess that Cardiff then did not capture my imagination.



Marquand's Parents' Wedding

*But despite failing to unseat Gower, I learned a lot about the constituency – and a fair amount about Cardiff which the constituency encircled, like the outer ring of a doughnut encircling the hole in the middle.*

was an indefatigable, inexhaustible, even compulsive canvasser. No sooner were the votes counted in one election than he was tramping the streets and knocking on doors in preparation for the next. Letters, sometimes of condolence and sometimes of congratulation, poured from his office to constituents of all kinds. All this had

In the mid-1950s the Home Secretary Gwilym Lloyd George, the great Lloyd George's son but to all intents and purposes a Conservative, made Cardiff the capital of Wales. But, unlike Edinburgh, Cardiff did not feel like a capital city. It felt more like an English provincial city – less exciting than Manchester, but more exciting

than Leeds. As that implies, it wasn't noticeably Welsh. I remember a member of the Barry constituency Labour Party telling me, 'Wales for the Welsh and Glamorgan for us'. That may have been a joke, but I suspect that it expressed a fairly widespread attitude.

My third Cardiff incarnation still continues. It started at an IWA event around ten years ago. Geraint Talfan Davies, then IWA Chairman, invited me to speak about a book of mine which had interested him; he and John Osmond the Director took my wife and me out to lunch, I think in the Millennium Centre. We joined the IWA, and over the years came back to Cardiff for several IWA events. Since then we have settled in Penarth and luxuriate in the ever-changing seascape and admire the beautifully restored Victorian pier.

The contrast between this incarnation and the second is extraordinary. Today no one could possibly doubt that Cardiff is indeed a capital city, and a remarkably vibrant one. Visually, the redeveloped Bay area is a splendid counterpoint to the Edwardian baroque of the civic centre. Richard Rogers's elegant and welcoming Senedd building is not just beautiful; it breathes a spirit of participatory democracy, a world away from the oligarchic archaism and pompous flummery that pervade the atmosphere of the Palace of Westminster. Visiting the Houses of Parliament you feel that they belong to that remote and myth-encrusted entity, the Crown in Parliament. Visiting the Senedd you feel that it is the property of the Welsh people.

But there is more to twenty-first century Cardiff than the visual excitement of the redeveloped Bay. The Senedd is the child of the Government of Wales Act of 1997 that gave the Principality a limited form of what used to be called home rule and is now called devolution, and of the subsequent Welsh referendum. In 1979, in the dying days of the



Hilary Marquand, David's father

ill-starred Callaghan Government, the Welsh electorate had voted by an overwhelming majority against devolution. In 1997 they voted by a tiny majority in favour (Cardiff and Newport voted against). But the minutiae of the result didn't and don't matter. What did and does matter is that for the first time since the days of Hywel Dda in the early middle ages, and arguably since the eve of the barbarian invasions in the fifth century CE, distinct Welsh political institutions now reflect and shape a distinct Welsh political will.

As a result Cardiff is now the most exciting city in the United Kingdom, and one of the most exciting in Europe. A brief look at the contrast between the histories of Wales and Scotland helps to explain why. Scotland was an independent kingdom for centuries before the treaty and acts of union of 1707 that created the United Kingdom. It had its own legal system, its own Presbyterian Kirk, which professed different doctrines and had a different form of church government from the Church of England and four great universities as against England's two. It also had its own Parliament, dating back to the fourteenth century. The acts



David James Rees, Marquand's maternal grandfather

of union of 1707 merged the Scottish and English Parliaments, but they guaranteed the continued existence of the other institutions that differentiated Scotland from England; and these kept the memory of independent Scottish statehood alive and acted as an enduring focus for a distinct Scottish identity.

None of this was true of Wales. What Wales had was the language. Its survival for centuries, not as a peasant patois, but as a language of high culture and learned disputation, testify to an extraordinary resilience among Welsh speakers. Yet it was a waning asset. By the early-twentieth century, Welsh speakers were a minority of the population of Wales, albeit a substantial minority. By the early twentyfirst the great majority of Welsh people didn't speak it. (Of the three greatest Welshmen of the last century – David Lloyd George, Aneurin Bevan and Dylan Thomas – only Lloyd George was a Welsh speaker.) Against that background, Welsh devolution takes on a special significance, absent from its Scottish counterpart. To put it simply, it has given the people of Wales new strings to their bow. As readers of the Welsh Agenda know only too

well, the devolution settlement was unsatisfactory in many ways. Despite subsequent improvements it still is. But with all its inadequacies, it has given the people of Wales, through their elected representatives in the Welsh Assembly and Government, a better chance of answering the primordial questions that face all political communities – Who are we? And who do we want to be? – than we have had for centuries.

At bottom these questions are philosophical, in a profound sense moral, not mechanical, economic or narrowly institutional. They have to do with ends, not means; with the intangibles of culture and sentiment, not the outward forms that clothe and all too often conceal them. In stable, settled political communities they are rarely discussed. They don't need to be. But the reason why Cardiff is such an exciting place is that the political community that is Wales is neither stable nor settled. Thanks to devolution it is unsettled. So the questions have to be debated, and the answers sought. I don't pretend to know the answers. No single person could. But I am sure of one thing. Some time ago a civil servant in the devolved Welsh administration tried, in my hearing, to distil in a few words the crucial difference between the political culture of Wales and that of the United Kingdom as a whole. The overarching theme of United Kingdom governance, he said, can be summed up as 'choice, customer, competition.' The Welsh equivalent, he thought, is: 'voice, citizen, collaboration'. Instead of endlessly looking over her shoulder at her English neighbour, the task for Wales is to make a reality of that magnificent trio.



David Marquand is a political writer and historian, a former Labour MP and Principal of Mansfield College, Oxford.

# Putting the patient experience first

Let's talk cancer

#IWA Cancer

## Jess Blair outlines the findings of the IWA's Let's talk cancer project

Getting experts together to devise improvements is the standard approach to policy development, but the expertise of the person who experiences the service is all too often absent in the discussions.

Building on our experience of using the 'crowdsourcing' approach with our online Constitutional Convention earlier this year, we extended the methods to the debate around cancer care.

We posed three simple questions online to people who had first-hand experience of cancer care in Wales: 'Tell us a good experience you've had of cancer care in Wales'; 'Tell us a bad experience you've had of cancer care in Wales'; and finally 'What would be your idea to improve cancer care in Wales?'

Over a six week period some 9,000 people engaged with the debate, primarily online but also through paper questionnaires in NHS settings. We worked with our funders for the project, Tenovus Cancer Care

and the Jane Hodge Foundation, as well as an expert steering group. We also recruited a panel of practitioners to test the practicality of the issues that emerged.

The outcome took us a little by surprise. Whereas the debate amongst politicians, journalists and lobbyists tends to focus on the availability of high-cost drugs and the length of waits for specialist referral, when we asked 'the crowd' for their views on what the most important issues to address the answers focused on the simple, everyday, issues facing people in the health service.

As Kirsty Williams, leader of the Welsh Liberal Democrats, said at the launch of our report: 'We [politicians] are actually missing the point, and that's why this work is so valuable, because we're actually hearing what is important.'

### The report recommended:

- > Patients should be given accurate information about delays to appointments on-the-day so that they may better manage their time during the delay period.
- > Patients should be able to easily access their notes and any letters relating to their case.

- > Financial support and information should be readily and easily available for people affected by cancer.
- > Patient transport provision should be clearer and more flexible prioritising the patient experience, with an emphasis on efficiency and timeliness.
- > Where possible some elements of care should be delivered locally.
- > Patients' records should be available to all practitioners treating the patient throughout their care.

These recommendations are not new ideas and they are certainly not just explicit to cancer care. We now plan to work with partners to try and develop these ideas further, and identify what the barriers to implementing these suggestions might be in practice and how they can be overcome.

Jess Blair is Policy and Projects Manager for the IWA.





# Can Wales get its 'fair share' of research funding?

Peter W Halligan

A vibrant research capacity in science, technology, engineering, mathematics (and) medicine (STEMM) is long considered a key element of national government strategies to sustain the economy and improve society. In the US scientific and technological advances produced roughly half of all economic growth over the last 50 years and in the UK innovation is credited with nearly two thirds of economic growth between 2000 and 2008.

In many countries, the strength of the university research base is crucial for supporting this innovation and economic success. Unlike England and other larger EU countries where much of the Research and Development expenditure comes from business, the Welsh research base lacks a significant private R&D sector and consequently relies on its research universities to produce 84% of Wales' research outputs and nearly half of all R&D investment.

In terms of research standing, population-based targets are commonly used when comparing the performance of the UK's constituent countries. Given strong UK-wide competition for UK Research Council funding, the annual total income from the four UK countries have been used for the past 20 years as a proxy of regional research standing. Since Wales never secured its 'standard population share' of 5%, improving RC grant capture was a key target for the Welsh Office in 1993 and a high profile target and cause of concern for successive Welsh Governments since devolution. Achieving this population share of RC income was also seen as an important step in stimulating economic growth. Reliance on securing Wales's UK share of RC funding however has contributed to a misleading and reputationally damaging perception of the Welsh university research base particularly when compared with Scotland, which wins considerably more than its standard share.

My recent report for the UK Leadership Foundation for Higher Education, *'The Case for Growing STEMM Research Capacity in Wales'*, co-authored with Louise Bright, provides some of the important backstory and reasons why, despite a range of well intended by HEFCW and Welsh Government initiatives, Wales has over the last two decades failed to achieve its standard share of total Research Council income and the Welsh Government's ambition to secure the standard share remains a high profile target.

The main reason why Wales did not secure the Research Council target over the past 20 years was that Welsh universities secured proportionally less research income from the high-spending science and medical research councils. This, however, was not due to poor performance, but rather to a historical and significant under-capacity in the number of academic researchers working in science, technology, engineering,

mathematics and medicine (STEMM). Welsh universities are relatively good at attracting research funding from the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC). However, both these councils distribute comparatively smaller proportions of the total RC funding.

To derive a more complete picture of the current STEMM shortfall in Wales, we calculated the total number of academic researchers in the four UK nations engaged in producing the UK's academic research base. Using Wales' population share of total UK academics contracted to engage in research we found that Wales' academic research population was some 0.5% below Wales's population standard share of 4.8%, whereas Scotland had over 2.4% above its country population share. Moreover, much of the research capacity deficit involves STEMM disciplines with the largest subject staff deficits being in clinical medicine, biosciences, physics, electrical and computer engineering, mechanical and production

engineering, and maths.

In addition to highlighting the need to better match policy outcome targets with levels of research capacity, our report shows that the Welsh research base, despite its relatively low share of total RC income and small levels of STEMM academic staff, is the most efficient at translating its relative low levels of research income into high impact research and at the same time producing research impact that outperform many similar sized countries both in Europe and worldwide. This is impressive given that R&D spent in Wales typically only represented 2.1% of the UK total.

The strategic decision by HEFCW to fund reconfiguration and collaboration over the past decade was largely intended to improve the quality of research conducted by Welsh HEIs and primarily directed at countering the effects of the sector's historical fractionation. While this produced little effect on the Welsh Government's high-profile target of growing research council funding, the initiatives were associated with

impressive improvements in Welsh research performance (as measured by published research impact) over the last decade and particularly from 2003 onwards.

While the long standing policy to secure Wales 'standard share' of UK research council income was well intended, it ultimately proved elusive and reputationally damaging due to Wales's historic shortfall in STEMM research capacity. Although mentioned in reports over the past decades, this underlying problem of under-capacity in STEMM was not seriously tackled until 2012 when the Welsh Government contributed £50m towards building a stronger science base. Building on this Sêr Cymru investment, Wales's current chief scientific adviser is currently planning further initiatives to address this capacity deficit and in the process improve Wales's ability to win greater competitive funding.



**Prof Peter W Halligan** is  
Chief Executive of the  
Learned Society of Wales.



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# Student Finance: time for a rethink?

**Ken Richards** challenges the anomalies, inconsistencies and costliness of the student finance system and outlines areas for potential reform

Given shrewd financial planning, in Wales it is possible for a student from a family with a household income of £100,000 and financial assets of £1million to receive the same package of support as a student from a one-parent family on benefits. The current means testing of access to funding is fundamentally flawed in two main respects: it is too generous to students from high-income families and the definition of household income used is out of date.

The move to a maximum tuition fee level of £9,000 per annum recommended by the UK government following the Browne Review in England has increased the flow of resources going to universities in Wales. In his recent budget, George Osborne announced that from 2017-18, universities that demonstrate excellence - the Russell Group comes to mind - will be allowed to increase their fees by the rate of inflation. Together with the raising of the cap on university places in England, this is likely to further handicap the majority of Welsh universities in their quest to expand numbers.

The issue of student finance is likely to be a lively one in the next Assembly. It is hoped that by then the Diamond Review into higher education funding will have been submitted.

Current policy on student finance has many features to commend. For example, the Assembly Learning Grant for disadvantaged students is considerably more generous than in other parts of the UK, totalling a little over £5,000 a year; in England the full grant was less than £3,500 and following the recent budget is to be

replaced by a loan. It is encouraging to note that, compared to a decade ago, these students in Wales are 65% more likely to apply for university, though in England the comparable figure is even greater at 95%.

Unlike England, Wales has also retained the Education Maintenance Allowance, designed to encourage students from poorer backgrounds to stay on in education after the age of 16: important since these students are just as likely to apply for university as other students.

However, the Tuition Fee Grant, which pays all universities with Welsh domiciled students the difference between their fee level and £3,685, is extremely poor value for money; it is mainly a middle- and upper-class subsidy, effectively paying students and their families for pursuing a course of action they would have followed anyway. Students from these social backgrounds are in a majority in every university in Wales, the proportion varying from about 54% to about 78% (Sunday Times University Guide 2015). I estimate the cost of this subsidy over the course of this Assembly term is around £1bn, not including the cost of

subsequently supporting students who will be in their first and second years during the last year of the Assembly term, also excluding EU students who are also entitled to the full tuition fee grant.

There is no evidence that this policy has encouraged more students to apply to university though it may have prevented a decline in applications. In terms of application rates, Welsh numbers remained at around 29% from 2010 through 2013 with a slight increase in 2014. Acceptances from Wales were roughly constant between 2006 and 2014 whereas in England, which did not have a tuition fee subsidy policy, acceptances increased by nearly 30%. It is true that in both England and Wales the number of 18-year-olds has fallen by between 5% and 7%, so a constant acceptance level represents some progress (Data from UCAS 2014 End of Cycle Report). Universities in Wales are concerned that this policy may encourage Welsh students to study outside Wales.

The Tuition Fee Grant is a bad idea for all students, not just those who study outside Wales. If we want to encourage Welsh students to study here, a non-means-tested grant could be introduced for those staying in Wales, which would have the additional advantage of not having to be extended to EU students. Cash in hand now might also prove a better incentive to students than a tuition fee loan deferment into the far-off future.



**Ken Richards** is a retired academic economist who was a member of two Assembly-sponsored reviews of student finance chaired by Professor Teresa Rees.

*Unlike England, Wales has also retained the Education Maintenance Allowance, designed to encourage students from poorer backgrounds to stay on in education after the age of 16: important since these students are just as likely to apply for university as other students.*

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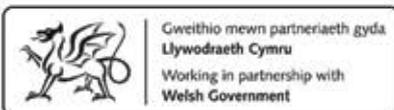


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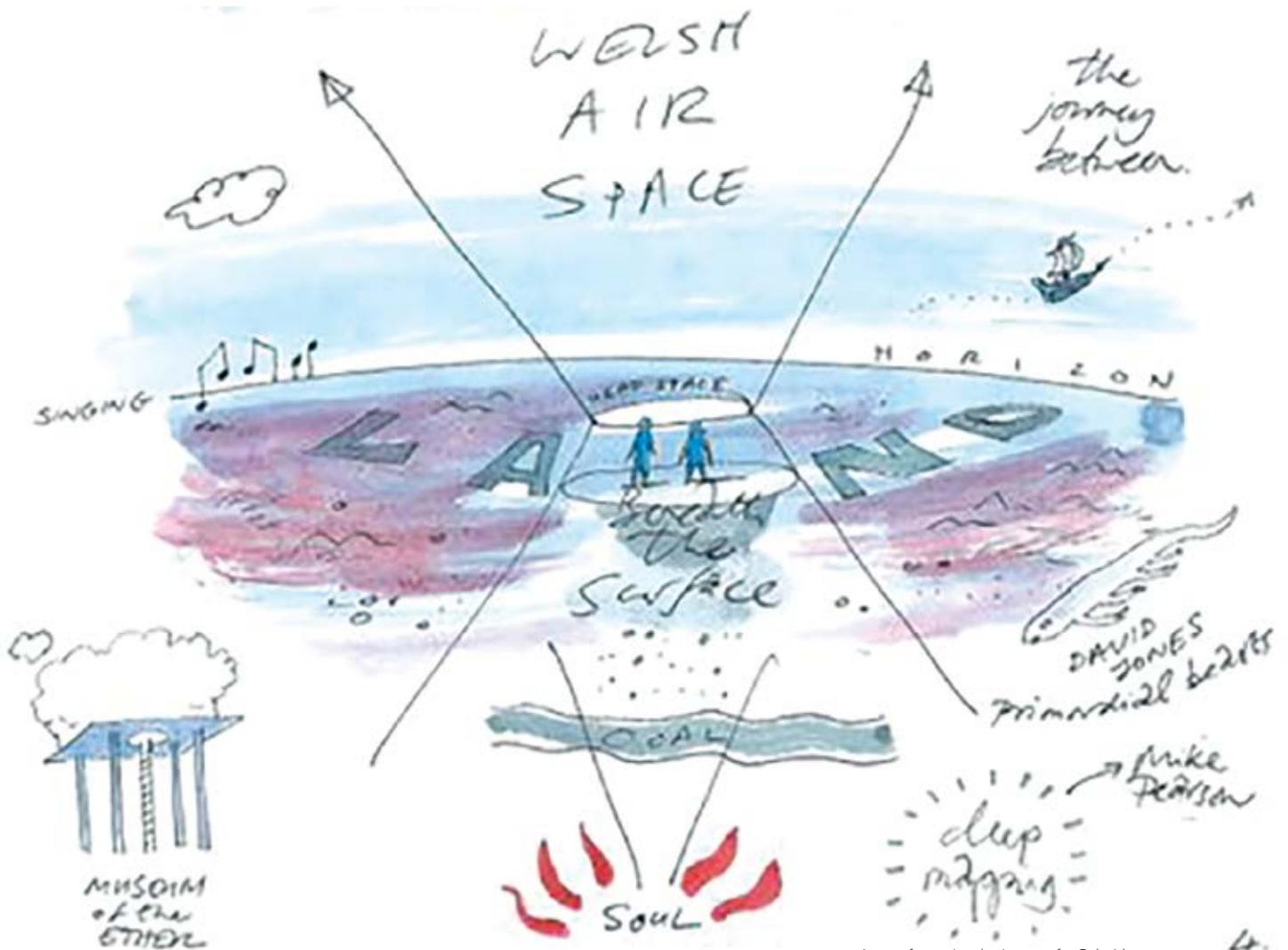


Image from visual minutes of a Coleridge planning meeting, by Chris Glynn.

# Zombie Nation: Wales Resuscitated, By Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Dylan Moore meets classical singer and facilitator Richard Parry, and catches a glimpse of a society that could yet be

'Richard Parry has founded an institute of Welsh affairs, says Dylan, halfway through our conversation.' Parry allows himself a smile at the length of time it has taken for your correspondent to reach this realisation. The mission of the IWA is to 'act as a catalyst for change, [to] bring people together so that ideas can collide and solutions can be forged, its vision 'to help create a Wales where everyone can flourish'. Samuel Taylor Coleridge

was a visionary, and so is Richard Parry. Coleridge in Wales, ostensibly a 'nation-wide touring festival' to take place over three months early next summer, is perhaps, above all else, an independent think tank: its aim 'to gently seek and nourish courageous new thinking, relationships and action for our times.'

In 1794, four years before his celebrated collaboration with Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads*, reinvented poetry, Samuel Taylor Coleridge dropped out of Cambridge University and took off on a walking tour of Wales. Immersed in the raw beauty of a natural world that was, then, of little interest to society, Coleridge dreamed up a utopian vision he called 'pantisocracy' – 'level government by and for all' - and made plans to institute

an egalitarian community on the banks of the Susquehanna river in the eastern United States. When his friend, the poet Robert Southey, doubted the project's viability, for a while the plan was to decamp to Wales.

Despite Coleridge's affirmed place in the canon of English poetry – his reputation rests today on a handful of very great poems, 'Christabel', 'Frost at Midnight', 'Kubla Khan' and the peerless 'Rime of the Ancient Mariner' –

At a time when England, but perhaps not Wales, again seems to be pulling away from the continent, Coleridge in Wales asks the question: 'What cultural, social and environmental treasure does Wales hold today that other areas of Britain have forgotten?'

Richard Parry suggests that the fullness of Coleridge's genius 'has never been fully celebrated.' R.S. Thomas, in 'Abercuawg', his keynote address to the 1976 Eisteddfod about a relationship in Welsh culture of place and identity, claimed that 'in order to understand imagination's true meaning one must be acquainted with the work of Coleridge, but I haven't time to go into that today.' What Parry is planning, in association with an already impressive cast of collaborators, is 'an eighty day footnote' to Thomas' remark, 'forty years later, to find out what that means.'

The 80 day festival will comprise meetings, happenings, local events, touring exhibitions, excursions and theatre, winding its way around Wales, through museums, universities, art centres and local communities. There are even plans to bring the Ancient Mariner himself, together with a crew full of zombies, into the ports and harbours of Wales. But this is no conventional 'commemorative' event, despite that next year will mark the bicentenary of Coleridge's midlife classic *Biographia Literaria*. Parry is less interested in celebrating the man Coleridge or exploring the nation Wales than the inverse. The artist Ivor Davies has

summarised the vision thus: 'Most people would think of Wales as a place and Coleridge as person; and what it seems you are doing, rather, is to treat Wales as a person – and Coleridge as a place.'

It is an astute observation that reaches toward the heart of the 'territory', a word Parry employs time and again as he ambles through the philosophical underpinnings of the project. Personally, the territory explored by the project encompasses

Parry's singing heritage as a classical baritone and his work as a facilitator, which, he explains, is rooted in the work of the American psychologist Carl Rogers, whose groundbreaking work in establishing a person-centred approach in clinical psychology led to, amongst other things, the appearance of the modern counsellor.

But Parry is self-effacing, and it is the unexplored avenues and canons in the mind of Coleridge that fire this festival of the public imagination. One of the reasons Parry claims that 'Coleridge's ideas do not sit well with the English cultural palette' is that he was 'a major conduit for European sensibility and thinking.' At a time when England, but perhaps not Wales, again seems to be pulling away from the continent, Coleridge in Wales asks the question: 'What cultural, social and environmental treasure does Wales hold today that other areas of Britain have forgotten?'

Parry describes himself as 'just an arm waver'. 'These are not my ideas,' he says, 'I'm a facilitator and am just pointing out that a lot of unfashionable stuff sits in a particular constellation... a powerful, and important constellation.' This 'unfashionable stuff' includes the 'brooding poets and philosophers who

cracked the French Enlightenment' and clearly inform the project's scope. The names that pepper Parry's conversation form a kind of alternative history of ideas: the German philosopher-poets Johann Gottfried von Herder and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Schelling, the half-forgotten Englishmen who prefigured them, Cambridge Platonists Henry More and Ralph Cudworth, and Ruskin's profound influence on Gandhi.

What links such disparate figures is an emphasis on the validity of experience and a freedom from limiting mechanical and materialist thinking. 'The highly influential and now rather forgotten clergyman and political campaigner F.D. Maurice was very much inspired by Coleridge,' says Parry, 'and asserts boldly and learnedly that we are not animals with souls, but spiritual beings.' In a dominant culture of materialism and an age of narrow policy agendas, it is heartening to hear such a clearly different voice being brought back into circulation. Whatever might actually happen next year - and Parry cheerfully admits he is not fully sure, because of the massive emphasis on 'participation' – it is clear that Coleridge does have something to say to us, now, about our lives, personal and collective.

'This exploration is not a backward-looking re-visit of 18th and 19th century historic Romanticism,' emphasises Parry, 'It is a contemporary exploration, with institutions and communities, of unexplored intellectual streams and daily culture that emphasise the wealth of relationship and place in our communities and economies.'

'Perhaps a stereotypical English-British culture is in terror of spirit; there seems an antipathy to it in modern Britain and in popular culture,' Parry ventures. 'And Coleridge is interested in spirit, theologically and philosophically held, that doesn't seek to instrumentalise the Other. His language of spirit gives us a better repertoire for talking about our sense of

self and a wider creative capacity.'

Coleridge was an anti-slaver whose opposition to the human capacity to enslave, to host and to relationally instrumentalise each other went beyond his activism against the economic slavery opposed by Wilberforce. Ironically, both men were addicted to opium, Coleridge famously so. 'We don't hear much about Wilberforce's opium habit,' says Parry wryly. 'He was able to regulate it, whereas Coleridge was a much more turbulent personality.' The poet once tried and failed to kick his addiction by going cold turkey on an epic walk from the Lake District into Scotland.

But this popular image of Coleridge the drugged-up madman poet has eclipsed not only Coleridge the polymath - journalist, scientist, diplomat, revolutionary, thinker - but also Coleridge as 'a place': a critical juncture in the history of European ideas, a road not taken that will, at last, be embarked upon, by Wales 'a person' next year.

Says Parry: 'In the mid nineteenth century, John Stuart Mill declared that everyone was either a Benthamite or

a Coleridgean. As Jeremy Bentham's utilitarianism began to dominate politics and culture, we've sort of lost sight of the alternatives.' But he also identifies and emphasises in Coleridge 'the power of the fragment'. The poet's breadth of vision and chaotic lifestyle left many projects tantalisingly unfinished, and to some extent Coleridge in Wales is about picking up some of the pieces. The artist and Parry's co-curator Chris Glynn has called the project 'a slow-motion Hadron Collider, around the mountains of Wales, seeking lost and hidden particles of relationship.'

It is to these ideas - of relationship, of participation, of humanity - that the conversation constantly returns. 'The bedrock of a creative economy is strong communities and a capacity to be hosted by the environment and each other,' maintains Coleridge, through Parry, and 'English pragmatic materialism no longer provides the institutions for us to address questions of how we handle our capacity to be destructive, or to be a blessing.'

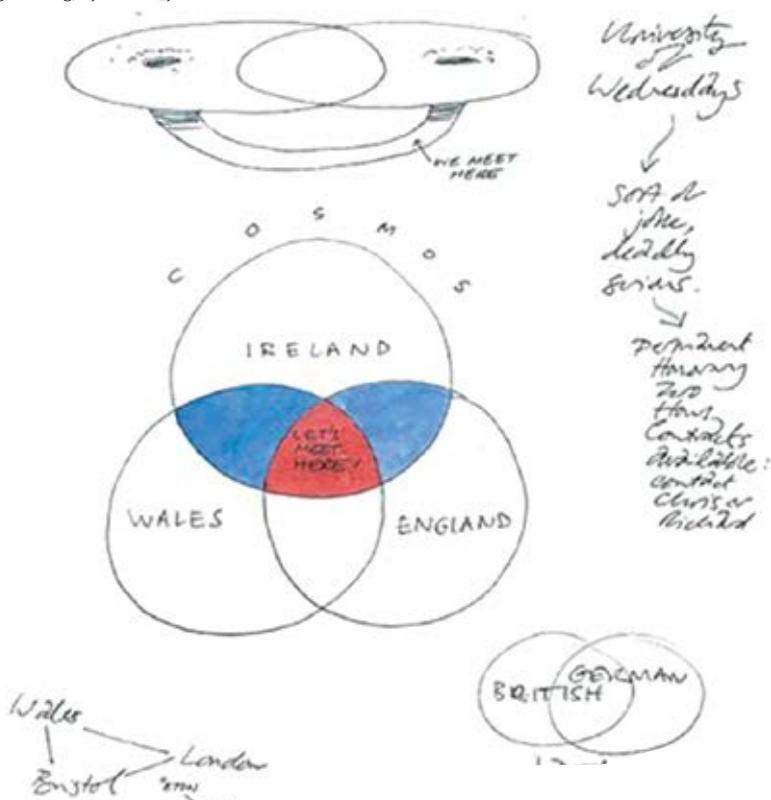
One Welshman who has grappled

with such questions is the twentieth century painter and modernist poet David Jones, whose famous copperplate engravings illustrating *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* are to receive a full retrospective at the National Gallery in Cardiff. Jones identified in the poem a Brythonic *hud a lledrith* mystery voyage that explores a central theme of our relationship to the natural world.

Parry is full of praise for Wales' pioneering *Future Generations Bill*, but convinced that UNESCO's 'three pillars' of sustainability - the freedom to move capital, social inclusion ('couldn't they stomach social justice?') and the environment - cannot be supported by a new fourth pillar, culture, because 'culture is our humanity, it is who we are.' 'Art and creativity,' he argues, with Coleridge leaning heavily over his shoulder, 'are not a bolt-on. Our current culture has a tendency to leave artists marginalised and the theologically interested wandering. What Coleridge sought to do was to balance liberalism and radicalism with conservative institutions.' Gladstone, claims Parry, 'attempts to build the British state out of Coleridge - the relationship between church and state etcetera.'

And it is within these etceteras that the territory lies. An exploration as much of Wales in Coleridge as the other way around. A footnote to R.S. Thomas. An exploration of the *Ancient Mariner* illustrations of David Jones. A 'sigh' for a girl called Mary Evans in Wrexham. And a inspired scribbling on a poster by his sometime collaborator Iolo Morgannwg. Disillusioned and returning from London, the founder of the modern Eisteddfod - where Coleridge in Wales will culminate next year - stopped in Bristol where he heard Coleridge lecturing. His graffiti read simply, 'Coleridge, Coleridge, Coleridge, Coleridge, Coleridge.' It is enough to make one want to add: 'Yes, Coleridge.'

Image from visual minutes of a Coleridge planning meeting, by Chris Glynn.



# The Bigger Picture:



## Lessons for the Early Years

**Mary Powell-Chandler and Chris Taylor** look beyond Donaldson for solutions to the early years attainment gap

The Donaldson Review dominated political and policy debate on educational attainment for the past two years. The results of Professor Donaldson's review were eagerly anticipated and, when published in February 2015, did not disappoint. In total 68 recommendations were made, which amounted to radical and far-reaching changes to the school curriculum. The Welsh Government has announced that it has accepted all of the recommendations, and during the autumn we will learn when and how the changes will be phased in.

Many minds are now focused on how

to implement these ambitious plans, and ensure that all children and young people in Wales are able to reach their full potential in school. This journey will not be easy nor without cost. There are numerous challenges ahead, but the gains can be substantial.

However we must be careful that we don't pin all our hopes for children on a system they don't encounter until they are three years old. Neither should we allow radical changes to the rest of education system to take our attention away from the early years. The impact of policies aimed at the early years, such as the Foundation Phase and Flying Start, have so far been fairly positive - but there is a great deal more to be accomplished and still many issues that need addressing.

Incredible things happen to children's brains in their very early years. A child's brain doubles in size in the first year, and by age three it has reached around 80% of its adult volume. The early years present a key opportunity to improve

children's educational outcomes by making sure their development is optimal and they arrive at school happy, able and ready to learn. If we fail to look beyond the school gates when implementing Donaldson, we risk failing children before they reach school.

Donaldson recommended that literacy, alongside numeracy and digital competence, should be a cross-cutting priority across the whole curriculum, recognising the centrality of language and communication to a good education. The rationale given is:

Language is the essence of thinking and is integral, not just to effective communication, but to learning, reflection and creativity... Being able to listen attentively and speak lucidly and understandably or to use non-verbal communication effectively are crucial attributes in learning and life more generally. Developing oracy - the capacity to develop and express ideas through speech - is of central importance to both thinking and learning.

Clearly, this is an area that needs focus. Four out of 10 children living in poverty in Wales leave primary school at age 11 unable to read well - and this gap begins in the early years. Children first learn to read; then they read to learn. By age three, 50% of our language is in place and by age five, 85% of it is in place. Learning to read well starts early and good early language skills are the vital stepping stone. If children do not learn to understand words, speak, and listen from an early age, they will struggle to learn to read well when they start school. At school entry, children from low-income families lag behind their high-income counterparts in vocabulary by 16 months - a much larger gap than those for other cognitive skills.

The Read On. Get On. campaign - a coalition of charities, academics, businesses and individuals - has a common goal: that all children in Wales will be reading well and with enjoyment, by age 11, by 2025. This is an ambitious vision, and will require considerable effort from all parts of society. In Wales, a stubborn gap in attainment between poorer children and their better-



off peers remains. Using a new analysis of the Welsh data within the Millennium Cohort Study, Read On. Get On. has found that a child who has experienced poverty persistently is twice as likely to score below average in vocabulary scores age 5, and these patterns persist through to literacy skills at age 11.

Boosting children's early language skills is critical to narrowing the attainment gap and improving the life chances of our poorest children. Waiting until a child starts school is leaving it too late. In fact, waiting until a child starts early education at age three is also too late to start focusing on children's language skills. Babies are born ready to learn language and need stimulation and encouragement to develop their language skills, right from birth. Talking, reading, playing and singing with even the youngest child can have a huge impact on their early language development, and therefore on their ability to learn when they arrive at nursery and then at primary school.

Professor Donaldson was given the remit of looking at education between the ages of three and sixteen. However, there is much we can learn and apply to the early years. Of the eleven Statements of Purpose, three resonate perfectly with the approach needed for the early years:

- > mobilise the education community around a common mission
- > promote broad ownership of education and make the curriculum open to wide debate beyond the professional community
- > provide clarity about aspirations for the children and young people of Wales

Common aspirations for our children are needed across policy and sector divides. We believe the early years and early language development should play a part in the common mission. The Early Years workforce should feel a sense of co-ownership as some of the earliest educators. Relying on the education system to make the difference at the age of 3 misses an important opportunity to improve the life chances of children. The Donaldson recommendations have been broadly welcomed across Wales, and there is much to be optimistic about. However, to truly make a difference to children's attainment and life chances we need a coherent system that tracks and responds to children's development and makes the most of the opportunities in the early years.

Education and early years policy sit in different ministerial portfolios within the Welsh Government, which may help explain the gap. Different political pressures and drivers inform policy-making in these areas, which can lead to competing pressures. To make a fundamental difference to the life chances of children growing up in Wales, we need a unifying approach informed by a child's developmental journey.

There are many reasons why children do not develop better vocabulary skills in their early years. Explaining the importance of early language and talking to parents and practitioners is fundamental to improving the situation, and the Welsh Government has made progress through focused campaigns and resources, for parents and practitioners. However, simply telling parents 'what to do' for their child's development is not enough: it underestimates the challenges many parents

face, particularly those living in poverty. It also relies on the false assumption that the decisions and behaviours that parents make are primarily responsible for their child's development. This is simply not correct and offers a simplistic view of the problem and hence the solution.

The state has a role in ensuring that the necessary resources and facilities are available to support children and parents, in the forms of technology, libraries, access to museums, and well-trained community based practitioners. Schools play a key role, and must be given the resources to employ community outreach or family engagement officers who have the freedom to extend their skills and develop new innovative practices. There is still much to be done to ensure the Foundation Phase is firmly embedded in all maintained and funded non-maintained provision for three to four year olds, and that parents realise the educational opportunities and benefits of the Foundation Phase in these early years. Equally, we need to ensure that all childcare provision, whatever the setting, is delivered through developmentally appropriate practice that encourages a love of learning. In Wales in particular, there is an untapped source of support in the form of grandparents, extended families and the local community. We would argue that we need policies and strategies in Wales that can support and exploit this great resource to help parents, schools and ultimately young children to develop their readiness for school.

Donaldson surmised the mission as helping every child 'grow as a capable, healthy, well-rounded individual who can thrive in the face of unknown future challenges.' To make the difference we all aspire to, we need to support families better in the early years of a child's life. As a nation which has proudly enshrined the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Children into our legislation, we owe it to all our children to ensure we take the earliest possible opportunities for them to achieve their full potential.

**Mary Powell-Chandler** is Head of Save the Children in Wales and **Professor Chris Taylor** is Co-Director of Wiserd.

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# A Justice for Wales

Paul Silk makes the case for a Welsh Justice on the Supreme Court

Eighteen months ago, the Commission I chaired made a carefully graduated set of proposals for the transfer of aspects of the justice system from Whitehall to Cardiff. But we also wanted to preserve links between the justice systems in England and in Wales. In that context, we never really contemplated the replacement of the Supreme Court as the final appeal court for Wales. But we did recommend that there should be at least one judge on the Supreme Court with particular knowledge and understanding of the distinct requirements of Wales and Welsh law.

The Supreme Court was set up under the Constitutional Reform Act 2005. The Court is made up of 12 Justices. Two are Scots and one is from Northern Ireland. It is the final court of appeal from the three jurisdictions of England and Wales, of Scotland and of Northern Ireland (except

in Scottish criminal cases), and it also decides 'devolution issues' in respect of Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. A devolution issue arises if (in the case of Wales) either the Attorney General or the Counsel General believes that the Welsh Government or the National Assembly have not acted, or propose not to act, within their powers. It is also possible for a devolution issue to arise in the course of litigation and for it to be referred to the Supreme Court by

Some may justify the different treatment of Wales by saying that there is (as yet) no separate Welsh jurisdiction.

the Court of Appeal.

As IWA members will well know, there have been more references of Assembly laws to the Supreme Court than there have been Scottish and Northern Irish references. Though we are now promised a new 'reserved powers' devolution model, I am not entirely sanguine that Welsh devolution issues will then disappear from the Supreme Court. It is even possible that their numbers will increase.

# Wales may not be a jurisdiction, but there will increasingly be different laws that apply in Wales, both as the National Assembly legislates for us and as, in devolved areas, Parliament legislates for England alone.

The President of the Court has announced that in any hearing involving Welsh devolution issues, the Supreme Court panel will, if possible, include a judge who has specifically Welsh experience and knowledge. Helpful and welcome though this is, it still treats Wales differently from the other devolved nations. And although the Court has recently brought in Lord Thomas of Cwmgiedd when Welsh devolution issues have been considered, we cannot rely on the serendipitous advantage of having a Lord Chief Justice who so clearly comes from Wales and understands Welsh issues so well.

Some may justify the different treatment of Wales by saying that there

is (as yet) no separate Welsh jurisdiction. However, the 2005 Act requires the First Minister to be consulted on appointments to the Supreme Court, and it also – as the outgoing Chief Executive of the Court has recently reminded us – requires the Supreme Court selection Commission to ‘ensure that between them the [Supreme Court] judges will have knowledge of, and experience of practice in, the law of each part of the United Kingdom.’ Wales may not be a jurisdiction, but there will increasingly be different laws that apply in Wales, both as the National Assembly legislates for us and as, in devolved areas, Parliament legislates for England alone.

As well as distinctive Welsh laws

and different devolution issues, it is also the case that laws made by the National Assembly have equal validity in Welsh and in English. They should be co-drafted in the two languages and able to be construed by the judiciary at all levels, including the Supreme Court, in Welsh, not in Welsh translated into English.

Having a Welsh Supreme Court Justice would perhaps incidentally do something to improve the Court’s diversity. The nine England-and-Wales Justices are overwhelmingly associated with the South-East of England. All except one were educated at Oxbridge, and all but one attended English public schools. There is only one woman. None is from an ethnic minority. The need to have greater diversity and life experience among the Justices is pretty clear, and, just in those terms, it would be good to see the appointment of a Justice who went to a Welsh comprehensive school, or attended a Welsh university or, at least, whose practice as a lawyer – and therefore whose social milieu – had been in Wales.

The Supreme Court can meet away from London, and the President has said that he is ready to do so. When the next Welsh devolution issue arises, I very much hope that the Court will convene in Cardiff, ideally with a Welsh Justice.



**Sir Paul Silk** chaired the Commission on Devolution in Wales.

# A colonial fantasy

Jasmine Donahaye examines nineteenth-century plans to establish a Welsh colony in Palestine

How differently we might be marking colonial anniversaries if, as originally suggested, Y Wladfa had been established not in Patagonia but in a dusty province of the sprawling Ottoman Empire. The idea of setting up a Welsh colony in Palestine was not some passing, whimsical notion, as the occasional mention of it by historians would suggest, but a plan with concrete developments – and it might well have been realised had its proponent, the Reverend John Mills, been a more ruthless or effective missionary.

Mills introduced the idea in *Y Drysorfa*, in his monthly column, ‘Y genhadaeth luddewig’ (the Jewish Mission) in early 1856. At the time he was the Calvinistic Methodists’ missionary to the Jews of London, and he proposed the colony after visiting Palestine the previous year to ‘relieve’ (and convert) the destitute Jews of Jerusalem. By the end of 1856, the idea had developed and been widely endorsed. ‘At the request of and in unity with the Reverend M. D. Jones, and other friends from various denominations in Bala,’ Mills wrote in a letter to *Yr Amserau*, ‘I have been speaking with the Turkish ambassador about the matter, together with some of the leading men of our land, and I am pleased to be able to say that there is every sign that we will succeed.’

At the beginning, Mills’s emphasis was similar to that of English colonisation societies, whose purpose was to better facilitate Jewish conversion to Christianity. However, English proposals concerned Jewish settlement in Palestine – or, to use their millenarian ‘End of Days’ terms, Jewish ‘restoration’. These early and

mid-nineteenth century English fantasies of Jewish return long predated Theodor Herzl’s formulation of political Zionism, and overtly or covertly they were more concerned with ridding Europe of its Jewish population than with Jewish interests or needs.

Mills’s proposal for a colony in Palestine was, therefore, a different matter. Uniquely it combined conversionism and colonisation – not a Jewish settlement in Palestine, but a Welsh one – and its purpose was political as much as religious. Since losing independence, Mills argued, Wales had also lost its place on the map, and a colony in Palestine would bring it to the world’s attention: it would, figuratively and actually, place Wales back on the map.

Initially, in presenting Palestine as ‘the best place in the world for the Welsh colony’, Mills emphasised the missionary advantages of the location, arguing that the opportunity to do good for ‘Israel’ (meaning the Jews as a collective, but particularly the mostly impoverished Jewish population in Palestine) would lend the idea weight. ‘Some of the leading men of the land have agreed to give a helping hand’, he wrote, an endorsement that derived from the project’s ‘importance’ in connection with the conversion of the Jews. The support for his work in Palestine was widespread: the following month *Y Drysorfa* listed donations collected from readers in London, Liverpool and across Wales.

Missionary aspirations are usually omitted from popular Welsh Patagonian narratives, but it was precisely the missionary possibilities that made Michael D. Jones initially favour Palestine, and he

was later interested in similar opportunities in Patagonia. However, despite Jones’s support for Mills in 1856 and his early interest in Palestine rather than Patagonia or America, he shifted focus after two societies objected categorically to Palestine and withdrew their support – for Mills proved to be something of a liability.

Mills was an unusual missionary, for despite some observations and attitudes that read now as deeply offensive, his views on Jews changed in positive ways as a result of contact. Though he spent twelve years seeking to convert the Jews of London at the behest of the Calvinistic Methodists, not only did he fail to achieve converts, but he was accused of courting conversion himself.

His mission in London ended abruptly in 1859 in a public spat over his dubiously ‘gentle’ rather than ‘coercive’ conversionist methods. Suspicion had been mounting for some years, not least because of the sympathetic views he expressed in his 1853 volume entitled *The British Jews*. With his integrity in question, and two societies and consequently Michael D. Jones withdrawing support, Mills’s plan for a Welsh colony in Palestine was undermined. Nevertheless, from the mid-nineteenth century onwards he opposed Patagonia and heavily promoted Palestine for what became increasingly political rather than missionary reasons.

It was in his 1858 book about Palestine, entitled *Palestina: sef Hanes Taith Ymweld ag Iuddewon Gwlad Canaan* [Palestine: namely the history of a journey to visit the Jews of the Land of Canaan], that Mills made his detailed argument

for Palestine rather than Patagonia as 'the best place in the world for a Welsh colony'. Here he presented the distinctive advantages of the quality of the land; the opportunities for Welsh independence and world influence, and – as an added bonus rather than the chief reason for its being – its religious situation and potential. He dispensed with what he expected would be 'the inevitable objection' from those who believed that Palestine belonged to 'Israel' and that it was they who would 'possess her again', by suggesting that the territory was sufficiently large to accommodate the Welsh settlers.

Palestine was rich in natural assets, he argued, and was sleeping through a long Sabbath from which it was only waiting to be awoken by honourable Welsh labour. The exploitation of these incomparable resources, under-utilised because of eastern sloth, would not require the kind of hard labour that Wales itself exacted; on the contrary, unlike in Wales and America, in Palestine nature did 'more than half the work'. In turn this would leave time and energy for the cultivation of the mind and for the service 'of virtue and belief'.

Mills believed that Welsh emigrants had to be able to 'live as a community of Welshmen – live on their own land; earn their own bread; speak their own language; formulate their own laws – in a word, carry on their whole being as a community independent from any other government'. Even if the proposed colony in Patagonia were to prove successful, he argued, it was 'so remote, and so out of sight of the civilised world' that there was no hope that it would ever be noticed, but every country felt such an interest in Palestine that the Welsh settlement would carry the weight that would enable it – and therefore also Wales – to regain a place on the map of the world. Inevitably the Welsh colony would come to the attention of the thousands of people who visited Palestine every year, and they would take home with them this knowledge about the Welsh, 'and before a few years were out, the character of the Welsh colony would be well known in the civilised world and its history would be known in all the main languages of Europe and Asia'. In



Image: Keith Davies

this way, he concluded, 'the Welsh colony in Palestine would be like "a city set on a hill" – a light, in some measure, unto all the nations of the earth'.

The reference here to Matthew 5:14 – 'Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid' – also has its forerunner in Isaiah's 'or l'goyim', 'a light unto the nations', which is how Zionists would characterise what the state of Israel was to be.

Mills gave no detail about the practical organisation of the proposed colony, but argued that its autonomy would be secure, for it 'would be under the continual gaze of the various European powers and this would ensure that no one could interfere with its independence'.

In contrast to the Patagonia idea, Mills's colonial vision was not one of escaping tyranny and securing independence away from interference by European powers, but one of influence: a politically independent Welsh national home in Palestine would be empowered, and would therefore also empower Wales within Britain, for, as he observed, Palestine was going to be extremely valuable in the near future, and such a settlement would facilitate British imperial interests in India in particular.

This facilitation of other state power interests had its counterpart in Y Wladfa. As Glyn Williams argues in *The Welsh In Patagonia*, it was a new expansionist Argentine government, eager to secure control of a contested and unstable region against both internal and external claims, which actively sought European settlers to colonise Patagonia.

Mills casually disposed of the problem of an existing population in terms typical of colonial attitudes in the period: he characterised the 'natives' as childlike, welcoming, and easily convinced of the colonisers' benign interests and care. Jew, Moslem and Christian, he remarked in passing, would embrace the idea when they saw what benefits the Welsh would bring. He felt sure, he concluded blithely, that Moslems, Christians 'and especially the Jews, would very quickly be full of kindly feelings for the colony, and would be eager to serve it', and the settlers would lead by example, and would quickly win their neighbours round to virtue and to truth.

Despite some practical developments, including plans for Welsh involvement in the extension of the Hejaz railway, the colony in Palestine was never realised. Mills lectured widely on his proposal, even after the establishment of Y Wladfa, and the idea was still in circulation at the beginning of the twentieth century and would no doubt have been familiar to Lloyd George. Perhaps his directive to General Allenby to 'get Jerusalem as a Christmas present for the nation', and the Balfour Declaration with its promise of a Jewish national home in Palestine in 1917 were informed by that colonial fantasy – a fantasy that might well have become reality had Mills been a less enlightened man, and one that casts an interesting light on the colonial dream that was realised in Patagonia.

**Jasmine Donahaye's** latest book is the memoir *Losing Israel* (Seren, 2015). Other work includes *The Greatest Need*, a biography of Welsh-Jewish writer Lily Tobias (Honno, 2015), *Whose People? Wales, Israel, Palestine* (UWP, 2012), and two poetry collections.

# The trouble with civil society in Wales

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**Rebecca Rumbul** calls for greater distance between government in Wales and the third sector

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Civil society in Wales is often neglected. The politico-economic landscape is dominated by publicly funded bodies and rhetoric on the need for a more thriving and robust private sector. It is, however, the hard-working and under-appreciated engine of public policy, responsible for high levels of service delivery, the plugging of gaps in publicly funded services, innovation in addressing cross-cutting policy issues and the provision of expertise and critical appraisal in the development of legislation.

Civil society is populated with inspiring and passionate people working in often low-paid and insecure roles,

Arguments against plurality are often based on cost, with opponents querying why Wales would need more than one charity for 'young people', or more than one 'regional' newspaper.

assisting the vulnerable, championing the environment and breaking news. It is a critical friend to government and champion for its diverse public. For all of its virtues, however, there is an inescapable tension between doing good work and maintaining organisational existence. And such good works must be paid for.

In the late 90s and early 2000s, generous low-maintenance grants from the National Lottery Good Causes and Objective 1, as well as the Welsh Government's grant system, enabled civil society in Wales to grow and diversify, and to invest in professionalising alongside the development of devolution. This funding environment supported a rising plurality of organisations (considered by scholars to be a sign of a healthy civil society environment), in which multiple constituencies of expertise could inform debate and maintain a constant pressure upon government to improve the quality of legislation and policy delivery.

Those cash-rich days are now long gone, and civil society in Wales has undergone a contraction in its plurality. This has been exacerbated by the funding regimes put in place by the Welsh Government and its EU funding body WEFO, in which high value and high volume requirements for service providers squeeze out smaller organisations from receiving a share of the funding. This means services that are small, local, agile, holistic and innovative are lost. Our media has similarly contracted, with local news and regional news subject to ever greater cuts. Arguments against plurality are often based on cost, with opponents querying why Wales would need more than one charity for 'young people', or more than one 'regional' newspaper. Whilst questions of cost are valid, plurality guards against single interests being served, and it is prudent to examine who exactly is providing the funding to these dominant organisations that are singular in their policy area. Civil society organisations are mostly charities or social enterprises, and therefore many rely on a mixture of private gifts, service contracts and grants. News outlets rely on good contacts to provide them with reliable information. Developing and maintaining good relationships with funders

and contacts is integral in ensuring an organisation is able to continue operating. In the service-delivery oriented sphere, it is the Welsh Government that provides the most significant funding to the dominant civil society organisations in Wales.

There is no question about whether government should provide at least some funding to civil society groups – it absolutely should, in particular to those that provide vital services. However, the distance between donor and recipient has been shown to be concerningly close in Wales, in particular with regard to those organisations that receive the bulk of their funding from the Welsh Government. Quite naturally, organisations do not wish to bite the hand that feeds. To criticise one's benefactor is risky in the most benign of situations, let alone when you and your staff are vulnerable to an annual review of your organisation's funding. Organisations are also painfully aware of the lack of dynamism in the political environment in Wales. Unlike in England,

where a change of Government is quite possible every 5 years, and average tenure is now down to 1.3 years, in Wales, organisations must contemplate that the current Minister and their small pool of colleagues may be around for another two decades. This knowledge does not provide fertile ground for debate or criticism, however friendly the framing. A small civil society sector plus a small political class ensures that, if you work in Wales for your whole career, you are likely to work with the same people for over 40 years. In such circumstances it is unsurprising that civil society leaders are not often heard being fiercely critical.

The result of such timidity in expressing criticism of government policy reduces the quality of information and debate available to legislators, policy makers and the wider public. Civil society has the knowledge and expertise to question government, to challenge its actions, and to work with the media in publicising issues that might go against

current government policy. If it is unable to do these things freely, the sector may stagnate, public money may be wasted on useless policies, and eventually citizens themselves may develop the same mistrust of civil society that is currently reserved for politicians and bankers.

Unfortunately, the losers here are the people of Wales. Without plurality in our civil society sector, and with perpetual organisational fear of funding withdrawal, civil society groups will continue to sanitise their views and limit their contributions to wider debate. The inevitable result of this course of action is that policy development will be stunted. Most concerningly, it will likely travel in the direction of the ideological preferences of Labour Ministers, rather than towards innovative real-world solutions that take advantage of Wales' agility and showcase the best of its civil society talent.



Rebecca Rumbul is Head of Research at mySociety

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## The South American Connection

Jon Gower looks back on another year of cultural commemoration

Hard on the heels of the Dylan extravaganza and just before Llandaff's finest – the fighter ace and children's favourite Roald Dahl – gets a similar celebratory treatment, this year has been all about Patagonia. For it marks the sesquicentennial of the intrepid and rather foolhardy overseas departure of a boatload of Welsh adventurers to South America and the persistence of that settlement, Y Wladfa, to this very day. In that sense we salute both the spirit of those on board the *Mimosa*, which set sail from Liverpool docks in the summer of 1865, and their steely determination to keep the old ways in a new land. This meant building chapels and keeping their doors open, of safeguarding the Welsh language in the face of the usual pressures

on new immigrants to shed traditions and detach from their roots, thus to conform and convert, in this case to the Spanish language, or to Catholicism. This the Welsh colonists managed to do with a mixture of personal resolve and communal determination, not to mention an ability to tame the wind-blasted thorn scrub and make a good fist of it as agriculturalists, even winning a gold medal for their wheat in Chicago.

So 2015 has been a non-stop cavalcade of events, with theatre shows by no fewer than three companies, a TV season on S4C and BBC, not to mention Radio Cymru and Radio Wales broadcasting documentaries about life in Y Wladfa now and then. We had some of the really big guns firing, as when Huw

Edwards realized a lifelong dream for his TV series when he joined the veritable caravanserai of broadcasters who have travelled across the Patagonian deserts to tell the self-same story. Not satisfied with that, BBC Wales is going the whole hog and more and taking the entire works band, sorry, National Orchestra of Wales across the south Atlantic to play concerts in places such as Gaiman and Trevelin. They are to be commended for having the vision to do so, let alone rustling up the money to support it in these hard times.

Many people will have their own highlights but for me it was the chance to meet up again with Rene Griffiths – after maybe a couple of decades – as he published his autobiographical *Ramblings of a Patagonian*. Cineastes among you will



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remember this much-loved guitarist, actor and singer was the human grail after which the musician Gruff Rhys's quested in the film *Separado!* Rene is a relative of Gruff's, who 'searched' high and low for him in Argentina, only to 'find' him in the shadow of Cardiff castle. Rene, with his ebullient singing, and songs which marry the Welsh language – so often wedded to the minor key – to the infectious rhythms of tango is, for me, at least the modern embodiment of the Patagonian spirit, a human bridge between languages and musics. There is every sign that this year's panoply of events will help build many lasting links between Wales and our south American satellite, having even more effect – and thus a greater legacy – than the centenary celebrations in 1965. These brought to an end a period of severance and disconnect between the two places, caused by the two World Wars, outbreaks of global influenza and a lack of faith in sea-travel after the sinking of the Lusitania.



Image: Mark Douet / National Theatre Wales

mention how sweetly his voice resounded in the metal cathedral of the huge storage areas. As with so many of Marc's productions there was so much material, such complexity, that there were things that didn't work – a Bierkeller-style dance

Gardner's review of the latter production, suggesting that 'over the past three days Port Talbot ha[d] been the happiest place on earth.' This was clearly the most transformative theatre and reading this assessment of the play's impact made me incredibly proud, if regretful that I hadn't seen it too. But that word – transformative – is not a bad label for McGrath, too, for his time in our National has been just that.

He has been tireless in his support not only for this once-fledgling organisation but for theatre more generally: he has been to more productions, in both Welsh and English, than many a theatre critic. He has put the word 'generosity' at the heart of the company's mission statement and supported a generation of theatre makers. It is no coincidence that Wales is fair hooching with small theatre companies at the moment, creating a sense that the whole theatre ecology, to purloin one of Geraint Talfan Davies's favourite words, is healthy. That it is in such fine fettle owes much to John McGrath's unstinting commitment to the art form and to his native country. I for one wish him well as he moves to Manchester and thank him with all heart. Transformative, yes, that's the one.

**Jon Gower** is a broadcaster and writer. His latest book is *Gwalia Patagonia*.

## There is every sign that this year's panoply of events will help build many lasting links between Wales and our south American satellite, having even more effect – and thus a greater legacy – than the centenary celebrations in 1965.

Another Patagonian singer, Billy Hughes, travelled to Wales to take part in a very different case of bridge-building, namely the first joint production by Theatr Genedlaethol Cymru and National Theatre Wales, helmed by Marc Rees, one of the very few people who can imagine and realise work on a scale big enough to make use of the enormous and arresting setting of the Royal Opera House stores in Abercwmboi, in the Cynon Valley, home to many of the original settlers of Patagonia.

I'd last heard Billy sing in Bethel chapel, Gaiman, and seeing him in this transmogrified setting, full of dancing women, showers of grain and articulated trucks was to realize how extraordinary was the feat of keeping the Welsh language alive in a far-off land, not to

sequence to a thumping dance beat seemed incongruent – alongside moments of great tenderness and beauty but that may well have been his intention, for we are lucky to have an artist so keen to both take the pulse and test the waters. So we had a work of complexity, conjoining film, conventional acting, choreography and even large scale tapestry, so that the people who gave me a lift back to Cardiff talked about it non-stop, stirred by it, fired up even, if slightly mystified by it too.

This production was also among the last work under John McGrath as Artistic Director of NTW. I missed both of the biggies – namely *The Persians* and *The Passion* – yet there was something incredibly uplifting about sitting in a hotel room in San Francisco and reading Lyn

# Nudging people out of their cars

Jane Lorimer outlines the success of a programme providing people with transport choices

Why do people choose to travel the way they do? For many people it's simply a matter of habit and 'I've got a car so I'll use it.' But even for people who own a car, there are cheaper and faster alternatives.

The Welsh Government funded research in four urban centres across Wales between 2010 and 2014 to get a detailed picture of travel behaviour and how it could be influenced. The Personalised Travel Programme presented people with alternatives to the car for everyday journeys tailored to their needs and their locality.

The programme had a target population of 99,000 households split between Cardiff (63k), Pontypridd (10k), Caerphilly (14k), and the Mon a Menai region (12k).

Personalised Travel Planning (PTP) works with households to offer tailored information and help to enable people to walk, cycle and use public transport more often. It has been tried and tested across the world and has been shown to deliver measurable declines in car use, helping to reduce traffic congestion, increase public transport patronage, cut harmful emission and increase levels of physical activity.

Travel behaviour in urban Wales is fairly typical of the patterns elsewhere in the UK. On average, households make just 2.8 journeys a day with the average distance being 11 miles. Roughly 20% of these journeys are commuting to work, whilst over a third of all journeys are for leisure purposes.

The research also looked at whether viable alternatives existed for journeys people were habitually making by car - and found that the potential for change to public transport, walking and cycling was high. Over half of the regular car journeys made in the Cardiff area could be substituted by

other transport options with no significant effect to travel time. People choose the car for subjective reasons.

Once baseline travel behaviour in the intervention areas had been gathered, contact with households was made by telephone and on the doorstep. Residents were invited to discuss their travel needs in a non-judgemental way, and were offered information specific to the locality and journey opportunities of their routine trips to work, education and leisure.

A suite of new marketing materials was produced including a location specific Local Travel Map, which identified bus route numbers and cycle routes for the main destinations within the area. Personalised journey plans using Traveline Cymru's website

for bus and train were provided on request.

Over the three-year project, 50,000 households across the target areas received almost 500,000 items of travel related information and incentives. Most importantly, the project influenced travel behaviour with recorded increases in walking, cycling and public transport and a decline in car use.

This was evaluated by resurveying the target areas one year after the initial travel behaviour samples. Within Cardiff a 12% reduction in car use was observed, as well as a 4% reduction in single occupancy car journeys, equating to a reduction of 49 car journeys per person per year.

There were corresponding increases seen in the use of sustainable travel modes in Cardiff between 2011 and 2013; the most



significant contribution to this change was a growth in cycling, which gained 48 trips per person per year.

Qualitative research demonstrates that the service and method of contacting households was popular and well received.

**Caerphilly household:** 'Excellent. Hopefully this sort of project can get people out of their cars and help alleviate the congestion caused by the school run.'

**Pontypridd household:** 'It's good to be asked your opinion and much more engaging to be contacted rather than sent things out of the blue. It was nice to have a conversation about it, rather than just receiving things.'

**Mon a Menai household:** 'The children are now back in school and I'm getting them to bike to school and back every day. I was surprised reading the package and discovering routes that I was not aware of.'

**Within Cardiff a 12% reduction in car use was observed, as well as a 4% reduction in single occupancy car journeys, equating to a reduction of 49 car journeys per person per year.**

With an average cost of £20 per household PTP offers an excellent return on investment, especially when compared to road building programmes which attempt to cater for increased demand but have the result of locking-in carbon intensive and increasingly unaffordable private motor vehicle use.

PTP would be an effective tool to reduce local car journeys where there are pressures on the strategic road network, as is the case around the M4 Newport corridor and A55/A494/A548 Deeside corridor. It would also work well phased to follow public transport enhancements including the South Wales Metro by raising

awareness of new transport options and influencing local travel behaviour.

There is a growing understanding that achieving a green growth development path requires efficient and sustainable urban transport systems. With an increasing body of evidence demonstrating the importance of excellent urban mobility as an ingredient for attracting inward investment, a reliance on private motorised transport cannot be a policy of the future in our urban areas.

What's more, there is an increasing public interest and appetite for investment – three quarters of all Cardiff residents would like to see more money being spent on improving bicycle lanes because they think it would make Cardiff a better place to live and work, and according to the Bike Life Survey this year, 70% of people who currently commute by car themselves would like to cycle more.



**Jane Lorimer** is National Director of Sustrans Cymru

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# Good Food: A quiet revolution

**Kevin Morgan** makes the case for Wales to actively embrace the good food movement

A quiet revolution is underway in the UK: to make good food more available and affordable. Its agents are consumers who are becoming ever more conscious of how and where their food is produced; producers who want to work with, rather than against, nature; campaigners who want to reform the conventional food chain to render it more sustainable; parents who want to see better food served in school canteens and families of patients who are shocked by the absence of wholesome food in hospitals. They are also ecologically-minded entrepreneurs who believe that a new food culture is

beginning to emerge; they want to tap the commercial opportunities of a more discerning, quality-conscious market that fosters rather than frustrates health and wellbeing. The significance of this good food movement has been obscured by 'local', 'organic' or 'Fairtrade' food, each a small part of a bigger picture.

### **Sustainable diets**

Ill-health due to unhealthy diets is reckoned to be some fifty times greater than ill-health due to food-borne diseases, a finding that raises big questions about the nature of our food industry (Rayner, 2002). Food is often treated as a conventional business. But we ingest its products and therefore it is vital to human health and wellbeing in a way that other industries are not. Agri-food firms need to make a profit, but their products are also increasingly required to meet societal tests: human health and ecological integrity (Garnett, 2014).

Many chronic conditions – notably coronary heart disease, obesity, diabetes and certain cancers – are linked to poor diets, costing the NHS some £6 billion a year. Obesity attracts most public attention, and is more prevalent in Welsh children than those in any region of England, primarily due to food spending differences between social classes. Austerity is likely to exacerbate class disparities in diets, health and wellbeing because, in the view of a leading food poverty expert, 'more and more families in the UK are unable to buy affordable, nutritious food' (Dowler, 2012).

Consumers – including the poorest consumers – already know a great deal about what constitutes a healthy diet, but choose not to act on information. We need instead a societal response to the challenges because individuals are more likely to consider changing their habits and practices with their friends, families and communities.

## The Public Plate

Public sector catering service needs to be viewed anew. The best index of a just (and sustainable) society is the way it treats its poorest and most vulnerable members, be they pupils, patients, pensioners or prisoners. Good food should be more readily available in schools and hospitals (Morgan and Morley, 2014). Fortunately, fewer public caterers now feel obliged to forage in the cheapest end of the spectrum but provisioning continues to vary to a degree that is totally unacceptable.

One of the most important public sector innovations was the creation in 2013 of the National Procurement Service, which manages contracts across the public sector 'to reduce expenditure, eliminate duplication, develop a sustainable procurement model and increase efficiency'. To date more than 73 public bodies have joined the NPS.

## Food for Life

The Food for Life Partnership (FFLP) is one of the most inspirational social experiments of our time; it addresses

societal challenges through a sustainable food programme integrating public health, ecological integrity and social justice. Launched in 2007 with the support of the Big Lottery, the FFLP was designed to promote the 'whole school approach' to school food reform. FFLP is now branching out in two different ways – geographically, by diversifying beyond its original schools in England and, sectorally, by including day nurseries, universities, hospitals and care homes.

The first independent evaluation of FFLP in schools concluded by saying that the FFLP Schools Award can act as a proxy for outcomes across school meal take up, parental engagement, sustainable food attitudes and healthier eating.

Wales has been something of a desert for the FFLP model compared to England and Scotland, which is odd when the values embodied in the model are very similar to those championed by Welsh Government. Therefore, there is no reason why Wales' government could not emulate its Scottish counterpart, embrace the FFLP model and champion good food for all.

## The Public Realm

The notion that governments are powerless victims of circumstance is one of the most pernicious and disempowering notions in the world today. In an age of austerity there will always be pressures to cut costs: profoundly counter-productive if cost is merely displaced. Poor diets generate short term costs in the form of nutritional poverty and long term costs in the form of burgeoning healthcare charges.

Despite the spectre of the Nanny State – an ideological weapon that has been wielded to great effect by the food industry to forestall public regulation – the public realm has a financial obligation and a moral duty to regulate the production and consumption of unhealthy food and drink. Simon Stevens, chief executive of NHS England, has said that educators and public health bodies need to tackle obesity with the same ferocity as teen pregnancy and drink driving, labelling obesity 'the new smoking', because it is the cause of 1 in 5 cancer deaths.

The good food movement is the greatest ally of the NHS; the civic energies of the movement need to be harnessed if the societal challenge of diet-related disease is to be met with a societal response. As it is a societal problem, with multiple causes, every section of society needs to be part of the solution, and there is no better place to begin than in our schools.

Welsh Government has made bold commitments to public health, social justice and sustainable development; commitment to becoming a Good Food Nation would open a new chapter in this story. Welsh Government has a political obligation (on account of its sustainability duty) and a social need (on account of the high rate of diet-related disease in Wales) to make health and wellbeing second to none in importance.

*Good Food for All* by Kevin Morgan is the IWA's third Senedd Paper.

**Kevin Morgan** is Professor of Governance and Development in the School of Planning and Geography at Cardiff University, where he is also the Dean of Engagement.

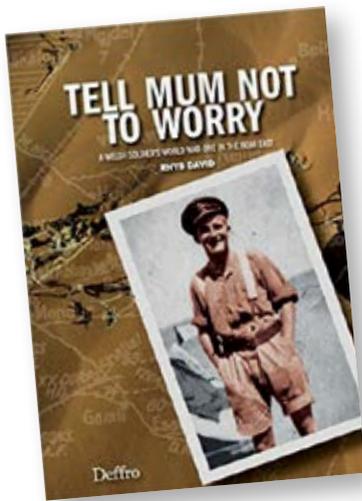


# Reviews

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## Local lads, distant vistas

Toby Thacker



*Tell Mum Not To Worry: A Welsh Soldier's World War One in the Near East*

**Rhys David**  
**Deffro, 2014**

On his seventeenth birthday in March 1915, Dewi David, a young Post Office worker in Cardiff, volunteered to join the British Army and serve in the First World War. He joined the Signals Company of the 53rd (Welsh) Division, and after six months' training was shipped out with his new comrades to the Mediterranean, to join the ill-fated Gallipoli campaign. On 22 October he landed at C Beach, Suvla Bay, where for the next eight weeks he endured the worsening weather on the peninsula before being evacuated, taken briefly to Salonica, and then to Alexandria. For the next three years Dewi served with the Welsh Division in Egypt and Palestine, taking part in the gradually growing British

and Allied offensive that pressed at first slowly through the Sinai desert towards Gaza, then with gathering momentum on to Bethlehem and Jerusalem in December 1917, before ending with the capture of Damascus in October 1918 and the complete defeat of the Turkish armies facing them. In March 1919 Dewi was demobilised in Egypt, and made the long journey back across the Mediterranean, to Italy, then through France, and eventually from Southampton back to his native Cardiff. During his four years of service, Dewi never had any home leave, and did not rise above the rank of Sapper. Most of his time was spent working with signals and communications.

This then is not the usual narrative of the First World War, the story of journeying out to Flanders and fighting in the mud and blood of the trenches that has been so tragically and lyrically told by writers such as David Jones and Llewelyn Wyn Griffith, or more prosaically by a private soldier like Frank Richards. It is not really a story of fighting, as Dewi spent most of his time behind the lines and saw little actual combat. It is the record of an innocent and ordinary lad whose

war service took him far from his home, and exposed him to other worlds, geographically, culturally, and emotionally. He dealt with this, as so many other soldiers did, by writing home, frequently and at great length. This book is based around the large collection of surviving letters from Dewi to his family, and from them out to him in his odyssey through the Eastern Mediterranean and Palestine. From these letters we learn that Dewi's main preoccupations, which he evidently shared with other soldiers, were with food, drink, shelter, and with diversions from the monotony of army life. And although he was far from home, he – again like his comrades – spent much of his time dreaming of the world he had left, of Cardiff, of holidays at Porthcawl, and of cycling and walking in the green valleys of Glamorgan.

The greatest strength of the book lies in its local detail and colour. Rhys David has worked meticulously to reconstruct the domestic life of Dewi's family in Splott, and to find out about the many different places Dewi spent time in while in the army. The often obscure references in his letters

**The greatest strength of the book lies in its local detail and colour. Rhys David has worked meticulously to reconstruct the domestic life of Dewi's family in Splott, and to find out about the many different places Dewi spent time in while in the army.**

## How did soldiers in a comparatively neglected theatre of war – like Palestine – feel about the public focus in Britain on the horror of the Western Front?

to books he had read, to poems he knew, to contemporary music hall songs, or to local characters known to his family are all carefully explained. We learn precisely which brands of cigarette Dewi and his comrades favoured, and how much they relied on food parcels from home for variety in their otherwise terribly monotonous diet. Intriguingly, there is also some exploration of issues which historians of the larger British experience of the First World War are now addressing: how did the local and regional identities of soldiers sit alongside the larger shared identity of being part of the British army? How did volunteers – like Dewi – feel about their contemporaries who did not volunteer, or who became conscientious objectors after conscription was introduced in 1916? How did soldiers in a comparatively neglected theatre of war – like Palestine – feel about the public focus in Britain on the horror of the Western Front? Did the experience of military service change their attitudes about gender roles and in particular, towards women? And how did soldiers returning from what David Jones called the ‘parenthesis’ of wartime experience readjust to post-war

Britain? In Dewi’s case, it appears that he resumed where he had left off, re-joining the Post Office and living in domestic peace in Cardiff until his death in 1963. Rhys David tells us that Dewi’s military service had a ‘profound effect’, ‘perhaps persuading him to value all the more a quiet domestic life in the city he loved’. So this is not a narrative of trauma, and the persistence of trauma, like those which have come to occupy a dominant place in the collective British memory of the First World War.

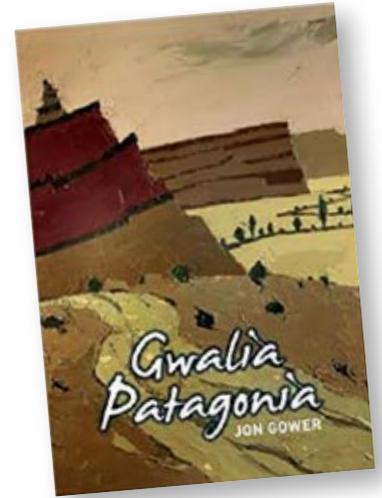
In terms of identity, we do learn a great deal. As Dewi grew up in the army, he wrote his letters very largely in the common language of the soldiers, often rendering slang words and phrases phonetically, and confirming David Jones’ observation that a Cockney idiom was the default language for the ordinary British soldier. But Dewi was also self-consciously Welsh, and proud to serve in a Welsh Division. Although not a native Welsh speaker, he liked to use Welsh phrases and words, and to comment on differences between people from different parts of Wales. He does not appear to have experienced a tension between these dual Welsh and British identities, and his letters would seem to confirm the recent work of scholars who have examined how soldiers in the British Army, whether they were from Wales, Tyneside, Scotland, or the Home Counties, shared strong senses of local and regional belonging while at the same time feeling themselves part of a larger collective, and rubbing shoulders with comrades from all over the UK, and indeed from the far flung British Empire.

This carefully researched book will be of interest not only to readers interested in the local history of Cardiff and in the Welsh experience of the First World War, but to those looking for detailed evidence about how ordinary lads experienced this huge conflict. I suspect Dewi David himself would have been very pleased to think that it would help bring to wider attention the experiences of Welsh soldiers in what he ironically described as ‘petty side-shows’ like Suvla, Egypt, Palestine, and Salonica.

**Toby Thacker** is a Senior Lecturer in Modern European History at Cardiff University

## A labour of love

Dylan Moore



*Gwalia Patagonia*  
Jon Gower  
Gomer, 2015

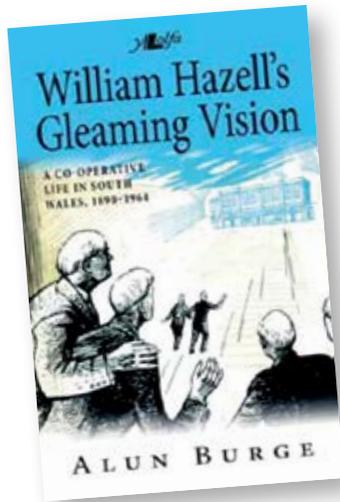
*Gwalia Patagonia* (Gomer) has been a labour of love for self-confessed ‘professional Welshman’ Jon Gower. For such a small colony (just 162 people originally set out on the old tea clipper *Mimosa*), in such an obscure end of the world – ‘grey – tough and stunted – wiry, desert shrubs on parched dry scrubland’ – Y Wladfa has attracted an inordinate amount of attention, especially this year, from both academic historians and the popular media.

The book’s structure – chapters of history followed by chapters of travel and chapters of more personal writing – suits Gower’s propensity for indulging esoteric passions as well as his capacity to encapsulate big-picture visions. He is a Philomath, a bibliophile and a helpless addict of ‘ornithology porn’. But however enjoyable the indulgences that are the hallmark of the writer’s work, only one question really needs to be asked, soberly, of *Gwalia Patagonia*. Was it worth it? Five years of writing, a six-foot writing desk’s span of reading and a Creative Wales Award to fund the fieldwork, to produce a book about a place already over-trampled by hopeless dreamers and literary giants. The answer, of course, is a resounding ‘yes’; *Gwalia Patagonia* won’t be the last word on Y Wladfa, but it may be the last for some time.

Dylan Moore

## An unstated rebuke

Aled Eirug



*William Hazell's Gleaming Vision:  
A Co-operative Life in South Wales,  
1890-1964*

**Alun Burge**

Y Lolfa, 2014

This is a detailed, engaging and affectionate biography of William Hazell, one of the hitherto unrecognised heroes of the cooperative movement in south Wales. It is also a significant contribution to the historiography of those social movements that created a real sense of community and self-help in the era before the post-war Labour Government's creation of the welfare state and the introduction of nationalisation.

This portrait of a key figure in the south Wales coalfield is partly based on Hazell's own short history of the co-operative movement in south Wales, 'The Gleaming Vision', published in 1954. This was ostensibly the history of the Ynysybwll Co-operative Society, which described 'how ordinary people assumed responsibility for organising aspects of their economic and social lives to provide co-operative services for their own community.' Burge's achievement is to place Hazell's work fully in Welsh and British contexts, and to describe how the mutual forms of owning and belonging, as expressed in the cooperative movement, were bypassed on the path

Burge focuses on Hazell and the cooperative movement as one that saw people as consumers rather than simply as workers and producers. A recurring theme of the book is the emphasis given to the interconnected character of the labour movement in south Wales in this period.

towards nationalisation and the corporatism of 1945. Whilst Hazell welcomed the placing of the mines under public ownership, and the introduction of a National Health Service, he also questioned whether the principles of co-operativism and the role of mutual and friendly societies had been sufficiently recognised by the Labour Government in its building of the welfare state.

Burge's main sources are the 400 articles written by Hazell that he has painstakingly traced. In Hazell, he encapsulates the central importance and widespread impact of the Cooperative movement: these 'democratically skilled, self-governing bodies comprised of committed community based activists who married social commitment with good business sense'. As well as being a leading light in the co-operative movement in south Wales Hazell was, as Burge explains, characteristic of the thousands of men and women who were the backbone of labour organisation in the valleys. Most of those community leaders are now rarely remembered, and this biography should serve not only as a tribute to Hazell but also to those who followed the same path.

Hazell was born in London in 1890 and lost his mother at an early age. At 13, he worked in a builder's firm in Woking in Surrey and because of his stepmother's cruelty ran away from home at the age of 16, to find work at Lady Windsor Colliery, Ynysybwll, where he was to live and work until his death in 1964. There he became active in the local miners' lodge, secretary of the Workmen's Institute, and a local Labour councillor, but his most important contribution was his involvement in the co-operative movement. He was a cornerstone of the self-sufficient communitarian culture that created its own institutions and that served south Wales so well throughout the first half of the twentieth

century. At its peak the movement had 300,000 individual members.

Burge focuses on Hazell and the cooperative movement as one that saw people as consumers rather than simply as workers and producers. A recurring theme of the book is the emphasis given to the interconnected character of the labour movement in south Wales in this period. Hazell was personally the embodiment of interconnection between the co-operative society, the local miners lodge, the Workmen's Institute, the Trades and Labour Council and the Women's Co-operative Guild.

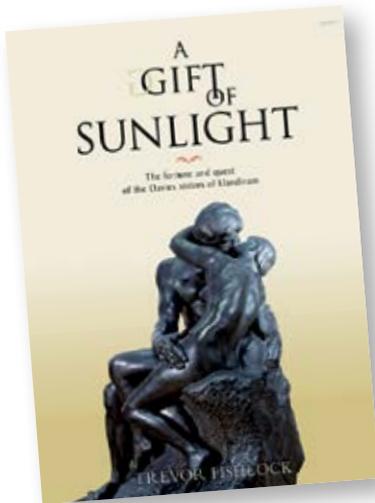
Both Hazell and the cooperative movement with which he was synonymous have been badly served by labour and working class historians hitherto. The Co-op was a valuable socialist tool in the armoury of institutions built up by the same class solidarity that created welfare halls, libraries and a nascent voluntary health service in south Wales in the first half of the twentieth century. This inheritance has been insufficiently recognised. So the significance of Burge's work lies in its unstated rebuke: that whilst the political struggle and the role of trade unions, including the history of the South Wales Miners' Federation has dominated Welsh historiography, the pervasive growth and influence of the co-operative movement has, with the exception of Burge himself, passed historians by.

This significant study is the culmination of eight years of original and innovative research that has interrupted Burge's original intention to write the history of the coop movement in south Wales. It forms a formidable foundation for that wider study and we will indeed be fortunate if Alun Burge is able to match the high standard he has set in this remarkable biography.

Aled Eirug

## Gifts indeed

Susie Wild



*A Gift of Sunlight: The fortune and quest of the Davies sisters of Llandinam*

**Trevor Fishlock**  
Gomer, 2015

As women who valued beauty, the Davies sisters would not be disappointed with the sumptuous production of this hardback tribute to their lives, bound in gold; a vase of sunflowers on an autumnal day. This is the first book to fully examine the sisters' collection of paintings for the people of Wales and an interesting story, well told by Trevor Fishlock. Shy and reticent Edwardian women, gatherers of flowers and artefacts, 'Gwendoline and Margaret believed that beauty had a power to do good.' In the depression years of the 1920s and 1930s they transformed their home in Montgomeryshire into 'a place of music, song, poetry, paintings, printing, festivals and flowers among glorious trees [...] Their assembly of brilliant paintings is a marvel. For love of their country they gave it to the people, a gift of sunlight.'

Fishlock's introduction sets the tone for this accessible and evocative appreciation of the sisters, the history, the happenings and the art of their era. Having already made two documentary programmes about the Davieses of Llandinam and the Davies sisters' trailblazing art collection, he makes an informed narrator. Fishlock's own visual style of writing dances us through a Paris in

flux, his linguistic verve echoing the modernist painters who worked 'to capture the moment, to transmit a sensation of movement, to make paint itself seem to quiver.' With photos from the family archive, and over 50 images spanning their art collection, the illustrated pages turn easily.

The book begins with perhaps one of their most famous acquisitions, Renoir's 1874 painting *La Parisienne*, icon of the collection the sisters bequeathed to the National Museum of Wales. Gwendoline bought the piece for £5,000 from the Grosvenor Gallery in 1913 and it can still be seen on display in Cardiff today. The recount flits between Paris, where the Impressionist Movement was stirring and which was regaining its

## Between 1951 and 1963 the Davies sisters bequeathed 260 works of art to the National Museum of Wales, making theirs one of the great British art collections of the 20th century.

'swagger' after the Franco-Prussian War, and the mountains of Wales. We learn of the humble beginnings of the sisters' grandfather, the industrialist and philanthropist David Davies. Chapters cover his time in Parliament, railway construction and coal mining (the 'buried sunlight' to which the title refers) and naturally progress to discussing Gwendoline and Margaret's father, Edward Davies, who died when his children were teenagers. He left £1,206,311 as his estate, the equivalent of over £130 million today, the majority of which was divided equally between his three heirs, leaving the two women 'independent mistresses of their own wealth.'

The girls were home-schooled but Higher Education for women was still warned against and resisted at the tail end of the 19th century. Luckily for us, their stepmother had a personal interest in art

and encouraged the girls to study culture and to travel. They toured the galleries and viewed the architecture of France, Italy, Germany, Switzerland and Greece, and both their interest and knowledge bloomed. Early 'forays as buyers of art were tentative and modest', and yet, after a burgeoning idea that they could build an art collection for their country began to prove quite likely - their first exhibition taking place in Cardiff in 1913 — they soon gathered more.

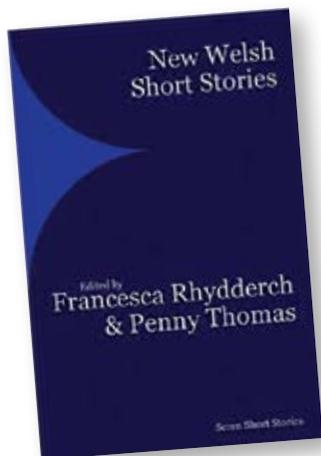
Between 1951 and 1963 the Davies sisters bequeathed 260 works of art to the National Museum of Wales, making theirs one of the great British art collections of the 20th century. Fishlock explains that, in an art world dominated by men, 'As female collectors they were rare; and since they were also sisters and spinsters and Welsh and Nonconformist they were unique.' Artworks they amassed included pieces by Van Gogh, Turner, Constable, Rodin, Monet, Augustus John, Cézanne, and Boticelli. The book details their travels, their purchases including the setting up of the 'music mansion' Gregynog and its private press devoted to 'beauty at all costs'. There are also subtle hints at the self-denial of the sisters' romantic hearts, of those who 'in a sorrowing world have erred in too much loving.'

At times the book feels overly dominated by the lives and histories of the men in the family and those in their political and social circles — those for which more records will exist, of course — and so, frustratingly, it doesn't always give the reader as much as they would like to know about the inner lives, thoughts and motivations of Gwendoline and Margaret (or any of the other mentioned women) specifically. Later chapters also become bogged down with the minutiae of dates and other numerical details at the loss of the earlier pace. Overall, however, *A Gift of Sunlight* is still an enjoyable introduction into the accomplishments of two women who devoted their lives, wealth and philanthropic endeavours to the arts and to Wales. Gifts indeed.

**Susie Wild** is a poet, writer and festival organiser. She is Publishing Editor at Parthian Books and Marketing Officer for elysiumgallery, Swansea.

## Short stories showcase

Lewis Davies



*New Welsh Short Stories*  
Eds. Francesca Rhydderch  
and Penny Thomas  
Seren, 2015

Cynan Jones' playful dragon story, 'A Letter from Wales', complete with found Victorian letters and drawings of bugs, is one of the highlights of the *New Welsh Short Stories*. It is a homage to late Victorian gothic, skilfully setting the fiction and tension before a suitably dramatic and surprising ending. It is a good example of a writer trying to break out of the Welsh tag by sending it up while also with Jones trying something new and extending his own reach beyond the old sgwar mile.

The selection, edited by Penny Thomas and Francesca Rhydderch, brings together a selection of Welsh writers, offering a showcase for current talents. In form it is a bit like John Williams' selection *Wales Half-Welsh* (Bloomsbury, 2004), which wasn't so much half-Welsh as half-written or my own *Urban Welsh* (Parthian, 2005) – which was wasn't very urban either. The editors in this new selection claim in their introduction of asking writers whose work they like – which is fair enough. Unfortunately what you often get using this approach is a few stories that have been hanging around, a bit lost, not quite finished or fully realised, drying and mouldering at the bottom of a drawer for a season or two like a bag of old conkers.

Joe Dunthorne contributes a found urban myth, Rachel Trezise moves from valleys youth to Port Talbot nursing home pensioners, Deborah

Kay Davies writes an uneven story about childhood while Tyler Keevil offers a night start for a young fiction writer from Canada coming to terms with impending fatherhood by cutting the lawn at midnight. Maria Donovan produces a profound and elegiac narrative of loss and leaving the past go with 'Learning to Say (Goodbye in Russian)'. 'Crocodile Hearts' by Kate Hamer is a convincing portrayal of suburban dysfunctional through a horror comedy but I felt I wanted a bit more of it. The world of the story is successfully created and then it slithers away like one of the crocodiles in the story.

Some of the slighter stories don't quite pull in all the elements of a successful fiction and read as something half-formed, not quite finished, needing another draft. Alun Richards in his masterclass on stories in the *New Welsh Review* in the late nineties claimed he liked them to have a beginning, a middle and an end. He didn't really mind which order they came in but he wanted them there.

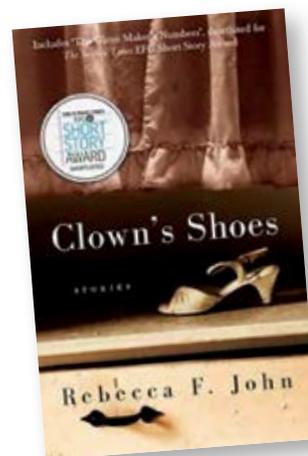
With a few honourable exceptions such as Carys Davies's *The Redemption of Galen Pike* there seems to be a lack of ambition in the world of Welsh fiction at the moment. There is very little experimentation, the length is really too short. The stories that have been winning or being short-listed for the big international short story awards like Lionel Shriver's 'Kilifi Creek', Rebecca F John's 'The Glovemakers's Numbers' or Francesca Rhydderch's 'The Taxidermist's Daughter' are a lot longer than most showcased here. The Rhys Davies Award has cut the word limit on entries invited to under 2,500. I realise it is not purely a numbers game but it is hard for stories of this length to compete against longer works of five to six thousand. The work of Alice Munro is a sustained example of this.

The most significant new voice, and for me the most ambitious story in this collection, is from Thomas Morris. '17' showcases his work, introducing an engaging anti-hero from contemporary urban Wales who holds together an implausible story of frightening neighbours, small-time crime, suicide and mud-wrestling in the grounds of Caerphilly castle to produce a work both comic and serious at the same time. Morris's first collection *We Don't Know What We're Doing* has just been published. I'll be buying a copy – which is what these anthologies are all about.

**Lewis Davies** won the Rhys Davies Award for his short story 'Mr Roopratna's Chocolate' in 1999.

## An accomplished debut

John Lavin



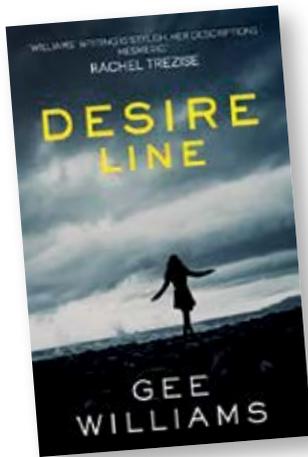
*Clown's Shoes*  
Rebecca F. John  
Parthian, 2015

One of the stories in *Clown's Shoes* (Parthian), the debut of Rebecca F. John, is 'The Glove Maker's Numbers'. Concerning a synesthete's breakdown following the death of her brother, it was shortlisted for this year's prestigious *Sunday Times* Short Story Award. It is not difficult to see why. John enters a mind unravelled by grief with both empathy and perception. However, given the author's youth, what is perhaps most impressive is her lack of sentimentality when dealing with this and other ambitious subjects. Take the bewildered Korean girl, starting a new life in England with her aunt, after the apparent death of a wayward mother – someone that her aunt describes as having had a 'bad mind'. Or try 'Salting Home', where a woman finds herself unable to communicate with a daughter that she has believed to be dead for ten years. When the daughter leaves in the night, the mother experiences a terrible sense of relief that feels both alien and wrong – not only to herself but to the reader too. In the bold, dramatic stories collected in *Clown's Feet*, John plants us, time and time again, in new terrain. This is an extremely accomplished debut and, alongside Carys Davies' *Redemption of Galen Pike* (Salt) and Thomas Morris' *We Don't Know What We're Doing* (Faber), yet further sign of the renaissance of the Welsh short story.

**John Lavin**

## Beyond murder-mystery

John Lavin



*Desire Line*  
Gee Williams  
Parthian, 2015

The shadow of Hitchcock also looms large over a book in which the narrator holds imaginary conversations with the Master of Suspense.

Gee Williams' prose style calls to mind a somewhat unlikely hybrid between James Joyce and Martin Amis. First person, unreliable narrator, not-quite-murder-mystery, *Desire Line* (Parthian) is told in a semi stream of consciousness style where meanings are not always immediately apparent – deliberately so – and where appearance and reality are constantly called into question. In this it echoes the best – i.e. early-to-mid – Martin Amis, in particular his own not-quite-murder-mystery, *London Fields*.

The shadow of Hitchcock also looms large over a book in which the narrator holds imaginary conversations with the Master of Suspense. And in Williams' hands, Rhyl, the book's setting, becomes a noir-ish, too-bright-early-technicolour otherworld, the match of Hitch's San Francisco. A damaged place:

Once a glamour girl but finding she was unloved, Rhyl had stopped taking care of herself years ago. Self-harmed in fact.

And a place where the body of the renowned Oxford author, Sara Meredith, is found washed up on the beach. In the narrator's celluloid-centred search to find the truth behind Meredith's death, he uncovers a great many secrets and lies not only about her life but about his own. Much like fellow Welsh author Jo Mazelis' recent work *Significance*, *Desire Line* is a work of great philosophical depth and profundity masquerading as a murder mystery. And like that book it leaves you both disorientated and yet somehow awoken. A must read.

**Dr John Lavin** is Fiction Editor at *Wales Arts Review*

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# #RefugeesWelcome

Dylan Moore

Writing regularly on the subject of Wales provides a perpetual reminder of Gwyn Thomas' reaction on being afforded column inches in a weekly newspaper: 'What on earth has a civilised man to say to readers of a Sunday newspaper at seven-day intervals? And it has to do with 'Welsh affairs'; there isn't a Welsh affair in sight that isn't black and blue from polemical flogging.' Thomas' verbose, lyrical tongue, as usual, was at least partially ensconced inside a jowly cheek, but he had a point.

*The Welsh agenda's* half-yearly intervals provide plenty of material for today's columnist, but there are other reasons why writing about Wales has changed since Thomas' day. Devolution; the pace of change; fragmentation of society and politics. The most significant, though, is the greater interconnectedness of our world: now, there are very few 'Welsh affairs' that are not also 'world affairs', perhaps even fewer world affairs that are not, or will not become, Welsh affairs. This century, our challenges are global: climate change, resources, inequality, education, healthcare, crime, terrorism, the internet.

There has been lots of noise, on social media and through mainstream print and broadcast channels, about the language used to describe the current and ongoing situation across Afro-Eurasia. It began as a 'migrant crisis', presented by the British rightwing press over the summer as an offence to hardworking families' holiday plans, then morphed, almost overnight, into a 'refugee crisis', lent a name and a face by the harrowing photographs of little Aylan Kurdi lying lifeless on a Turkish beach. If we have to have a simple name for the entire complex situation, I would prefer to call it a 'human crisis.'

It is a human crisis not only because it is global, but also because it needs to be explained as a failure of humanity. Our collective inhumanity has created the conditions for the biggest displacement of people since the second world war.

Totalitarianism in Eritrea; repression in Oromia; war in Syria and Sudan; extremism in Pakistan and Afghanistan; barbarity in Iraq. And the world's problems are divorced neither from each other nor from us. There are refugees seeking sanctuary in Cardiff some of whom are escaping violence waged by jihadis born and raised in Cardiff. The whole thing is a mess.

It is perhaps instructive that Alun Davies, AM for Blaenau Gwent, evoked the ghosts of former Yugoslavia as he lamented the slow reaction of our political leaders to the crisis: 'I remember witnessing at first hand the human impact of genocide in Rwanda and again in the Balkans. In both cases it took a public outcry over the deaths of thousands of people before politicians took action.' Watching thousands of men, women and children tramping across fields where Serbs and Croats fought and died in Europe's last major conflict is almost as poignant as the pictures of crammed trains of refugees desperate to get *into* Germany. Walter Benjamin's Angel of History, it seems, is attuned to irony as well as complexity; 'where we see a chain of events... he sees a single catastrophe... rubble on top of rubble.'

At the #RefugeesWelcome march in Cardiff, a chant went up: 'No borders! No nations! Stop deportations!' The man walking next to me lowered his voice and asked 'What about the Rugby World Cup?' An impracticable reality, but a powerful slogan, No Borders should apply to our thinking rather than our physical checkpoints. The literal cry of a permanently disgruntled anarchist fringe serves as a useful signpost for mainstream political thinking. Global problems have global solutions; the Angel of History's 'sky-high rubble heap' is a Welsh affair too.

Humans in Wales have responded. Donations have been made. Collections for the camps at Calais abound. The music community in Wales has pulled together to create *Reach Out!*, a 30-track charity rock album. Charlotte Church and Gruff Rhys were

both at the Cardiff march. But this is not a natural disaster like the 2004 tsunami, or a famine like the one that spawned Live Aid. We cannot patch up Europe, or the world, with loose change and old clothes. We must pick up the pieces, and recognise that the 'rubble' of this crisis is our fellow human. Those in Croatia, Kos or Calais today may be in Wrexham or Newport next month; they will need more than a hashtag to welcome them.

It is heartening that the sympathetic public outpouring has been matched by some political will in Wales. Leanne Wood has long made it Plaid Cymru's position to develop all-party support for refugees and Carwyn Jones has previously stated in principle support to make Wales the first Nation of Sanctuary. The First Minister was quick to call an emergency summit to plan Wales' response. It is time to be both brave and bold.

Wales has long told itself a story of being a nation with a proud tradition of keeping a welcome. This year's republication of Wales: A Tolerant Nation? (UWP) celebrated, explored and challenged this myth. We now have a unique opportunity to make Wales a world leader. Prejudice around asylum and migration is often founded on a fear of lacking capacity to cope with numbers, 'pressure on public services.' But public response to the current crisis has shown that a human infrastructure is here, waiting to be tapped. Many people are offering up rooms in their own homes; current asylum mechanisms do not allow for such generosity. Unprecedented times call for unprecedented measures.

You may say I'm a dreamer, but I'm not the only one - and the hard reality we face is that if we don't dare to dream, we will instead, surely, be enveloped by nightmare. As one graffiti in Calais has it: 'We must learn to live together like brothers or we will die together like idiots.' To imagine this applies to some human beings but not to others could yet prove the mistake of the century; there is no 'them', there is only us.

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