

the welsh agenda



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to world stories**

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Editor: John Osmond

Associate Editors:

Geraint Talfan Davies
Rhys David

Administration:

Helen Sims-Coomber

Design:

marc@theundercard.co.uk

To advertise, tel: 029 2066 0820

Institute of Welsh Affairs

4 Cathedral Road
Cardiff CF11 9LJ

Tel: 029 2066 0820

Email: wales@iwa.org.uk

www.iwa.org.uk

The IWA is a non-aligned independent think-tank and research institute. Members (annual subscription £40) receive agenda three times a year, can purchase reports at a 25 per cent reduction, and receive discounts when attending IWA events.

Branches

North Wales Secretariat

c/o Huw Lewis
6 Maes yr Haul, Mold,
Flintshire CH7 1NS
Tel: 01352 758311

Gwent Secretariat

c/o Chris O'Malley
University of Wales, Newport,
Caerleon Campus
PO Box 179, Newport NP18 3YG
Tel: 01633 432005

West Wales Secretariat

c/o Margaret Davies
Principal's Office,
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Carmarthen SA31 3EP
Tel: 01267 237971

Swansea Bay Secretariat

c/o Beti Williams
Department of Computer Science,
Swansea University,
Swansea SA2 8PP
Tel: 01792 295625

Cardiff and Valleys Secretariat

c/o Emma Bremman
4 Cathedral Road,
Cardiff CF11 9LJ
Tel: 029 2066 0820

IWA Women

c/o Kirsty Davies
kirstydavies@iwa.org.uk
Tel: 07900 692898

Wales in London

c/o Robert John
First Base, 22 Ganton Street,
London W1F 7BY
Tel: 020 7851 5521

A Welsh brand to die for

Economy Minister Edwina Hart told the Assembly's Enterprise and Business Committee in March that she needs "a brand that's identifiable in Wales in terms which takes in the economy, inward investment, tourism, all of that, that takes in everything." She said she had a team of experts examining how the government is projecting its message to potential inward investors and visitors from overseas. Mrs Hart is whistling in the wind. An all-encompassing Wales brand has been a holy grail for decades past. It will be no less elusive today.

Wales has a number of powerful brands. To start with *Y Ddraig Goch* is a pretty potent national emblem that does not lack distinctiveness. In this year of the Grand Slam, Welsh rugby continues to be our leading component of international recognition. Wales is also strongly associated with performers like Bryn Terfel, Katherine Jenkins, Tom Jones, Shirley Bassey and Sir Anthony Hopkins, and cultural institutions like Welsh National Opera. They are powerful projections of Wales, but they are not a brand.

When Edwina Hart bemoaned the absence of a brand she was thinking of the economy. Countries that have been able to project a strong image around the world have generally done so in terms of indigenous business success associated with distinctive products. Guinness is inextricably associated with Ireland, whisky with Scotland, Nokia with Finland, Ikea with Sweden and so on.

Wales has developed some useful brands over recent years, especially in the food sector, with products such as Tŷ Nant mineral water, Rachel's Dairy, Halen Môn or Penderyn whiskey. However, these are highly niche and unlikely to achieve the global identification that Edwina Hart is looking for. In the absence of such individual brand ambassadors for Wales, the one brand that established some international recognition was that of the Welsh Development Agency - a brand carelessly cast aside when the WDA was hauled unceremoniously into the civil service in 2004. Baby and bathwater spring to mind. It was a brand to die for (certainly, many English regions would), and the failure to remedy that act of vandalism has been a black

mark against every Economic Development Minister over the last eight years.

Edwina Hart's announcement in March of a science policy that includes a £50 million fund to attract the best scientists to Wales, and another £100 million to kick start a drive to build critical mass in the life sciences field are welcome initiatives. But we still face formidable hurdles if we are to lift ourselves from the bottom end of economic league tables, something we have so far failed to do despite billions of euros being pumped into West Wales and the Valleys. In terms of inward investment we have plummeted from the top to the bottom of the UK table. At the same time the Welsh Government's capital funding has been cut in half.

The WDA's most successful chairman Lord Rowe-Beddoe, in his address to the IWA's National Economy conference in March, judged that it would be asking too much of the Welsh Government to swallow its pride and recreate the organisation. That is, no doubt, a savvy political call, but there are two related areas in which the Welsh Government needs some arm's length capacity if it is to move forward. First, a capacity to sell Wales hard each and every day, a task for which politicians and civil servants cannot possibly have the necessary time. Second, to raise private finance in ways that will not fall on to the Welsh Government's balance sheet and, under the Treasury's over-strict rules, incur a penalty on our Barnett formula funding.

There are two potentially useful brands, that could give shape to such a new capacity, currently lying in drawers. The WDA brand still rests with the Welsh Government and, in visual terms, could be revived without necessarily resurrecting the agency in its previous form. The other - the Bank of Wales - lies in a drawer at Lloyds TSB, a bank that is in public ownership. In its day, pre-devolution, the Bank of Wales had little exposure outside Wales, but it is a title that has an authoritative ring that could be built into something powerful in the new context. Whatever the solution the Welsh Government needs to move quickly if it is to lift the curse of our current, culpable invisibility.

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Cover: Huw Edwards, presenter of the BBC's *Story of Wales*, contemplates the 1536 Act of Union (more accurately 'Incorporation'), that was exhibited by the National Museum in St Fagans last year. "This is the most important document in the entire history of Wales," he says.



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Coming Up

• Connecting Wales with the world of finance

Tuesday 1 May 2012, 9.15am – 3.30pm, Radisson Blu Hotel, Cardiff
This conference will explore new sources of finance for business, including equity finance, and focus on the regional growth funds set up by the Westminster Government.

Keynote speakers: Business Growth Fund Chairman Sir Nigel Rudd; Jonathan Price, Chief Economist, Welsh Government; Paul Oldham, Business Growth Fund Regional Director for Wales and the West; Tom Ayerst, Director Transactions Services, PwC; Walter May, business entrepreneur; Chris Pryce, Matrix Private Equity Partners; and Chris Rowlands, chair of the UK Government's 'Rowlands Review' on the availability of growth capital for SMEs.

£70 (£56 IWA members)

• Putting Wales at the heart of Rio+20

Friday 18 May 2012, 9.15am – 4.00pm, Cardiff University, Cardiff
This conference examines the practical impact the forthcoming Welsh Government sustainable development legislation will have on delivering the UN Rio Janeiro June 2012 summit goals of (i) promoting the green economy to eradicate poverty; and (ii) putting in place institutional frameworks for delivering sustainable development.

Keynote speakers: First Minister Carwyn Jones; Peter Davies, Welsh Commissioner for Sustainable Futures; Anne Meikle, Head WWF Cymru; Jane Davidson, Director, Institute for Sustainable practice, University of Wales Trinity St David.

£70 (£56 IWA members)

• IWA Inspire Wales Awards 2012

In association with the Western Mail

Thursday 14 June 2012 7.00pm, City Hall, Cardiff

An evening recognizing achievers in the fields of business, education, science and technology, arts, media, and creative industries, environment, citizenship, Welsh in the work place, global Wales, youth activities and sport.

£55 (£50 IWA members)

Table of 10 - £500 (£475 IWA members) Prices exclude VAT.

• Co-operative enterprise – combining social responsibility with wealth creation

Friday-Saturday 6-7 July 2012

Atrium Building, University of Glamorgan, Cardiff

Marking the thirtieth anniversary of the Wales Co-operative Centre, this two-day conference explores how co-operative and mutual enterprises can be a motor for wealth creation.

Keynote speakers: Paul Flowers, Chair, Co-operative Bank, Derek Walker, Chief Executive, Wales Co-operative Centre; Alex Bird, Executive Chair, Co-operatives and Mutual Wales; Mark Drakeford AM for Cardiff West.

This conference is free but registration is essential via the IWA website.

• Growing our Woodlands in Wales

Monday 9 July, Parc Thistle Hotel, Cardiff

This conference will engage with the Welsh Government's policy to significantly increase the woodland cover in Wales from the present 14 per cent to 20 per cent by 2030.

Keynote speakers: John Griffiths, Minister for the Environment and Sustainable Development; Professor Gareth Wyn Jones, Chair, Welsh Government Land Use and Climate Change Group; Sophie Wynne-Jones, Wales Rural Observatory, Aberystwyth University; and Jon Owen Jones, Chair, Forestry Commission Wales.

£70 (£56 IWA members)

Just Published

• Forging a new connection - Cardiff and the Valleys

Edited by Stevie Upton

Addresses the challenges facing southeastern Wales in creating a city region to promote better transport, housing and environmental strategic co-ordination

£10 (£7.50 to IWA members)

More information: www.iwa.org.uk

When borders are crossed

Daniel G. Williams discusses two new editions of Raymond Williams' work which chart the long revolution through which we continue to live

The study of revolution entails a paradox. If a process of social transformation is far-reaching enough, then it should transform the criteria by which it can be identified. Therefore, in a post-revolutionary world, where political and cultural co-ordinates would have been fundamentally transformed, the process of revolution would presumably be unintelligible to us according to the terms and values of the pre-revolutionary past. However, if the revolutionary process is apparent, intelligible and open to study, then perhaps the desired social transformation has not been deep or radical enough. In order for it to be studied it would seem that the concept of revolution must presuppose some kind of continuity in the shape of a subject or society to which a radical alteration occurs. But how then is a notion of continuity compatible with revolution?

This question is raised by the title of Raymond Williams's *The Long Revolution* (1961), which has recently been republished in a handsome edition by Parthian Press. Whereas Williams's career-making volume *Culture and Society* (1958) had "tried to restate an existing tradition" of cultural responses to industrialism, from Edmund Burke to George Orwell, *The Long Revolution* was "an attempt to reach new ground". Yet critics have often expressed some confusion as to how different this gradually emerging new ground would be from that which preceded it, and what vehicles were being advocated for reaching it.

In the volume of interviews *Politics and Letters* (1979) Perry Anderson, frustrated by Williams' reluctance to express his views in the rigorously (some would say arid) analytical language of European Marxism, suggested that *The Long Revolution* "suffered from an underlying culturalism, still conceiving social change more in terms of common processes of creative growth...

rather than the conflictual oppositions of class struggle". Williams responded by noting that the

"... book was an attempt to think through the idea of revolution in a society with substantial levels of cultural development and of democratic practice - in other words, a capitalist democracy as distinct from an absolutist state, or from societies marked by more absolute forms of material deprivation and poverty. [...] To stress the processes of cultural development, with all their contradictions - in the popular press, in the educational system, in the newer means of communication - and the political complications that follow from them, seemed to me a precondition for rethinking the notion of revolution in a society like Britain. [...] The best tendency in the book is an effort to see what class struggle would mean in areas of cultural and educational development which were normally excluded from socialist politics at the time."

This attempt at thinking through the idea of a long revolution in Britain takes a strange and fractured form. *The Long Revolution* begins with a now somewhat dated and rarely discussed account of the working of the individual creative mind in social contexts. Williams walks a tightrope between a simplistic empiricism based on a belief that there can be a direct and unmediated contact with an external reality, and an extreme idealism which believes that it's only through its articulation in language (or 'signification') that the real can exist at all. Williams emphasises both the extent to which we inherit ways of apprehending the world, and our creative capacity to develop new ways of seeing and feeling. While accepting the materialist case that the world exists

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whether we articulate it in language or not, the “true importance of our new understanding of perception and communication is that it verifies the creative activity of art in terms of general human creativity”. This is because “our way of seeing things is literally our way of living, the process of communication is in fact the process of community: the sharing of common meanings; the offering, reception and comparison of new meanings”.

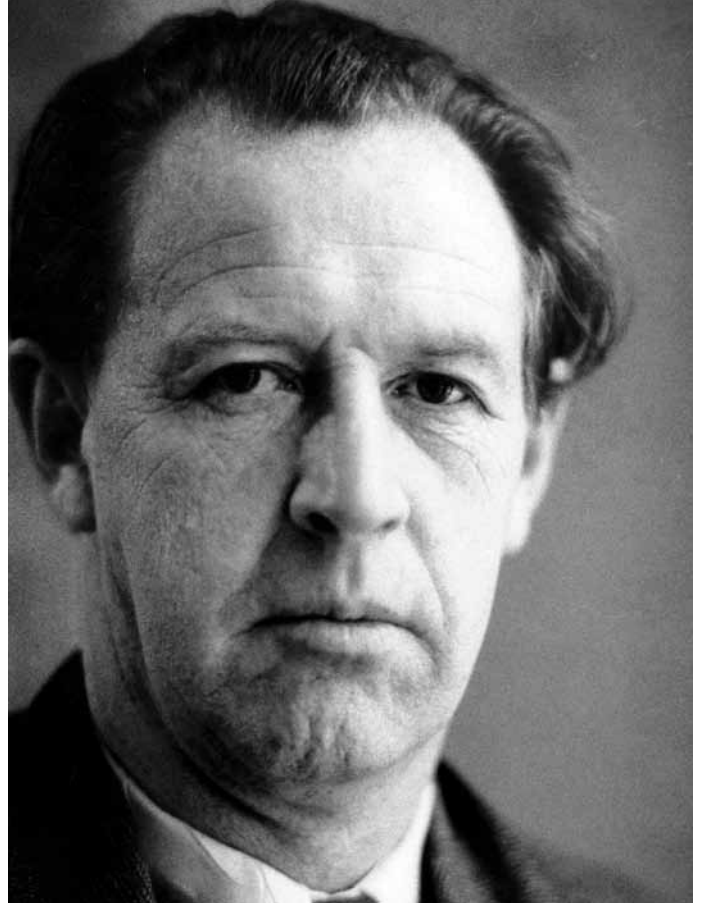
Anticipating later developments in historiography, Williams argues that a model where literary texts and other works of art are used as slides to illustrate an historical or social interpretation is untenable, for “art is part of society ... there is no solid whole outside it”. It follows therefore that the study of culture is “the study of relationships between elements in a whole way of life”.

This approach to culture and society is put into practice in the central part of the book which is made up of seven pioneering chapters on education, literacy, the press, spoken language, writers, drama, and the realist novel. These chapters contain some of Williams’ finest writing and most penetrating and original cultural criticism. By now, many of the fields which Williams began to map out have been covered in greater detail by others, but the prose continues to communicate the sense of a critic discovering new areas and methods of research, and trying to articulate a new sense of the relationships that constitute a culture beyond the language and concepts available to him at the time. What’s somewhat curious is the fact that there’s little real attempt at connecting these independent studies, and this sense of fragmented discontinuity is intensified by a final chapter which aims to map “the meanings and values which are lived in works and relationships” in the emergent Britain of the 1960s. The diverse changes that Williams refers to as “the history of our expanding culture” are never really brought together.

In this respect, Anthony Barnett’s introduction to the new edition is particularly valuable. Founder of the website Open Democracy, and a long time campaigner on issues such as electoral reform and civil liberties, Barnett is less interested in the specifics of Williams’ cultural analyses as he is in the overall trajectory of the work and its contemporary relevance. He suggests that one way of bringing *The Long Revolution*’s diverse threads together is to ask ‘against whom’ is the book addressed? ‘In the first place’ Williams is writing against the dehumanising traditions of the Left, as manifested in passages such as this:

“We can group other individuals into particular classes, nations or races, as a way of refusing them individual recognition. And some men will be satisfied by this while they are individuals and others the masses, the excluded group. Yet, inevitably, by this extending process, we are all converted to masses, for nowhere, in a world so composed, can our own individuality be fully recognized by others.”

If Williams is writing here against the dehumanising instinct within the Left, then he was also writing against the élitism and exploitation of the Right. But Barnett is at pains to note that this does not amount to some kind of ‘third-way position-taking’, for the book’s



Raymond Williams pictured in the early 1960s.

“... argument can face both ways because its foundation is positive not negative: its originality is Williams’ claim that people - his people - have the capacity to be self-governing as whole human beings.”

However, who ‘his people’ are in this book is somewhat ambiguous. The general answer in relation to Williams at this point in his career would be ‘the British working class’. But Williams makes it clear that he’d prefer to think of class “not in economic terms” but “in terms of style of life and behaviour”, and that it might be better that we abandon the term ‘class’ altogether for “more interesting discussions of human differences”. The identification with the socially excluded is clear enough throughout the book, but it seems that the long revolution for democracy, economic equality, access to learning and communication, derives its “meaning and direction ... from new conceptions of man and society which ... can only be given in experience”.

‘Experience’ is a term that carries considerable weight in *The Long Revolution*. Williams tells us in his introduction that he has not confined himself to “British society because of any lack of interest in what is happening elsewhere, but because the kind of evidence I am interested in is only really available where one lives”. It is this emphasis on the experiential nature of his thought that led Williams to be described as a humanist and ‘left Leavisite’ (after the Cambridge English don F. R. Leavis) by a generation of Marxists who became influenced by the ‘scientific’ and more analytical Marxism of the French philosopher Louis Althusser (1918 - 1990).

The most famous attack was mounted by Terry Eagleton, who dismissed *The Long Revolution* as a work of “idealist epistemology, organicist aesthetics and corporatist sociology” (see *Criticism and*

Ideology, 1976). For the Althusserians 'experience' is a synonym for illusion; it is ideology in its purest and most distorting state, and is the opposite of science or truth. Williams's tendency, on the other hand, was to counterpose conceptual, discursive or theoretical formulations against his own and his family's immediate experience. For Williams, any theory removed from a basis in human experience offers a false doctrinal fixity and a simplistic illusion of clarity.

In *The Long Revolution* Williams's emphasis is on a process of lived experience, a process of growing democratisation and cultural participation that is the making of an emergent 'common culture'. The concept of a 'common culture' reflects one of the deepest desires in Williams's cultural thought from the 1950s onwards; the desire to make connections in the name of a cultural 'wholeness' and 'general interest'. Capitalism is to be resisted as a system for it breeds divisions: of classes, of peoples, of nations. This dimension of his thought is particularly clear in the chapter on the 'The Growth of Standard English', which ends with the observation that:

"... there will doubtless always be people and groups who are anxious to show that they are not as other men, but the deep process of the growth of the great international language will not be much affected by them, though they may for a time be blurred".

It is this emphasis on a common human experience that informs the particular prestige that Williams gives to realism in the novel. Realism, for Williams, is conceived as a process; an aim in writing that calls for new forms and approaches as our world, and understanding of that world, changes. Rejecting those voices in the late 1950s who argued that 'the realistic novel... went out with the hansom cab', Williams argued that realism was an 'intention' that did not require an adherence to an already established form. 'Realism' does not refer to imitations of 19th Century conventions, for Williams insisted that new social realities would require new realisms. His conclusion was that "a new realism is necessary" to

capture the shape, and contribute to the emergence of, a common culture.

This strain in Williams' thought has been dismissed as a form of dogmatic formalism rooted in the assumption that a 'provincial English [sic] experience' could be made 'common' and universal. About twenty-five years after the publication of *The Long Revolution*, Black British critics such as Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy drew attention to the potential discriminatory implications of 'common culture' as a concept, and advocated a multicultural form of citizenship, drawing on the realities of human mobility and a fluid, diasporic, consciousness in its place. What they failed to register was the fact that Williams was already exploring the tensions and limitations of his thought in relation to his own Welsh formation. In his introduction to *The Long Revolution*, Williams noted that "this book and *Culture and Society* and my novel *Border Country*' marked the completion of "a body of work which I set myself to do ten years ago". If *Border Country* can be read as the fictional embodiment of Williams' theory of realism, it is also a novel that begins to register the problems inherent in the concept of a common British culture, and in this respect it anticipates future developments in Williams's thinking.

This is especially the case in relation to the presence of the Welsh language in the novel. For the 'Baptist anniversary' at the chapel, Will (largely based on Raymond, as Dai Smith has demonstrated) is taught "a little Welsh poem of two verses" by his father Harry, which the boy recites "clearly" while standing "nervously under the arch of the pulpit". Will is given a book entitled *The Holy Child* for his efforts which he throws into the river, much to the embarrassment of his parents. In another scene Harry, who rarely expresses his emotions overtly, can't seem to control his anger when he hears the 'little minister' Joshua Watkins

"...rehearsing his prayers and sermon. It went on for more than an hour, in Welsh, although the eventual delivery would be in English. The practice, it seemed, was to get the first flow right".

Harry's anger is primarily a response

to Watkins's unwillingness to help with spreading ashes on the frozen lane, followed by the minister's impertinence in asking Harry to empty his lavatory bucket. But it is surely significant that the issue of language difference appears at those moments of heightened emotional pressure in the novel, where character motivations become difficult to fathom, and where the realist narrator's claim to 'know' the characters' thoughts and inner beings breaks down. The Welsh language emerges at those very moments where Will and Harry lose control of their own contained emotions. The language seems to represent a sphere of experience that lies beyond the grasp and understanding of the controlling omniscient narrator of the realist text. It resists being incorporated into the realist vision, and creates a frustrating fault line in the concept of a 'common culture' which is reflected in the characters' responses.

The role of Welsh in the novel reaches its climax in the section on the eisteddfod. Here, the boundaries between languages, between generations, and between Will and the culture which surrounds him, become dissolved in the performances of the choirs which are followed by the communal singing of the Welsh national anthem:

"It was time now for the choirs, and Will knew, looking up, that it was no use at all even trying to stay separate... The drop of the raised hand, and then not the explosion of sound that you half expected, but a low, distant sound, a sound like the sea yet insistently human; a long, deep, caressing whisper, pointed suddenly and sharply broken off, then repeated at a different level, still both harsh and liquid; broken off again, cleanly; then irresistibly the entry and rising of an extraordinary power, and everyone singing; the faces straining and the voices rising around them, holding moving, in the hushed silence that held all the potency of these sounds, until you listening were the singing and the border had been crossed. When all the choirs had sung, everyone stood and sang the anthem. It was now no longer simply hearing, but a direct effect on the body: on the skin,

on the hair, on the hands.”

Will's desire to 'stand apart' is clear, but when the choirs begin to sing, that position of intellectual detachment becomes untenable. We're told that a "border had been crossed" as listener becomes singer in an act of empathy that again seems to lie outside the narrator's control. Indeed, the eisteddfod in *Border Country* can stand metonymically for Welsh culture itself. It is a transformative space in which 'I. Morgan, Watch Repairer', becomes 'Iltyd Morgan y Darren', in which a border is crossed as the power of the art produced by a community has a "direct effect on the body".

By the time Williams published *The Country and City* in 1973, that border experience had become the explicit experiential basis for his cultural analysis. The border now was both the frame of his own intellectual development, and a metaphor for the lines of division within any cultural formation. The opening chapter tells us that:

“...in a predominantly urban and industrial Britain I was born in a remote village, in a very old settled countryside, on the border between England and Wales. Within twenty miles, indeed at the end of a bus route, was in one direction an old cathedral city, in the other an old frontier market town but only a few miles beyond it the first industrial towns and villages of the great coal and steel area of South Wales. Before I had read any descriptions and interpretations of the changes and variations of settlements and ways of life, I saw them on the ground, and working, in unforgettable clarity.”

This autobiographical note is struck at several key moments throughout Williams's still remarkable analysis of the changing attitudes towards the cultures of the country and the city. As Stan Smith notes in his illuminating introduction to the recent edition produced by Spokesman Books, lines of lineage and movement within Williams's own family become “lines of communication ... lines on a

battlefield and lines on a map, dividing up the landscape and demarcating the deep histories of place and displacement” as the concept of a ‘common culture’ is decisively jettisoned in favour of a plural conception of societies and the advocacy of variable socialisms. The tendency to universalise a particular formation (of which Williams is himself guilty in *The Long Revolution*) is criticised throughout, most powerfully and memorably in Williams's rejection of the Marxist tendency to demean and ridicule the ‘idiocy of rural life’:

“In the *Communist Manifesto* Marx and Engels argued that ‘the bourgeoisie has subjected the country to the rule of the towns ... has created enormous cities ... has made barbarian and semi-barbarian countries dependent on the civilised ones’: the familiar history of capitalism and imperialism. They argued that these relations of centralisation and dependence had created the conditions for revolution, and in one sense they were right.

“But there was an ambiguity at the core of the argument. They denounced what was being done in the tearing progress of capitalism and imperialism; they insisted that men must struggle to supersede it, and they showed us some ways. But implicit in the denunciation was another set of value-judgements: the bourgeoisie has ‘rescued a considerable part of the population from the idiocy of rural life’; the subjected nations were ‘barbarian and semi-barbarian’, the dominating powers ‘civilised’. It was then on this kind of confidence in the singular values of modernisation and civilisation that a major distortion in the history of communism was erected. [...] This difficulty worked itself through in a surprising way, in our own century. Revolutions came not in the ‘developed’ but in the ‘undeveloped’ countries. [...] Thus the ‘rural idiots’ and the ‘barbarians and semi-barbarians’ have been, for the last forty years, the main revolutionary force in the world.”

It would take another article to do justice to the arguments in *The Country and the City*, but *The Long Revolution* should be read today in light of the ways in which Williams's thought developed. The passage above is a striking example of the way in which his method of “submitting personal facts, the incidents of a family, to a total record; to learn evidence and connection and altering perspectives”, leads to a revision of his previous positions. It is that crucial emphasis on experience that accounts for what the African American critic Henry Louis Gates has recently described as Williams's “theoretical openness”.

We need that openness now more than ever. In his introduction Anthony Barnett draws on the examples of the Occupy movement and the Arab Awakening to suggest that we may now be entering a period of revolutionary possibility following the era of what Roberto Unger called “the dictatorship of no alternatives”. If we continue to accept the inevitability of the unbridled capitalist economy, and the political structures that support it, then we will not see the other possibilities that are inherent within the situations in which we find ourselves, and within the histories that we inherit.

In this respect *The Long Revolution* is a concept rather than a description. It is a “historical process that is hard to comprehend because we are all within it”. Williams was the first to try and describe where we were and, to adapt Stan Smith's appropriate imagery, to cut and clear the “choked thoroughfares of our culture” so as to “indicate passable routes through the social, economic and political histories” that shaped him, and us.

Just as Raymond Williams excavated and reconstructed the past in order to offer alternative paths towards the future, so we should mine his writings now as we try to understand our position within an ongoing revolution, and to measure the distance that we still have to travel.

Daniel G. Williams is Senior Lecturer in English and Director of the Centre for Research into the English Literature and Language of Wales at Swansea University.

News

Creating a city-region for Cardiff and the Valleys

With 1.5 million inhabitants spread across ten local authority areas, commuting flows in the tens of thousands and significant economic disparities, southeastern Wales faces a major challenge in building an inclusive city region. However, a new publication from the IWA *Forging a new connection - Cardiff and the Valleys* argues that it offers great rewards in terms of connectivity, housing

and the environment.

The book, based on a conference organised by the IWA last November, says we must find new ways of overcoming economic inequalities, fragmented governance arrangements and cultural resistance to creating a city region around the Welsh capital.

In her introduction the book's editor, IWA Research Officer Dr Stevie Upton, says what is needed is strong leadership focusing on a small number of commonly agreed goals. She counsels against



attempting to formulate an all-encompassing strategy at the outset. "Too early an attempt to create such a thing could all too readily descend into disagreement," she says. "It is a process that can begin with just a few shared goals". These should start with collaboration

in transport, especially the creation of an electrified metro light rail network for the region, leading to a more strategic approach in housing provision.

The book also contains contributions by Thomas Kiwitt, Head of Planning for the Stuttgart city region, by former Mayor of Vancouver Gordon Campbell and, on the Manchester city region, by Professor Alan Harding.

Forging a New Connection is available from the IWA at £10 (with a 25 per cent reduction for members)

Putting Wales at the heart of the debate on the UK's future

Wales must stake out a place for itself in the debate on the constitutional future of the United Kingdom or risk being sidelined by a bilateral settlement between London and Edinburgh. This is a key driver of a three-year project on the UK's changing union being undertaken by the IWA together with the Wales Governance Centre at Cardiff University, and Cymru Yfory/Tomorrow's Wales.

At the heart of the project will be a new *Forum on the Changing Union* which will provide a platform for constitutional experts and politicians from across the British Isles. A group of around 30 'opinion formers', it will contribute new thinking on the changing shape of constitutional relationships within the British Isles

A second strand of the project, which is being jointly funded by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust and the Nuffield Foundation, will be to respond to the agenda of the Silk Commission that has been set up by the UK Government to consider the financial and constitutional future of the National Assembly.

IWA chairman Geraint Talfan Davies said, "There is a danger that in the next few years the debate on the UK's constitutional future will be framed as a bilateral exchange between elites in Edinburgh and London."

However, he said Wales has both the capacity and the interest to orchestrate the breadth of conversations that are needed:

"Wales's position within the United Kingdom equips it to make a unique contribution to the re-imagining of relationships within the British Isles. At the same time we have to begin to research the implications of more radical Scottish devolution, or even Scottish independence, for each and every part of the UK, and for the UK as a whole."

Professor Richard Wyn Jones, Director of the Wales Governance Centre, said:

"The project's aim is to identify and break through the geographical, political and media barriers that have created separate constitutional debates in different parts of the UK. We have to bring these separate debates together and, if not integrate them, at least make sure that those involved in these debates are more aware of the knock on effects of changes in one country for the rest. It is striking, for example, that to a large extent England – by far the largest component of the United Kingdom –

has so far been little involved in the devolution discussion."

The response to the work of the Silk Commission is to be carried out by three work groups:

- **Finance and Funding** chaired by former Assembly Member and Welsh Minister, Andrew Davies who is currently working in an advisory role to the Vice Chancellor of Swansea University.
- **Legal Aspects and Jurisdiction** chaired by Emyr Lewis, Senior Fellow in Welsh Law at Cardiff University, and a partner with Welsh law firm, Morgan Cole.
- **Scrutiny, Accountability, Capacity and Devolved Powers** chaired by former Member of Parliament and Assembly Member Cynog Dafis.

The three Working Groups will not only feed directly into the Silk process itself, but also generate material in a form that will give Welsh organisations and the wider public the solid information base they will require to understand and influence both the Commission's work and the subsequent Government responses to its recommendations.

Welsh horizons across 50 years



25/25 Vision is a project being undertaken in association with Literature Wales to mark the IWA's 25th anniversary in 2012. Twenty-five writers have been asked to produce a 2-3,000 word essay casting their minds back over their experience of the past quarter-of-a-century in Wales and reflecting on what this inspires them to hope for in the next 25 years.

The resulting essays, being edited by IWA Director John Osmond and former Literature Wales Chief Executive Peter Finch, will reflect a personal vision in each case. However, the writers have been asked to place the recent collective experience of Wales as an essential backdrop for what they believe or hope the future will hold.

Taken together, the 25 accounts will provide a profound and revealing commentary on a half-century in which Wales is emerging from the shadows to occupy a place of greater clarity in the world.

A central part of the project, which will be launched during the autumn, will be photographic portraits of the authors by John Briggs. The photographs will also be put together in an exhibition that will tour a number of arts and cultural venues around Wales during 2013. It is hoped these will include venues in Cardiff, Caernarfon, Aberystwyth, Merthyr and Swansea.

Geraint Talfan Davies writes, page 28

Flexible working good for business

Fears that flexible working policies are a costly extra that businesses can ill afford are unfounded. This is the principal finding of a report published by the IWA and Chwarae Teg in March. *Capturing the Benefits of Flexible Working* focuses on men's use of flexible working arrangements to allow them to care for family members, and on the experiences of employers in meeting their requests. It finds that the organisations involved in the research had seen improvements in productivity, and even financial savings, following the introduction of flexible working policies. None reported an increase in their administrative burden and some had witnessed a decrease.

Staff were also reported to be more focused, more motivated and more willing to work flexibly in their employer's favour as the business need arose. As one manager at Milford Haven Port Authority explained, "Yes you're looking after the bottom line. But to look after the bottom line you've got to look after your workforce."

Prepared by the IWA's Research Officer Dr Stevie Upton, the report concludes that:

"The relative stability of flexible working arrangements over time, coupled with the fact that requests tend to relate to only a small number of types of flexibility, points to flexible working being a relatively straightforward process to manage once implemented. Moreover, organisations that actively promote use of flexible working are no more likely to report negative effects on their operations than those that do not."

It also finds, however, that jobs requiring staff to be on call or to work off-site or in teams can be hard to arrange flexible working for. Forty per cent of the men questioned would like to provide more care for family members. The principal barrier to them doing so was non-availability of flexible working for their job role.

The report is available at £10 (£7.50 for IWA members) but free to download from the IWA website.

New IWA Fellows



New Fellows who have joined the IWA are Elan Closs Stephens (pictured), Emeritus Professor of Communications and Creative Industries at Aberystwyth University who is the BBC's trustee for Wales; broadcaster Huw Edwards, presenter of the BBC's *News at Ten* who also features on the cover of this issue as the presenter the history series *The Story of Wales*; and Lalita Carlton-Jones of Llandudno.

We regret to announce that Dr Hilary Lloyd Yewlett, Life Fellow of the IWA, passed away on 4 March 2012. A former lecturer in English and Education at Cardiff and Swansea Universities, Dr Yewlett had latterly also developed a scholarly interest in history, a passion which she had shared with readers of *ClickonWales*. Her staunch support for the Institute will be sadly missed.

Cultural Entrepreneurs

A Welsh voice for world stories



David Pountney

The telling of stories through music and dance is a fundamental human instinct. At Welsh National Opera we are custodians and creators of artworks which embody this instinct in some of the most sophisticated and complex expressions of European culture. Our primary task is clear: to realise these spectacular and technically demanding artworks to the highest possible standard, and to make the results accessible to everyone in our society.

Telling stories can be an intimate process – in a small group around a fire or one-to-one at bedtime – but a society also needs stories to illuminate its collective existence. We are not just a random selection of people thrown together by economic necessity, but a collective culture that has worked out a common strategy of compromise and rule-making that makes our collective life possible. Language, landscape and the historic pressure of one group against another define the way that these compromises are arranged, and these are embodied in the collective stories we tell and the means used to tell them.

Opera is the European form which explicitly seeks to tell stories to society as a whole – stories which sometimes elevate individual experiences to universal truths, and sometimes seek to discuss the nation itself. Politics, in its broadest sense, (the destiny of the collective, the Polis) is the proper subject of opera, and is frequently intertwined

with individual bliss or tragedy, just as our personal lives are irrevocably bound up in our collective existence.

The definition and rediscovery of national identity was expressed through opera across the whole of Europe throughout the 19th Century. Opera was the forum in which the ancient stories that affirmed the subtle differences between different groups were re-told. It was also a forum through which the rediscovered language of nationhood was a primary means of defining that nationhood.

Through the operas of Smetana and Dvorak the Czechs rebuilt their national identity in the face of overwhelming German linguistic and cultural domination, as did the Poles with Moniusko. The operas of Mussorgsky, Rimsky Korsakov and Glinka forged the iconography of the Russian State against

be moved by. And that is why for us, this fabulous treasure of communal utterance can function so powerfully as a collective voice of Wales.

The realisation of these large-scale works explicitly addressed to a wide audience requires the maintenance of significant groups of skills. Society is represented on stage by the chorus. This idea goes back to the Greeks where, incidentally, a “Sponsor” was the individual who paid for the Chorus and thus determined the scale of work to be written. As with the Choir, a significant element of Welsh culture, the Chorus is central to the expressive message of opera. The orchestra is the collective that gives these stories, through its emotional power, universal significance. The maintenance of these two fundamental pillars is the heart of an opera company, backed up by all the essential technical

Opera is the European form which explicitly seeks to tell stories to society as a whole – stories which sometimes elevate individual experiences to universal truths, and sometimes seek to discuss the nation itself.

a background of aristocratic Francophile tradition. Interestingly, the result of this potentially narrow nationalistic ambition has been works of universal power and relevance. The need for society to find and define a collective voice gives rise to song that all can appreciate and

and administrative skills.

In addition, as in all other areas of European culture, there is a huge requirement for technical excellence. In opera, the expressive possibilities of singing are pushed to their limits. Stretching technical possibility is

one of the elements of a live opera performance that defines its knife-edge sense of occasion. However, finding, training, or acquiring on the open market, artists with these highly developed technical skills, combined with artistic maturity and depth of perception, is neither simple nor cheap.

If we realise all this with success, it will be clear that we have created an élite object that aspires to represent the highest technical and artistic achievements of European culture. I am not afraid to use this bogey word – indeed, creating an élite object is something of which we can be proud. This is also because following the achievement of ‘realisation’, our second task is to make this élite object accessible. In turn, this can only be done through a combination of price and communication. Price is already in place. Welsh National Opera is cheap – possibly even too cheap. But clearly communication has a way to go.

Recently a group of young men involved in the ‘cultural industries’ told me that they still had the perception of opera as something for which they “needed to dress up”. This is, in reality, so ludicrous it is laughable. It is at least 50 years since people actually ‘dressed up’ to go to normal opera performances – I am not talking about Glyndebourne or Salzburg here. In fact, the word to describe the average British audience at an opera performance would be nearer to ‘scruffy’ than ‘dressed up’! Those young men, I am sure, spend more money on fashionable ‘down dressing’ than the average opera goer on ‘dressing up’. Nonetheless, as we know, perception, or prejudice, has nothing to do with reality. This represents a big communication gap. It cannot be that prejudice and out-of-date perceptions should still be the barrier between people and this high point of cultural and emotional expression.

Another essential act of communication is to re-affirm our core role as providing a live artistic experience. We may hope that the burgeoning presence of opera in cinemas and on the net will attract

people’s interest and encourage them to seek out the live experience. It is important that we communicate that whatever the excellence of the ‘condensed milk’ variety, the live event is a unique occasion.

In defining our artistic programme for the next five years, we are seeking to set the enjoyment of opera within an exciting and stimulating intellectual context. Opera is a forum of ideas about collective identity, and this will be born out by repertoire chosen to represent important thematic ideas. For example, in the spring of 2013 we feature ‘Free Spirits’ via two works from the 1920s – Alban Berg’s *Lulu* and Janacek’s *The Cunning Little Vixen*. Both works examine the then incipient threat of erotically and socially liberated women but from very opposite perspectives. Berg writes from the neurotic, urban pessimistic viewpoint of Vienna, Janacek from the optimistic standpoint of a man at one with nature. Together they make a wonderfully enjoyable pair of operas that are as stimulating for their ideas as for their vibrant eroticism.

We shall also make a bold attempt to show that opera remains an intensely fertile medium in the 21st Century. Right across Europe there is a surge of creativity in the medium, but much of this does not reach Great Britain. We will change that, for instance bringing Jonathan Harvey’s magical electronic score for ‘Wagner Dream’ to play alongside our new *Lohengrin*. And as the representatives of the land of song, we shall also carry out an in-depth examination of the Italian tradition of *Bel Canto* (beautiful singing) starting with the three Donizetti operas that deal with our Tudor monarchs – after all they were a Welsh family!

Our aim is to be bold without being reckless, since an artistic institution stranded on the sandbank of mere survival is a sorry sight. All art is about vision. We trust that our vision will make the role of operatic story telling an essential part of our cultural life.

David Pountney is Chief Executive and Artistic Director of Welsh National Opera.

Outside the box in Bangor



Elen ap Robert

After nearly seven years with Galeri Caernarfon, I am taking up post from April as Artistic Director for Bangor University’s new Arts and Innovation Centre *Pontio* – eight miles to the west. I’m moving on with some trepidation, a feeling of intense excitement and knowing that an immense challenge awaits me. I am leaving a unique organisation, the security of a familiar team, having developed an artistic vision and 23 seasonal programmes of events, to step into the unknown.

I leave behind a physical base for something *virtual* – yet to be built. There is a feeling of *déjà vu* nevertheless as Galeri also existed only in plans alone when I first joined. Yet whereas Caernarfon was without a focus for the arts until Galeri opened its doors, Bangor is rather different. Up until 2008, Bangor was home to the much loved Theatr Gwynedd. Six years will have passed by the time the long-awaited Pontio centre opens its doors in 2014 – and expectations are high.

On a national level, Pontio will raise the profile of the arts in Wales, and on a local level it will provide a focal point for the community. Pontio will be at the very heart of the city. I look forward to ensuring that Welsh is its language of operation. Pontio, from the Welsh word meaning “to bridge”, is the working title for both a physical building and a wider concept. The new building will house a flexible, 450-seater multi-functional theatre. It will be a mid-scale receiving theatre primarily, and the emphasis will be on staging performances across the arts spectrum of a high quality.

There will also be a 120-seat studio theatre, a 200-seat cinema, a state-

of-the-art Design Studio, new lecture theatres, Students' Union facilities, and a variety of social learning spaces. It will be a place for people to meet, eat, learn and be entertained.

The secret to the success of Pontio will be to identify and engage with different audiences - the 11,000 strong student population and staff of the University and the local community. Consulting with these groups about programming will be crucial. For example, the increasing number of overseas students could see a demand for greater cultural and linguistic variety in the programming over time.

Pontio must also work meaningfully with hard-to-reach communities in imaginative ways and ensure that residents feel that it is relevant to their lives. Engaging with Maesgeirchen, the socially and economically disadvantaged Communities First area in Bangor, will be a priority. This is an area which falls within the 10 per cent of the most underprivileged areas of Wales. Pontio will explore possibilities of adopting the successful *Pas Peblig* model developed by Galeri Caernarfon, recently recognised by the Arts Council of Wales as a model of good practice.

Pontio will explore barriers to access such as transport, cost and deep seated issues to do with some people's perception that a theatre is not a place for them. To reiterate the words of Heritage Minister Huw Lewis, "the arts must be accessible to all". We will offer tickets free of charge, or at reduced rate, and explore apprenticeship possibilities, demonstrating commitment to the Welsh Government's child poverty agenda.

I am struck by a danger of investing all our energies in 'bricks and mortar'. As we consider the construction of a £40 million centre, we still need to think outside the theatre building - and outside the box - as we attempt to entice new audiences and those with little or no experience of the theatre.

One way will be by presenting work in unexpected locations. The National Theatre of Wales has been staging productions in unlikely and imaginative

places. Theatr Genedlaethol Cymru will stage their adaptation of Shakespeare's *Tempest*, *Storm* in a circus tent later this year, and Theatr Bara Caws will take *Gai Fod...* to wood clearings in north west Wales.

These companies are not turning their backs on traditional performance spaces. On the contrary they are exploring new stages and contexts in our locality, and they are hungry to do this with venues like ours.

As organisations I wonder whether we are guilty of expecting everything to come to us. Pontio may be a brand new 'receiving' venue, offering inspiring performance spaces and possibilities, but we have more to offer. I will ensure that we are open to collaborating in innovative ways which resonate with our communities and our artistic vision - both in and outside our new building.

Resolving contradictions at the Museum

David Anderson



The creation of a national museum, as with so many other areas of public life in Wales, came relatively late compared with other countries in the British Isles. Although founded in the first years of the 20th Century, it was not until the 1920s that the building in Cathays Park, with its nod to the Art Deco style, finally opened to the public. It is all the more remarkable that, only two decades later in 1948, the Museum should establish in St Fagans what was then (after Skansen Museum in Stockholm) only the second open air museum in Europe.

Cathays Park and St Fagans stood at almost opposite ends of the spectrum of museum types. The National Museum at

Cathays Park was the kind of institution one would expect a nation to create, when applying for membership of an already well established club. It was formal and imposing, with collections of art, natural sciences and archaeology of the highest quality, displayed in beautiful galleries.

St Fagans could not have been more different. It seemed to represent a fundamental challenge to, and a radical critique of, the Cathays Park museum and its museological assumptions. At Cathays Park, culture is primarily material and is contained in objects, whereas at St Fagans culture is primarily intangible and performative and is sustained and transmitted generation upon generation through people.

Cathays Park, by implication, looks for its peers not within Wales but to institutions beyond. It is international as well as national, whereas St Fagans for most practical purposes has no peer; it is unique in its elements, and uniquely Welsh in its character and values. It is no wonder that it is St Fagans, more than any other museum in Wales, that has won a special place in the hearts of so many people.

I know of no other museum service, national or other, which contains two great institutions of such contrasting philosophies - each passionately felt and indispensable - forever in dialogue with one another. These differences have often been a source of creativity.

Context is everything. Many museums, it could be argued, were created as a statement of loss. The museum in Cathays Park was the product of early 20th Century European nationalism. St Fagans emerged in a period of post-War austerity, when Welsh industries were central to the economy of the United Kingdom, and the Welsh language and rural ways of life were perceived to be under threat.

It was only after the coal, steel and other traditional industries themselves declined in the latter half of the last century that the National Slate Museum in Llanberis, the National Wool Museum in Drefach, Big Pit in Blaenafon, and then the National Maritime and Industrial Museum in Swansea were created, all acts

of national memory not dissimilar in their way to that of St Fagans before them.

Six years ago, after extensive public consultation, Amgueddfa Cymru - National Museum Wales developed a ten-year Vision. Central to this is the ambition to create three national institutions - a National Museum of Art, a National Museum of History, and a National Museum of Natural Sciences.

The National Museum of Art opened in July 2011 in refurbished galleries on the upper floor of the site in Cathays Park. By setting Welsh art in a wider European context, the Museum seeks through this synthesis to resolve (most people believe successfully) the long debated question of whether its priority should be the finest works of Welsh artists, or those of European masters.

The next challenge will be the transformation of St Fagans into the National Museum of History for Wales. To achieve this, we plan (subject to our bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund being successful in the summer of 2012) to bring together Amgueddfa Cymru's archaeology displays, together with its collections of rural and industrial social history, to tell the story of the peoples of Wales, and their ways of life, from the earliest surviving Neanderthal traces in 230,000 BC up to the present day.

This would mean a radical revision of the Museum's present displays by including, for example, the story of the Suffragettes and other social and political movements. But the exhibits should not be a reassuring narrative of past achievements. It is part of the work of public institutions in a democracy to encourage children and adults to develop the skills of critical thinking - to consider the evidence for themselves, debate conflicting and even uncomfortable interpretations, and reach their own conclusions.

The plans include two major architectural interventions. The first is a remodelling of the existing reception building, through which every visitor passes to reach the historic houses on the rest of the site. The original 1960s construction is a significant example of post-War Welsh architecture, but over

the years several additions of less obvious architectural merit have been added, including the 1990s toilet block. We propose to make the building fit for the requirements of a 21st Century audience, with improved physical access, a large reception area, a new Centre for Learning and new gallery spaces.

The second architectural project will be an entirely new building in the middle of the site. This will explore the relationship between humans and their environment over time, with a particular focus on making - the ways in which people in Wales have used the natural resources around them to sustain themselves, and use their skills and creativity to improve the quality of their lives.

Another innovation will be a new programme of experimental archaeology. The Museum will use archaeological evidence to recreate a Bronze Age burial mound, rebuild houses from a recently excavated Celtic village, and reconstruct the great hall from Llys Rhosyr, the 13th Century enclosed 'llys' or court of Llywelyn ab Iorwerth on Anglesey. All are based on excavated evidence by various organisations, and new research by Amgueddfa Cymru.

Following the planned completion of St Fagans in 2016, the next major project will be the transformation of the ground floor of the Cathays Park museum to become the National Museum of Natural Sciences for Wales, a development we hope to complete by around 2020. This will use the Museum's extraordinary scientific collections to create exhibits that engage with the environmental issues Wales faces today.

These initiatives will all, we hope, be institutions for our age - places where the public can learn about the past, consider its relevance to the contemporary world, and make informed decisions about the future.

David Anderson is Director General of Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales.

Downloadable fresh fish everywhere



Lleucu Siencyn

The process of becoming Literature Wales began a couple of years ago when we played the game 'fresh fish today' with our full title at the time: Academi – the Welsh National Literature Promotion Agency and Society for Writers.

The game goes like this. A fish-seller at a market has written in huge letters on the blackboard, "fresh fish today". A man walks past, and says he likes the sign, but he doesn't think there needs to be as many words. "How come?" the fish-seller asks. "Well, you don't need the word 'fresh' as it's clear you're selling the fish today, and that they're fresh." The fish-seller agreed, and wiped away the word. It now had: "Fish today". The man looked and said, "You know, you don't need 'today' either. As it's obvious to all who's passing what day it is." The fish-seller wiped the board again. It now only said: "Fish". The man looked at the stall, and said: "Actually, it's pretty obvious what you're selling..." And before he finished the sentence, the fish-seller had wiped his board clean.

The point is to work out which of the words you *don't actually need* to sell your product, or to say who you are. We got rid of every word apart from the two essential ones: "literature" and "Wales".

By doing this, it would be much easier for people to understand what we do: it is just as it says on the tin, the literature of Wales - for everyone. The word 'Academi' implied something you would be invited to join, and please knock first. On the other hand, Literature Wales is already out there; out and about in the fields, city centres, shops, schools, pubs. It's downloadable and in big, big letters.

We're knocking on your door. And we'll make sure, if you can't come to literature, then literature will come to you. So what's changed, what's different now? As well as changing our name, the whole sector has been simplified in terms of funding. Literature Wales is now the old Academi plus Tŷ Newydd Writers' Centre, while Literature Wales also looks after the funding for the Aberystwyth-based Welsh Literature Exchange, which facilitates translation.

Coming together was a key turning point. As individual organisations, we delivered very worthy and commendable programmes and activities, but perhaps we did not reach a wide enough audience. Together, following the same strategy and vision, we can do much more. Wake up the sleeping giant, was the challenge set for us by the Arts Council of Wales.

We took literature to Wales' busiest shopping centre with a month-long pop-up shop, *The Literature Lounge* at St David's Centre in Cardiff. We've also launched a new festival, in partnership with the National Trust and Coracle, in Carmarthenshire's beautiful and historic Dinefwr Park and Castle. And we're about to launch a bigger, better, splashier and muddier Literary Tours programme for 2012, in partnership with Cadw, the Church in Wales, several National Parks and others.

More opportunities and professional developments for writers will feature strongly in our programme during the coming years. In the autumn, a full programme aimed at writers will feature sessions on publishing, copyright, and the digital future – as well as networking opportunities for writers of all levels. We also want to

Shivering on windswept mountains,
chatting to restless teenagers, partying
in fields next to ancient white cattle.
Literature is the most adaptable and
flexible of all art forms.

We're all aware of the uncertainty facing charitable and arts organisations in the next five to ten years. How can the arts survive through a period of cuts? Crucially, arts organisations must win hearts and minds. We cannot rely on previous good works, and expect to still be here based on past business models. At Literature Wales, we want to make sure that we engage with the public in an open and democratic manner. Listen to audiences, develop a public profile and presence, launch new and exciting initiatives that will spark the public imagination.

In the last six months we've seen the establishment of a Young People's Laureate (covered by the Sun and the Daily Mail, thanks to celebrity endorsement by Charlotte Church).

ensure more opportunities for our writers to travel and perform abroad, and to create partnerships with writers and organisers all around the globe.

We're literally getting out there. Shivering on windswept mountains, chatting to restless teenagers, partying in fields next to ancient white cattle. Literature is the most adaptable and flexible of all art forms. We do it every day – whether wittily on twitter or quietly on kindle. Literature Wales is there to connect it all, and bring it all back to its core audience, the people of Wales. Fresh fish? No need to ask, it's already there.

Lleucu Siencyn is Chief Executive of Literature Wales.

Baffling venue leads Wales' creative sector



Andy Eagle

Chapter has intrigued, interested and sometimes baffled me over the last 20 years I have been working in Wales. Now in post for close to nine months I can confirm that it is still interesting, intriguing and also sometimes quite baffling. Unique is a word that maybe we overuse in selling ourselves in the arts. In the case of Chapter I believe the term is justified.

Forty years ago Chapter grew out of the integrity and dedication of artists and the art in which they believed. It did not come out of a feasibility study or a regeneration project but truly from a grass roots desire to place art at the heart of this part of west Cardiff.

Since then Chapter's community roots have become stronger and more embedded. Today its role and importance is undoubted, to the extent that it could almost be described as part of the establishment - though many a loyal Chapterite would shudder at the suggestion. Yet many challenges remain. As we head into the next 40 years can we do so without the hint of a middle-aged spread?

While these are challenging times Wales has not seen the same level of savage cuts in the arts as has been the case over the border. The Welsh Government sees their intrinsic social value to a greater extent than Westminster. Nevertheless the public investment squeeze is on and we are in the midst of an austerity period that I think is yet to filter through to the pockets of the Welsh public. Chapter needs a robust sustainable business base and operational structure that future proofs the organisation. Our cost base and income targets are being reviewed so that the core of our operation,

creativity and artistic risk is supported and developed further in line with the aspirations of our key public stakeholders.

Sound management and the arts are not considered natural bedfellows in some quarters. I know some of my colleagues at Chapter are uncomfortable with some of the wording I am using and some of the changes in structure and approach I am implementing but the changes are necessary. With a sustainable business base Chapter can thrive and develop enormously in the next few years and the potential is almost limitless.

I want Chapter to be recognised internationally as Wales' leading contemporary arts centre where artistic experimentation and boldness are encouraged and where different types of audiences are engaged. In many ways we have the perfect platform. Since the redevelopment of Chapter's café bar the numbers coming through the doors have at times been overwhelming.

The result is a genuinely inclusive

social space that is an artistic opportunity in itself. Mothers and toddlers, knitting circles, youth groups and artists all mingle together. This was the vision of Janek Alexander my predecessor. The opportunity and challenge for us is to ensure our visitors engage in the arts programme we deliver in the building as well as in the wider community through our participation programmes.

Core to Chapter's values is its support for emerging and aspiring Welsh artists, whether they are filmmakers, visual or performance artists. We are building on this through our involvement in the Creative Producer for Dance initiative over the next three years in partnership with Arts Council Wales and the tender winning Creative Producer Carole Blade.

Developing exciting artistic partnerships is one of my key plans for the future. We have over 30 SMEs in the creative industries based in Market House across the road from the main building. When I arrived they were referred to

as tenants. I am now calling them our resident companies. Closer ties are being discussed with our resident companies Earthfall, Ffotogallery, Bafta Cymru and the recently housed Theatr Iolo.

These partnerships will form the basis of future investment at Chapter. At the same time we must address our environmental responsibilities and provide as much opportunity as possible for the creative sector to expand. After all, this is now recognised as a key economic driver for both the Cardiff and the wider Welsh economy. Our aim is to unlock the potential of the incipient talent that surrounds us and enable it to flourish.

Andy Eagle is Director of Chapter.



THE LEARNED SOCIETY OF WALES CYMDEITHAS DDYSGEDIG CYMRU

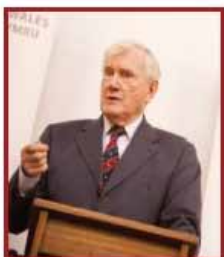
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Tackling Wales' Sir Humphreys

Andrew Davies calls for radical reform of the way the Welsh civil service operates

Articles

Tackling Wales' Sir Humphreys

LORDS SPECIAL

Wales in the House of Lords

Turkeys don't vote for Christmas

Stereotypes in the Rhondda

Boxing clever in the land of the pulled punch

Our views of the civil service are indelibly influenced by programmes such as *Yes Minister* and, more recently, *The Thick of It*. The caricature of civil service mandarins like Sir Humphrey Appleby and special advisers like Malcolm Tucker running rings around hapless Ministers is now lodged in the public's memory. Like all good caricatures, amongst the gags and stereotypes, there is a large grain of truth.

However, many people are not aware that Welsh Government civil servants work for an institution that originated in mid-19th Century Victorian Britain, which is the only part of the pre-devolution constitutional settlement that remains unexamined and unreformed. Many people are surprised to be told that senior Welsh Government civil servants are appointed by and are accountable to the head of the UK Civil Service and not Welsh Ministers. I believe the time has now come for radical reform.

The Home civil service owes its origins to the Northcote-Trevelyan report of 1854 that recommended a permanent, unified and politically neutral civil service. However, by the mid-20th Century there were growing concerns about the ability of the civil service to respond to the changing demands of Britain. As a result Prime Minister Harold Wilson set up the Fulton Committee, which reported in 1968.

Lord Fulton, former Principal of Swansea University, found the civil service to be inadequate to meet the tasks facing the UK. The Civil Service was based on the cult of the

amateur generalist, while those with specialist and technical skills were not valued or given the authority they deserved. The Civil Service was also very hierarchical with a classification system that made it rigid and unresponsive. The Civil Service lacked skilled managers especially in terms of personnel management. In addition it was a closed and inward looking institution which had little contact with the wider community.

It has been widely acknowledged that Fulton failed and the period since has seen successive reviews that have repeated the criticisms that Fulton made. For example, in 1997 Cabinet Secretary Sir Richard Wilson, then Head of the Civil Service, identified civil service reform as his major priority, and his proposals bore an uncanny resemblance to the Fulton recommendations.

So the urgent need for reform has been consistently recognised by senior civil servants and politicians but one is entitled to ask what progress was made? A decade after Wilson the Whitehall Civil Service itself undertook a series of Departmental Capability Reviews, which again showed the same defects:

- Weak executive capacity, with poor leadership and management.
- Weak reflective capacity and poor long-term thinking.
- Poor co-ordination and disjointed government, with little evidence of joint working between Civil Service departments.



Dame Gillian Morgan, the Welsh Government's Permanent Secretary. When she was appointed in May 2008 former First Minister Rhodri Morgan was consulted but not formally involved in her selection. Photo: John Briggs

- Poor management of knowledge and organisational memory, which undermined learning and innovation.
- An obsession with process and compliance, not outcomes and delivery.

Bearing in mind that these were internal and not external reviews this was a pretty damning indictment by the Civil Service itself. My own experience over ten years as a Minister confirmed this. This is not a criticism of individual civil servants but of the Civil Service system and culture, which will be very familiar to many who encounter it on a regular basis. The Civil Service is not good at long-term planning and is rarely strategic in its thinking, policy making and its financial planning. The promotion of senior officials is largely on the basis of intellectual and policy-making ability not on their leadership and management capability. Because of the preoccupation with policy, the management of relationships, whether

Many years ago, a consultant working for Welsh Government said to us as Ministers, “Don’t forget, senior officials spend most of their time managing you and not their departments.” Sir Humphrey is alive and well!

internal or external, is not seen as a priority. Many years ago, a consultant working for Welsh Government said to us as Ministers, “Don’t forget, senior officials spend most of their time managing you and not their departments.” Sir Humphrey is alive and well!

Welsh Ministers have recognised that the current system will be challenged to deliver the policy making or the management of services that 21st Century Wales requires. For example, the proposed establishment of a Welsh institute of public policy is a recognition of the lack of sufficient capacity of the Welsh Civil Service to make policy. As

the 2011 Welsh Labour Manifesto also stated, it is “anomalous that the Assembly Government senior civil service is not accountable to Welsh Ministers and that after the first decade of devolution it is appropriate that the current civil service system be reviewed.” There followed a commitment to “review and seek realignment of the governance and performance of the Assembly Government civil service, better to reflect the developing requirements of devolution whilst remaining part of the Home Civil Service.”

What might come out of such a review? Radical change is certainly

needed. First of all, the anomaly of accountability must be addressed. After devolution the Civil Service Code was amended to provide that “civil servants

of accountability, including responsibility for appointments, of the Permanent Secretary to the First Minister and Welsh Ministers. I also believe it is anomalous in

in their department? I think Ministers should be politically accountable for the development and delivery of policy and senior civil servants responsible for financial and operational management of their departments.

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owe their loyalty to the Administrations in which they serve”. However, the Welsh Government Permanent Secretary and the Senior Civil Service are still formally accountable to the Cabinet Secretary/Head of the Civil Service, not Welsh Ministers.

For example, when Dame Gillian Morgan, the current Permanent Secretary, was appointed, former First Minister Rhodri Morgan was consulted but not formally involved in her selection. In my view, there should be a clear line

the 21st Century that there are effectively two classes of civil servants. It is elitist, smacks of “officers and other ranks” and should be abolished.

I also believe there should be a clearer distinction between Ministerial and Civil Service accountability and responsibility. The existing convention that Ministers are accountable for everything that happens on their watch is dysfunctional and damaging. How can a Minister be responsible for the actions of every civil servant who works

Poor performance management by senior civil servants has been identified as a major weakness. The current system of performance-related pay where, like much of the private sector, decisions are made by senior civil servants themselves, should be abolished. I believe that Senior Civil Servants should be appointed on fixed-term contracts with key strategic criteria based on Welsh Government objectives. If these criteria are not achieved then the contracts should not be renewed.

Management is not taken sufficiently seriously in the Civil Service, which paradoxically is both poorly managed and over managed. It is also a very hierarchical and status conscious organisation. Civil servants will often



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be described by their grade rather than their job title! In addition and perversely financial management is not related to performance management, so while there is control, indeed micro-management of expenditure, this is unrelated to the effective management of policy outcomes. As in any business, financial management should be closely related to performance management and the effective value-for-money use of that expenditure.

Presently senior civil service management is inwardly rather than externally focused, with the bulk of their time taken up with internal organisational matters. In a post-devolution Wales we need civil servants who are facilitators working closely with social partners in civil society, rather than gatekeepers of information and access to Ministers. This requires a very different skill set. My long-standing proposal is for the creation of a 'Welsh Public Service', with its own distinct ethos and 'permeable' boundaries, in which staff could move seamlessly between the civil service, local government, the health service, or indeed the third and private sectors.

There has been some debate in recent years about the creation of a separate Welsh Civil Service. At present I do not believe that to be desirable. With the current constitutional settlement, the ability to be part of the wider UK civil service is crucial for effective policy-making between Welsh and UK Governments, as is the secondment of staff between Wales and Whitehall. There is a danger of a purely Welsh Civil Service being parochial and not aware of developments outside Wales. Moreover, it might not be able to recruit a critical mass of staff with sufficient ability. However, a 'Yes' vote in a Scottish referendum will force this as well as other issues onto the agenda.

While the separation of the Welsh from the Home Civil Service may not currently be feasible, a great deal of work has been done in Wales over the last ten years to develop partnership arrangements across public bodies especially around employment and



Cathays Park, home of the Welsh civil service. Should it become a Welsh Public Service?

human resource issues. The manifesto commitment to establish a national secondment scheme is an extension of this process. All this work will need to be sustained and accelerated to bring a de facto Welsh Public Service into existence.

The training of civil service and public service management in Wales needs addressing seriously. At a UK level the Civil Service College must be more attuned to the needs of devolved government. To tackle the priorities of public service management in Wales, the 2011 Welsh Labour Manifesto committed to the establishment of a Leadership Academy. The intention is to improve management training and facilitate the creation of a Welsh Public Service. Working with universities and other providers, management training would be based on the needs of public services in Wales.

An attempt was made in the Welsh Labour manifesto to address the existing bias in the civil service towards policy making rather than service delivery, through the commitment to set up the First Minister's Delivery Unit in Government. This is intended to improve the ability of the First Minister Carwyn Jones to co-ordinate and implement delivery of Government objectives over this Assembly term.

A complaint often made of the Civil

Service is that it is risk-averse. However, I don't think this is necessarily accurate. In my view it is more a case that the Civil Service, like the public sector generally, is often poor in assessing and managing risk. As we have seen in Wales and elsewhere civil servants have frequently taken enormous and very expensive risks, for example in the procurement of major ICT projects. Here I believe the problem has been the lack of the right expertise resulting in private sector providers negotiating deals that provide large profits for the companies involved but do not serve the needs of government and the taxpayer. This is an area where there is a great need to strengthen the role of skilled specialists rather than generalists.

I would also argue the problem is less risk aversion than an over emphasis on compliance and process. As various reviews of the civil service have found, innovation is not incentivised or encouraged. The dominant culture is one of 'not invented here' and 'not the way we do business'. To create the required innovative outward-looking culture, and to tackle the problems of micro-management and the culture of compliance, whole levels of unnecessary management should be eliminated. A flatter management structure should be created with a greater delegation of responsibility and financial management.

There must be a clearer focus on the delivery of fewer but more strategic policy outcomes. There should also be a reduction in the requirement for the mechanical following of administrative process, much of which is unnecessary, repetitive and self-serving. As gatekeepers, the concentration on process is of course one of the ways in which civil servants control outside or partner bodies, and one of the ways senior civil servants 'manage' Ministers. Old habits would seem to die hard.

Professor Andrew Davies, a former Finance Minister in the Welsh Government, is now a strategic adviser to the Vice Chancellor of Swansea University.

HOUSE OF LORDS SPECIAL

Wales in the House of Lords

Eluned Morgan casts an eye across the red benches of the other place

Prior to my appointment to the House of Lords last year I had very little to do with this revered institution. Indeed in my 15 years of active political life I had never even set eyes on the glimmering gold and red chamber. I guess this must have been subliminally intentional as I had devoted my entire political career to trying to master the European model of governance and helping to fight for and establish the National Assembly of Wales rather than taking an interest in UK political structures.

Neither did my perception of the Lords fill me with unbridled enthusiasm given I was entering the place in my mid forties. After all, mine was a 'life' peerage

I am uncomfortable with an appointed legislative chamber in the 21st Century. It is high time to introduce elections despite the undisputed brilliance, eloquence, experience and commitment of most of its sitting members.

Yet one of the most surprising aspects of the House of Lords was the number of Welsh peers who were already there with whom I was unfamiliar. Having been politically active in Wales for well over a decade I thought I had a grasp of the 'Welsh political players'. But I had underestimated the weight of experience that Wales could call on in the House of Lords.

There are, of course, obvious players

Barry Jones, the Kinnocks, John Morris, Ted Rowlands, Don Touhig, Wyn Roberts, and Alan Howarth. More recently there are members who have served in the National Assembly, such as Mike German.

Other names, Tory grandees of Wales, were more familiar to me at a younger age. Nicholas Edwards, now known as Lord Crickhowell, served as MP for Pembrokeshire and as Secretary of State for Wales in Margaret Thatcher's first and second administrations. Michael Howard who was born in Gorseinon and rose to become leader of the opposition is also sometimes present on the red benches. Geoffrey Howe of Aberavon was born in Port Talbot and was Margaret Thatcher's longest serving cabinet member. He served as Chancellor of the Exchequer, Foreign Secretary and finally Leader of the House of Commons until his resignation in 1990 was widely considered to have precipitated Thatcher's downfall three weeks later.

I was also very familiar with Anita Gale who had been the General Secretary of the Wales Labour Party for over a decade and was instrumental in pushing for gender parity in the Assembly. I knew of Jack Brooks, the former Leader of South Glamorgan County Council, a political fixer and agent to Jim Callaghan.

Other personalities who have made their mark outside the confines of politics also fill the tearooms with familiar Welsh

Having been politically active in Wales for well over a decade I thought I had a grasp of the 'Welsh political players'. But I had underestimated the weight of experience that Wales could call on in the House of Lords.

and the thought of commuting from Wales for the next fifty years was quite debilitating. However, I did recognise that since leaving the European Parliament I had lost my political voice. I could use the Lords as a platform to speak up for Wales and to champion other causes which I care about.

such as Dafydd Wigley and Jenny Randerson who entered the House at the same time as me. There were other names I was familiar with, too, who were ubiquitous in the Welsh political lexicon, most of whom have had distinguished careers in The House of Commons. They include Donald Anderson, Alex Carlisle,

accents. There is undisputed respect for Tanni Grey Thompson, not just as a result of her success on the track, but because of her tireless work on disability and sports issues in the Lords. Baroness Illora Finlay is also a Welsh treasure we should cherish who is the undisputed expert on palliative healthcare in the Lords. David Rowe Beddow is a familiar name to anyone who is involved in economic development and the arts in Wales and who became the formidable Chair of the Welsh Development Agency. Rowan Williams the Archbishop of Canterbury rarely makes an appearance, but is for the time being still the respected figurehead for the worldwide Anglican Church until his announced retirement.

But there were also other names with whom I was less familiar. The first thing to bear in mind is that there is a degree of subjectivity in terms of how to define a Welsh peer. For example, would they have to have Welsh parents, be born in Wales, to currently live in Wales, or would it be enough for them to have lived here at some point? Well I am an inclusive kind of girl so anyone who wants to define themselves as Welsh is OK by me. The following are a few I've come across in my travels so far.

Alistair Bruce, Lord Aberdare, is a Crossbencher and an elected hereditary peer proud of his Welsh heritage who was a trustee of the National Botanic Garden of Wales between 1999 and 2000. Kay Andrews, Baroness Andrews of Southover, worked as a Parliamentary Clerk from 1970-85 and then became a policy adviser to Neil Kinnock when he was Leader of the Opposition between 1985 and 1992. She served as Director of Education Extra until 2002 and has served in many Government positions in the Lords. In 2009 she was appointed the first woman Chair of English Heritage.

Gordon Johnson Borrie, Baron Borrie QC, is a lawyer and Labour life peer. Born in 1931 he was educated at John Bright Grammar School, Llandudno. A lawyer by training, he practiced at the Bar before becoming a law lecturer

and later a law professor at Birmingham University. He was in charge of the Office of Fair Trading from 1976 to 1992. He chaired the Labour Party's Commission on Social Justice from 1992 to 1994.

Another Labour peer Keith Brookman, or Baron Brookman of Ebbw Vale made his name internationally in

the steelworker unions. He was on the Executive Committee, Wales 1982-85, the National Constitutional Committee 1987-91, and the NEC 1991-92 and was General Secretary of the Steel workers Union, the ISTC before he retired.

Mervyn Davies of Abersoch is a former banker and was Minister of



Eluned Morgan, at her ennoblement as Baroness Morgan of Ely in January 2011: "One of the most surprising aspects of the House of Lords was the number of Welsh peers who were already there with whom I was unfamiliar."



"I am at one with the First Minister in thinking that we should try and elaborate a more regional form of representation in the chamber."

State for Trade in the last Labour Government. He was the author of the report on women on boards, Chairman of Standard Chartered from 2006-2009, and Chief Executive from 2001-2006. He still serves as the Chair of the Council of Bangor University. Garfield Davies, of Coity, is a Labour peer and a former trade union leader. Davies became a full-time trade union official with USDAW and rose through the ranks, becoming General Secretary of the union in 1986. He retired in 1997 when he became a peer.

For me the undoubted Welsh star in the Lords is Elystan Morgan who sits as a Crossbencher. Morgan contested Wrexham three times for Plaid Cymru in the 1950s and then Meirionnydd at the general election in 1964. Later he joined Labour and was elected Member of Parliament for Cardiganshire in 1966 and served as Under-Secretary at the Home Office from 1968 to 1970. He is a

For me the undoubted Welsh star in the Lords is Elystan Morgan who sits as a Crossbencher. Morgan contested Wrexham three times for Plaid Cymru in the 1950s and then Meirionnydd at the general election in 1964.

distinguished barrister and held the office of Circuit Judge between 1987-2003. His eloquence in the Lords would put Shakespeare to shame. He is extremely well respected and well loved.

Baroness Lin (Llinos) Golding, daughter of Ness Edwards who was MP for Caerphilly, was Labour MP for Newcastle-under-Lyme for 15 years. There are three Griffiths'. Sir Hugh Griffiths of Govilon, a crossbencher, is a judge and

served in the Welsh Guards during the Second World War. He received a Military Cross in 1944. Leslie Griffiths of Burry Port, is a Labour peer, and a Methodist minister. He spent most of the 1970s serving the Methodist Church of Haiti, where he was ordained, before returning to Britain to serve in ministries in Essex and Golders Green. He served as President of the Methodist Conference from 1994 to 1995. Since 1996 he has been Superintendent Minister at Wesley's Chapel, London. Brian Griffiths of Fforestfach was a former adviser to Baroness Thatcher and was a vice-Chairman of Goldman Sachs International.

Richard Harries of Pentregarth, a cross bencher, is a retired bishop of the Church of England. He was the 41st Bishop of Oxford from 1987 to 2006. Since 2008 he has been professor of Divinity at Gresham College, London.

Denise Kingsmill is a Labour peer. She lived the first ten years of her life in

New Zealand, born of a Welsh mother and New Zealand father. She studied at Croesyceiliog School and was Deputy Chairman of the Monopolies and Mergers Commission where she presided over 20 inquiries. She also undertook a number of cases relating to the rights of women,

He is Vice-President of the Lloyd George Society.

Charles Williams of Elvel, a Labour peer, has served in a number of different business posts including a director of Mirror Group Newspapers and was Chairman of the Prices Commission.

worth comparing Welsh representation with the number of peers who have a base in London. The Constitution Unit carried out a survey of members which showed that 138 Members have their primary home in London, while 182 have a secondary home there. This means that 320, or 70 per cent of those who responded to the questionnaire, had a permanent base in London.

Another consideration is that Welsh peers do not necessarily have to represent Wales nor are they expected automatically to speak up for Wales. There is no formal link nor channel for discussion with the National Assembly, let alone the people of Wales. In this respect, now that the Assembly has primary law making powers, it is worth asking whether we should have a system of checks and balances on its decisions, in the way that the House of Lords is a revising chamber for the House of Commons.

Currently there is a great deal of discussion about reforming the House of Lords. I am at one with the First Minister in thinking that we should try and elaborate a more regional form of representation in the chamber. In some way the red benches should reflect the changing nature of our constitutional set up in the UK. If Scotland were to gain further powers, we would need serious reassurance that the Welsh voice is to be heard in a sea of English MPs and Lords. Certainly, the current structure is totally anachronistic. It does not cater for any member living outside of London who is not of pensionable age and who therefore has no alternative income. And it certainly takes no account of childcare considerations. It is little wonder that 82 per cent of the membership is over 60. The time is ripe to reform the House of Lords to ensure that it better reflects modern society.

Eluned Morgan is Baroness Morgan of Ely.

There are currently 792 peers who sit in the House of Lords, although the total number is 831. Welsh peers represent just over 6 per cent of the overall total which means that we are slightly 'over-represented' in relation to the Welsh population.

while specialising in employment law.

Jean McFarlane or Baroness McFarlane of Llandaf, a crossbencher, made her name as a nurse. She was a Member of the Royal Commission on the NHS 1976-79, a member of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission 1983-88, and a member of the General Synod of the Church of England.

I remembered being hugely impressed on the night of the 1997 referendum campaign by the extraordinary accuracy of Labour peer Ken O. Morgan's prediction of the result. A Welsh historian and author he is known especially for his writings on modern British history and politics and on Welsh history. He served as Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University of Wales Aberystwyth from 1989 to 1995.

Before being raised to the peerage Labour's Delyth Morgan had a long and successful career in the voluntary sector, including a decade at the helm of Breakthrough Breast Cancer. She played a leading role in creating breast cancer as a high profile issue when it had been a hidden and rarely discussed condition.

Martin Thomas of Gresford is a barrister and High Court Judge and fought Wrexham on numerous occasions for the Liberal Democrats.

He was President of the Campaign for the Protection of Rural Wales between 1989-1995.

Ivor Richard was a former member of the European Commission and also served as the UK Ambassador to the USA. He was a member of Tony Blair's first cabinet and, of course, chaired the cross-party Richard Commission on further powers for the Assembly.

I am very sorry that it does not look like I will have much of a chance to get to know the Labour peer Lord Prys Davies nor the crossbencher Lord Chalfont of Llantarnam both of whom are on leave of absence from the chamber.

I guess that the fact that I was unaware of many of these personalities says more about me than about them. Many of these people were big players over two decades ago, and although some of the names were familiar, anyone under the age of fifty is likely not to know them unless they have a better grasp of recent Welsh political history than I have.

There are currently 792 peers who sit in the House of Lords, although the total number is 824. Welsh peers represent just over 6 per cent of the overall total which means that we are slightly 'over-represented' in relation to the Welsh population. However, it is

HOUSE OF LORDS SPECIAL

Turkeys don't vote for Christmas

Dafydd Wigley examines proposals to reform the Lords and judges that the UK is heading for a constitutional quagmire

The Draft House of Lords Reform Bill which will dominate the new session at Westminster has far-reaching potential implications for Wales. It proposes a much smaller Second Chamber – reduced from over 824 to some 300 members, of whom 240 would be elected and 60 members nominated by an independent commission. There would be a dozen English bishops – half the present number – and a handful of Ministers, appointed by the government, to speak for them in the reformed Upper House.

The Second Chamber would be elected by STV and would be phased in over three elections, simultaneous to elections for the Commons – in 2015, 2020 and 2025. Members would serve for one 15-year term, without being re-electable. This would seem to negate the democratic answerability that the reforms are meant to provide!

Wales would probably be one

multi-member constituency, with four new members elected every 5 years, as currently happens with the European Parliament. By 2025 Wales would therefore have its full compliment of 12 elected members in the new Second Chamber.

The 824 Members of the House of Lords is an inexact figure. Every month some die and some new peers may be appointed. Thirty-eight don't participate for various reasons. Of the active Members, 90 are hereditary peers, 671 are life peers, and 25 are bishops. The present party composition is: 238 Labour, 217 Conservative, 186 Crossbenchers, 90 Liberal-Democrats and 55 others, including bishops.

The Draft Reform Bill proposes that each party group would be scaled down by about a third at each of the three transitional elections, so that numbers would drop to about 650 in 2015, to 475

in 2020 and to 312 by 2025. What are the prospects of such change occurring?

Since all three UK parties had commitments to Lords Reform in their 2010 election manifesto, a whipped vote in the Commons should secure the Bill its third Reading. By no stretch of the imagination can that be anticipated in Lords. Turkeys don't vote for Christmas. There isn't the slightest possibility of the Bill being passed in this coming session of Parliament. The question therefore arises whether in 2013-14 the Coalition Government would use the Parliament Act to insist that the Commons has its way and the Lords Reform Bill gets enacted. Even if that happens it will be difficult to ensure elections to a reformed Second Chamber take place by 2015.

The central weakness in the Draft Bill is its failure to address the new role for the Second Chamber. It states:

"Nothing in the provisions of this Act... affects the status of the House of Lords as one of the two Houses of Parliament, affects the primacy of the House of Commons, or otherwise affects the powers, rights, privileges and jurisdiction of either House of Parliament, or the conventions governing the relationship between the two Houses".

This is facile. To pretend that an elected Second Chamber can carry on in the same way as the unelected House of Lords over the last hundred



Would maximum devolution result in the Lords becoming, in effect, a chamber for England?



Lord Wigley: "To pretend that an elected Second Chamber can carry on in the same way as the unelected House of Lords over the last hundred years beggars belief".

years beggars belief. We saw in the last Parliamentary session how Lords amendments to the Welfare Reform Bill, the Legal Aid Bill and the Health and Social Care Bill, were thwarted by whipped votes in the Commons.

As a nominated chamber, the House of Lords has to yield to the primacy of the first chamber. A new Second Chamber with an elected mandate would hardly submit so easily to the views of the Commons.

The composition of a Second Chamber elected by STV, would differ fundamentally from the political balance of the Commons, which is elected on a first-past-the-post basis. The Government would still be formed by the largest party in the Commons. However, that party would rarely have a majority in the reformed Second Chamber. The Government would only have a majority in both chambers if it were a coalition

government. Even then there would be no certainty. Consequently, the UK would regularly see political deadlock, as was faced by President Obama last summer with his financial proposals.

The future role of the Second Chamber cannot be considered in isolation from other constitutional developments. The Scotland Bill has just completed its parliamentary passage, giving the Scottish Parliament significant new taxation powers. The Silk Commission will consider this for Wales. Any responsible government should have taxation powers, so that electors can judge the Government's priorities.

The Silk Commission will be looking at more than taxation. In its second phase, next year, it will consider new functions for the National Assembly. High on the list must be powers over police and prisons, and the judiciary in Wales,

though further pressure from Scotland may augment this list.

Carwyn Jones has suggested that Westminster's Second Chamber might become a federal chamber for the UK with responsibility for defence, foreign affairs and broad economic policy. His suggestion arose in the context of Scotland securing independence. It was perhaps easier for him to postulate the idea for what is still a hypothetical situation. He is, however, aware of discussion at Westminster that if 'devolution-max' gained momentum – a model supported by former Tory Prime Minister John Major in a keynote speech last July – some envisage the Second Chamber as a UK quasi-federal chamber.

If maximum devolution also applied to Wales and Northern Ireland, this would leave the House of Commons as essentially a chamber for England. This would overcome the West Lothian question. Carwyn Jones flagged up – somewhat tongue in cheek, I suspect – that there should be equality of representation from Wales, England and Northern Ireland (and Scotland if it hasn't seceded) within a federal chamber. Aeronautical pigs come to mind!

The UK is heading for a constitutional quagmire. The old saying is that 'form follows function'. A federal Second Chamber must surely be an option if 'devolution-max' emerges from Scotland's referendum debate.

If the UK has a future, creative thought must now be given to the powers devolved to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland – and indeed England. Such consideration may change discussion about the Second Chamber. But if the English body politic isn't prepared to contemplate this, it must accept partial responsibility for the approaching break-up of the United Kingdom.

Lord Dafydd Wigley is Honorary President of Plaid Cymru.

Defying stereotypes in the Rhondda

Chris Williams looks back on a century of history in Labour's archetypal heartland

Last year the Rhondda Labour Party celebrated its centenary. Like a lot of centenaries, there's more than an element of 'you pays your money you takes your choice' about which date one settles upon. However, it's certainly true that, on 31 October 1911, a Rhondda Labour Party was founded.

What prompted this event was the expectation that the Labour MP for the Rhondda constituency – the miners' leader William Abraham – had fought his last election. In December 1910 he'd won with some ease, defeating the Tory Harold Lloyd who would later switch camps to Labour and later still be convicted of fraud. However, Abraham was 68, and was finding the strain of both presiding over the increasingly militant South Wales Miners' Federation and representing a constituency containing more than 150,000 people increasingly difficult.

'Mabon', as he was popularly known, would suffer a breakdown in 1912, and relinquish the union leadership to fellow MP William Brace. He was expected to retire before the next general election (which, had it not been for events in Sarajevo in June 1914, would probably have been held in 1915) and there was concern to avoid a situation in which his replacement was simply nominated by the Rhondda District of the SWMF.

Activists in the Mid Rhondda Trades and Labour Council took the lead in founding a Labour Party with the objective of uniting "the forces of



In J.M. Staniforth's 1909 Western Mail cartoon *Rival Musicians*, Mabon is at the piano with his music sheet declaring free imports, budget, socialism, disestablishment, and down with the Lords. Outside the Conservative candidate Harold Lloyd is playing the tariff reform horn. Meanwhile, standing at the window Miss Rhondda is saying, "Do stop that noise Mabon, I want to listen to the music."

Labour in order to secure the election of Labour Representatives on all National and Local Governing Bodies". But it turned out to be a damp squib. The aforementioned Rhondda District afforded it a 'cool reception' - the miners did not want a conglomeration of railwaymen, teachers clerks, hairdressers and unattached socialists usurping their position of dominance, thank you very much. By 1913 the state of the organisation was thought 'deplorable'.

Of course, Mabon didn't have to face an election in 1915, nor one in 1918, since he was given an unopposed return for his last two years in Parliament. It wasn't until 1923 that the Rhondda miners relinquished control and allowed an orthodox Constituency Labour Party to establish its sovereignty – with the understanding that Rhondda MPs would still be drawn from the ranks of the SWMF.

So 1911, 1923, or even 1918 when a Rhondda Borough Labour Party was formed (and disappeared) are all credible candidates for a foundation year. Indeed, so is 1885, when 'Mabon' was elected to Parliament as member

for the newly-created Rhondda constituency, and also 1886, when the Rhondda Labour and Liberal Association was formed (an early version of the 'Lib-Lab' pact) to provide him with appropriate support.

Does it matter? Well, it's always a good idea to acknowledge the complexity of history and the refusal of the past to be quarried for present purposes only. And the Rhondda does stand proxy – at least to those outside Wales – for all the south Wales Valleys.

According to the *Dictionary of National Biography* (not the later *Oxford DNB* – which gets it right) Pontrhydyfen's Richard Burton was born in the Rhondda (at least they spelt it correctly and not 'Rhonda'). Speaks volumes, doesn't it? It would be like mistaking most of the current cabinet for Harrovians. As someone who started on an academic career with an in-depth study of the politics of the Rhondda valleys (*Democratic Rhondda* – University of Wales Press, 1996) I'm naturally ultra-sensitive to such gaffes.

Part of the motivation for that study was to get beneath the usual clichés – they didn't count Labour votes in the Rhondda,

they weighed them; the Valley (Fawr and Fach) was a 'hotbed' of socialist militancy; Labour could put up a donkey with a red rosette around its neck and still win, etc.

There is some truth behind such characterisations. Rhondda Labour did occasionally record the largest majorities in the kingdom. Mid-Rhondda was a centre of syndicalist agitation and Mardy a 'little Moscow'. A donkey, no, sorry, it was an ass, did win the Blaencwm ward by-election of 1947.

Yet there was always much more to it than that (and I did make the last bit up). It is interesting to speculate what might have happened in Rhondda elections had the old dual-member system been applied between 1918 and 1974 (when Rhondda had a 'West' and an 'East'). Could there have been enough dissentient voters to elect a Liberal in the 1920s, a Communist in the 1930s or 1940s, and a Welsh Nationalist in the 1960s? After all, Harry Pollitt in 1945 (for the CPGB) and Vic Davies in 1967 (for Plaid) came too close for Labour's comfort.

Then again, Rhondda's Labour MPs were rarely on the left. The aforementioned 'Mabon' was, at root, a Liberal. He was succeeded in

Rhondda West by Will John, who had established his radical credentials by being imprisoned during the Cambrian Combine dispute, and whose greatest impact in the Commons was to suggest that Tory MPs were frequently drunk in late-night debates (he was forced to apologise for speaking that truth). For a long time he was partnered in Rhondda East by W. H. Mainwaring, once co-author of *The Miners' Next Step*. But, despite remaining a believer in Marxian economics, Mainwaring was virtually indistinguishable from any other trade union MP.

Someone who did stand out was Mainwaring's predecessor, David Watts Morgan, between 1918 and 1933. For many years 'Mabon's right-hand man, he risked the automaticity of succession by throwing himself enthusiastically into the Great War, ending it a Lieutenant Colonel with a DSO and CBE, thrice mentioned in dispatches and labelled (by the admittedly partisan *Western Mail*) "the organiser of victory".

Elected unopposed to the Commons in 1918 (the real fight was to win the miners' nomination), in 1921 he earned another sobriquet – the 'best-dressed' man in the House. Dai

Watts's speciality was morning dress. He was on good terms with members of the royal family, and when he died one obituarist commented that he was "as much at home at a garden party on the lawns of Buckingham Palace as among his mining constituents".

Another predicted that "his beaming countenance and his Mussolini-like activity" would earn for him a place among "the immortals of the Rhondda". It was a comment that reminds us of the past's capacity to challenge our preconceptions, perhaps holding out the enticing possibility that, had he lived longer, Valley Lines would have run on time.

Rhondda Labour was more varied and diverse than the stereotypical image suggests. It did not always choose its own. 'Mabon' was from Cwmafan, Will John Cockett, Mainwaring Fforestfach, and Dai Watts Skewen. So the current MP Chris Bryant's Cardiff roots are hardly novel. Of course, it was dominated by miners – two-thirds of the male workforce in 1921 were directly employed by the coal industry – but a look at the minute books of party branches and Co-op women's guilds gives the lie to any suggestion of insularity, with international affairs commonly discussed and connections forged with socialist organisations overseas.

Given its history, I am pleased that the Boundary Commission Wales has recommended the survival of Rhondda as a political unit. The parliamentary constituency is set to embrace Aberaman, Mountain Ash and Cwmbach rather than – as had been a possibility – disappear altogether.

But tradition, centenaries and great names can only carry one so far. Rhondda's historic centrality to Welsh politics was grounded in the significance of its long-vanished industrial base. A hundred years on from that one founding moment among many, the challenge for Rhondda Labour is to remain relevant for the next century.

Chris Williams is Professor of Welsh History at Swansea University.



W.H. Mainwaring, co-author in 1912 of the syndicalist *Miners' Next Step* – demanding workers' control, a minimum wage and seven-hour day – became Rhondda East's MP in the 1920s. However, by then he was "virtually indistinguishable from any other trade union MP".



William Abraham or Mabon as he was popularly called, was first elected to the newly created Rhondda constituency in 1886 and remained an MP for the next 35 years. But it was as a moderate miners' leader that he was best known.

Boxing clever in the land of the pulled punch

Geraint Talfan Davies reviews 25 years of the IWA

The 1980s were a grim time for Wales. Devolution had been rejected by Welsh people in 1979. Steel plants were closing or shedding jobs. The coal industry was being closed down with no hint of a plan for dealing with the consequences. Meanwhile, the long and traumatic miners' strike was painfully emblematic of a combined industrial redundancy and political disenfranchisement. The then Secretary of State had an advisory council of sorts, giving advice mainly in private. In those days Wales was a place where things were done to us, not for us or by us.

When a group of us got together in 1987 to set up the IWA it was because there was a real sense of a vacuum in Welsh civic life. There was no organisation, entirely independent of government or party, that could provide a bridge between the all-too separate worlds of business, academia, politics, and the wider public. We wanted to get some fresh and positive thinking into the public domain and to engage more people, and more businesses, in serious debate about public policy as it affects Wales. Suspicious critics called us 'the CBI in drag'.

It began as a small group of trustees, meeting monthly at 8.00 am and coaxing others to give of their time to share and propagate ideas for improving our situation. It is now an organisation with more than 1,200 members – individual and corporate – with a chain of branches that covers the whole of

Wales, and a tiny staff of six. We publish the journal you are now reading three times a year, which, remarkably, is the only regular journal in Wales dealing with the full range of public policy. We run a daily news analysis site – clickonwales.org – and arrange more than a dozen conferences and seminars each year across the wide gamut of public policy.

I wouldn't claim that we have changed the world. We don't have the resources of a government or of a university or even of London think tanks, with their hefty backing from large corporations. However, I do think we have made a mark, mainly by putting people in touch with ideas, sometimes our own, often the ideas of others.

We wanted to get some fresh and positive thinking into the public domain and to engage more people, and more businesses, in serious debate about public policy as it affects Wales. Suspicious critics called us 'the CBI in drag'.

In 1993 we were the first to point to the widening GDP gap with the rest of the UK in a report that looked forward to 2010. Sadly, too few of the ambitions for Wales expressed in that report have

been achieved. In the late 1990s – with the indefatigable John Osmond in post as our first full-time Director - we made a constructive contribution to the first devolution proposals and published the statistical survey that made the case for EU Objective 1 status for a large part of Wales. It was written by an academic/political alliance of Professor Kevin Morgan and Adam Price – an intellectual precursor, perhaps, of a later coalition.

With the Assembly established, a decade of research and campaigning work by the IWA, steered by Colin Jenkins and John David, ultimately led to the piloting of the Welshbac by the Welsh Government, although not on the precise basis that we had

mapped out. We provided a platform for another campaign to appoint a Chief Scientific Advisor for Wales. Our report on architectural standards persuaded the Welsh Government to establish the



The late Gareth Jones, for many years Chair of the IWA's research Panel, pictured in 1993 at the launch of *Wales 2010: Creating Our Future*. This was a panoramic survey of all aspects of Welsh life that addressed the question Gareth himself posed: "What should we, the people of Wales, do to enable Wales to be one of the most prosperous regions in Europe by the year 2010?" When that year eventually came round he suggested the question should be asked anew, but with the year 2030 being substituted.

Design Commission for Wales, while another report made a persuasive case for establishing the Wales Millennium Centre.

In recent years a report on rural schools, found there was a more powerful case for amalgamations than many opponents were prepared to admit. And a study last year on school performance at Key Stage 3, instead of just concentrating on weaknesses – of which there are undoubtedly many – pinpointed instead the best practices that we thought all schools should emulate.

On the publication of those two education studies the man who is now the Education Minister's special adviser, Professor David Reynolds, asked publicly why it was left to the IWA to do some of this work rather than Government. "It is extraordinary," he wrote, "that in the two most significant areas of educational policy in Wales – the issue of small school closure and the issue what makes for effective educational provision in an ineffective system – the Government has not used its own budget to investigate

these issues."

And to think that we once worried that we might not be needed once the Assembly was created. The truth is that the public sector in Wales is so dominant – too many of us are beholden to Government in one way or another – that we have become the land of the pulled punch. I marvel that the favourite name for newborn boys in Wales isn't 'Grant'.

An anniversary is a fitting moment to thank all those who have supported the IWA over this period – individuals, businesses, trusts and foundations. Over time a voluntary organisation builds a very substantial debt of gratitude to very many people. I hope we can repay that by always striving to improve, which is why we are currently undertaking a strategic review of our organisation with a view to shaping it for the future.

The truth is that as a young polity we are facing the most awesome array of fundamental issues. The world is in flux: crises of global capitalism,

institutional crises at a European and UK level, a reconstruction of relationships in these islands, demographic change and climate change, the worsening imbalance of physical and economic development in these islands, and both social and economic strains accompanying the worst and most prolonged period of public expenditure constraint since World War II.

We need to mobilise every possible intellectual resource to find a way in which we can cope and, hopefully, thrive. We cannot afford to limit ourselves to a closed debate within a political or civil service monoculture. We need open minds. At the end of its first quarter century the Institute of Welsh Affairs will do its bit to keep the windows wide open and I hope you will all be willing to help us in that effort.

Geraint Talfan Davies is Chair of the IWA.

Articles

A few pearls amidst much wishful thinking

PUBLIC PROCUREMENT SPECIAL

Values for money
How large firms outside Wales are dominating homegrown enterprise

A few pearls amidst much wishful thinking

Rhys David examines the work of the Welsh Government's economic sector panels

Welsh biotechnology company sold to world's biggest pharmaceuticals giant in multimillion pound deal

Material sciences breakthrough from Swansea University labs

Anglesey welcomes 50th cruise ship of the year

These are the headlines we might be hoping for from the Welsh Government's strategy of concentrating its efforts on nine key sectors within the economy. But are we likely to be reading them any time soon? The odds, it has to be admitted, are long.

Conditions in Europe are against us. The Continent's recovery is likely to be slower than that of the US and Asia. Wales has skills and infrastructure deficits

which have defeated long-standing attempts at a cure. And competition will be tough. There are few advanced territories that have not identified sectors such as biosciences, advanced manufacturing and the creative industries as their targets.

Yet, as Lord Rowe-Beddoe, breaking a 16-year vow of silence as a past chairman of the Welsh Development Agency, said at the IWA's national economy conference in March, we need to recover some of the self-belief Wales was exhibiting in the closing years of the last century. Quite a lot seemed possible at that time. Lamenting the constant drip-drip effect of poor statistics and the public unease these could promote, he said we must get back to believing that we are more than capable of shaping our future. Why otherwise would inward investors want to come to Wales, he queried.

Cue Sir Chris Evans, another speaker at the IWA event, who just happens to be

The Welsh Government's Sector Strategy

Six sectors were originally chosen in the 2010 coalition government's Economic Renewal Programme:

- Advanced Materials and Manufacturing
- Creative Industries
- Information and Communications Technology (ICT)
- Life Sciences
- Energy and Environment
- Financial and Professional Services

A further three were added by the present Labour government last year:

- Food and Farming
- Construction
- Tourism

chairman of the Life Sciences Sector Panel as well as one of Europe's most successful scientific entrepreneurs with a record of starting 80 companies and creating new value of more than £5 billion.

Midway through March this year Sir Chris and Business Minister Edwina Hart unveiled plans for a new fund to be supported by £25 million of public money in each of the next two years, with the aim of attracting similar amounts of match-funding from the private sector. The fund, which will have its own private sector managers based in Cardiff, is designed to support existing and incoming businesses in the life sciences sector, and to attract top scientists to work in Wales.

At the IWA conference Sir Chris had identified what he saw as the sector's main problem in Wales: commercialisation and internationalisation of activities once companies had been started up and begun to grow.

As the most tangible outcome so far from the sector strategy exercise it is undeniably impressive and certainly sets a benchmark for the other sectors to follow. Elsewhere, however, the results so far have been mixed. Some panels – and it has to be remembered nearly all have been in place for more than a year – seem to be barely beyond the stage of sketching out where their sectors stand.

Take for instance the financial service sector. Its advice to the Minister describes its vision thus:

“To make Wales the most competitive region in the UK for financial and professional services outside London by 2021”.

One of its challenges is to

“... grow employment in the sector from 124,000 to 200,000 by 2021, while another is to grow jobs and GVA [Gross Value Added] in our sector faster than the UK average”.

A key driver is summed up in this baffling statement:



Sir Chris Evans, chairman of the Welsh Government's Life Sciences Panel, told the IWA's National Economy conference in March that his sector's main challenge was the commercialisation and internationalisation of companies once they had begun to grow.

“The 1.4m population living in the Cardiff City Region, and its close proximity to London make Cardiff one of Europe's fastest growing cities.”

The suggested strategic priorities include the need to “sell Wales's business propositions to the world and particularly London” and provide training support to improve the “rich pool of professionals available for fast-growing businesses”. To deliver the vision it will:

“... target international financial and professional services businesses... offer a flexible whole of Government approach with generous funding... and engage the largest 100 financial services companies in Wales, and develop a

three year business plan identifying growth opportunities for them”.

Similar pearls of wishful thinking have been heard before. Indeed, it would be worth looking back at the papers left behind by the South East Wales Financial Initiative headed by City financier, Godfrey Jillings, in the 1990s. At that time Jillings opined that Cardiff and the rest of south Wales would secure professional services because of its “advanced electronic communications and high calibre staff”.

He was clear most of the investment in Wales would be back office functions and indeed this has proved to be case. Which businesses or business operations the latest incarnation of Wales as a financial centre will comprise or what



In March Business Minister Edwina Hart unveiled plans for a new £25 million fund to support existing and new businesses in the life sciences sector.

form Government support should take is not defined by the latest panel, leave alone how the journey from boosterism to bricks and mortar will be made.

To be fair there are some sensible ideas in the various reports and some senior businesspeople have been recruited. The ICT panel starts with the rather depressing observation that its sector is largely invisible on the world stage and has actually seen a decline in companies and employees since 2002. It identifies some priorities – stronger links between suppliers, and users of ICT products and services, public sector procurement opportunities, and increased R&D. However, the delivery mechanisms it suggests – active marketing and communication of Wales's ICT message, for example, or closer engagement with companies in the sector - can be little more than holding comments.

There are some sensible recommendations from the creative industries panel which, among other things, wants the sector to:

- Focus resources on those creative businesses which sell or license products and services to markets outside Wales.
- Ensure that training and education relevant to the sector are aligned to the needs of business and the digital economy.

It also has ideas as to how the priorities could be delivered, for example through a continued Welsh presence at trade fairs, access to finance – particularly for export-oriented businesses - and a strong Wales Location Service.

Likewise, the advanced materials and manufacturing panel wants to see clear milestones established, a much stronger evidence base, strategic evaluation of capital projects and a defined delivery mechanism to govern the sector's path along the agreed route map. Good stuff but not the flesh on the bones that is needed, a criticism that applies to most of the panels.

One nagging doubt about the sector strategy and its chances of success is bound to be a point made by Professor Garel Rhys of Cardiff University at the recent House of Commons Welsh Affairs Select Committee hearings into the Welsh economy. Referring specifically to inward investment and the re-organisations that had taken place, including the abolition of overseas arm International Business Wales, he claimed the Welsh administration in Cardiff was short of the right sort of competence.

Many young officials, he felt, lacked experience and feared getting things wrong. "The base unit of decision-making is increasingly the sector team. However, so many of these are so small they cannot do very much." He adds later:

"Potential investors all too often feel that they are being shunted back-and-forth when they try to establish contact with the Welsh administration and to no real effect. The experience... is more driven by ticking boxes than by decision-making. Some investors have been moved on by sectors that felt a project was too big for them, others felt they were facing 'boys with toys' who displayed a failure to understand the nature and significance of a project."

Similar though somewhat less trenchant doubts about the capacity of the Welsh civil service were expressed at the IWA conference which clearly will have to be operating at its most competitive and commercially-minded if the sector strategy is to deliver the goods. Where led by as forceful, decisive and successful a character as Sir Chris Evans, the process of establishing a clear strategy and implementing it will clearly be driven along at a rapid pace and it is likely officials too will be galvanised.

However, every single one of the panels will need to be as pro-active. All will need to be a combination of powerful and industry experienced members with forthright ideas on how to inject 'velocity' – one of the key words at the IWA conference. They will also need experienced Government officials with the authority and courage to make tough decisions.

Time is pressing, as the latest unfavourable – though in many ways misleading - comparisons of Wales with Greece and Romania make clear. If we fail to get the latest structure for delivering economic growth both right and capable of delivering there is a real danger the good old Welsh economic jalopy – registration number GVA 78 - will just chug along as before, the sat nav constantly demanding a series of U-turns, lefts and rights.

Rhys David is a former Financial Times journalist and a trustee of the IWA.

PROCUREMENT SPECIAL

Values for money

Kevin Morgan says we should give a nudge to a sleeping giant in the Welsh public purse

One of the great paradoxes of British economic policy over the past half century is the fact that successive governments have devoted enormous effort to things they could not control, such as the external value of sterling. On the other hand they have neglected things they could control, like the procurement of goods and services in the public sector.

The public procurement market in the UK was worth more than £230 billion last year, roughly equivalent to £1 in every £4 spent by the Exchequer, making the public sector a much bigger economic player than most people realise. Public procurement is a sleeping giant because of its untapped potential to effect social, economic and environmental change. When it is deployed effectively, the power of purchase can secure *values* for money in the broadest sense and not just value for money in the narrow sense.

Public procurement is a profoundly arcane world which outsiders find virtually impossible to fathom. Maybe this is why so few people have noticed that Europe's public procurement regulations are currently under review, with enormous implications for the way the public sector buys goods and services. Although public sector contracts will still be subject to the EU principles of fairness, transparency and non-discrimination, the European Commission wants to simplify the rules to ensure that procurement can play its part in meeting the goals of Europe 2020, with its commitment to "smart,

sustainable and inclusive" growth.

This regulatory review ought to have garnered more interest because it heralds the birth of a much more sustainable public procurement policy. Indeed, it provides an ideal vehicle for us to deliver our duty to sustainable development in Wales. Among other things the review will introduce three important new changes. It will:

1. Make it easier for small and medium-sized enterprises to participate in and benefit from public procurement contracts by reducing paperwork and breaking up contracts into smaller and more feasible lots.
2. Promote the concept of whole-life costing, which allows contracting authorities to take account of social and environmental factors when weighing up the costs and benefits of competing offers.
3. Extend the special measures already in place for sheltered workshops and employment programmes to embrace a broader range of beneficiaries.

All of these provisions will make it easier for creative public sector managers to use the power of purchase to secure values for money. Sadly, however, creativity and procurement are not natural bedfellows, and certainly not here in Wales, where we seem to be more risk averse than elsewhere in Europe when it comes to deploying the power of purchase.

Why is this? One possible answer is that it is due to a lack of competence and confidence, both of which can be traced to a chronic skills deficit at the heart of the public sector in Wales. The scale of the current skills deficit in the public procurement profession in Wales can be illustrated by a simple good practice rule, which recommends that every £15 million of public spending should equate to one qualified Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply manager. On the basis of this rule, we are short of some 174 professionals in the Welsh public sector.

I cited these figures in my evidence to an Assembly inquiry into public procurement reform in February. When asked why we appear to be more risk-averse than elsewhere, my response was to say, "We are profoundly under-skilled in the public sector in Wales. We should be a leader, but we are a laggard. When you are not skilled and are not confident about your work, you cannot be expected to be creative".

When creativity does emerge on the public procurement front, it tends to be despite the system rather than because of it, reflecting a lack of political leadership as well as a professional skills deficit. Two of the best examples of public sector creativity in Wales in recent years are the *Can Do Toolkit*, a good practice guide to positive procurement, and *Arbed*, the first pro-poor green energy scheme in the UK. These two initiatives merit a lot more attention because they hold valuable lessons for creativity and innovation in

the public sector.

The story of the *Can Do Toolkit* is instructive for many reasons, not least because this innovation would never have seen the light of day had it been left to the prosaic workings of government. This was because it involved a high degree of novelty – and novelty is something that is not easily handled in the public sector. The *Can Do Toolkit* was designed to secure more community benefits from public contracts. It began with targeted recruitment and training to bring unemployed or economically inactive people back into the labour market, and then broadened out to help local firms win a greater share of public sector business. The Toolkit condensed a bewildering array of complex EU regulations into a simple manual of good practice, showing public sector officers *how* to innovate, not just exhorting them to do so.

If the Toolkit was an innovative product, so too was the process that fashioned it. At the heart of this process

Of all the hurdles that i2i had to overcome to deliver the Toolkit, the most difficult was the internal hurdle inside the Welsh Government in the form of Value Wales, the official procurement unit.

was i2i (*inform to involve*), a special purpose vehicle that had been set up to help registered social landlords to get the most out of the £3 billion investment programme to meet the higher quality specifications of the Welsh Housing Quality Standard. The most distinctive feature of i2i was that its members – all dedicated housing professionals – were in but not of government in the sense that, while they were clearly working for the housing and regeneration departments of the Welsh Government, they were also working for the social housing sector. This semi-official status gave i2i access to government without the constraints of being in government, a relative autonomy that it used to good effect. Among other things, i2i recruited the services of Richard McFarlane, a leading authority on community-centred public procurement. He played an important role in fashioning the community benefit clauses of the *Can Do Toolkit*, ensuring that they were fully compliant with EU procurement regulations.

Of all the hurdles that i2i had to overcome to deliver the Toolkit, the most difficult was the internal hurdle inside the Welsh Government in the form of Value Wales, the official procurement unit. Fuelled by conservative advice from its legal advisers, Value Wales expressed strong reservations about the legality of the *Can Do Toolkit* from the outset, claiming it failed to comply with EU procurement regulations. Value Wales even went so far as to commission external legal advice to bolster its opinion that the Toolkit was illegal, but to no avail. Significantly, the main reason for its opposition was the sheer novelty of the *Can Do Toolkit* – the fact that nothing like it had ever been attempted in the civil service before.

That the *Can Do Toolkit* emerged at all is cause for celebration. But we should learn two important lessons from this experience. First, it was

designed and delivered by i2i, an organisational innovation akin to what Americans call a Skunk Works, an officially sanctioned breakout space where a team of innovators is allowed to circumvent the habits and routines of a firm or organisation to excavate a novel path (the way IBM developed its first PC). Second, the *Can Do Toolkit* would not have survived without robust political support from within the Welsh Government and this was provided by Jocelyn Davies and Leighton Andrews, the deputy ministers for housing and regeneration respectively, who were both deeply committed to the idea of a community-focused procurement policy.

Arbed (save in Welsh) is a partnership between the Welsh Government and the social housing sector and is another example of a successful innovation that holds important lessons for the way we design and deliver policy in Wales. Established in 2009, *Arbed* is an outstanding example of sustainable development in action. It aims to eradicate fuel poverty, reduce the carbon footprint of energy consumption and boost economic development by making Welsh homes more energy efficient. This was achieved in Phase one of the programme by retrofitting homes with solid wall insulation, solar panels, heat pumps and a range of other energy efficiency measures.

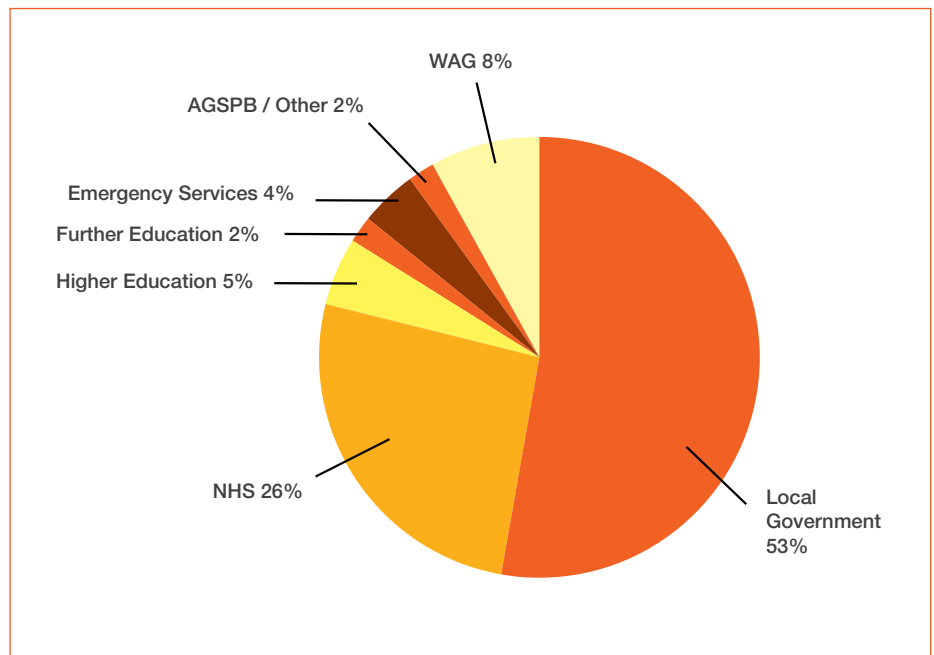
The most distinctive aspect of the *Arbed* programme is that it is a pro-poor green energy programme, the first of its kind in the UK. Working with social housing providers, the Welsh Government consciously targeted the most deprived parts of Wales to ensure that the poorest households could enjoy the benefits of energy efficient investment. Equally innovative was the way that Phase one of the programme was financed – an initial sum of £30 million from the Welsh Government was used to leverage an additional £31 million, primarily from energy suppliers, housing associations, and local councils,

making a total investment of £61 million. (The final Phase one budget will be larger because an additional £6.6 million has recently been secured for the programme). As a result of this collective investment, over 6,000 homes were improved, the majority of which were in the social housing sector.

The Phase one programme also supported the development of a local supply chain in low energy measures. For example, 41 of the 51 installers that delivered *Arbed* Phase One operate primarily in Wales, and five of the 17 products that were eligible for support, were manufactured in Wales. These local economic development benefits complement the social and environmental dividends of the *Arbed* programme.

Another distinctive feature of Phase one of the programme was the judicious division of labour between government and the social housing sector. While *Arbed* schemes were grant-funded by the Welsh Government, the actual procurement was done by social housing providers. This was a genuine partnership in which each side played to its strengths. The fact that the social housing sector was given such a prominent role in the delivery of Phase one, owes much to the innovative management skills of Tim Sydenham, an energy expert who was brought into the Welsh Government to head up the *Arbed* programme. Many people in the social housing sector are convinced that had he not been involved, the normal workings of government would have issued a conventional tender and the work would have gone to one of the usual corporate suspects.

Once again, an innovative external agent helped to make the public procurement process more creative than it would otherwise have been and, once again, it would not have succeeded without robust political support from within government – this time from Jane Davidson, the Minister principally responsible for the Phase one programme.



How the Welsh public sector's annual procurement budget, estimated at around £4 billion, is divided up.

Yet, having built up its capacity to deliver energy efficiency schemes, the social housing sector is now very nervous that *Arbed* Phase two may not be as successful. This is because the contract will probably go to a conventional corporate supplier who will not be as committed to nurturing the capacity of social housing providers. This decision needs to be monitored very carefully. The total budget for Phase two amounts to some £45 million, a major sum in an age of austerity.

Arbed and the *Can Do Toolkit* are successful examples of public sector innovation and we urgently need to learn the lessons of their success. Perhaps the most important lesson of all is that creative public procurement would not have emerged from the normal workings of government for the simple reason that novelty, the inner core of creativity and innovation, is frustrated rather than fostered in the compliance culture of the civil service. This means that the public sector needs to create a culture of constructive challenge in its own ranks, either by

engaging with challenging partners from the private and third sectors or by developing more challenging mindsets from within.

Fashioning a more innovative public sector is no longer an option for us in Wales. Radical change is being forced on us by the brutalising effects of a pre-Keynesian ideology. The key challenge for the foreseeable future is how to secure sustainability in an age of austerity. Creative public procurement can help us to meet this challenge of values for money - by furnishing such things as nutritious food for schools and hospitals, renewable energy and dignified eldercare. The missing ingredients in the recipe for creative procurement are professional skills and political leadership. We will never secure values for money in Wales unless we address these twin deficits.

Kevin Morgan is Professor of Governance and Development at Cardiff University.

PROCUREMENT SPECIAL

How large firms outside Wales are dominating homegrown enterprise

Duncan Forbes urges the Welsh Government to make its procurement practices more user-friendly for small businesses



A positive analysis of the impact of the *Can Do Toolkit* between 2008 and 2011, published earlier this year by the Chartered Institute of Housing Cymru.

Sustainable economic growth is critical for our future in Wales as we struggle with a global economic crisis which shows little sign of abating. This means that with every move we make and pound we spend, we need to support Welsh business, create Welsh jobs and to build the skills of Welsh people.

Generating jobs and building the skills of people in Wales so that we have sustainable economic growth should be the single priority for Welsh Government. In Scotland a joined up approach across Scottish Government has been successful in generating new business opportunities and business growth. It should be a consistent theme running through every policy initiative and most importantly every procurement decision. Creating new Welsh jobs is as much the responsibility of the Minister for Health and Social Services as it is the Minister for Housing, Regeneration and Heritage or the Minister for Finance.

Unfortunately, we have a very long way to go towards achieving this degree of focus. We are moving rapidly in the wrong direction because Welsh Government is allowing, indeed even encouraging, the public sector to procure services in the wrong way. We assume that big procurement secures savings. This may be true when buying goods that are mass-produced but there isn't any reliable evidence that it is true for service-based contracts like construction. In fact, our experience is the opposite. There is no substitute for long standing relationships based on trust which deliver best value for money.

In England, the Coalition Government are pursuing a pretty explicit agenda of handing over public services to their friends in big business. Inadvertently, we are doing the same in Wales.

Welsh business comprises mostly micro firms with fewer than nine employees, or small firms, employing between ten and 49 workers:

- Only 12 Welsh businesses are listed on the London stock exchange
- Micro-business make up 95.7 per cent of all Welsh concerns, including 98.2 per cent of construction businesses and 94.6 per cent of health and education businesses
- Just 3.6 per cent of all Welsh businesses are small, including 1.5 per cent of construction businesses and 4.4 per cent of health and education businesses
- Only 0.1 per cent of all Welsh businesses are large, with 250 or more employees – there are no construction businesses in this category, and just 0.2 per cent of health and education businesses.

Because of these statistics, large-scale procurement essentially ensures that most profits from public contracts go outside Wales. There are numerous examples of how Welsh Government policy on promoting collaboration

throughout the public sector is having the unplanned effect of excluding Welsh businesses.

Local authorities have followed Welsh Government advice and collaborated over works to schools, advertising a framework for £400 million. Unsurprisingly, the primary winners were:

- Carillion, with a global turnover of £5 billion.
- Leadbitter, with a turnover of £450 million, and who are partners of Bouygues, with global turnover of 23 billion Euros.
- Laing O'Rourke, with a global turnover of £4 billion.
- Morgan Sindall, with a turnover of £2.2 billion.

According to the press, local Welsh-based builders complained bitterly that they were being shut out of the programme arguing these contracts threatened the existence of the Welsh contracting industry. Whilst housing organisations like Bron

A local Welsh contractor who works for us told me recently that despite being a medium sized business, they had been unable to meet the turnover requirements for the framework and were excluded. Yet they work for us delivering excellent value for money.

Afon have led the field in demonstrating how it is possible to support Welsh business to win work and create local jobs through procurement, this isn't always the case. A consortium of housing associations decided to tender a framework for works. One housing association then found that none of the trusted small local building partners who had been carrying out their works for many years and with whom they had excellent working relationships were able to compete effectively because of their size. All were excluded from the framework.

A local Welsh contractor who works for us told me recently that despite being a medium sized business, they had been unable to meet the turnover requirements for the framework and were excluded. Yet they work for us delivering excellent value for money.

There is a lack of strategic leadership giving attention to procurement within the public sector to ensure that we make the Welsh public sector pound create jobs and build skills for Wales. Welsh Government will spend over £1 billion pound in capital expenditure in the next financial year and local authorities will spend further large sums. Every single public pound should be required to pursue our main focus of sustainable economic growth even if it is being used to build highways, schools or hospitals.

What then is the solution to these issues? The Welsh Government should:

- Make clear that all public sector procurement in Wales is expected to be readily accessible to small and micro Welsh businesses, thereby contributing to the creation of local jobs and developing local skills.
- Ensure that Ministers, senior officials and leaders in local government are united in providing that jobs, skills and other added value is secured in

all Welsh public service procurement.

- Establish a new programme of training or retraining for procurement professionals in Wales that focuses on challenging assumptions about competition as the only method of securing value for money, on aggregation being required under the EU rules (it isn't!), on managing risk and the techniques for securing wider benefits from procurement as has been done through the *i2i Can do Toolkit*.
- Establish within Welsh Government and encourage within local government a process for strategic challenge for any significant contract or external spend to oversee delivery of improved procurement of services to ensure jobs and skills are secured.
- Promote changed and improved practice in procurement throughout the public services in Wales.
- Carry out an overarching review of the policy drive for collaboration and ensure that this is linked to strong messages about the need to avoid unnecessarily aggregating contracts and excluding Welsh businesses.

Duncan Forbes is Chief Executive of Bron Afon Community Housing in Cwmbran, Torfaen.

Articles

Hands on higher
education

On target for
seven-year-old
Welsh speakers
reaching 25%
by 2015

Hands on higher education

Interior of Newport's new City Campus. Opened in January 2011, it houses 2,700 students from the University's Business School and School of Art, Media and Design aimed at bringing the two disciplines together to promote entrepreneurship.

Chris O'Malley argues that a new university for southeast Wales should be more of a teaching hospital than a traditional academic institution

Education Minister Leighton Andrews says he wants to see a new, larger university in southeast Wales, based on the University of Glamorgan, Cardiff Metropolitan University, and the University of Wales, Newport. In Newport, we have proposed that what should be created is a brand new University, built on an entrepreneurial model. We see this as a logical next step on a journey on which Newport has already embarked. Combining with others to create such a new institution, on a transformative scale, offers the opportunity to make a uniquely powerful contribution that would set a bench mark for others in the UK and around the world.

According to the standard model, university engagement with external society is treated as a 'third mission', an add-on to teaching and research. In contrast, the model we have put forward sees engagement with our region as the driver of *all* of the university's activity, including teaching and research. An institution that embodies a real step change for Wales will not emerge if the exercise is conceived as being one of simply extending one of the existing universities' management model and ethos. There are six major differences between the two models that are being envisaged.

The first lies in how the university defines its mission and measures success in achieving it. The new university would not be tied to standard measures informing university league tables. Rather, it would be focused on how it contributes to the region's development, such as in enhancing skills, supporting new innovation or in helping to attract investment. In deciding which departments or research centres to establish or expand, the views of academic peers will form only part of the picture. When recruiting or promoting staff, experience as a practitioner in innovation and entrepreneurship will be given equal weight to experience in teaching and research.

Secondly, there is a step-change in the management culture and processes of the university, based on an enterprising ethos that encourages risk taking, empowers innovation and rewards successful external engagement as strongly as teaching and research. A university that operates a largely standardised, top-down command and control management system will never be able to achieve this. The development of enterprising skills – the ability to attract and mobilise resources to achieve change – will be taught to all learners as a core part of their studies.

A third distinctive dimension of the new university would be the centrality of partnership with practitioner organisations. Currently, an increasing number of the University of Wales, Newport's programmes include integrated work experience, student projects that are live briefs from external clients, lectures from practitioners, and staff exchange with practitioner organisations. The new University would elevate such partnerships to a higher level, whether in the public, private or voluntary sectors. The most complete model of such interaction that currently exists is the Teaching Hospital, with all lecturers also being practitioners, and all students being required to undertake internships as part of their qualification. We believe that with disciplines such as Business, Computing or Engineering the principle is just as relevant. University operated consultancy companies can play a role analogous to that of the Teaching Hospital, with university staff and students engaged in client projects while consultants teach on University programmes, on a planned, rather than ad hoc and occasional, basis.

A fourth dimension is the willingness to be innovative in the range and design of programmes being offered. The University of Wales, Newport has already responded quickly to external demands to put in place programmes in areas that we have not offered before, from animal care to metallurgy. We see this kind of responsiveness as being a key feature of an entrepreneurial organisation. Externally-based projects are often central to programmes we offer, such as the Bewehl programme (which empowers learners in disadvantaged communities), an Enterprise Development qualification based on the development of a plan for a new business, or the work project-based qualification we offer in management of educational institutions. In the new university, programmes based on projects in the workplace should be a more prominent feature, whether for start-up business, the public, private or voluntary sectors.

A fifth dimension of distinctiveness is that an entrepreneurial university



Sir Terry Matthews discusses entrepreneurship with fashion students at the launch of the new City Campus at the University of Wales, Newport. The telecommunications investment company Wesley Clover, owned by Sir Terry, has a partnership with the University's Institute of Advanced Broadcasting.

places a much larger emphasis on direct engagement with external bodies – whether private or public sector - through consultancy, applied research, or raising the skills levels of their existing work forces through short courses and projects. It therefore earns a larger part of its income by making itself more directly useful to the society around it.

The final difference between the two models would be in their organisation. Because of their traditional structures, universities typically find it difficult to break out of their disciplinary silos in responding to such challenges. Instead we would want to organise the new university through structures that reflect the principal external sectors which it sets out to serve and address, including the creative industries, sustainable technology, and advanced manufacturing. Centres of Excellence would draw on relevant expertise from across the whole university and develop innovation partnerships with such sectors. These Centres would drive a large part of the university's teaching and research activity of the University.

Through the development of this approach to the design and operation of a new University, the contribution that Higher Education makes to the development of southeast Wales can be made more powerful and effective. There would be many benefits, including:

- Entrepreneurial graduates would be prepared more effectively for the changing and unpredictable 21st Century, with the emphasis placed on creating a highly skilled, practical workforce.
- There would be deeper learning through stronger interaction between theory and practice.
- The relevance of university programmes to the needs of society, whether in research or scholarship, would be strengthened.
- Enhanced prospects for attracting investment to southeast Wales and broader funding base for the university.

In creating a new university for southeast Wales we have an opportunity to build something genuinely new and transformative. We can take the historical strengths of our three universities and recalibrate them to meet the challenges of the modern economy. However, this can only be fully achieved if all concerned are challenged to take a radical approach to the creation of a new institution.

Chris O'Malley is Pro Vice Chancellor, Regional and International Development, with the University of Wales, Newport and Chair of the IWA's Gwent Branch.



On target for seven-year-old Welsh speakers reaching 25% by 2015

Michael Jones reports on progress with implementing the Welsh medium education strategy in primary schools

In the spring of 2009 the then Welsh Minister of Education, Jane Hutt, launched the draft of the Government's Strategy for Welsh Medium Education. A year later the Strategy became government policy under her successor Leighton Andrews. The current Labour Government intends to make this strategy statutory instead of advisory.

Last July Leighton Andrews published the first report on progress made towards achieving the targets set for increasing the percentage of those children receiving Welsh medium education at the age of 7 (defined as those children assessed for Key Stage 1 through the medium of Welsh as a first language). In 2009 the figure was 21 per cent. The target is 25 per cent by 2015 and 30 per cent by 2020. In 2000 the percentage was 18.1 per cent and the first post strategy figure, for the summer of 2010 was 21.8 per cent, which augurs well for achieving 25 per cent by 2015.

In the IWA's 2008 report *Creating a Bilingual Wales* Owen John Thomas

divided the country into three groups of counties by reference to their existing percentage of Welsh speakers.

The first group comprises the four counties with a population of over 50 per cent of Welsh speakers, namely Gwynedd, Ceredigion, Anglesey and Carmarthenshire. The second group of four has over 20 per cent who speak Welsh - Conway, Denbigh, Powys and Pembrokeshire. The remaining 14 have less than 20 per cent of Welsh speakers.

The new report includes a bar chart setting out the percentages of children in Welsh medium education at the age of 7 in each of the 22 counties in 2000 and 2010. Unfortunately, however, there are no similar charts at Key Stages 2, 3 or 4 - that is, for children at 10, 13 and 16 years old. It is interesting to look at these figures against the record of each county in adding to the provision of Welsh-medium schools. However, it must be borne in mind that the chart shows percentages of each county's cohort of children in each year and since about 1995 most counties have seen falling rolls and a reduced overall cohort. If all Welsh medium places are taken up but the numbers in English medium schools fall, the Welsh percentage increases without any increase in the numbers of Welsh medium children. (Note that the

percentages given hereafter are best estimates from the bar charts.)

1. Welsh speaking majority counties

Gwynedd has the highest percentage of children receiving Welsh education at the age of 7, having reached 100 per cent by 2010 compared with 95 per cent in 2000. This represents a county policy of compulsory Welsh primary education. Anecdotal evidence suggests a considerable tendency to exercise the available option of English medium secondary education, which is where charts for 13 and 16 year olds would be illuminating. Ironically Gwynedd's level of success means that this county can make no further contribution to growth between now and 2020. Meanwhile, Ceredigion (75 per cent) and Anglesey (70 per cent) both show a marginal percentage growth since 2000. These three counties each have only one designated Welsh-medium primary school and clearly rely heavily on their 'traditional' Welsh-medium schools. It is interesting that under the leadership of the governors the parents of the traditional Welsh medium Cardigan Primary School have voted to convert it into a designated Welsh-medium primary with no classes giving English-medium instruction.

The most populous Welsh speaking

county is Carmarthenshire where designated Welsh-medium primary schools are more numerous. There are eight in all and they are generally more highly regarded by parents than the Category A 'traditional' schools where the quality of Welsh provision is distinctly variable. The result is a demand for expansion of existing designated schools and an addition to their number. Nonetheless the percentage in the county did increase from 50 per cent to 55 per cent over the 11 years to 2010.

2. Counties with a substantial Welsh-speaking population

The four counties of Conwy, Denbighshire, Powys and Pembrokeshire all include areas with a majority Welsh speaking population and other very Anglicized areas. In Conwy and Denbighshire the coastal areas and some inland towns have Welsh education by way of seven designated Welsh-medium primary schools, while the more rural and upland areas have 'traditional' village schools. Both these counties have made modest increases in their percentages to a level at or just below 25 per cent. Again there has been a school in Conwy, Penmaenmawr, where the parents have voted for it to become a designated Welsh-medium school.

Powys with many Welsh speakers in Montgomeryshire and southwest Breconshire has two Welsh-medium primaries in Breconshire, Welsh units scattered all over its three component counties, and 'traditional' schools in rural Montgomeryshire. These enabled it to increase its percentage of Welsh speakers at 7 years from about 13 per cent to 17 per cent.

Pembrokeshire has long had a Welsh north and an English south. In the north 'traditional' schools provide

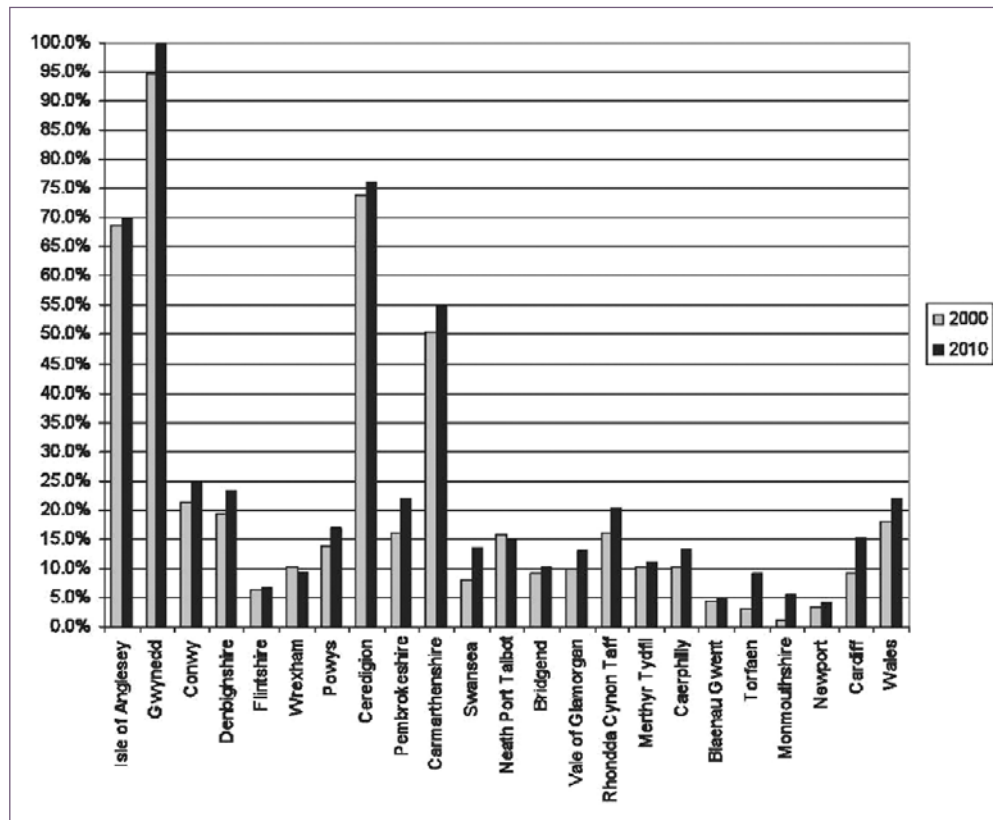


Chart setting out the percentages of children in Welsh medium education at the age of 7 in each of the 22 Welsh counties in 2000 and 2010.

Welsh primary education while in the south there is one designated Welsh primary and two schools with Welsh units. With these resources Pembrokeshire achieved 6 point growth in Welsh medium education from 16 per cent to 22 per cent.

3. Anglicized counties

(i) North-east Wales

Like the 12 counties in the south Flintshire and Wrexham provide Welsh medium education exclusively in designated schools. As Owen John Thomas noted, Flintshire has not seen an additional primary since 1971. It is no surprise that the percentage in Welsh medium education remained the same in 2010 as in 2000 at 6 per cent.

Apparently Wrexham did even worse falling from 10 per cent in 2000 to 9.5 per cent in 2010. However, investigation has disclosed two special factors. First, there

was a considerable inflow of families from England filling the English-medium schools; and second, the school at Cefn Mawr on the border between Wrexham and Denbighshire, originally designed by the old Clwyd County Council to serve Cefn Mawr and Llangollen, after county reorganisation suffered a substantial reduction in numbers due to Denbighshire opening its own school for Llangollen following the county reorganisation in 1996. It is only now that the school is beginning to recover. Wrexham is now planning to open its sixth Welsh-medium primary school on the basis of a survey of parental wishes carried out pursuant to the new strategy.

(ii) South-east Wales

Here the remaining 12 counties can be divided into 4 groups:

- The consistent providers – Cardiff, Caerphilly and Swansea.

- The compliant authorities – Newport, Torfaen and the Vale of Glamorgan.
- The non-compliant authorities – Blaenau Gwent, Bridgend, Merthyr, Monmouth and Neath Port Talbot.
- Rhondda Cynon Taf, the prodigal son.

The consistent providers

Since Owen John Thomas wrote in 2008, Cardiff has opened another two schools and added a third stream to Ysgol Pwll Coch in Leckwith. As he recorded, in 2008 the intake was 560. These were the children aged 7 in 2010 that the Strategy Report noted as forming 15 per cent of the Cardiff cohort compared with 9.5 per cent in 2000. The intake in 2011 is 657, up by about 16 per cent over three years. One cannot forecast a percentage of the overall cohort by 2013, as numbers in English-medium schools have started to grow in Cardiff. Nonetheless, this increase should make it substantially higher.

Likewise Caerphilly has opened another primary since 2008 and has plans to move Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Caerffili into larger premises later this year, plans approved by the Education Minister for which the council has provided funding. It showed a percentage growth from 10.5 per cent to 13 per cent over the 11 years to 2010.

Up to the 1990s Swansea's growth was held back by a Director of Education much opposed to Welsh-medium education. However, since then it has

grown consistently, showing an increase from 8 per cent to 13 per cent in 2010. Further growth will follow from the opening in 2011 of schools in Morriston and Bonymaen consequent upon a parental survey, plus a future new school in Gowerton to serve north Gower.

The compliant authorities

Newport, Torfaen and the Vale of Glamorgan are authorities which have followed the new strategy in all respects, by first carrying out a survey to ascertain parental wishes, publishing it and acting when it became apparent that there was a substantial unmet demand for Welsh medium education.

Newport increased the intake to its one existing school, opened a second in 2009, doubled its intake in 2010, and then opened a third in September 2011. The report under consideration shows a small percentage growth from 3 per cent to 4 per cent between 2000 and 2010. However, by summer 2013 the number of children in Welsh-medium education at the age of 7 will be 150 as against the 30 of 2000 and the percentage will be substantially higher.

Torfaen showed substantial growth of Welsh school population at 7 in its two primaries resulting in an increase of percentages from 3 per cent in 2000 to 9 per cent in 2010. This does not include the effect of the opening of a third primary in 2010 in response to the outcome of a parental survey in 2010.

The children in this school will first be assessed at the age of 7 in the summer of 2013 contributing to a further percentage increase.

The Vale of Glamorgan shows a satisfactory growth over the 11-year period from 10 per cent to 13 per cent. It was striking that a survey in 2009 showed a demand from 20 per cent of the Vale's parents for Welsh-medium education. Within a month of receiving and publishing the survey the Vale adopted a scheme to increase the intake at one school by 10 pupils a year, to open two additional schools as soon as possible, and to relocate another school in larger premises with a view to increasing its intake. The first school was expanded in time for September 2010, the two new schools opened in September 2011 and only the relocation remains to be carried out.

The response of these three authorities demonstrates what can be achieved if parental wishes are ascertained and receive the response which Welsh Government policy urges and shortly will require by statute.

The non-compliant authorities

With one exception the five authorities in this category show either no growth or very small growth between 2000 and 2010. With two exceptions they have not opened an additional primary for between 20 and 35 years.

Neath Port Talbot, which includes the Swansea Valley between Pontardawe and Ystalyfera, did open a new primary in 1999 and has carried out two parental surveys, both of which it refuses to publish. This is an area with a good historical record for Welsh-medium provision, with 15.5 per cent in Welsh education in 2000 but actually falling to 15 per cent by 2010. Here the Minister needs to intervene with his statutory powers.

Blaenau Gwent, Merthyr and Bridgend show no or miniscule growth and have carried out no parental surveys. Again, the inaction of these authorities calls for ministerial intervention, which for reasons



Pupils at Ysgol Gynradd Gymraeg Ifor Hael, Newport, on their opening day in July 2010. With them are the Lord Mayor of Newport, the Mayoress and the Deputy Mayor.

unconnected with Welsh-medium education occurred in Blaenau Gwent towards the end of 2011.

Monmouth shows a growth from 1 per cent in 2000 to 6 per cent in 2010 due to the growth of their one school in Abergavenny, and the opening and subsequent growth of their second school at Caldicot. Monmouth has not acted to meet the demand for a school in Monmouth, the need for which is demonstrated by the numbers who make the long journey to Abergavenny daily. There is also a need for a fourth school to serve the area around Usk.

No surveys have been published by these four non-compliant counties.

The prodigal son

When it was part of Glamorgan County Council up to 1974, and then Mid Glamorgan up to 1996, Rhondda Cynon Taf was the area in the southeast with the best provision of Welsh-medium schools and the highest percentage of Welsh-medium pupils as the 16 per cent it recorded in 2000 confirms. At the same time the area was also the site of bitter battles between parents and the local education authority which resulted in Mid Glamorgan opening no less than eight additional schools or units within the area of Rhondda Cynon Taf in its 22 years of existence.

Yet since then, Rhondda Cynon Taf has failed to open a single additional Welsh-medium school over the past 15 years, though it has made additional space available at some existing schools. Thus it has contrived to increase the percentage in 2000 to 20.5 per cent by 2010, substantially the highest in southeast Wales. However, this reflects overcrowded Welsh medium schools and English medium schools with many empty spaces.

Rhondda Cynon Taf has carried out two surveys of parental wishes, in the catchment areas of Aberdare Welsh primary and in the areas of two adjacent schools, Castellau and Gartholwg primaries. Both disclosed an unmet need for places amounting to at least one stream in each of the two areas surveyed. Yet the local education authority refused



Former First Minister Rhodri Morgan at the opening of Ysgol Llwynderw, Swansea's first purpose-built Welsh-medium Primary School in June 2009. Alongside him is Head teacher Alun Jones.

to act on the grounds that they had failed to appoint a head for a Welsh medium school in the Rhondda Fach and feared that if they opened two new schools they would not be able to staff them.

However, during 2011 Rhondda Cynon Taf faced a level of demand substantially above the places available at Llantrisant Welsh-medium school and at Llwynycelyn in Porth, and were unable to place the children in any neighbouring Welsh school. The parents in each case formed a substantial group and were able to create a good deal of adverse publicity for the local authority. After consideration of numerous expedients the council has made interim provision for 2011-2012 but has conceded that it must now start opening additional Welsh medium schools.

The first, where proposals have gone to consultation, will involve the opening of a Llanhari Primary in surplus accommodation at Llanhari Welsh Comprehensive where numbers have fallen due to Bridgend having opened its own Welsh comprehensive at Llangynwyd. The catchment area for the new school will be formed by reducing the size of the catchments of Llantrisant and Y Dolau Welsh primaries. Further proposals involve provision of a new for old school in Tonyrefail, temporary further provision in Porth, Rhondda, with

a new school to follow and a new school in the mid-Cynon to relieve pressure on Aberdare and Abercynon Welsh primaries. All these are included in the Government's 21st Century Schools programme.

So at the last minute RCT has repented of its opposition to Welsh medium expansion and can be welcomed home by its own Assembly Member Leighton Andrews, namely the Welsh Minister of Education.

It will be apparent that the response of the local education authorities has been and continues to be variable. Although some counties, fortunately many with large populations like Cardiff, Swansea, Newport and the Vale of Glamorgan, are responding well and will contribute substantial numbers to the all Wales percentage target of 30 per cent, there are backsliders which need to be brought into compliance. Statutory sanctions should oblige them to comply with parental wishes which some councillors obviously do not want to know while others prefer to ignore.

Michael Jones is southeast Wales coordinator for Rhieni Dros Addysg Cymru (Parents for Welsh-medium Education), Rhag.

Articles

Prenatal and
early years
intervention top
priority

New strategies
for dealing with
self-harm

Progress in
hitting the Welsh
housing standard

Prenatal and early years intervention top priority

Stephen Palmer says we need to capture a sense of urgency about our lifestyle deficiencies

When we are asked to assess our own risks the universal phenomenon of optimistic bias comes into play. We all tend to put ourselves above average which, of course, is a statistical impossibility. Try your own experiment. Ask your friends, "How many people in Wales are living a healthy life?"

There are five factors that epidemiologists have shown are strongly linked to good health – normal body mass index, regular consumption of fruit and vegetables, regular exercise, not smoking and only moderate alcohol intake. My guess is that you will get responses of around 10 to 20 per cent for a score of five. If only!

Data from the most recent 2009 Welsh Health Survey show that less than 1 per cent of the adult population has all five healthy life factors, and only 6.5 per cent have four. Perhaps even more alarming is that of those who reported that they worked in the health sector still only 1.4 per cent scored five out of five. Almost 8 per cent of all responders as well as of health workers scored zero – so much for role models.

The latest Chief Medical Officer's report shows that about 60 per cent of the adult population is significantly overweight, a quarter smoke, only a third eat enough fruit and vegetables, and only a third take enough exercise. Meanwhile, nearly half drink above the daily alcohol guidelines and over a quarter binge drink.

The implications for Wales are profound. Peter Elwood, the internationally renowned epidemiologist who in 1980 set up the Medical Research Council's Caerphilly cohort study, has revisited the data to find out what happened to those with the healthy life styles. The study recruited 2,512 men aged 45-59 years and followed them for over 30 years. Only two men of the cohort had all five healthy lifestyles in 1980. Thirty years later, compared with men with no healthy lifestyle factors those with 4 had 35 per cent fewer

deaths, 38 per cent less vascular disease, and 48 per cent less diabetes.

Just as momentous is the finding that dementia in the most healthy lifestyle group was reduced by about 80 per cent. Another way of looking at these findings is in terms of chronological age. A recent USA study using similar criteria found that people with no healthy behaviours were in effect 11 years 'older' than those with four.

These trends strike at the heart of sustainable development, the Welsh Government's central organising principle. In addition to the pointless waste of life there is the stark reality that, as the Wanless report warned in 2004, Wales will not be able to afford to pay for the sophisticated healthcare that these epidemics will demand on top of the growing cost of the ageing society.

So what is to be done? There are grounds for optimism. Peter Elwood calculates that even a modest reduction in risk factors would radically reduce the burden of disease. If only half the men had adopted one extra healthy behaviour then there would have been a reduction of about 12 per cent in the absolute incidence of diabetes, 6 per cent in the absolute incidence of vascular disease, and 5 per cent in the number of deaths. To achieve these health gains we need to face up to the reality of unhealthy Wales and capture a sense of urgency.

Some might point to the fact that year on year we are living longer. Over 20 years there has been a modest five-year increase in life expectancy at birth for men and three years for women. However, there are three caveats:

1. We are not improving at the same rate as comparable parts of England and therefore we are at increasing disadvantage in a competitive world. (Welsh women can expect 2.2 fewer years of healthy life than English women).

2. Second, the improvement is unequal and widening. Women in the highest quintile of deprivation in Wales can expect to live eight years less than women in the lowest.
3. The mortality statistics do not take into account new trends such as increasing alcohol consumption and the obesity epidemic which is predicted to cancel out recent improvements in life expectancy.

In several respects Wales is now well placed to meet the health challenge. As a central organising principle sustainable development provides an excellent paradigm for public health. For understandable political reasons, governments have often seen public health as the sum total of unhealthy individual behaviours. They have deduced that the route to change is through the NHS and public health practitioners getting the message out to people more forcefully.

However, focusing only on the individual's behaviour misses the fact that we are not all equal in being able to choose healthy lifestyles. The ecological model of health indicates that higher-level factors are also at work through economic, social and environmental pathways such as child poverty, poor housing, low social cohesion and worklessness. It is encouraging that the health policies of the present Welsh Government face up to these factors. New public health organisations are in place to build momentum.

Another major benefit of the sustainable development paradigm is that it forces us to think about the children of Wales. As former First Minister Rhodri Morgan put it in his Introduction to *One Wales, One Planet* in February 2008

"I want a Wales fit for generations to come... What motivates me is doing my very best to ensure a brighter, sustainable future

for my grandchildren and their grandchildren and every other child growing up in Wales today."

There is no doubt that what a child experiences during gestation and early years lay a foundation for their whole life. Yet data from UNICEF on the well being of children in rich countries, put the UK well and truly at the bottom of the OECD league. Of the six dimensions of well being they measured, the UK came bottom for two - family and peer relations, and behaviours and risks, with an overall average ranking of 18.2 out of 21. In the behaviors and risk taking of young people the UK was almost 30 points below the average score of 100.

Recent trend data also strongly suggests that children's mental health is deteriorating, with increasing prevalence of mental disorders. According to the UK Faculty of Public Health, one in 10 children and young people suffer from a diagnosable mental disorder. All this begins before birth. As the Faculty of Public Health states:

"When human foetuses have to adapt to a limited supply of nutrients, they permanently change their structure and metabolism. These 'programmed' changes may be the origins of a number of diseases in later life, including coronary heart disease and the related disorders of stroke, diabetes and hypertension".

Current estimates are that 6.5 per cent of Welsh mothers have a body mass index greater than 35, the highest rate in the home countries (underweight >18.5; normal 18.5-24.9; overweight 25-29.9; obese >30). Obese mothers have three times the risk of pre-eclampsia, gestational diabetes and four times the risk of post partum haemorrhage. Their babies have twice the risk of stillbirth and are 50 per cent more likely to be admitted to intensive care.

A third of Welsh women are smokers

when they become pregnant, again the highest rate in the UK. Mothers who smoke have 50 per cent increase risk of miscarriage and twice the risk of stillbirth. About one third of low birth weight in Wales can be attributed to smoking. The prevalence of low birth weight varies in Wales from 4.4 per cent in the richest local authority area to 7.8 per cent in the poorest. Given these trends in pregnancy, many Welsh children are starting out with a built-in biological disadvantage.

After their birth we are not in a good position to know how well our young children are progressing in Wales because we do not have data on their psychological development and wellbeing. We urgently need a measure of child development at two to three years of age to monitor the quality of parenting and nurture, as well as a school readiness measure at school entry.

One thing we can say is that low birth weight is linked to low educational attainment. Recent data from the Welsh Electronic Cohort of Children following up 200,000 babies through routine data linked anonymously at a database in Swansea University's Health Information Research Unit show that the chances of a child achieving grade 2 at Key stage 1 is reduced in a linear way with reducing gestational age. Children born before 28 weeks are two thirds less likely to reach grade 2.

Low educational attainment is predictive of worklessness, social exclusion and anti-social behaviour. For a sustainable Wales the top priority must be to improve the prenatal and early years environments of future generations.

Stephen Palmer is Cochrane Professor of Epidemiology and Public Health in the School of Medicine at Cardiff University. This is an edited version of a presentation he gave at an IWA conference on the Welsh Government's sustainable development legislation at the University of Wales Trinity St Davids in Carmarthen in January.

New strategies for dealing with self-harm

Mariel Jones and Catrin Eames examine how acute emotional and psychological problems among adolescents can be addressed



Self-harm can involve cutting, burning, scalding, banging or scratching one's own body, breaking bones, hair pulling and ingesting toxic substances or objects. It describes a wide range of behaviours that people do to themselves in a deliberate and usually covert way. Most prevalent is self-injury that is moderate or superficial skin cutting that rarely requires medical attention or hospital admission and hence goes largely unreported.

People who self-harm by overdosing are more likely to present at hospital emergency clinics. Each year at least 6,000 people in Wales are admitted as emergency cases as a result of self-harm. The actual prevalence of self-harm is difficult to know. Predictably, it is far greater than reported cases because of the reticence of people to disclose or even admit they have a problem. In 2004 a survey across the UK, *Young People and Self-harm*, documented a dramatic increase in disclosures of self-harm to children's help lines over a period of five years, with a 65 per cent increase in the last two years.

Self-injury is increasingly recognised as a symptom of emotional or psychological stress, used as a means of coping rather than dealing with the underlying problem. The severity and pathology of the behaviour amongst adolescents has yet to be established. However, it seems likely that there are

broadly two divergent pathways for the progression of this behaviour. For most young people affected it will be a transient activity, with superficial or moderate self-cutting as an experimental response to specific stressful life events. However, a smaller percentage may continue to engage in self-injury due to more chronic emotional difficulties and psychological problems with an increased risk of suicide.

There is overwhelming agreement that the primary function of self-harm is to regulate negative and unwanted feelings such as anger, sadness, and frustration, as well as for positive reinforcement, that is to feel something, even if it is pain. Adolescence is a challenging stage of development for young people when they are more at risk of responding negatively to stressful life events. Interventions that focus on stress management techniques may help adolescents deal with feelings of tension and anxiety that for some can otherwise result in self-injury.

Recent studies also highlight the importance of taking into account the potential social function of self-harm. Young people may self-harm to identify with others, to reduce or remove the expectations of others, or to cause another individual to respond or behave in a particular manner. There is considerable agreement in the

literature that the primary intention is not about getting attention or manipulating others, but rather an attempt to communicate distress or a desire to have someone understand or recognise how they are feeling.

Increased research interest is being directed at the role of the Internet and media in normalising self-injury. There is some evidence that the Internet is providing a platform for communication about this behaviour, raising concerns about the creation of a contagion effect. Images and accounts of self-cutting are commonly linked to sub cultures such as the 'emotional' commonly abbreviated to 'Emo', which originated in the mid-1980s hardcore punk movement. This is described on one website (Emo Corner) as "a new rising way of feeling your inner self". Emos have their own distinctive fashion style, their art and poetry can be defined as emotionally provocative, often expressing things that are difficult to discuss with most people. Themes include suicidal thoughts, painful experiences, inspiring events, or other kind of emotion.

Some dedicated self-cutting message boards provide links to pro self-cutting sites where cutting paraphernalia can be bought. Cutting 'clubs' are rumoured to provide a forum for friendship rituals related to self-harming. It is suggested that, if asked, any adolescent today

would be able to define self-injury and nearly half will personally know someone who has engaged in the behaviour. There is some suggestion that young people would be helped by training in 'media literacy skills' that would equip them to question the hidden beliefs and values that promote self-harm as a constructive means of coping with life's stressors.

The estimated onset age of self-injury is typically between 13 and 15 years old, although some have reported onset to range from 7 to 12 years. Many children and young people typically demonstrate a reluctance to disclose the behaviour, uncertain of how people will react, and concerned at losing control. It seems that if disclosures are badly managed the risk of exacerbating further self-injury is increased. Young people are reluctant to seek professional help for emotional and psychological problems. Few view teachers as a source of help with this self-injuring behaviour. Instead, they turn to friends. Often it is the friends, unable to deal with the problem, who turn to staff for help.

Research in Canada and the UK suggests that most teachers and lecturers have had some encounter with students who self-injure. It also reveals that most teachers feel ill-equipped to deal with such disclosures. Preliminary findings from a staff survey conducted in 2010 at a further education college in north Wales supports this evidence. It also confirmed findings that the overwhelming majority have not received any training to help them deal with this issue, although many would welcome it. A priority surely is to provide support for staff and students to deal with self-injuring behaviour.

There has been an upsurge of interest in the integration of techniques for improving wellbeing in education. An example is what is termed a 'mindfulness-based approach' which has a beneficial impact on mental and physical health. Initial research shows that mindfulness is closely linked to wellbeing with mindfulness training becoming increasingly popular in the



Images and accounts of self-cutting are commonly linked to sub cultures such as the 'emotional', commonly abbreviated to 'Emo', that originated in the mid-1980s hard core punk movement.

treatment of a wide range of health problems, particularly those which are stress-related. The two foremost mindfulness-based approaches developed for adults are shown to have a range of applications in both clinical and non-clinical populations.

Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy and Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction are eight-week experiential learning programmes with weekly group sessions involving guided meditation practice, teacher-led inquiry, psycho-education and regular home practice. Cognitive Therapy is recommended by NICE as a treatment for preventing recurrent depressive relapse. Stress reduction focuses on non-clinical populations and has positive effects on both psychological health and well-being.

There is evidence of growing interest in the application of Mindfulness-based approaches with children and adolescents in both the therapeutic and educational arenas. Examples include mindfulness interventions in pain management and depressive relapse prevention with adolescents. A study in Holland is currently evaluating the benefits of a Mindfulness approach specifically for young people who self-harm.

A group of researchers from Oxford and Cambridge Universities and teachers from Hampton and Tonbridge schools have recently developed a mindfulness-based course curriculum

for young people. Students who have taken the course report benefits including eating habits, working with difficult feelings, relationships, sleep, and dealing with stressful situations such as examinations and sport. Interestingly, students with lower emotional stability showed a greater increase in resilience and wellbeing, suggesting that the most vulnerable students benefited the most from the programme.

This last finding suggests there is potential in targeting general groups of students and that those who are most vulnerable to stress and are secretly self-injuring may benefit. Researchers at the Bangor University Centre for Mindfulness Research and Practice are currently developing mindfulness programmes for children, adolescents, and young people. They are particularly interested to investigate modifications in mind and brain resulting from mindfulness practice with a particular focus on the ability of adolescents and young people to deal effectively with emotion regulation.

The team is exploring the potential for embedding mindfulness training into normal professional staff development to provide a supportive platform upon which student group initiatives can progressively be delivered.

Mariel Jones and Catrin Eames are part of research team with the Centre for Mindfulness Research and Practise at Bangor University.

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Progress in hitting the Welsh housing standard

Tamsin Stirling assesses how far we have come in improving the quality of local authority and housing association homes in Wales

2012 marks the end of a 10-year Welsh Government programme requiring local authorities and housing associations to bring their properties up to the Welsh housing quality standard (see Box 1). In 2002, the Welsh Government also issued model rules for Community Housing Mutuals. These are housing associations owned by tenants. The object was to create a model in which the transfer of local authority owned housing to registered social landlords would be less likely to be perceived as outright privatisation.

The transfer of council homes to housing associations enables significantly more borrowing to take place which can then fund improvement work to homes. This is because the Treasury does not subject borrowing by housing associations to public sector spending limits. However, any stock transfer proposal must be approved by a ballot of the tenants affected.

So what progress has been made over the last decade on improving the quality of council and housing association homes in Wales? In March 2011 and January 2012 respectively, the Welsh Government and the Welsh Audit Office produced reports tracking achievements against WHQS. The Welsh Government report found that 78 per cent of housing association

homes but only 39 per cent of local authority homes will meet the Welsh Housing Quality Standard by the end of the 2012-13 financial year.

The Wales Audit Office report noted that 61 per cent of homes owned by both local authorities and housing associations were expected to meet the Quality Standard in full by March 2013 and 79 per cent by March 2017. These statistics are based on landlord projections made in 2010. However, the Wales Audit Office report raised significant concerns about the quality

and consistency of data relating to stock condition and to the lack of robust monitoring of progress towards the Welsh Housing Quality Standard.

The difference between the local authority and housing association statistics largely relate to the extent and timing of the transfer of council homes to new housing associations. Box 2 provides the record of the 22 Welsh local authorities in how they are addressing the improvement of their housing stock.

Half of Wales' 22 authorities have transferred their housing stock to new housing associations. Bridgend was the first, with Valleys to Coast Housing established in September 2003. The most recent, NPT Homes in Neath Port Talbot, was established in March 2011.

The other 11 authorities fall into two groups. Six authorities did not consider that stock transfer was the answer to their investment challenges (although Denbighshire did go some way down the road but stopped before holding a ballot of tenants). These authorities are using a combination of funding mechanisms including prudential borrowing. A further five authorities have held ballots for the transfer of their housing stock to new housing associations. Here the tenants have voted no - in Wrexham in 2004,

Box 1: The Welsh Housing Quality Standard

Homes should be:

- In a good state of repair.
- Safe and secure.
- Adequately heated, fuel efficient and well insulated.
- Contain up to date kitchens and bathrooms.
- Well managed (for rented housing).
- Located in attractive and safe environments.
- Suit the requirements of the household (for example, people with specific disabilities).

Box 2: Welsh local authorities and improvement of their housing stock**Ownership****Local authorities**

Transfer of housing stock
to new housing associations
/Community Mutuels

Blaenau Gwent (mutual), Bridgend, Ceredigion,
Conwy, Gwynedd, Merthyr Tydfil, Monmouth, Neath
Port Talbot (mutual), Newport, Rhondda Cynon Taf (mutual)
and Torfaen (mutual)

Retention of housing stock by local authority

Carmarthenshire, Cardiff, Denbighshire, Pembrokeshire,
Powys and Ynys Mon

Stock transfer ballot held –
with tenants voting against

Caerphilly, Flintshire, Swansea, Vale of Glamorgan
and Wrexham

Swansea in 2007, Vale of Glamorgan in 2011, and Caerphilly and Flintshire in 2012. In some of these cases it is not at all clear how they are going to achieve the Welsh Housing Quality Standard.

The overall conclusion of the Wales Audit Office was that:

“Many tenants have seen substantial improvements in the quality of their housing, although the original aim that all social housing would achieve the Welsh housing quality standard by 2012 will not be met for some considerable time.”

Given this, one could simply be critical. The Welsh Housing Quality Standard has been in place for a decade and yet it is going to take at least another half a decade for it to be achieved across Wales. However, it is important to acknowledge the scale of investment that has been made - for example nearly £500 million is projected for 2012-13 - and the added value that has accrued. Significant numbers of jobs, apprenticeships and other training opportunities have been created - although the same weaknesses in monitoring apply here as to the Standard itself. In addition, the use of procurement to support SMEs has developed rapidly, with support

provided by the Welsh Government funded organisation Inform to Involve hosted by the Chartered Institute of Housing Cymru.

Another important aspect of added value is the degree to which tenants in many areas have been involved in specifying and determining programmes of work, selecting contractors and monitoring the quality of work undertaken. And an important element of the ‘substantial improvements in the quality of housing’ is improvements in energy efficiency, reducing tenants’ fuel bills.

So what comes next? From my perspective, there are four issues for the future:

- Much has been achieved in terms of improving the quality of local authority and housing association homes across Wales, but there remains much to do. As can be seen from the findings of the two reports cited, projected dates for achieving the Welsh Housing Quality Standard now stretch to 2017 and beyond. The introduction of any new standard within that time-frame would have to be managed extremely carefully.
- There are particular challenges for authorities where tenants have voted no to stock transfer proposals. Neither

Wrexham nor Swansea has a clear trajectory to meet the housing quality standard “within any reasonable timescale in the context of the current policy and financial framework”. There is a role for Welsh Government here in terms of setting clear expectations for these authorities.

- There are major lessons to be learnt from the programme, not least for the Welsh Government in terms of its ‘system stewardship’ role – clarity, effective and timely communication and robust monitoring are all required.
- Finally, there is the knotty question of the quality of homes in the private sector. Some of our worst housing is in the private rented sector which is increasingly being used to house people in housing need. In addition, some of our poorest quality housing is owned by homeowners who have little or no financial or other capacity to make necessary improvements. Should any future Standard include all or some private sector housing within its scope?

Tamsin Stirling is Editor of Welsh Housing Quarterly (www.whq.org.uk).

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Turbine blight

Steve Dubé challenges the image and the sound of wind power stations in the Welsh hills

Last May Assembly Members witnessed the biggest ever demonstration at the Senedd. It wasn't about cuts, closures, the language, or job losses. It was about the spread of wind turbines and their perceived threat to the health and well-being of the countryside. So were these protesters, as some insist, misguided nimbys, prepared to sacrifice their country to nuclear power and our planet to an unpredictable future just to protect their view? And if the answer isn't blowing in the wind, where is it?

When Jane Davidson visited Carmarthen as Environment Minister a few years ago to promote wind energy she was certain of two things: wind power was the only available method of producing clean electricity; and the one problem – if it was a problem – was visual. Many at that meeting, anticipating a proliferation of turbines in Carmarthenshire, had been doing their homework and knew that noise was a major problem. Ms Davidson assured them she had stood next to a turbine and heard nothing at all. A few years later, the Minister was keynote speaker at an Institute of Acoustics conference on turbine noise in Cardiff. She arrived, pledged the Welsh Government to do its utmost to expand the spread of turbines in the countryside and left immediately. It was another instance of hearing nothing at all.

A decade ago the Welsh Government decided that large inshore 'windfarms' were the best response to twin crises: a world running out of usable fossil fuels, and the increasingly evident – and

perhaps unmanageable – effects on the planet of using those fuels.

Many people understood these threats back in the 1970s, but it was the 1990s before mainstream UK politicians took them seriously. Conventional energy companies responded to a degree, although some, like BP, have since downsized or even sold off their renewables divisions. All continue relentlessly to search for new sources of carbon fuels, with 'fracking' – injecting highly-pressurized fluid to fracture rock layers in order to access fossil fuels – the latest extraction technique.

This unceasing scramble for fossil fuel betrays the fact that feeding wind power into the National Grid does not replace a single conventional or nuclear power station. DTI figures show that turbines only produce at around 24 per cent of capacity. The National Grid has to estimate the amount of power needed without knowing whether the wind will blow, so turbine operators are sometimes ordered to reduce or even stop production to avoid overloading the system – *and are paid to do so*.

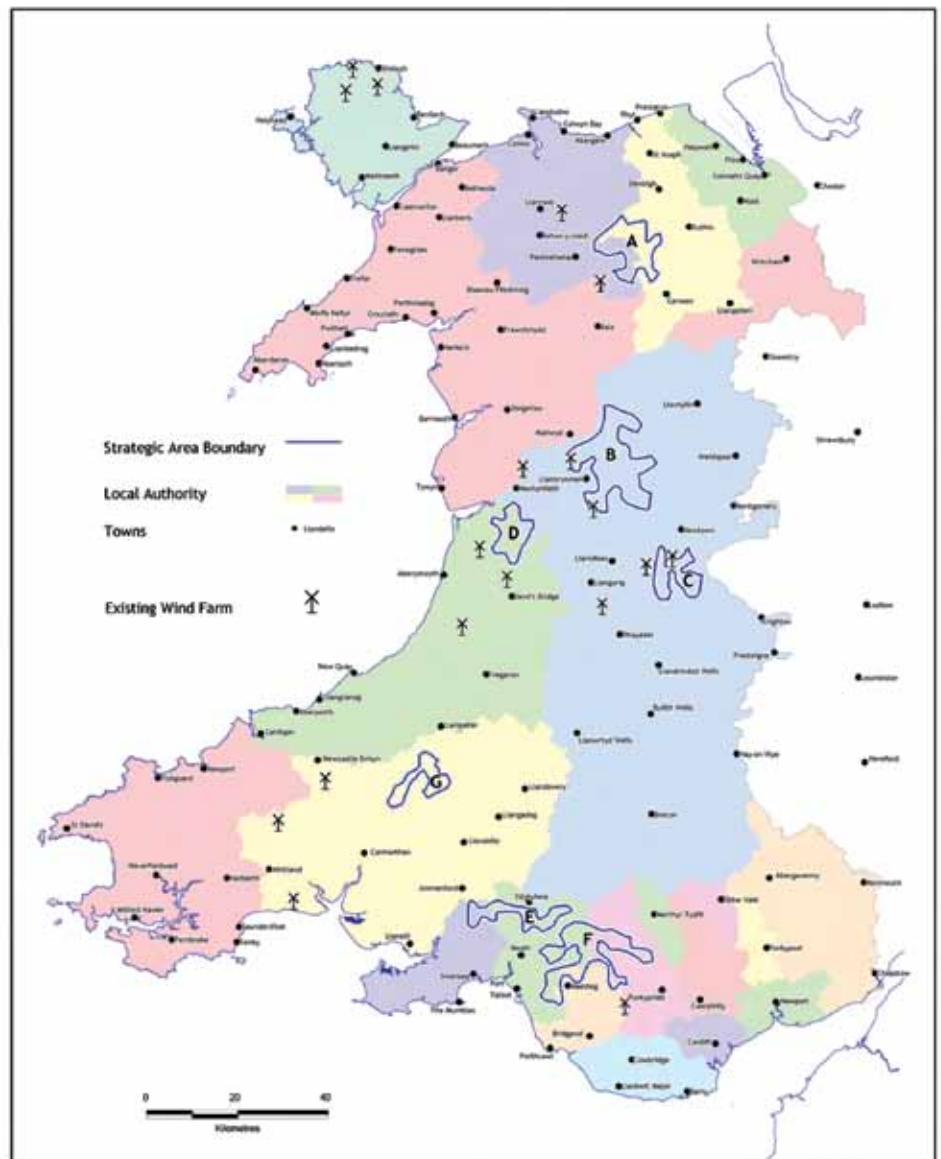
In turn this reminds us that wind energy is only economic because of huge subsidies – Renewable Obligation Certificates – financed by a hidden levy on electricity bills. This is thought to add around £20 a year to the average household bill, and is expected to rise to around £60 by 2020. In effect we're paying more for nothing – and most of that extra money goes abroad, mainly to Denmark, where wind turbine technology

was pioneered in the 1970s. The Danish government encouraged growth by paying 30 per cent of capital costs, feed-in tariffs and streamlining planning. Danish companies now produce almost half the world's wind turbines.

Germany got in on the act in the 1990s by requiring utility companies to connect renewable energy generators like wind turbines to the grid. Feed-in tariffs were already in operation there when the industry was deregulated in 1998. New legislation obliged German suppliers to pay higher prices for renewable energy, guaranteed 20 years. This enabled partnerships of farmers, for instance, to borrow the major start-up costs for wind turbines and biofuel plants and make a net profit within a few years. By the time the rest of the world decided to take 'peak oil', environmental degradation and climate change seriously, there was a subsidised wind turbine industry in Denmark, and feed-in tariffs in Denmark, Germany and Spain.

Meanwhile, the UK government had privatised energy in the 1980s and cancelled investment in renewables research. In 1997 the Blair government signed up to ambitious targets for renewable energy. But there were no feed-in tariffs at all in the UK, and the take up in Germany and Spain for solar power made photovoltaic cells impossible to buy over here.

Renewables targets, limited access to other technologies and pro-active lobbying by the wind energy industry made industrial wind turbines attractive to politicians wanting to show a mostly urban electorate that something was being done about climate change. Accordingly, Renewables Obligation Certificates were introduced to make wind energy profitable. These oblige UK electricity suppliers to source increasing amounts of power from renewables. Wind-power companies now receive as much or more from Obligation Certificates as they do for producing the actual electricity. In addition, the UK planning system was effectively



In 2005 the Welsh Government's Technical Advice Note 8 (TAN 8) mapped out seven remote areas in the Welsh countryside shown in this map, from area A covering Clocaenog Forest to the east of Pentrefoelas in north Wales, to area G covering Brechfa Forest to the east of Newcastle Emlyn in the south west. Unlike other parts of Europe there was no attempt to place turbines near large urban areas, or alongside motorways where connections to the grid could be more easily made.

streamlined to make it easier to develop wind power stations. It all made Britain hugely attractive for multinational wind energy companies.

In Wales, the streamlining happened in two ways, both of which are now discredited. Firstly, the UK government adopted ETSU-R-97 as the definitive method to assess noise from onshore turbines. Drawn up by a Noise Working Group of acoustic experts, ETSU sets day-time and night-time noise limits. But when the Group did its work 16 years ago turbines were between 49-59 metres

high with 0.4-0.6 megawatts installed capacity. Today's turbines are 140-plus metres high with more than 2MW installed capacity. The Working Group recommended revising ETSU within two years, with reviews at regular intervals to keep pace with developments in wind turbine technology. However, no reviews have ever been carried out.

Worse still, a Freedom of Information request has revealed that UK Government officials removed vital information from a report commissioned in 2006 from the leading noise consultants Hayes

McKenzie Partnership. This warned that wind turbines can generate noise that damages people's health and disrupts sleep over several square miles because the ETSU sound levels are too high.

The second streamlining was made in Wales itself, when the Welsh Government prioritised industrial onshore turbines as its contribution to UK renewables targets. Amid lobbying from the wind power industry, environmental consultants Arup were commissioned to delineate areas for giant wind turbines. This was Technical Advice Note 8 – TAN 8, which mapped out seven areas of the Welsh countryside for turbines. Unlike in some parts of Europe there was no attempt to put turbines near urban conurbations or alongside motorways, where connections to the grid already exist. Ms Davidson was not the only politician not to know that turbine noise affects people's health, but Arup certainly did, which is why the TAN 8 areas are away from major towns and cities, where the main demand for electricity exists.

In spite of an original commitment and repeated promises, the Welsh Government has repeatedly refused to review TAN 8, although the policy is now being reconsidered by the Assembly's

Environment and Sustainability Committee. And the Petitions Committee has been taking evidence on a call for controls of wind turbine noise. Both committees are hearing from Grŵp Blaengwen, which has 57 members living in and around the village of Gwyddgrug in north Carmarthenshire. Some of these originally supported the 10-turbine power station centred on Blaengwen farm overlooking the village, known confusingly as Alltwalis wind farm. Grŵp Blaengwen, formed after the failure of a local campaign of opposition, has been highlighting the noise problems and effects

made by a UK Minister.

At least it can be said that, unlike in Wales or Britain, Denmark's subsidies and streamlining of the planning system benefitted its own industries and economy. The turbines in Gwyddgrug are manufactured by the Danish company Siemens, and operated by the Norwegian state-owned energy company Statkraft. It's ironic that people suffering damage to their health by the Gwyddgrug turbines also subsidise the source of their ills. The Danish and Norwegian economies benefit while the local tourist economy flounders.

There's no compensation for those who

It's ironic that people suffering damage to their health by the Gwyddgrug turbines also subsidise the source of their ills. The Danish and Norwegian economies benefit while the local tourist economy flounders.

on people's health for more than two years and is now resisting proposals for a further 28 140-metres high turbines alongside. This, the proposed Brechfa Forest West windfarm, is currently being considered by the Independent Planning Commission because the installed capacity is more than 50 megawatts. The final decision will be

suffer turbine blight. Turbine companies and politicians point to Community Benefit Funds set up by wind energy companies. These make large sums available in grants to local organisations – though not to keep a school or police station open, and not for individuals or households. New toilets in the village hall, a resurfaced car park or toys for a pre-school group are no compensation for the noise that wakes you up in the middle of the night, stops you going to sleep again and devalues your home.

Irritation and depression is multiplied by the knowledge that Community Benefit Funds, like the £75,000 a year from the Statkraft turbines at Gwyddgrug, or the £350,000 promised annually from the 28 turbines planned by RWE for Brechfa Forest West, are loose change compared to the enormous profits of the turbine companies - made possible by that hidden levy on electricity bills.

Back in Denmark, the country's pioneering of wind energy has had dramatic effects. There are more than 4,000 onshore turbines – two-thirds more than Britain in a country one-fifth of the size. And electricity bills have been as dramatically affected as the landscape.



The largest-ever demonstration outside the Senedd took place in May 2011 in protest against the spread of wind turbines across rural Wales.

Danes pay some of Europe's highest energy tariffs – on average, more than twice those in Britain. A national anti-wind body, Neighbours of Large Wind Turbines, has more than 40 civic groups among its membership. The association's President, Boye Jensen, says: "People are fed up with having their property devalued and their sleep ruined by noise from large wind turbines."

In Wales the National Assembly's Petitions Committee was flooded with requests from people wanting to give evidence of exactly that. One witness lives three miles away from the Gwyddgrug turbines. The petition calls for the Welsh Government to pass legislation requiring turbines to be switched off between 10pm and 6am. If you've been kept awake for nights on end it doesn't seem a lot to ask. It's standard practice for industries and transport operators, including airports, to close down during the night to allow people living nearby to sleep in peace and quiet. It's a simple health issue, and with turbines projects coming through

for other TAN 8 areas, including the south Wales Valleys, it's one that could soon affect a million people – one third of the population of Wales. Interestingly, a confidential High Court settlement just before Christmas saw a Lincolnshire couple finally win their five-year legal battle for damages after being forced out of their home by the noise from a turbine development. It's a landmark case and the first successful private noise nuisance case in the UK.

It doesn't have to be like this. Small-scale wind power supplying banks of batteries to power a property or small group of buildings would keep control in local rather than in the hands of multinational corporations. Thousands of farm buildings offer acres of space for solar panels. Renewable energy can empower people as well as power their homes and businesses. The challenge of climate change requires real alternative thinking, free from the insatiable demands of corporate capitalism.

Wind power stations in the hills

might look good to visitors desperate for action on climate change. But the evidence shows they make no realistic contribution to ending reliance on fossil fuel or nuclear generation. They generate more money than electricity and more problems than answers. They benefit corporations, not people.

Moreover, the technology is unsustainable, with a huge environmental and carbon footprint. Aside from carbon costs in manufacture, transport and construction, the enormous concrete platforms will remain in the hills forever. The turbine towers and blades cannot be recycled, so will go eventually to landfill. Those who point out the realities of this green window dressing in the hills sometimes feel like the child who told the emperor an embarrassing truth.

Steve Dubé is a journalist who is also chairman of Grŵp Blaengwen.

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Future of One Planet Wales

Morgan Parry applauds efforts to create a national environment service for Wales

The first public institution with legal powers and duties ever to be created by a Welsh Government will be the body that replaces the Countryside Council for Wales, the Environment Agency and the Forestry Commission Wales. With sustainable development set to become our central organising principle, and a reassessment of our planning system to follow, we have an opportunity to restate the principle of the public interest. But can that be done without undermining the vitality and competitiveness of business?

According to the consultation document published in February, the new body will “maintain, improve and develop Wales’ natural resources, to deliver benefit to the people and economy of Wales now and into the future”. The role, culture and purpose of the body will be shaped by new thinking on environmental management described in the recently published Green Paper *Sustaining a Living Wales*. It’s a bold move to design a new body around new ideas, rather than

simply merge existing institutions. It positions Wales very well for the challenges of the future.

The new thinking is that we should move to an ecosystem approach. This recognises that, while many of our natural systems are degraded and operating beyond their limits, with more integrated management and more efficient use they can provide greater economic and social benefits. That is the central proposition of the Green Paper, which will become law in Wales through an Environment Bill in 2015.

But three other Bills are to follow: one on sustainable development, another on planning and a third on heritage. This complex landscape of change poses problems of consistency, but also provides opportunities for integration. There is no space here for a discussion of the Heritage Bill, although it could be argued that, as we adopt a broader more holistic way of working, the boundaries between the historic, cultural and natural environments will blur. Instead, I will confine my remarks to the other two Bills, because it is at their interface that the role of the new body becomes greater than the sum of its constituent parts.

In developing the Sustainable Development Bill, a key question is “do we need a definition of

Sustainable development must have long time-scales, commercial viability and an objective of reducing our global impact. All these are achieved by promoting well-managed mixed-species woodlands. Photo: Forestry Commission Wales.

sustainable development?” It seems to me that if it is to be our central organising principle, it is essential that we do. Sustainable development has failed to gain traction precisely because its relevance to policy is vague and contested.

CBI Wales has called for “a presumption in favour of sustainable development”, a call which I support wholeheartedly. But what does the CBI mean by this? Does it ally itself with the Government in England’s efforts to redefine sustainable development by weakening planning controls and privatising resources? Or does it agree with Parliament’s Environmental Audit Committee, which criticised the coalition Government for favouring economic growth over other sustainability requirements. The Committee called on the Government to adopt a definition of sustainable development that reflects the primacy of environmental limits, and to resist any moves to use the financial downturn as an excuse for weakening environmental protection.

The scientific evidence proves that sustainability is far from being vague or contested. Rather, it is a global response to measurably unsustainable trends – in biodiversity loss, in inequality, in poverty in the developing world, in resource use, in pollution levels, and in the impact of population growth. Development is only sustainable if it reverses these trends. Certainly, there are serious negative economic trends visible in Wales, but these are mostly cyclical and relative to our neighbours. On the other hand, the environmental trends are continuous, global and absolute. It isn’t possible to have sustainable development in one country.

In June 2012 there will be a Sustainable Development Summit in Rio de Janeiro. The EU is strongly promoting resource efficiency as its contribution, whereby companies that adopt resource efficient processes will be at a competitive advantage. This is clearly a pro-business agenda. Valuing our environmental assets and managing them wisely can only encourage responsible businesses to thrive.



RWE npower's new power station near Pembroke Dock on the southern shore of Milford Haven - planning consents and environmental permitting must be integrated so that developers get early warning of which locations are off-limits.

Economic policies also need to shift to reduce our per-capita demand for those resources, which are amongst the highest in the world. More than half of Wales’ resources come from distant elsewhere. The new environment body for Wales could have an oversight and advisory role on global resource trends, as well as having a specific duty to manage our own indigenous resources efficiently.

Wales has a good record in promoting sustainable development. In many countries in Europe, we are named spontaneously as the nation that has led the way, taking responsibility for our own actions and our moral obligation to others. This philosophy has been set out in successive sustainable development Schemes, the most recent being the iconically named *One Wales One Planet*, which former Environment Minister Jane Davidson described in the

last edition of *Agenda*.

Another big issue for the Welsh Government and its new body in seeking to manage Wales’ natural resources, is how it regulates. The Green Paper *Sustaining a Living Wales* proposes some new approaches at a local and national level.

Resources can be managed by the market, by regulation or a combination of the two. Market mechanisms have a very poor record in this regard. Our efforts to reduce carbon emissions rely heavily on the EU Emissions Trading Scheme. However, emissions are currently increasing by 3 per cent per annum against a target reduction of 3 per cent. So we must look at how governments can intervene more effectively.

The Welsh Government rightly criticises the UK Government for the “privatisation by stealth” of health, education and local government. But the privatisation of natural

resources through de-regulation of industry and the bypassing of environmental directives is an equally serious threat. Increasingly, where environmental assets are concerned, it's the wealthy that have consumer choice whilst our poorer communities do not. There is an issue of environmental justice here, which requires a strong role for the Welsh Government and the empowerment of civil society.

But we can consolidate existing legislation to make it more transparent and to reduce the cost to developers of complying. This is a strong theme in the Green Paper. Smarter regulation has been developed in places like Victoria, Australia without a lowering of standards, as a recent IWA conference heard. There is no evidence that environmental protection is a burden if it is applied fairly and efficiently. It is in the public interest that all industry – financial, service, extractive, farming or manufacturing – should be well regulated.

Incentives for farmers and others to manage land more sustainably must also be increased, which is why agri-environment schemes like Glastir are central to the new thinking. Paying farmers for protecting biodiversity is not new, but water and carbon management are also sources of income. The funds should come from those who benefit from exploiting ecosystems (ultimately us, the consumers) and we need new ideas about how they can be raised equitably within properly regulated regimes.

Minister John Griffiths has also begun a review of the planning system under the chairmanship of John Davies, and a Planning Bill will follow. Unlike England, which sees planning as an unnecessary impediment to development, Welsh Ministers have reconfirmed the role of the planning system, and of Government, in making decisions about the sustainable use of land.

Planning and resource management are intimately connected. Indeed Planning Policy Wales (which sets out the policies of the Welsh Government) states that “the planning system regulates the development and use of land in the public interest and

Forestry is well used to long planning timelines and an understanding of resource valuation. The new environment body needs forestry to be at its heart, because excluding it would undermine the objectives of integrated land management.

reconciles the needs of development and conservation, securing economy, efficiency and amenity in the use of land, and protecting natural resources”.

Given that these are also the central objectives of the Green Paper, it is frustrating that our planning professionals are not yet involved in its development. Although describing very well the interface with the development control system, the Green Paper defers until some future date any consideration of the relationship between planning and environmental regulation.

The Planning Bill should have as its starting point the new ecosystem approach set out in the Green Paper. A plan-based approach at different geographical scales would get consensus on how natural resources should be conserved at a national level and sustainably exploited at a local level. These resource plans should be the starting point of the proposed regional integration of planning, transport and regeneration, ensuring that local authorities are partners in the achievement of the national resource and environmental objectives.

A previous Environment Minister, Sue Essex, attempted this through the establishment of a Wales Spatial Plan. However, that will soon be wound up. I believe it wasn't given a clear enough purpose, didn't require local development plans to conform with it, and became separated from the day-to-day work of the Government's Planning Division.

The Spatial Plan should be reborn, with natural resource maps as the base layer. Superimposed on these should be the national infrastructure plan, transport, housing and all other economic and social infrastructures. And in the rural areas, forestry, agriculture, quarrying, water abstraction and all those activities that turn environmental assets into economic ones.

Forestry is well used to long planning timelines and an understanding of resource valuation. The new environment body needs forestry to be at its heart, because excluding it would undermine the objectives of integrated land management. We have a target to expand our forest cover substantially, but no way of achieving it because we have failed to encourage joined-up action between the different land-management agencies and interests. This will be easier with a single body.

Most important of all, the new body must represent the public interest. It must be the Environmental Service for Wales. It must be able to communicate effectively, regularly and directly with a wide range of audiences about the importance of the environment. Its role will be to publish information and evidence, explain science and decision making, promote the enjoyment and understanding of the natural world and encourage sustainable behaviours. The body will need a presence across Wales, on the ground, close to and listening to communities and stakeholders. If it can do this, it will become a respected and trusted institution in a confident new Wales.

And with clear and simple regulatory frameworks, underpinned by robust scientific evidence and ambitious resource management objectives, business in Wales will thrive. The new body can help business meet their environmental obligations and enable industry to create wealth and jobs. That's in everybody's interest.

Morgan Parry is Chair of the Countryside Council for Wales.

6

Heritage

Articles

Architectural
spirit of Wales'
second city

Oh to be
a pilgrim

There are some outstanding examples of architectural design with domestic properties in Swansea and the Gower. This property, known as Idle Rocks, involved the conversion of an undistinguished 1960s property in 2009 by Hyde & Hyde Architects of Swansea, affording panoramic views across Langland Bay.

Architectural spirit of Wales' second city

Richard Porch celebrates the innovative design of some of Swansea's 21st Century buildings

If the civic well being of a city can be measured in terms of its architecture then Swansea may be said to be flourishing despite the recession. Schools, community centres, a new bus station, art gallery and a cancer centre have all been built in an eye-catching modern idiom that grabs attention and is unashamedly of the 21st Century.

In 2009 the city's former Quadrant Bus Station was demolished and a new multi-million pound transport interchange worthy of the name was built. Even before it was opened, shortly before Christmas 2010, it won an award for Waste Minimisation from Construction Excellence Wales. This was for disposing of 25,000 tonnes of material which was reprocessed and re-used at other sites instead of being sent for refill. The £10 million project has 20 bus bays, three coach stands and a modern passenger waiting area, ticketing services and Shopmobility facilities. In addition, users of this dynamic passenger terminal can get a coffee at a branch of Costas, pastries at Greggs and groceries at a Co-operative Food store. The building has a futuristic curving plan-form and the structure is expressed internally using forked structural members that support the metal roof above an interior full of light and colour.

A similarly futuristic building opened shortly before Christmas 2011 when the first purpose-built cancer care centre in Wales was inaugurated in the grounds of Singleton Hospital. It provides information, psychological, emotional and benefits advice for those newly diagnosed with cancer by creating an environment within which they feel safe, uplifted and welcome. This enigmatic structure in concrete and steel was designed the world renowned Japanese architect Kisho Kurokawa shortly before he died in 2007.

Kurokawa based his design on the concept of the cosmic whirlpool, representing a strong symbol of life, with everlasting forces swirling around a still centre. Initiated by the Maggie Keswick Jencks charity such centres work to provide non-residential support for



The dramatic metal roof and futuristic curving plan-form of Swansea's new bus station that opened in late 2010. It is a great improvement on the city's former Quadrant station and has won several awards.



Maggie's Cancer Care Centre in the grounds of Singleton Hospital in Swansea – a building designed from a sketch by the world-renowned Japanese architect Kisho Kurokawa. It has the effect of drawing visitors into a warm and inviting environment.

cancer sufferers in a non-hospitalised way and in a domestic setting. There are eight other Maggie's Centres in Scotland and England with plans for others in Barcelona and Hong Kong.

Also in central Swansea work has started on a multi-million pound project to refurbish and extend the 100-year-old Glynn Vivian Art Gallery. Costing £6 million the work will involve creating a new lecture and community room and much more space for exhibits. Funded

by the Welsh Government, the Arts Council for Wales and Swansea Council it will take two years to complete. The Glynn Vivian is a key venue in the Welsh network of galleries and this project reflects its ambition to deliver the best in the visual arts in Wales.

Eight miles to the north of Swansea a dramatically modern school has arisen from the ashes of one destroyed by fire in 2009. Penyrheol School is a 5,300 square metre central school building involving



Artist's impression of the £6 million project to refurbish and extend the 100-year-old Glynn Vivian Art Gallery in Swansea.

Peter Fink's brief was to create a lighting artwork that would be dynamic, interactive, welcoming and also integrated within an existing design for the square.

a three-storey structure to house new design, technology, art, science, music and IT centres. In addition, a new library, administration, dining and special teaching facilities are contained within the new building. It is planned around three main blocks which clearly define the boundaries of the school functions, all of which are linked by a top-lit central street serving all levels. A varied use of materials has been deployed including steel cladding, masonry rain screen, brickwork and through-coloured render. The result is an arresting design, which is coolly modern and about as un-school-like as possible.

Swansea has had a long tradition of implementing public art dating back to its award-winning Maritime Quarter docklands development in the 1980s. The latest vehicle is the SA1 Swansea

Waterfront docklands redevelopment, which is located around the Prince of Wales Dock built in 1881. A public art strategy was commissioned from Celfwaith public art consultants of Cardiff and work began to implement it 18 months ago. The first major artwork was unveiled shortly before Christmas 2011 in Ice House Square. Costing £150,000 it was design by internationally-renown artist Peter Fink who has a long-standing interest in architecture and urbanism.

As the first area of public space that visitors see after crossing Wilkinson & Eyre's sculpturally dynamic 'Sail Bridge', Ice House Square is an important point of arrival for pedestrians and cyclists. Peter Fink's brief was to create a lighting artwork that would be dynamic, interactive, welcoming and also integrated within an existing design for

the square.

His artwork intersects the formal grid layout of the paving with lines of light within and around the trees. The artwork will run on set programmes that control the changes of colour and speed of light along these lines. Passers-by drawn into the square, intrigued by the moving lights, will unwittingly interact with them as sensors set into the ground respond to their movement and this will change the light sequence.

In times gone by, multi-purpose learning and enterprise centres would

have been built as low-cost industrial units tucked away on an industrial estate somewhere and be nothing to be proud of. The £4 million Canolfan Gorseinon Centre is a learning and enterprise centre with a difference. It stands on the site of the former Corus steel works eight miles from central Swansea. The need for such a centre was identified following two feasibility studies and much consultation in the community. A proportion of the site was given over to the Bryngwyn Village housing development built by Persimmon who gifted the land for the

Gorseinon Centre to Swansea Council.

The centre includes meeting rooms and conference facilities, training rooms and ICT suites as well as six business units, a crèche and a healthy living juice bar and café. The aim of the centre is to support 42 community groups and encourage young people to utilise its facilities. A striking geometric design, the structure incorporates numerous aspects of sustainable technology including rainwater harvesting facilities and a boiler, which runs on wood pellets.

It would surprise many people to know that Swansea has much interesting domestic architecture going from Georgian terraces to ultra modern private homes. Two of the latter have been designed by a small local practice called Hyde & Hyde. A house at Pennard on South Gower and another at Langland Bay show that attractive contemporary architecture can be built in sensitive locations without sacrificing design quality. Completed in 2010 Pennard House is a four-bedroom detached property in 1.5 acres of garden off a country road in Gower. Idle Rocks was completed in 2009 as a private home and involved the conversion of an undistinguished 1960s property. Refurbishing rather than demolishing meant that the project has impeccable green credentials. It also enjoys panoramic views of Langland Bay and (on a clear day) across the Bristol Channel to north Devon (see page 66). Both projects were shortlisted for RIBA regional awards in 2010.

Swansea is an attractive post-industrial city beside the sea with some of the finest natural countryside and beaches in Britain on its doorstep. It is now also home to some really stimulating contemporary architecture that captures the spirit of the city as it moves confidently into the second decade of the 21st Century.

Richard Porch is a commentator on the architecture and design scene in Wales and is based near Swansea.



The new Penyrheol Comprehensive School built eight miles north of Swansea by Stride Treglown Architects in 2009 - "an arresting design, which is coolly modern and about as un-school-like as possible".



The public lighting artwork by Peter Fink in the SA1 Swansea Waterfront's Ice House Square, switched on last Christmas.

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Cardiff Office
029 2022 3456

Caernarfon Office
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Menai Bridge Office
01248 715001

Marc Jennings, Graphic Design.

Branding,
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The Pilgrimage 2012 route across southern Wales from Llanthony Priory to St Davids. Illustration: Deborah Withey.

Oh to be a pilgrim

Andrew Dugmore explains why a trek is being undertaken this summer along a medieval route across southern Wales to St Davids

When Pope Calixtus II declared in 1123 that two pilgrimages to St Davids equalled one to Rome, or that three pilgrimages to St Davids equalled one to Jerusalem, a great many people faithfully followed the well-trodden path to the ecclesiastical capital of Wales. During this summer a group of us will again follow the pilgrim track to St Davids in a three-week trek across southern Wales.

Inspiration for Pilgrimage 2012 has come from the Cauldrons and Furnaces and Power of the Flame project, part of the cultural celebrations around the 2012 London Olympics. Cauldrons and Furnaces is promoting eight iconic Welsh heritage sites and the pilgrimage will traverse four of them – Blaenafon ironworks, Caerphilly Castle, Laugharne Castle, and Bishops Palace at St Davids itself.

For me it is also part of a long held dream that the pilgrim route will again become a popular journey. Historically pilgrimages were undertaken to holy shrines and sacred places and to allow pilgrims to come close to the relics of a venerated saint. There was great faith in the healing power of the relics and for the blessings received. Those who undertook pilgrimages in medieval times believed they brought them closer to heaven.

Vows were made obliging the believer to make the long pilgrimages, many walking in confession

and penitence for sin. They were usually well-organised journeys with the Bishops issuing letters of testimony which gave pilgrims privileged rights on their journey. Hostels were built along the route which looked after the local sick but also provided shelter and rest for the pilgrims.

Many pilgrim routes to St Davids became very popular during medieval times. The pilgrims offered gifts at the shrines, which brought considerable wealth to the Church. Some who walked the paths came for more secular reasons, perhaps wanting success on a business venture, a blessing for a marriage, or for success in battle.

When the Olympics come to Britain in the summer of 2012, we will be following in the steps of these ancient pilgrims, trekking across the southern landscape of hills, valleys, industrial landmarks and pastoral lowlands. The walk begins near the English border at Llanthony Priory and will link up the four CADW heritage sites. The arrival of the pilgrims at St Davids on 7 July will coincide with a procession of musicians, artists and dancers through the city.

The journey will be a special experience as we walk and talk, set up camp together, share meals and our innermost thoughts. It is hoped that not every night will be a mat under the starry night. A medieval sleeping chamber at Caerphilly castle

PILGRIM WAY remembering Robin Reeves editor and mountaineer

*A hesitant face, a man from the winds
Whose speciality was rock, and paths through rock,
Yet shaped like a stream bed in the trembling sands,
Weather, and gravity, lightening, dark ...*

*A journalist must ride Time like a bronco
And the times were not good in Wales in '79
A depleted world frightened of itself. Echoes
Of Cilmeri rubbished our leaf like acid rain.*

*Yet he had time, and the integrity of a pilgrim,
To saddle himself to the journey. The dirt road
To nationality out of tribal mayhem
Continually reaches dead end. As poetries fade,*

*He, whose speciality was rock, paths through rock,
Citizen of Tyddewi, unblocked the track.*

- Tony Conran

has already been offered. We will be entertained by events at Blaenafon iron works, Caerphilly Castle, Laugharne Castle and, of course, at Bishops Palace.

Wales is no longer a nation of fervent church goers and Christianity appears to have lost its hold on the soul of Wales. So what relevance has a Christian pilgrimage to a modern secular society? Despite the ebbing away of the Christian heart of Wales, there is still a yearning and seeking for purpose. The material excesses of consumerism no longer satisfy and there

is a hunger for something deeper.

Some will come in the ancient spirit of pilgrimage, a physical journey on foot to the holy shrine and cathedral of St David, but also an inward spiritual journey. Others would rather this be a journey and not a pilgrimage, perhaps a journey of reflection and self-discovery. The outward pilgrimage journey can foster the personal inward journey of soul searching, spiritual seeking or quest, and a need to find or discover oneself.

Pilgrimages can offer great potential

for healing, rehabilitation, and create a springboard for people to move forward in life. Pilgrimages could become therapeutic journeys for many, countering depression or disillusionment. For others it could be a form of criminal rehabilitation, or a way of tackling drug or alcohol dependency.

Many will journey to share our country, culture and friendships, enjoying the landscape and environment or simply for the challenge and adventure. Certainly, the best way to see a country is on foot. It gives the time to really see the landscape, to smell the scent of flowers, to feel the sun, wind and rain upon your face, to hear the wind swirling around the tree tops, and to sleep upon the bare ground of our ancestral guardians.

As a guide walking these paths again, my biggest hope is that Pilgrimage 2012 will make a difference for people. I hope that the journey will leave tracks, moments and memories, which will give hope and inspire. I also hope that 'Pilgrimage 2012' will be a large stepping stone for future pilgrim paths and journeys to St Davids.

In many ways I will be following in the footsteps of the late Robin Reeves, editor of the *New Welsh Review*, who had long dreamt of a permanent pilgrim trail to St Davids. His pilgrim legacy was eloquently expressed in the written compilation *I know another way – from Tintern to St Davids*, published in 2002 by Gomer Press. Tony Conran's commemorative poem, included in the book, is reprinted alongside.

A record of the 2012 journey will be gathered through words and images. A lasting legacy would be the re-opening of the Pilgrims way to St Davids. We need to establish a route with suitable resting places scattered along it. We only

Image of an Irish curragh, a wooden frame, tarred-skinned rowing boat that was often used by pilgrims in medieval times. Illustration: Deborah Withey.



I hope that the journey will leave tracks, moments and memories, which will give hope and inspire.

need to look to the pilgrims way along northern Spain to Santiago de Compostella to see how successful the opening up of a pilgrims route can become and how much such a route can contribute to economic progress.

Our Pilgrimage of 2012 asks if there can be meaning for a modern day pilgrim. I have no doubt there is great worth in walking these paths again, to experience them for ourselves, to feel the wind upon the face, and to dig our sole into our soul.

Andrew Dugmore heads Pembrokeshire Paths tour guides: www.pembrokeshirepaths.co.uk The pilgrimage from Llanthony Abbey to St Davids takes place between 16 June and 7 July and can be followed at www.pilgrimage2012.co.uk The pilgrims are keen to find people willing to offer hospitality along the route.



Detail of St Non from the 'Saints in Stones' series of drawing exhibited last year in St Davids Cathedral by the artist Deborah Withey, www.deborah-withey.com

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*Fishlock's File*

An ideal Welsh poet

Trevor Fishlock meets one of the 1960s writers who 'filled a certain hole in the air after Dylan Thomas'

Articles

Fishlock's File:

An ideal
Welsh poet

Living with
our history

A musical
world force

From the Cape
to Cwmdu

Book reviews:

*The man who
came to Neath*

*The antagonisms
between Labour
and Plaid Cymru*

*Autodidact who
discovered Wales*

*A party well
served by its
historians*

Herbert Williams recalls a lonely walk in a cold corridor and a decisive moment in his life. A sixteen-year-old tuberculosis patient in a sanatorium, he knew that the treatment was long and he might not survive. He also knew that if he quit before the treatment was over he would never recover. "I resolved not to go home unless I was properly discharged as fit. I was determined to stick it out."

Herbert was destined to endure. He'll be eighty this year. He reflects that both ends of his life are bracketed by serious illness. *White Walls*, the title of his latest collection of poems, refers to the decor of the hospital in Cardiff which treats his prostate cancer. "I've decided I'll write something linking the TB and the cancer," he said, "a piece of prose."

For the range of his life and experiences, and his pared and lucid style, Herbert is one of the ideal poets of Wales. He acted on his boyhood dream of being a writer and his work forms a peak in the literary landscape. He has more than sixty years of poetry, novels, short stories, biography, history and radio and newspaper journalism to his name.

Herbert was born in Aberystwyth, the youngest of six children. His two sisters encouraged the early efforts he tapped out on his father's typewriter. He was fifteen when he saw his older brother Bobby die of tuberculosis. The blow haunted him for many years. Some months after Bobby's death he himself fell ill with TB. He was bedridden at home for six months and then entered the sanatorium at Talgarth. Almost half a century passed before he drew on his two years there to write the

story *A Severe Case of Dandruff*. He still talks wryly of the prize he won in a sanatorium darts tournament: a packet of cigarettes which he queasily learned to smoke.

After Talgarth he found just the job for an eighteen-year-old aspiring writer, an inky beginning as a reporter on the weekly *Welsh Gazette* in Aberystwyth, at £2 4s.6d a week. "I loved it and did everything, courts, councils, inquests and sports. I learned about life and I grew as a person. I had a bad stammer but it helped that I had to interview people and talk to strangers. Funnily enough, I never stammered when I read poetry. It's music, and my mother said, 'don't stammer when you sing'."

He left Aberystwyth for a weekly in Reading. "I found it strange, after the passionate arguments of Wales, that people in Reading didn't seem to feel strongly about anything." More importantly, he had met Dorothy, his wife-to-be, and missed her. "I spent a lot of money in phone boxes." He returned to Wales, found a job on the *Cambrian News* and, aged twenty-two, married Dorothy.

Herbert joined the *South Wales Echo* in Cardiff and was industrial correspondent at a time when 100,000 men worked in the south Wales pits and it seemed that mining would last forever. In 1966, hearing of something happening at Aberfan, Herbert drove to the unforgettably horrific scene of frenzied digging.

After spells as a television critic and feature writer he was struck once more by restlessness and worked for the Tourist Board, leaving partly because he hated its office smell. He

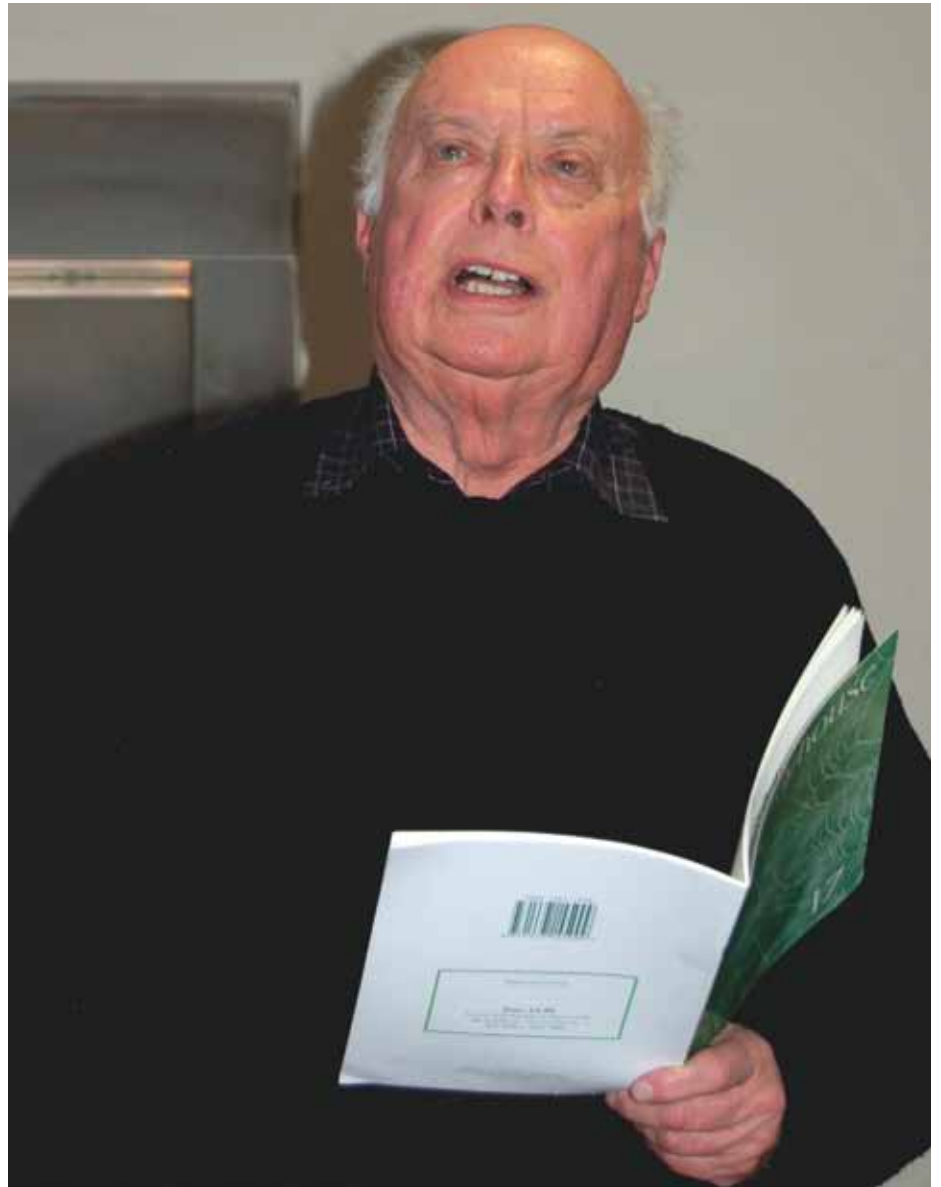
I learned about life and I grew as a person. I had a bad stammer but it helped that I had to interview people and talk to strangers. Funnily enough, I never stammered when I read poetry. It's music, and my mother said, 'don't stammer when you sing'.

worked on a newspaper in Birmingham, then returned to Cardiff as a producer for the BBC.

Herbert's many jobs in journalism and his radio and television scripts paid the bills and fed his five children. His great love, apart from his family, was his creative work, his poetry, novels and histories. He also wrote notable biographies of the railway and coal magnate David Davies of Llandinam, and of John Cowper Powys. He also has a talent for performing his verse in a conversational and accessible style. No doubt journalism sharpened his observation and the clarity of expression. In verse and prose he is a most readable writer.

Herbert first published a poem in 1961, in the *Anglo-Welsh Review*. "I remember how happy I felt that morning, riding on the bus to work, passing Cardiff Castle, seeing the blossom and knowing the joy of a poem in print."

He was one of the 1960s writers who filled a certain hole in the air after Dylan



Herbert Williams in full flight.

Thomas. Like others he admired Thomas, and experimented with Dylanism. He wondered in a poem what Thomas would have written had he lived longer, and concluded:

You did the right thing, Dylan.
You died.
You became a legend.
And what of us? What are we?
... We are the same as poets always were,
Egoistic, quarrelsome, jealous, rude,
A total waste of space.
Just like him.

Herbert Williams is a distinctive and distinguished Welsh voice, a poet with a sharp eye, genial, funny, acerbic, sceptical, indignant, a foe of cliché. He is devoted to Wales and its history. "I could never have settled down in England," he said. "Wales is my pleasure, a good place to be. I study its history. If you don't understand your history you don't know your country or yourself."

White Walls, published by Cinnamon Press, will be launched in Aberystwyth and Cardiff in May.



Living with our history

Gethin Matthews explores the dilemmas of a nation's past invading its present

The first and central declaration to make up-front is that I was delighted to see the history of Wales presented on our screens by Green Bay and BBC Wales, and with such a heavyweight, charismatic and able communicator as Huw Edwards fronting the series. The six hour-long episodes broadcast during February and March, looked great. There was exciting use of computer graphics to re-create the past appearance of some of our national monuments, and plenty of location filming at significant sites all over Wales to ensure a visual feast. Huw Edwards wasn't the only star of the show – the landscape of Wales looked fantastic.

The investment put in by BBC Wales and its partners is to be welcomed. As well as the television series there were very useful accompanying radio series (on both Radio Wales and Radio Cymru). The Open University was on board to help those captivated by the narrative to find out more. Meanwhile both Cadw and National Museum Wales were pro-active in organising events to complement the broadcasts. Given the general lack of knowledge of the basics of our national history among the Welsh population, these were all welcome advances.

That said, what did *The Story of Wales* achieve? What was its benchmark? If newspaper interviews with Huw Edwards and the speeches at the series' launch at St Fagans in January are anything to go by, the key staff and the commissioning editors at the BBC were looking back to 25 years ago, to the last time that a television series attempted to do justice to the entire sweep of Welsh history. In 1985 HTV Wales produced *The Dragon Has Two Tongues*, broadcast both on Channel 4 / S4C and ITV in Wales. The series, directed by Colin Thomas,

brought together the veteran broadcaster Wynford Vaughan Thomas and the fiery Marxist historian Gwyn Alf Williams. The production's unique selling point was to present two opposing views of history as the two argued their way through the long centuries of Wales' history – Gwyn in the red corner, decrying the struggles and ruptures in the Welsh past (and present), with Wynford presenting a more romanticised view, emphasising the continuities and harmonious aspects of Welsh history. The chemistry between the pair was priceless. The approach ensured that the history presented was never dry, but always relevant to the realities of 1980s Wales. Other directors have attempted to emulate this approach, of presenting history as a debate, a dialogue, a live matter – but no one has ever come close to matching what Colin Thomas produced in 1985.

I dwell on *The Dragon Has Two Tongues*, not just because the BBC top brass did so when *The Story of Wales* was launched, but because the series got around one of the central problems of attempting to tell any history on television – of how to convey the shades of grey that exist in the narrative. Television programmes prefer to tell a story simply, with a nice, clear line of argument.

In contrast with an academic work, where one can explore different tangents in footnotes or engage in a detailed argument considering multiple points-of-view, a television documentary presented by an authoritative voice needs to play it straight and direct – A leads to B, leads to C and so on. However, there are many points of dispute in Welsh history, where the facts are open to different interpretations. This is where Huw Edwards' strengths as a presenter are not, in fact,

an advantage. We are used to seeing Huw giving us the authoritative version of events, backed up by incontrovertible audio-visual evidence. Huw tells us that today in Parliament the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition had a disagreement, and we cut to pictures of Dave and Ed squabbling. However, the facts in the past are seldom that clear-cut. Consequently, Huw's pieces-to-camera often have to be worded with a sense of woolliness. Fuzziness replaces clarity.

Another foible (much beloved by television history but much sniffed at by academics) is the relentless use of the historic present. I suppose the idea is that it conveys a sense of immediacy and helps to bridge the gulf between the past and the present, but I find that it often muddies the waters. "Glyndŵr is still a rebel in the eyes of many, and his support in Wales is far from universal". Is that in 1405 or 2012? "Butetown is about to be redeveloped. The housing stock here and elsewhere desperately needs modernising". Are we talking about the 1950s or now?

There are other series with which *The Story of Wales* can usefully be compared. In 2000-02 the BBC gave us fifteen hours of *A History of Britain* with Simon Schama. In 2008-9 BBC Scotland produced ten hour-long episodes of *A History of Scotland*. There are many positive things to be said about the former, but its consideration of Welsh issues is not one of them. Such was its Anglo-centrism that a review by two historians (a Welshman and a Scot) decried it as 'Essex Man's History'. The commissioning of the Scottish history series was surely a response and a corrective to the perceived omission of a Caledonian perspective from the Schama series. However, the presenter, Neil Oliver, did tend to follow what one might term the Braveheart version of history. That's one of the problems with a 'national' history – how do you stop it from becoming a 'nationalist' history?

Sometimes *The Story of Wales* tries too hard to project modern nationalist



Huw Edwards in Snowdonia retelling the story of Llywelyn ap Gruffydd, our last prince, who was killed in the war against the Norman King Edward I probably at Aberedw in Powys, on 11 December 1282.

ideas back into the minds of past rulers. Is it really appropriate to say that Owain Glyndŵr's "vision of a *senedd* on Welsh soil has been fulfilled"? However, in general the series does enough to avoid any charges of parochialism.

One aspect emphasised time and again is the outward-looking nature of Wales through the ages, and the interchange of influences with the wider world. This is a useful viewpoint, and an antidote to what can be the default position in Welsh history of just concentrating on our large and dominating neighbour to the east (and blaming the English for all of Wales' woes). Thus, although the series is constantly on the lookout for the things that make Wales exceptional (in particular in the first programme, which skipped from the oldest human burial in Europe to the largest Neolithic site in Britain to the most important Bronze Age copper mine in the world) it does so in a level-headed fashion, within an appropriate European context.

A common weakness of television

documentaries is that they privilege the actions of particular 'great men', emphasising these individuals' role in determining the course of history. To give an example that will be familiar to anyone who has seen one of the multitude of less insightful documentaries about World War II, the conflict is often reduced to a personal conflict between Hitler and Churchill.

In Welsh history, there are many instances where complex issues can be over-simplified. For instance, there have been occasions when the collapse of the proto-state of Gwynedd in the period 1277-83 has been presented as the result of the personal battle between Llywelyn ap Gruffudd and Edward I. *The Story of Wales* treads a fine line here. On the one hand the structural weaknesses in Llywelyn's position are taken into account (that is, his lack of financial and other resources), but then we are introduced to the pantomime villain Edward, "fierce of temper and violent: he wants to crush this new Prince of Wales and win back power over all of Britain for

himself". This is a point where the insight of a medieval historian would have been useful, to highlight the complex conjunction of long-term trends and short-term factors that made Llywelyn's demise inescapable.

Having said that, I found the use of expert voices throughout the programmes to be very informative, and superior to the Schama / Oliver approach which kept the single presenter driving the whole narrative. Some of the research presented is genuinely fresh and new to the lay audience. For example, I found Professor John Koch's explanation of the seaborne migration into Wales to be refreshing. It was also laudable that the series included so many female voices, in contrast to both the Schama / Oliver series and *The Dragon has Two Tongues*.

The final programme highlights some of the sensitivities that come to the fore once a figure like Huw, who

needs to be seen as impartial, is brought on board as the frontman. There are external pressures on the programme-makers to ensure that the product is not controversial. Green Bay and Huw Edwards had their knuckles rapped back in 2008 (non-co-incidentally, at the same time as the BBC was receiving a thumping for the Brand/Ross debacle) for not showing due fairness to the Thatcherite point-of-view in the series *Power and the People* and also (astonishingly) for Huw's urging the electorate to use their votes.

In *The Story of Wales* the final programme's take on the Thatcher years is mild to the point of blandness – and actually Huw disappears from view for a while as Professor Dai Smith pops up to take the reins and tell us how the old kind of Wales 'dematerialised' following the defeat of the miners. It is left to Dai to explain that "You could certainly taste a sense of despair in Wales at the end of

the 1980s and into the 1990s" as the old institutions and certainties collapsed.

Huw ventures to suggest that "the government's determination to restructure the labour market becomes a divisive issue". However, the Conservatives gain plaudits for encouraging inward investment, allowing the growth of a Welsh quangocracy and spending on the Welsh language. Then suddenly it's 1997 and there's a bright new dawn. There is nothing here to upset that sole letter-writer who was so miffed at the presentation of Margaret Thatcher in the *Power and the People* programme, but the programme is the weaker as a result.

The series is determined to finish on an upbeat note, with a final summary that stresses the positives but stretches the facts to breaking point. "We're an ancient people, more certain of our identity than at any point in the past 1,000 years". Really? What about the enormous literature produced by O. M. Edwards



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What will be the legacy of *The Story of Wales*? The best that can be hoped for is that it will inspire many Welsh people to discover more about their past, with the assistance of the project's partners

and his coterie during the 'Edwardian High Noon'? Wasn't their conception of what Wales was and where it was heading stronger and clearer than the current mish-mash of ideas? Is this a result of the programme's focus on the country's Politics (with a capital 'P'), rather than the trickier process of gauging the subtleties of the mood of the people.

What will be the legacy of *The Story of Wales*? The best that can be hoped for is that it will inspire many Welsh people to discover more about their past, with the assistance of the project's partners. Let us hope that this is not the end of the story. After all, the six programmes are very much a whistle-stop tour, and there is so much more that deserves to be said. BBC Wales does have a decent track record of commissioning programmes that tell parts of the history of Wales. It is important that they continue to do so to fill in the gaps, particularly given

the Corporation's privileged position as the dominant supplier of information to the people of Wales. Long may their partnerships with the other educational bodies prosper.

What will remain in the memory of this particular series in a few years' time? I honestly don't know whether it will stick in the mind. The impressive graphics will surely be superseded by ever-more flashy techniques. I can't recall many individual flashes of brilliant oratory which demand to be quoted.

Once again, I return to *The Dragon has Two Tongues*. There were so many quotable passages in this series. Ask any Welsh historian of a certain vintage and they will be able to tell you their favourite, whether it's Gwyn Alf seething with indignation while standing on the remains of Capel Celyn; Gwyn Alf, soaking wet, addressing a Merthyr crowd with relentless passion about his experiences on

the Normandy beaches; or (my favourite) Gwyn Alf's breath-taking and inspirational summary of the impact of Owain Glyndŵr on the Welsh psyche.

Of course, I may be overly-pessimistic, and perhaps the upbeat conclusion of *The Story of Wales* will prove a rallying-cry to inspire the Welsh to greater deeds in the future. One can only hope that Huw's final words, "The story of Wales has only just begun" will be validated.

Gethin Matthews is a lecturer through the medium of Welsh at Swansea University, a post funded by the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol. His research interests are the history of the Welsh overseas, particularly in the gold-field communities, and the impact of the First World War on Welsh society and culture.

A musical world force

Rhian Davies celebrates the life of the mother of the more famous Ivor

Wales has always delighted in its choral tradition and is also rightly proud to have fostered the careers of many women musicians from Morfydd Owen and Grace Williams to Cerys Matthews and Catrin Finch. But in our eagerness to applaud the high achievers of the present, we can lose sight of the equally distinguished careers which were forged by previous generations. An outstanding example is Clara Novello Davies who took America by storm in the 19th Century.

Clara was born just over 150 years ago in Cardiff on 7 April 1861. Her father Jacob Davies was a coal wharf foreman and amateur musician who, after hearing a performance by the soprano Clara Novello -- daughter of Vincent Novello, the founder of the music publishing house -- determined that his own daughter should be named in her honour. Clara is reported to have made her first public appearance in a vocal quartet at the age of four and began giving piano lessons at ten. From 1882, she acted as accompanist to the Cardiff Blue Ribbon Choir which her father founded in support of the temperance movement and conducted to many successes at Crystal Palace competitions. From 1887, she also played for his Cardiff Choral Union whose Popular Concerts at Park Hall featured the leading soloists of the day.

Clara married David Davies, one of her father's choristers who worked



Clara Novello Davies, photographed in 1896.

for Cardiff Council, in 1883. Following the convention of the time, she was expected to retire from the stage, but the deaths of her mother and her first child Myfanwy Margaret at the age of 11 weeks compelled her to resume her profession. "Finding in the pleasure of constant work the forgetfulness of self," as she states in her autobiography, *The Life I Have Loved* (1940). Clara became a sought-after accompanist at concerts and eisteddfodau and developed an extensive practice as a vocal coach. Gwen Ffrangcon-Davies, Viola Tree and Sybil Vane were just three of the star pupils whom the self-styled

Madame Clara taught at her equally modestly-named Cardiff home, *Llwyn yr Eos* (Nightingale Grove), and at the two other studios she maintained simultaneously in Bristol and London.

In the year of her marriage, Clara Novello Davies also emulated her father by founding a choir to give annual concerts for prominent Cardiff charities. By the time her Welsh Ladies Choir appeared at St James' Hall, London, in July 1890, Joseph Bennett described them in the *Daily Telegraph* as "the most wonderful body of voices in the United Kingdom." The obvious basis for success was that all members were trained

soloists who sang according to the same vocal method. Clara's manual *You Can Sing* (1928) outlined the qualities she believed were necessary to mould a fine singer: a daily regimen of production and breathing exercises, time for studying repertoire, languages and the piano, tips on deportment and diet, and suggestions for relaxation including cultural outings, reading matter and golf. We would baulk today at her contention that smoking in moderation acts as a good disinfectant for the voice, but otherwise her recommended timetable -- beginning at 7am "with a pleasant thought, even if the weather is bad" and ending before sleep with a moment of concentration "on what you want to acquire and do for yourself, and others" -- remains breezily upbeat and motivational.

Clara gave birth to her second child, David Ivor (later Ivor Novello), in January 1893 and wasted little time in accepting an invitation to appear at the World's Columbian Exhibition, or Chicago World's Fair as it is now more popularly known, the following September. The committee was concerned that no choir from Wales had committed to compete but the *Western Mail* confirmed on 2 June that Clara had agreed to "throw that immense energy and enthusiasm into the scheme as she had done with other musical matters connected with Cardiff and Wales." Clara usually worked with 70 to 100 choristers but re-auditions whittled numbers down to 53 to meet competition requirements. Most of the chosen singers were unmarried and childless, unlike their conductress whose decision to part from her infant son attracted a good deal of flak.

The World's Fair ran for six months in America's second city from May to October 1893 and its purpose was to celebrate 400 years since Christopher Columbus arrived in the USA in 1492. Daniel Hudson Burnham, the architect responsible for the Flatiron Building in New York City and Union Station in Washington DC, was the Director of Works and his 'White City' was an

immense and visionary landscape occupying 633 square acres and including canals, gardens and over 200 buildings. Cultural commentators have traced echoes in the Disneyland of today and indeed Walt Disney's father Elias was one of the Chicago construction workers.

The Fair was exotic, too: 46 nations participated and whole townscapes were imported from far-flung locales, including a Cairo exhibit containing 25 structures and employing 200 Egyptian nationals; a Japanese tea-house from Kyoto, and a replica of Blarney Castle. Other displays included furniture from the King of Bavaria's

palace; the manuscript of Lincoln's inaugural address; the original Liberty Bell; Pocohontas' necklace; Bach's clavichord and Mozart's spinet. George Ferris introduced a new entertainment wheel 80 metres high; visitors sampled Shredded Wheat for the first time; Buffalo Bill Cody set up his Wild West Show next to the complex when he was denied an official pitch and Thomas Edison -- whom Clara met -- created an Electricity Building which included an 82-foot Tower of Light with 18,000 bulbs. Others present included Archduke Franz Ferdinand, Scott Joplin and Louis Comfort Tiffany.



Clara Novello with her son Ivor in the late 1930s.



The Royal Welsh Ladies Choir.

The ladies' choir contest took place on 4 September 1893 before an audience of 15,000. The test pieces were Schubert's *The Lord is my Shepherd* and Lassen's *The Spanish Gipsy Girl* and the competition attracted entries from Ohio, Utah and Greece as well as the formidable Caecelian Ladies Choir of Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. The result was extremely close between the latter and the Welsh Ladies, but John Thomas, *Pencerdd Gwallia*, Chairman of the adjudicating panel, awarded the Gold Medal and first prize of \$300 to Clara. Her autobiography recalls:

"At his words I almost felt I had gone mad ... The scene following that verdict was indescribable. The audience went crazy! My girls went crazy! I was already crazy! ... The first Ladies' Choir, which I believe I am correct in saying was also the first ensemble to cross the Atlantic Ocean, and the first Welsh woman conductor, had made good."

To trim expenses and ensure that the tour paid its way, Clara sent 10 girls home while she and her remaining choristers travelled onward to perform in Cincinnati, Columbus, Scranton, Pittsburgh and New York. 10,000 people greeted their eventual return to Cardiff and, when Clara met David Lloyd George some years later, he produced a crumpled newspaper cutting

from his pocket-book, saying, "You've been there, Madame, ever since you won at Chicago."

On 8 February 1894, the Welsh Ladies were invited to give a command performance before Queen Victoria at Osborne House on the Isle of Wight. No choir had previously been honoured in this way and the Queen renamed them the Royal Welsh Ladies Choir with immediate effect. Clara also received a brooch with the initials V.R.I. (Victoria Regina Imperatrix) enamelled in red, gemmed with 16 diamonds and surmounted by a crown, which she regarded as her personal talisman and wore every day for the rest of her life. Such recognition increased the Choir's marketability greatly, of course, and by May 1894, the Ladies had been snapped up by the impresario Percy Harrison to give two concerts with Adelina Patti at the Royal Albert Hall. They then toured extensively to all parts of Wales, the major cities of England and Scotland and the Channel Islands, a circuit which was repeated annually until 1899. Clara and 22 singers also returned to the USA in 1895, departing Southampton on 21 September for a 70-concert tour through 14 states. *The Allentown Chronicle* reported:

"God bless the Welsh! ... Nothing grander in song has ever been heard in this city. It was perfection ...

In volume of voice, in the exquisite shading, in attack, phrasing and tune, it was faultless ... The ladies were dressed in the national costume ... The majority of them were knitting, as if to typify the homely virtues of the Welsh people, who ply the needles to the measure of their song."

Clara's autobiography confirms that socks knitted by her choristers on the concert platform were sold on for the handsome price of 25 dollars a pair, although it has proved more difficult to establish how -- and how much -- the Royal Welsh Ladies were paid. Some were rewarded with free dentistry after their triumph in Chicago, but there must have been a pay scale for subsequent appearances as the singers were professional soloists who gave up other work to tour. The level of Clara's remuneration has also not yet become clear, but there is no doubt that the World's Fair conferred celebrity status upon her at the age of 32. *Y Cerddor*, the national music magazine of Wales, and Frederic Griffiths' groundbreaking book *Notable Welsh Musicians* both carried extensive profile pieces about her in 1896. Griffiths commended Clara's "indomitable perseverance ... well-known pluck [and] unfaltering energy" and concluded that "her successful career is due entirely to her own efforts and should stand out a brilliant example to her younger colleagues." From 1897, Clara also began to publish her own compositions -- songs, duets and choral works that were often settings of her own texts such as *Victory, No more war!* and *Friend*.

The Royal Welsh Ladies next appeared at the Paris Exposition in July 1900 when they joined the Rhondda and Barry Glee Societies to form a superchoir of mixed voices, the Royal Welsh United Choir, which gained the *Grand Prix*. Camille Saint-Saëns invested Clara with a circlet of golden laurel leaves in "the most emotional moment of my life ... when he who was as a hero in my eyes stood at my side."

The Ladies then played London's Palace Theatre twice nightly for eight weeks from October 1900, becoming the first choir to appear at any music-hall. The contract led to Clara being spurned at Salem, her home chapel in Cardiff, plus resignations from the ranks because some singers and their parents regarded the halls as "sinks of iniquity". However, she insisted "this was the happiest engagement of our lives".

When the outbreak of the First World War frustrated an intended tour to Australia, the Choir reverted to giving charitable concerts with Ivor Novello acting occasionally as accompanist. Ivor, Gladys Cooper and choristers from all over Wales also took part in Clara's Golden Jubilee Festival at the Cardiff Empire in September 1922. The illuminated address with which she was presented read:

"These Thousand Voices singing under your baton are a proof of your magic as a conductor ... May God bless you and guard you as a world force ... resting secure in the fact that your countrymen and women will always love and honour you."

By this time, Madame was living at Central Park Studios, 15 West 67th Street, New York City, where she taught from October to June, dividing the rest of her year between Paris and London. The seed was planted during her first visit to the USA in 1893. "There never was a more thrilling city to one of my nature," she explains in her autobiography. "Its life, vigour, movement, captured my heart ... and the American idea of 'doing things at once' corresponded with my own." Clara founded several ensembles in New York including a choir of massed female voices that sang at the Metropolitan Opera and the Novello Davies Artists' Choir that appeared in the Town Hall.

The Royal Welsh Ladies also remained in being, giving a command performance at Windsor Castle in April 1928, becoming "the first ensemble

ever to be televised" on St David's Day 1937 and appearing at another Paris Exposition the following October. The choristers travelled to France by bus from Cardiff City Hall while Ivor Novello treated their 76-year-old conductress to her maiden flight from Croydon Airport. Clara was invested with various honours by the French Government including the *Médaille d'Honneur* and a corsage of golden palm-leaves. The Ladies gave a series of Peace Concerts in Holland, Belgium and Germany during the 1930s and, according to Sandy Wilson, one of Ivor Novello's biographers, his mother's "last grand project, never realised, was to fly them to Berlin and sing Hitler into surrender."

The declining years of the "Empress of Song" remained crowded with celebrity appearances and endorsements -- sharing a stage with Gracie Fields; dispensing autographs from Ivor's red Rolls-Royce at the Cardiff National Eisteddfod; providing the foreword to a book on fortune-telling called *There's Something In It!*, and recommending toiletries ("I have found the Evan Williams *Shampoo Bleu* remarkable for preserving the natural beauty of my white hair. It definitely keeps yellow tints away and keeps the hair gloriously silky.") The following indelible glimpse of Clara Novello Davies stems from an eisteddfod organised by the 2nd Battalion, The Welsh Guards, at West Byfleet in 1940, three years before her death on 7 February 1943, where she had been invited to appear as Day President and Ralph Vaughan Williams as adjudicator. Lieutenant-Colonel Price takes up the story:

"Behind the stage the curtains parted. We beheld Madame Clara now sheathed from head to foot in tight gold lamé, a wreath of gold leaves in her hair and carrying a baton of gold leaves ... As she advanced to conduct her song, the ranks of the massed choirs in battle-dress parted in amazement. The train of her dress caught on a nail on the Pirbright floor, the music

of her song had been placed upside down on the music stand and, the butterfly screw being loose, it gave under her as she appeared to lean on it for support and down she went in a deep but involuntary obeisance to the audience. There was a quick recovery, a long speech about son Ivor and away we went with her song. It was a fiasco. She tried it through twice and then, oblivious of Vaughan Williams at her feet ... she rapped out 'You don't know it. Stand up!' -- and on and on we went ... There seemed no hope of it ever ending. At last the Regimental Sergeant Major was rushed on to the stage to call for 'Three Cheers for Madame Clara Novello Davies.'

This vignette certainly tallies with recollections of the larger-than-life "Mam" which have come down to us through the numerous studies of Ivor Novello. Margaret Lindsay Williams, who painted the full-length portrait of Clara Novello Davies in National Museum Cardiff, also recalled her as "short, plump and always very dressed up ... an extremely dominating personality." But perhaps these elements of the 'pushy mother' and the *grande dame* can now be seen in the wider context of the considerable and pioneering career forged by a nineteenth-century woman in the music of Wales and the promotion of Welsh music overseas. To spur you on with your own life's work, may I leave some of Madame's maxims ringing in your ears:

There is no excellence without labour.

There's no such word as can't.

and

*Not every car is a Rolls-Royce,
but even a Ford has its uses.*

Rhian Davies has been Artistic Director of the Gregynog Festival in her native Montgomeryshire since 2006.

From the Cape to Cwmdau

Peter Finch follows the epic journeys of borders writer Horatio Clare

There's been an altercation in the lane leading from the village to the farm. A local resident in a four by four has refused to give way to the thirty or so literary tourists trying to proceed up the steep hill. We stand back in the hedges so that the red-faced tweed-capped driver can pass. At the head of the column Horatio is telling everyone to simply ignore it. There's bad blood, clearly, but I'm not sure why.

We are on John Pikoulis's guided literary walk to Horatio Clare country. We are visiting the farm and the landscape that inspired Clare's 2006 hit, *Running For The Hills*, the story of his upbringing in the Black Mountains. This Marches landscape where Wales shades down into England and where the language stutters flat before going completely out has inspired so many writers. Chatwin's *On The Black Hill*, Ginsberg's *Wales Visitation*, Owen Sheers's *Resistance*, Antony Woodward's *The Garden In the Clouds*, and Raymond Williams's masterwork, *Border Country*. This is Wales without the distance, a step in from England, foreign but not alien. Just a few paces from where many people live. Cymru pasteurised, where nationality and language are not the things that make the world work.

In the village hall below the hill the gathered retirees have had the chance to ask Clare about his writing. Clare, the travel writer, the memoir spinner, author of *Truant*, his *Running for the Hills* follow-up which tells of years of drug-fuelled dissolution in Oxford and France. In it Horatio Clare comes across as a sort of well brought-up, anglicised William Burroughs. A Mr Nice without the drugs world cheer-leading. Someone you wouldn't be afraid to invite in for tea.

A white hair at the back puts her hand up. "Can you tell me," she asks in a slightly quavering

voice, "just what it's like? This taking of drugs, that is." There's a ripple of laughter and assent. This is the question they all want answered. Clare smiles. If this was a film his part would be played by Hugh Grant. He pulls his chin and pauses. "It's like drinking a bottle of the best Shiraz all in one go," he eventually says. There's more laughter. A safe reply. It's what they wanted to hear.

As we lope down across the steeply-sloping field on which the heating fuel delivery tanker got irrevocably stuck in the book, Horatio tells me that his relationships with the locals are not the best. The book did not go down well. The truth, if indeed it is the truth, is often unacceptable. *Running for the Hills*

He pulls his chin and pauses.
 "It's like drinking a bottle of the best Shiraz all in one go," he eventually says. There's more laughter. A safe reply. It's what they wanted to hear.

where humanity and landscape meet, where life scraped by on the meagre takings made by a worn-down sheep farm, and where the rights of passage from child to youth are enriched by distance, Welshness, and the love of a broken eccentric family, is one of the best books to come from Wales in the first decade of the new millennium.

Truant takes his life story on through Clare's lost years. Although how one so young (the author was born in 1973) can have become so lost so soon is hard to understand. *Truant's* subtitle is *Notes from the*



Horatio Clare, pictured outside a pub in border country – “he looks Russian, sounds English but is, in fact, Welsh”.

slippery slope. In it Clare explains his use of drugs and the way the world fell apart for at least five years. His time was spent in hedonistic pursuit of anything but the real. Lying down in darkened rooms allowing dope to live his life for him. Slowly sliding into dissipation, his mental stability questioned and then eventually ruptured. Clare found himself fallen over the edge and he records the details with painstaking precision. The cure he finds, the sort of cure if indeed it is a cure, has him return to his family in the pure Welsh hills. And there the book ends.

I was once a user, Clare declares, but I am no longer. No more smoking, no more putting things up my nose. Although the reader is left with the strong suspicion that he doesn't quite mean this. And so that proves.

A Single Swallow - following an epic journey from South Africa to South Wales, which came out in 2010, is Clare the consummate travel writer. In it he creates a pretext for a mad and often dissolute journey from Cape Town back to the family farm above Cwmdu. He follows the migrating swallows. He times himself to be travelling in a sort of permanent spring, chasing the thousands of birds he had come to love in childhood all the way from their winter habitat – the

South African spring – all the way back across Africa and Europe to Wales as the seasons advanced to spring again.

As a device around which to build a book this might at first appear to be either artificial or of interest only to ornithologists. It turns out to be neither. In fact those, like me, with little knowledge of the world of birds, have little to fear. This is no nature book. Clare travels with the minimum of possessions, hardly any cash, and only ragged preparation. He takes planes rarely and crosses the vast African continent by bus, train, foot, hire car, and by sitting, shaken to death, on a shared seat in a pick-up truck.

En-route he analyses what it is to be a westerner controlled by artificially imposed time zones, by geography, by history, indeed, by civilisation itself. In Africa the world is not like that. The swallows go by. He spots them, he misses them. They outwit him. He learns their multiple names. He entangles with dense black bureaucracies that are in place simply as an aid to the already overwhelming corruption of the officials in charge. Your visa is out of date. This is the wrong stamp. Pay, pay, pay again.

All the while he explains patiently that despite how he might look (Russian), or sound (English), he is in fact Welsh. Of

course, no one has ever heard of Wales. But then Ryan Giggs is mentioned and the shape of the world becomes clear once again. Football is the international leveller.

Africa, Clare discovers, is falling apart. Much of it is broken, little works, and no one cares. But this is no constraint to enjoying life. Order is a western habit. “The idea that you might not know where you will be sleeping the day after tomorrow and therefore that nobody else can know, seems rabid eccentricity,” Clare declares, going native, and abandoning his mobile phone forever.

Throughout the journey he makes notes and records conversations only to blow them all when he gets back to Europe. On the quayside in Gibraltar, his mental state once again wobbling, he throws everything he owns into the sea. Clothes, rucksack, notepads, cash. Penniless and without passport he somehow makes it back up through Spain and across France to London and then on to the place from where the swallows first started on their journey – Wales.

A Single Swallow delivers on the promise first shown in *Running for the Hills*. Clare the dope smoker, Clare the dissolute, Clare the unstable shows that he can rise above it all as Clare the writer- engaging, informed, ordered, entertaining, uplifting. Horatio Clare is the new Millennium Eric Newby, a Welsh Paul Theroux, a Buddhaless Jack Kerouac.

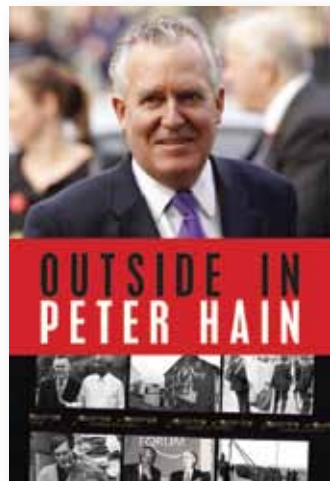
And despite his given name, he is a self-aware and determinedly Welsh writer. Here's a writer who looks outwards rather than in, someone who has no problem with Wales and its size, and has no difficulty with identity. Check out his latest, a tale made by reworking part of the Mabinogion, *The Princes Pen* (Seren Books). But if you haven't done so already, start off in the hills.

Peter Finch is a poet, psycho-geographer and literary entrepreneur.

Reviews

The man who came to Neath

Peter Stead



Outside in
Peter Hain
Biteback, £20

In spite of its title suggesting a position in some unknown team game I was eager to read Peter Hain's autobiography. I must confess that he is a politician whom I have always regarded as being a good thing. In personal terms I have always found him to be nothing but helpful and courteous, and this volume's cover photo nicely captures his rather apologetic smile that confirms his generally unassuming manner.

First and foremost one remembers and admires Hain as a hero of that 1960s battle to isolate South Africa. As someone who played a small part in some of the bitter protests of that era I had not appreciated quite how difficult and painful his own experiences had been. At the age of fifteen he had to go to the lectern of the Pretoria crematorium to read a tribute to a close family friend who had been hanged just two hours earlier and whose body was now in the adjacent coffin. It was Hain who then pushed the button that sent the

coffin on its way.

Later, in London, he was hounded by MI5, sent a powerful letter bomb and then framed for a bank robbery by agents of BOSS, the South African Security Agency. I did not know those details at the time but felt an enormous gratitude to Hain for his part in exposing the evils of apartheid and for showing the value of protests against specific evils rather than indulging in the futile ideological battles of that era's left-wing extremists. Above all I appreciated the manner in which he had flushed out all those sportsmen and women, fans, administrators and, of course, choristers who suppressed all matters of ethics and morality once their own pleasure was at stake.

In a later manifestation (and such is the physical change, one can be forgiven for thinking that it is a different person) Hain emerged as the MP for Neath. I was delighted by his adoption and gave thanks that a safe Labour seat in Wales had opted for a candidate with a hinterland who was capable of making it to the Cabinet. Subsequently one admired the significant contribution that Hain made to the securing of devolved government, especially when one remembers all those home-grown Labour representatives who created difficulties or dragged their feet. Both in the Cabinet and subsequently in Opposition Hain has continued to think both creatively and pragmatically, not least with regard to the organisation and running of the Labour Party. In many ways his thirteenth and final chapter, *Mission Unfulfilled*, is the best in the book.

And yet one was always aware that in admiring Hain certain allowances had to be made, not least with regard to his all-too-obvious vanity. In *Outside In* Hain has written a dramatic account of his early years and a remarkably detailed account of Labour in office. Throughout, however, we are never very far from the 'I' dimension, a perspective brilliantly satirised by John Crace in the Guardian. One can imagine that his publisher urged

him to start with Mandela, but actually to start the first sentence of the book with "Ah, Peter, return of the prodigal son!" Nelson Mandela beamed", pretty much takes the biscuit. And this account of a meeting with the great man at his home in 2000 ends with vainglorious banality: "we walked out together...his hand resting on my shoulders, in part affectionately, in part because (now aged eighty-one) he found walking increasingly difficult".

So often do luminaries greet 'Peter' that one is soon longing for Mandela to slip up and call him 'Brian' or for Ian Paisley asking to be reminded of his name. Occasional footnotes remind us of Hain's many publications, including his 1995 thriller *The Peking Connection* written following a trip to China. I had not previously known of this book though Robert Mugabe had, for the book had treated him sympathetically and in 1999 the author presented him with a copy. At their meeting Mugabe patted 'Peter' on the knee.

When all is said and done Hain's vanity is so blatant and persistent that one just accepts it as a rather amusing and almost endearing part of his persona. Every politician has to cultivate some sense of his own worth and has to develop a coherent and acceptable image. Of course, Hain had to deal with being an 'outsider'. He chose to live in another country and to abandon the role of protester as he entered mainstream politics, first in a small party and then in one that was capable of forming a government. In reliving this process I think Hain rather overdoes the relevance of his rebellious past, for the 1960s were a general period of protest and this country is full of successful business people, vice-chancellors and politicians who would be reluctant to discuss their 1960s values and lifestyles. What emerges from this book is that Hain being an outsider was far more of a psychological question than one of political extremism.

Once when I was in East Africa I saw Hain's name in a newspaper headline.

It was a story in which, in his capacity as 'Minister for Africa', Hain was making a general pronouncement about the future of the continent. I remember thinking at the time that Hain was destined to be Foreign Secretary. Reading this autobiography, the essential subtext is not that of a rebel choosing to play the insider's game but rather of someone failing to make it into the higher echelons in the party of his choice.

In his noticeably favourable review of the book Martin Ivens spoke of Hain's

As he develops his theme of being an outsider Hain points out that he "was not born into the pernicious British class system" and insists that he has never seen himself as a "politician's politician".

"career of reliable if unspectacular achievement". Contrast this with the plane journey taken with Tony Blair in 2006. Hain accidentally sat in a seat designated for the Prime Minister and Blair commented, "You might as well get used to it, Peter". This is the most revealing moment of the book, for whilst Hain was never a new Labourite (Robin Cook was his Labour hero) he was undoubtedly seduced by the Blair image and tantalisingly was faced with the possibility of being Blair Mark Two. And so it was that he became a Blairite Minister for Europe, supported the war in Iraq and agreed that Rhodri was not the man for Wales. There is something almost Shakespearean about the path that subsequently took Hain from that high-point of Blair's casual aside and patronage to his coming only fifth in the

2008 Deputy Leader's poll and then being dropped from the Cabinet as scandal threatened to ruin his career.

As he develops his theme of being an outsider Hain points out the he "was not born into the pernicious British class system" and insists that he has never seen himself as a "politician's politician". In these remarks, and in countless references throughout the book, one has the distinct impression of a politician who has never had any access to the sub-cultural batteries that fuel most of his colleagues. Of course, the fruits of his career have accrued. We learn of the small *finca* in Spain and one senses the move away from early religious influences, teetotalism and vegetarianism, but the pride in the 'unostentatious lifestyle' remains.

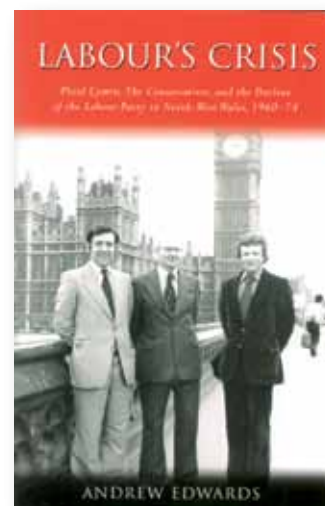
Throughout there are references to the relative 'modesty' of people's homes and at one point there is a give-away reference to one politician's immaculate appearance suggesting a sense of inferiority. Yes, Hain is vain, but his pride is essentially that of a petit-bourgeois and contrasts with the braggadocio arrogance exuded by most political leaders.

We are left in no doubt that his family have always come first. There is his devotion to his remarkable parents (for many years his mother was his secretary) and more recently the phenomenon of his kith and kin taking over Resolven. Hain was moulded in Pretoria and Putney but it is in the Neath Valley that the family *boma* has been built. There remains something satisfactorily adolescent about Peter Hain and the evidence is there in his constant assertion of support for his beloved Chelsea team. One suspects that he would have willingly sacrificed his later political career if he could have swapped places with Jose Mourinho, 'the Special One'. And, unlike Blair, his football is not an affectation. For all his over-developed sensitivity, Peter Hain's roots, both old and new, are real enough.

Peter Stead is a cultural historian specialising in 20th Century Wales.

The antagonisms between Labour and Plaid Cymru

John Osmond



Labour's Crisis - Plaid Cymru, The Conservatives, and the Decline of the Labour Party in North-West Wales, 1960-74

Andrew Edwards

University of Wales Press, £49.99

Huw T. Edwards – British Labour and Welsh Socialism

Paul Ward

University of Wales Press, £18.99

A revealing aside in Andrew Edwards' survey of Gwynedd politics in the mid 20th Century refers to an interview he undertook in 1995 with one of the most influential, if shadowy figures behind the devolution process, Gwilym (now Lord) Prys Davies. In the 1940s he had been active in the Welsh Republican Movement but later joined the Labour Party which he judged to be a more effective vehicle for advancing the cause of Welsh autonomy. Prys Davies was close to Jim Griffiths who became the first Secretary of State for Wales in 1964, and was also an adviser to John Morris when he was Secretary of State in the period leading to the ill-fated 1979 referendum.

However, of most interest from the perspective of Edwards' book, was Prys

Davies' experience as Labour's candidate in the 1966 Carmarthen by-election in which Gwynfor Evans triumphed and launched the modern era of Welsh politics. Edwards reports that, looking back from the mid-nineties, Prys Davies recalled that "campaigning in the by-election had very little to do with traditional nationalist issues but instead was a battle between two different types of Welsh nationalism, one housed in the Labour Party and the other in Plaid Cymru."

Edwards demonstrates beyond doubt that in Gwynedd during this era Labour and Plaid Cymru represented different types of Welsh nationalism. However, the question that arises is the extent to which Labour's nationalism in Gwynedd was felt anywhere else in Wales. Indeed, to the contrary, to what extent were Welsh national aspirations actively opposed by mainstream Welsh Labour outside Gwynedd? While Gwilym Prys Davies himself hailed from Meirionnydd there were other leading figures in southern Wales who shared his aspirations, most notably Jim Griffiths, but also the Merthyr MP S.O. Davies, and Emrys Jones, the party's general secretary in the 1960s and 1970s. By and large, however, they were exceptions.

Generally, and certainly in the 1960s and 1970s, Welsh-speaking Labour activists in Gwynedd were viewed with deep suspicion by the party elsewhere. In particular Anglesey's Cledwyn Hughes was widely regarded as one of a select band of Labour MPs who were "nationalists first and socialists second", as Caerphilly Labour MP Ness Edwards put it in 1967 in a letter to Richard Crossman who was then Leader of the House of Commons. Moreover, Hughes himself was acutely aware of this perception. Edwards has had access to his diaries and quotes the following entry from November 1970:

"The Welsh Labour Group... has always been divided between those who want to do something constructive for Wales and those who don't want to bother. The latter's argument is that whatever you do encourages the Nationalists

or is a deliberate sop to them. Some have a big chip on their shoulder because they cannot speak Welsh. They cannot admit it to themselves but they regard those who do speak Welsh as fellow travelling Nationalists more often than not. They forget that we have fought the WNs longer than they have and that the Nationalists in fact made dramatic gains in the two seats, Rhondda West and Caerphilly, where the members, Iori Thomas and Ness Edwards, had been consistently hostile to progress in Welsh matters."

Of course, within Gwynedd classification of such attitudes according to whether you could speak Welsh or not did not apply, so in that sense politics operated on a more level playing field. In his book Edwards charts the period from the 1930s to the 1960s when a talented group of Labour activists rose to take over a Liberal-dominated territory, to be succeeded by an equally talented group of Plaid Cymru activists from the 1960s onwards (with the Conservative Party gaining a slice of the action in Conwy). These Labour and Plaid cadres were to an almost equal extent motivated by wanting to achieve greater autonomy of Wales. However, in both cases Edwards puts their success down to other factors, in the main because they

developed a left-wing programme rooted in Welsh priorities, including a Parliament for Wales with a Secretary of State as a precursor, action on the Welsh language, and improved communications between north and south Wales.

Yet, as Edwards points out, Labour's success in Gwynedd in this period had more to do with Labour's overall programme for economic development, nationalisation and the establishment of the health service, together with the weakness of the declining Liberal Party. Similarly, rather than arguments connected with self-government, Plaid Cymru's rise in the 1970s had more to do with the evident failure of the Labour governments of the day to deliver economic progress. Plaid also articulated a more convincing economic programme, for instance its proposal for a Welsh Development Agency that was outlined in its 1970 Economic Plan.

Nonetheless, it was Wales and Welsh concerns that were uppermost in motivating the campaigns of both Labour and Plaid Cymru in these two periods. Moreover, Welsh political aspirations were intimately linked with the personalities and leadership qualities of the people at the centre of the story. Together, these are central to understanding the dynamics of the period and especially

Yet, as Edwards points out, Labour's success in Gwynedd in this period had more to do with Labour's overall programme for economic development, nationalisation and the establishment of the health service, together with the weakness of the declining Liberal Party.

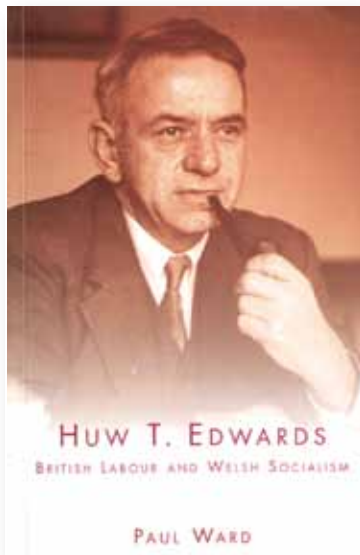
were able to present a more plausible case for economic advancement for north-west Wales than their opponents.

The leading Labour figures were Goronwy Roberts who won Caernarfon from the Liberals in 1945, and T.W. Jones and Cledwyn Hughes who took Meirionnydd and Anglesey in 1951. In the 1930s Roberts had been founder of the Grŵp Gwerin movement at the University College of North Wales, Bangor. This

the relationship between the two parties. A major criticism of Andrew Edwards' otherwise groundbreaking book is that he largely ignores the explanatory power that would have come from a study of the charismatic personalities that led the political movements of the time.

Especially interesting from a contemporary perspective would have been a sharper focus on the two key Plaid Cymru leaders in Gwynedd in the

1970s, Dafydd Wigley and Dafydd Elis Thomas. Despite the fact that Edwards interviewed Wigley for his research in 2000, we are told virtually nothing about his background, what led him into Plaid Cymru or what has sustained his remarkable political career over more than three decades. As for Dafydd Elis Thomas, his background is confined to a miserly footnote: "Thomas gained a first-class honours in Welsh at the University College of North Wales, Bangor in 1967



and worked as an interviewer on HTV Wales' *Cymru Heddiw* ('Wales Today') programme during the late 1960s and as a university lecturer in the early 1970s."

A powerful example of what could have been gained by greater attention to the psychobiographies of these leading figures is provided in Paul Ward's life of Huw T. Edwards who was known in the 1950s as "the unofficial Prime Minister of Wales". Given his role and influence it is extraordinary how far Huw T. Edwards has slipped out of Welsh consciousness today. Yet Ward's study and Gwyn Jenkins' earlier 2007 biography, *Prif Weinidog Answddogol Cymru*, will surely restore him to his rightful place as a key orchestrator of the survival of Wales as a nation during the 20th Century.

As Huw T. Edwards himself often recounted, his life story had much of the 'log cabin to White House' about it.

He was born on an isolated farm in the mountains of Arfon in 1892, the youngest of seven children. His mother, who taught his father to read and write, died when he was eight and henceforth he was mainly responsible for his own progress. At 14 he was working in nearby slate quarries but before long had moved to the Rhondda to work in the coalmines of south Wales. A cousin was killed in the Senghennydd explosion in which Edwards was involved in a rescue party. Following active service in World War I he returned to quarrying in north Wales, became active in union work and embarked on a life long career within the Transport and General Workers Union, rising to become its Welsh leader in the late 1930s. From that position he advanced to involvement in almost every aspect of Welsh life, becoming chair of the advisory Council for Wales and Monmouthshire that was established by the Labour government in 1949.

During the 1950s, under Huw T. Edwards' leadership, the Council started making the intellectual case for establishing a Welsh Office and Secretary of State. It produced three memorandums that were presented and successively rejected by the Conservative government of the day. Nonetheless, this was a vital process that, along with the Parliament for Wales Campaign of the period, had the effect of convincing Labour in opposition to adopt the policy of a Secretary of State for Wales as part of its manifesto for the 1959 election. With hindsight it can be seen that this was the pivotal moment in the 20th Century Welsh devolution story that culminated in the 1997 referendum that eventually established the National Assembly.

Until now Huw T. Edwards has largely been erased in the historical accounts of these events in part at least because, in 1958 in frustration at Prime Minister MacMillan's rejection of the case for a Secretary of State he resigned as Chairman of the Council for Wales and the following year left Labour and joined Plaid Cymru. At the time this was a sensational step accompanied by much publicity. However, Edwards' experience in Plaid Cymru was

an unhappy one and eventually, in 1966, he returned to the Labour fold. The result has been that neither party has wished to be too closely associated with his memory, which explains why he has to a large extent been airbrushed from history.

Now, with the publication of Paul Ward's excellent biography, Huw T. Edwards is being rehabilitated to his rightful place as a central figure in the Welsh devolution story (and much else besides). What is especially significant, set against Andrew Edwards' account of the politics of Gwynedd, is the balancing in Huw T. Edwards' life and career of the pressures of Welshness on the one hand and Britishness on the other. Both were salient, and Ward, an English academic who brings an important perspective to all of this, is right to emphasise Huw T. Edwards' attachment to British class connections. Yet, at the end of the day, while Edwards' British identity waxed and waned according to time and circumstance, his Welsh identity remained constant and, indeed, deepened the older he became and the more experience he accumulated. It was significant, for instance that, despite constant entreaties, he refused to stand for the many safe Labour seats he was offered in north-east Wales, to the great enhancement of his influence and impact on Welsh history.

The importance of these two studies is that together they provide some much needed historical depth to the identity dilemmas confronting contemporary Welsh politics, especially so far as the Labour Party is concerned. They also foreground the continuing importance of the relationship between Labour and Plaid Cymru for the future of Wales. They tell us that if the antagonisms of these central and closely intertwined forces in Welsh political life can be sublimated and replaced with a more constructive relationship— as was briefly achieved by the *One Wales* agreement they negotiated at the start of the 2007 Assembly — then our country would be much better off.

John Osmond is Director of the IWA.



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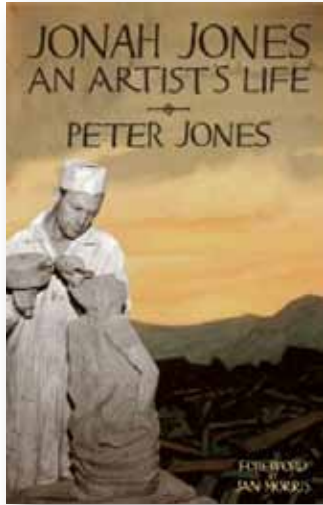
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Autodidact who discovered Wales

Harri Pritchard Jones



Jonah Jones: An Artist's Life
Peter Jones
Seren Books, £14.99

This is a work of filial piety, by the son of a unique person, Jonah Jones (1919-2004), and is certainly none the worse for that. The book is detailed in its recounting of Jonah's life and work, but the details are never tedious. The style and pace of the work are most pleasing, as are the numerous photographs of the people and works which feature in this rich life. As the blurb says, Jonah was "sculptor, painter, letter cutter, stained glass maker, novelist, art educationalist ... in many ways a 20th Century Renaissance man." Indeed, and he excelled in all these vocations.

His work is most visible in the various open air public art all over this country and elsewhere, as well as in smaller sculptures and stained glass windows in Catholic churches mainly in England, and in schools, colleges and private homes. His skills developed and adapted to various media as his physical capacities waned in middle age. He then turned to a successful career as novelist and water-colourist when he was no longer able to be, as he called it, a navy sculptor.

By *navvy* he meant the style of

work involved in his many statues and sculptures, where he seemed to discover, to reveal, the subject as he worked in and with the stone or wood or metal. There was grain of a concept which was then brought forth out of the grain of the medium itself.

So it was with his Welsh identity. Jonah was an autodidact, a self-made polymath, and his Welshness was akin to that. He was born and brought up in Durham during the depression of the 1920s. He felt himself to be Welsh on the basis of hearing a grandfather wax eloquent about the beauty of Gwent. Jonah never set foot in Wales until he returned from duties as a non-combatant in the British Army in France and later in the Mandate Forces in Palestine. When he did arrive in Wales he was accompanied by his new, Jewish wife Judith, a writer, who had fought with the Hagannah against the British. They arrived in Gwynedd, bent on working as artists, and that was what they became, to our great enrichment.

His inculturisation in Wales was, like his sculpting, a two pronged process. There was an element of composition: on the basis of reading and listening and studying, but also a delving within himself as he lived and roamed in his inherited nation, and reared his children to be fully

"I knew I wanted to be an artist, that was all, but how to become one was quite beyond me. Art was almost a dirty word in the arid wastes of the unemployment areas that had nurtured me."

fledged members of it. Ironically, he later discovered that his grandfather had been English, though working in Wales and in love with the country!

This book chronicles Jonah's life in its various, almost discrete stages, starting with his poverty-stricken native patch in Tyneside, the struggles of a young autodidact using a menial job in a library to learn about life and art, and discover a latent vocation to be an artist. Jonah's work as a sculptor and painter were kindled in many ways by coming across the work of David Jones. Though he was living in a sort of cultural desert, he said:

"I knew I wanted to be an artist, that was all, but how to become one was quite beyond me. Art was almost a dirty word in the arid wastes of the unemployment areas that had nurtured me."

Then this occurred:

"I read David Jones's *In Parenthesis* and was so moved, so impressed by the sheer rootedness of it that I believe it marked a turning point in my life. Furthermore, its author looked back with pride on the Cockney-Cymro of his ancestry and fixed it in this time, this space".

To his chagrin, he never met David Jones, but developed as a sculptor and letter cutter under the influence of Jones and Eric Gill, and worked closely with one of Gill's disciples, Lawrie Cribb. He was by now settled in Gwynedd, in the Porthmadog area, and did various jobs to keep the wolf from the door, including helping John Petts run the Caseg Press. But it was his near neighbour, Clough Williams-Ellis the architect of Port Meirion, who commissioned and promoted Jonah.

Another neighbour, Peter Thorp, a laicised priest, succeeded in getting him an apprenticeship in the Eric Gill school in Piggotts. It was Thorp, too, who introduced Jonah to the Catholic colleges of Radcliffe and Ampleforth which commissioned sculpture and stained glass from him. This period, between 1959 and 1974, was Jonah's most prodigious and successful time as an artist.

Jonah had also become involved with art education and the re-vamping of the Colleges of Art. He was a member of the Summerson council and an inspector of the colleges. This led, in a somewhat strange way, to his being invited to Dublin

where he became the Director of the National College of Art. The Irish period, 1974-78, was fraught because he was a 'non-national' and there were elements opposed to any foreigners. But he won through, in re-structuring the college and winning the hearts of the students. Meanwhile, Judith and he enjoyed the cultural offerings and bonhomie of Dublin.

On his return to Wales he took up sculpture again, and produced some well-known busts of his friends Clough and Huw Wheldon and others, but also started developing two other branches to his *oeuvre*. He turned to subjects that were more specifically Welsh, people such as Bob Tai'r Felin and O. M. Edwards, the Welsh princes of Gwynedd, and the Mabinogi tales. Also, he concentrated more on his writing, starting with a novel set in Ireland in 1916, *A Tree Must Fall*, where he drew on his experiences as a pacifist in the British Army and his period in Dublin. It was published by Bodley Head, and was followed by another novel, *Zorn*, about a blond, teutonic looking German boy who is persecuted for his part-Jewish ancestry. Jonah's love of Gwynedd, where he walked extensively with his whippet, led to the volume *Lakes of North Wales*. He admitted to even kissing the earth of his adopted land!

Unexpectedly, Jonah was given a chance to go back to his native patch in 1980 when he received an invitation to be Artist in Residence at Newcastle University. This gave him a chance to revisit Tyneside, which he found to be transformed, and to see more of one of his beloved sisters. A further sojourn

in academia followed the next year with a fellowship in Gregynog, working with the famous press. He enjoyed both immensely.

A fascinating commission arrived afterwards from a most unexpected source, the University of Western Illinois. This was for 14 painted inscriptions of Welsh poems for a touring portfolio and exhibition to "raise awareness of the riches of Wales's culture and its influence in the USA". These are among his finest work of painted texts, and he acknowledged the influence on them of David Jones's work and Roman inscriptions in the National Museum.

In 1991 Jonah and Judith decided that they were aging and would move to Cardiff, to a flat to be nearer their children. There he was given space to work in the various studios and offices of his daughter, Naomi's animation company. He did a lot of lettering and beautiful water colour illustrations of Biblical and various literary texts. Although he eventually died of a brain tumour, thought at first to be signs of dementia, his powers only gradually waned.

He had been a towering figure. A polymath, a jovial and loyal friend, a committed humanist with an element of Catholicism, and a fully fledged Welshman. His contribution was immense. We owe a great deal to the way his grandfather praised the people and country he had found work in.

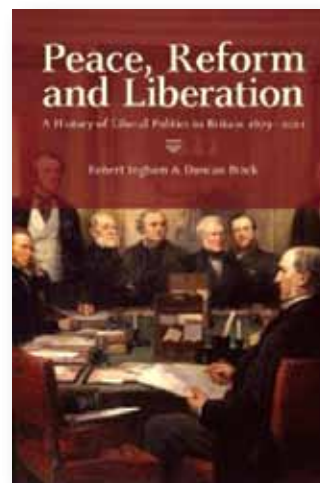
Harri Pritchard Jones is co-chair of Literature Wales.



Jonah Jones did not see sculpture as a luxury, but preferred to make things that took their natural place in the community and would be accepted as part of the everyday environment. This close-up of *The Bridge* his early 1960s sculpture at Coleg Harlech, named after the college's symbol, covered four sides of the lift shaft in the refectory, a total area of 11.5 x 4.5 metres. It is made of Sicilian marble and Welsh slate with over 800 individual pieces. The original location has been demolished and the sculpture held in storage. However, it is hoped that it will be placed as part of a sculpture park on the diverted coastal path through Harlech.

A party well served by its historians

J. Graham Jones



Peace, Reform and Liberation: a History of Liberal Politics in Britain, 1679-2011
Robert Ingham and Duncan Brack (Eds)
Biteback Publishing, on behalf of the Liberal Democrat History Group, £30

The enterprising and prolific Liberal Democrat History Group is to be warmly congratulated on the publication of this admirable one-volume history of the Liberal Party, subsequently the Liberal Democrats, spanning the period from 1679 until the present. This is its fifth major published work. Indeed, many of the members of the group's distinguished editorial board, some of whom are highly acclaimed and prolific scholars in their own right, have contributed chapters to this volume. But throughout the text a distinctive house style is sustained.

The party has been the subject of recent competent one volume histories by several historians, among them Dr Chris Cook, Dr Roy Douglas and, particularly, Professor David Dutton. The great strength of the present offering is that it is the cumulative work of a team of experts brought together within a single tome. Most of the contributors have quarried avidly the scholarly articles published in the quarterly *Journal* regularly produced by the Group, now running to no fewer than 73 issues.

Understandably, the later period is surveyed in much greater detail within the

book. The study also enjoys the inestimable advantage of extending right through to the present day, with a chapter by Duncan Brack surveying the period from 1988 to 2010, and one by Philip Cowley and Martin Ryder on the party's highly mixed experiences in coalition government with David Cameron's Conservatives in 2010-11. Throughout the contributions are impeccably scholarly, but are also highly accessible and readable to a wide cross-section of people.

...this immensely valuable book will be widely used by students, professional academics and the interested general reader who will return to it time and again for information and a stimulating read.

Accessibility is also facilitated by the provision of regular sub-headings within the various chapters. Parallel to the main text is the inclusion in smaller print of panels of additional information, usually brief potted biographies of the major players in the Liberal story (occasionally one can but feel that these might have been longer and more substantial), but also short resums of some key themes through the centuries. One such inset prints at length a resolution on community politics strategy passed by the Liberal Party's annual assembly in 1970. Some deal with the fortunes and experiences of the party in specific localities or cities. Others analyse with admirable economy themes like 'the Radical Programme' of Joseph Chamberlain in 1885; local 'pacts and deals' made between the Liberals and the Conservatives in various constituencies; and the important role played by Liberals in the 'Britain into Europe' campaign in the early 1970s. These additional panels would perhaps have looked better had they been printed as tinted blocks in clearer contradistinction to the main text.

Other valuable features include tables

conveniently presenting the results of each successive parliamentary general election (with much helpful statistical information conveniently presented for the historian of the Liberal Party), valuable appendices on party organisation from 1859 to the present, statistics on the Liberal vote from 1832 until 2010, a list of the successive party leaders, and a helpful timeline of the key dates and events in the long history of the party. The index is detailed and genuinely helpful to the reader. It should

be added, however, that the amount of detail included in the footnote references varies considerably from chapter to chapter as do the guides to further reading (always impressively up-to-date) provided at the end of each chapter. There is also a brief foreword by the current Deputy Prime Minister and Liberal Party leader Nick Clegg.

The contributors' valiant effort to cover so much ground in so circumscribed a space inevitably leads to some lack of clarity at times, especially in the early chapters. The present reviewer was a little disappointed that there is so little attention is given to Wales, one of the core heartlands of the Liberal Party, especially from 1868 onwards. After all, seven of the twelve Liberal MPs elected in the general election of July 1945 represented Welsh constituencies. The all-important establishment of the quasi-independent Welsh Liberal Party in 1967, primarily the brain-child of Emlyn Hooson, is not discussed. Indeed, Lord Hooson is mentioned only once in the book – in the context of his standing for the vacant party leadership in 1967 – and Geraint Howells,

long-serving Liberal MP for Cardiganshire, later the Lord Geraint of Ponterwyd, features not at all.

The general standard of accuracy through the text is very high and the quality of the proof-reading impeccable. But the correct title of the highly contentious report produced by the party's rural land committee in October 1925 was in fact *The Land and the Nation*. Lloyd George's younger brother William is wrongly named as 'W.G. George'. The description of Sir Rhys Hopkin Morris, against all the odds the Liberal victor at Carmarthenshire in July 1945, as simply "a much-loved relic of unbending Gladstonian Liberalism", is surely notably wide of the mark. A. J. Sylvester is described as Lloyd George's "personal private secretary", while his correct title, at his own insistence, was always the "principal private secretary" to the former prime minister. But these are all very small matters which do not in any way detract from the potential value of the book.

This hard-back volume is made available at a reasonable price, but one tends to bemoan the lack of photographs and illustrations in an essentially popular study. However, this immensely valuable book will be widely used by students, professional academics and the interested general reader who will return to it time and again for information and a stimulating read. This survey can be read as a whole, or simply dipped into by students seeking material for their essays. I feel sure that it will certainly stand the test of time and will also be up-dated in successive new editions in the future. The Liberal Party has been notably well-served by its historians.

J. Graham Jones is Senior Archivist and Head of the Welsh Political Archive at the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth.



Peter Stead

Miraculous Grand Slam lessons for Wales

In our daily press pocket cartoons often speak more profoundly and memorably than words and I remember sometime in the 1990s reflecting poignantly on a cartoon by the late and great Gren. He had a father taking a son across Westgate Street and into the Arms Park. Looking up, the son inquires, "Dad, what's a Grand Slam?" Well, as of St. Patrick's Day 2012 there cannot be a man, woman or child in Wales who doesn't know the answer to that question. Page after page in the *Western Mail* (and its supplements) and programme after programme on the BBC will have ensured that everyone understands that this is the most important triumph since the winning of the Second World War. Our national identity has been well and truly confirmed.

At the stadium it was feel-good time as joy broke out on the highly-decorated faces of the jester-hatted, red-shirted army of zealots. There were growls of red-wined mellowed satisfaction from the more respectable red-scarf and barbour-wearing enthusiasts sandwiched between them. Everyone seemed to know that this was the third Grand Slam in eight years, but perhaps it was only the older fans who remembered that the Slam of 2005 was the first for 27 years. Grand Slams are not easily achieved. Wales has only won 11 (there had been an earlier barren period between 1911 and 1950). Youngsters would do well to appreciate just how remarkable this season's results have been, and as the euphoria subsides we need to look closely at what made this Grand Slam possible.

Gren's cartoon had appeared at a time of sheer misery for Welsh rugby fans. I remember a run of attending eleven consecutive defeats at Cardiff and thinking that the game in Wales was dying a death. We had no world-class forwards, we had no big men, our players were not hard enough, carried the wrong kind of weight, lacked real fitness and there was little mid-field creativity.

Most worrying of all, we wondered whether the administrators of the game were capable of turning things around, especially given the higher demands of the professional era. Even now, three grand slams into a new century, I find it hard to believe that things have been turned around so completely. Certainly, mistakes have been made. The Regional formula will almost certainly need to be rethought, but the manner in which both the national game has been placed on a sound business footing and the national team prepared have bordered on the miraculous.

There are lessons for Wales as a whole to learn. Welsh rugby set out to recruit and pay the best coaching staff in the world (a Kiwi and an Englishman) and allowed them to buy the best available training facilities. Suddenly the new confidence in Wales generally and in rugby in particular allowed a cosmopolitan dimension and players came into the Welsh squad who might well, if the mediocrity of the 1990s had continued, looked for international honours elsewhere. There had once been a shameful episode in which Wales had attempted to smuggle in ineligible players. Now Welsh rugby was genuinely recruiting players who might well have been tempted to use the other half of their dual qualifications. We had long been used to reading of Irish players born around the globe. Today not all Welsh players are born in Cefneithin and Blackwood.

Without doubt the biggest lesson to be learnt concerns the players themselves. The game of Rugby has changed enormously in the professional era. It is a far more demanding sport than it was in the Welsh golden eras of the past. The required degrees of fitness, concentration, bravery, discipline, determination, and media savvy are now infinitely greater. Of course, the financial rewards are greater too, but that should not prevent us from having an enormous respect and admiration for the yes, miraculous

way in which a new generation of young world-class athletes have arrived to grace the Welsh team. Where on earth did Leigh Halfpenny, Alex Cuthbert, George North, Sam Warburton and, especially, Dan Lydiate come from? What did we ever do to deserve them? Every night I give thanks, hoping that the youth of Wales are learning the obvious lesson that they need to 'go forth and do likewise'.

Rugby is by far the most widely reported (and hyped) aspect of Welsh popular culture but it is not the only success story. The Swansea City Football Club has followed the same trajectory. Just a decade ago the Club faced disaster but an inspired group of local businessmen launched a new era by combining a more professional approach with a very clear commitment to play a more attractive and intelligent brand of football. What was vital in their transformation was the decision to opt for a different kind of manager. Sound economics went hand-in-hand with the pursuit of quality and style. The Swans have quite rightly earned unprecedented praise from the pundits. However, they know that there is work to be done not least in establishing an academy so that the city can return to the old days when it produced its own world-class stars.

Maybe it was Welsh National Opera and the National Orchestra of Wales that first brought international standards to Welsh cultural life but it can be argued that it is in sport that the nation is being offered a fuller template for the future. Welsh Rugby, the Swans and Welsh Athletics had all been facing ignominy but they saw a way forward in opting for business common sense, international quality, a cosmopolitan outlook and above all in encouraging an elite group of individual athletes to see that discipline and hard work could result in glory. Their successes have won new audiences and given Wales as a whole a new sense of pride.

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Today that era looks altogether like sepia-veiled history. In its place Welsh democracy has been born with the creation of the National Assembly that was granted primary legislative powers in last year's referendum. While still struggling with the downturn, the Welsh economy has broken free of what 25 years ago was a third-world structure and developed a more balanced profile. Meanwhile, Welsh culture has flourished with sport, the arts and the media all gaining recognition on the world stage. Throughout these 25 years these changes have been closely followed, analysed and promoted by the activities of the Institute. In this period our size and influence has grown in response to the emergence of Wales's civic culture. We now have a staff of six, a high-powered Board of Trustees reflecting every aspect of Welsh life, over 1,000 individual members, more than 100 Fellows, and 150 corporate members. We have developed a branch network that covers the whole of Wales, produced a raft of publications including our journal *Agenda*, and launched a daily online news magazine ClickonWales.

To celebrate our 25th anniversary we will be publishing *25/25 Vision: Welsh Horizons across 50 years*, a collection of essays in which 25 writers cast their minds back over their experience of the past quarter-of-a-century in Wales and reflect on what this inspires them to hope for in the next 25 years. It will be an opportunity for us to look forward to what we can hope our country will achieve in the next few decades and plan for the continuing contribution that will be made by the Institute. It will be a moment to reflect that all our achievements and our continuing contribution depends on the vital support of our members. As a charitable trust we rely on our membership to sustain us and to guarantee our independence. Without the membership the IWA would not exist and Wales would lose part of the intelligence that is so vital in steering its course.

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