

the welsh agenda



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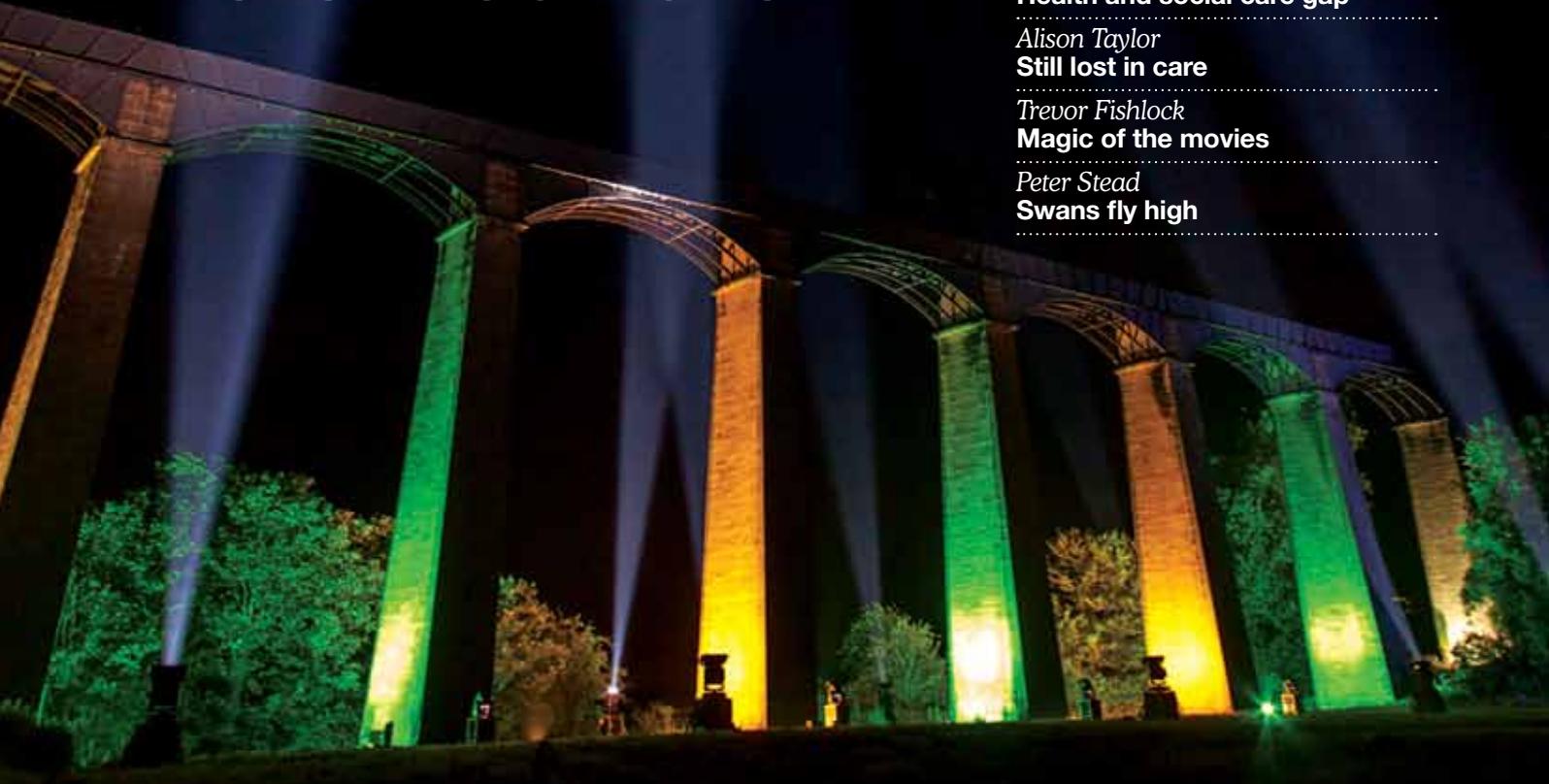
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Still lost in care

Trevor Fishlock
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Swans fly high

Reinvention of Welsh canals



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An Assembly fit for purpose

Wales has been fortunate in the last decade in having had three fundamental examinations of the devolution settlement: the Richard Commission that reviewed the capacity and powers of the National Assembly in 2004, the Holtham Commission that looked into ways of funding the Assembly and the Welsh Government in 2009, and now the Silk Commission, whose Phase 1 report has dealt with the devolution of powers over taxation (see page 16). The first two provided bodies of evidence that have stood the test of time and sets of recommendations firmly based on that evidence. The Silk Commission's first report, published in November, is in the same mould.

Taken together, we would have a larger, fairly elected, fit-for-purpose Assembly (*pace* Richard), a Welsh Government fairly funded (*pace* Holtham) and (*pace* Silk) a Welsh Government responsible for a set of taxation and borrowing tools that would move it, and Welsh politics as a whole, from an adolescent to an adult phase of their existence.

The problem has been summoning the will for implementation amidst common calculations of party advantage and not a few fissures. The move to law-making powers, post the Richard Commission, was initially crab-like, creating Legislative Competence Orders by which the National Assembly sought endless permissions to legislate from Westminster. Thankfully, the 2011 referendum consigned these to a glass case in the constitutional museum. However, Richard's other recommendations to increase the size of the Assembly, widen its powers and change its method of election remain on the table.

Similarly with the Holtham Commission report, whose methodologies and conclusions were not only robust enough to withstand UK Treasury scrutiny, but also sensible enough to merit amending the proposals for taxation powers for Scotland first advanced by its own Calman Commission. Those Holtham amendments are now embodied in the Scotland Act 2012. Yet a rational, needs-based reform of the Barnett formula, that was central to Holtham, has run into a combination of post-recession austerity that has intensified normal Treasury instincts, and a Scottish roadblock to change that many believe will survive even after the 2014 referendum on independence.

Holtham and the Silk Commission's report on taxation and borrowing powers

deserve better. Silk has relied heavily on the Holtham Commission's work, but Silk's more political composition has grafted on a degree of pre-emptive political compromise that, in a rational world, should increase the chances of implementation. There is nothing in it that should frighten the horses. On income tax the sharing of power between Cardiff and Westminster (and the devolution of other minor taxes) would still see the Welsh Government covering only 25 per cent of its expenditure, at best, from this source. There is an argument that it should cover at least a third of its expenditure in this way for the improvement in accountability to bite.

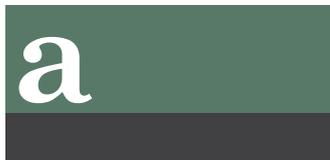
In addition, the recommendations for improved economic and taxation statistics for Wales and for the creation of a robust Treasury function within Welsh Government would also be big gains in themselves. Wales need these tools both to make its case and to introduce more rigour into its own government.

Unfortunately, the chances of a foot-dragging response are high. Labour is nervous of giving the Conservative Party in Wales a taxation story with which to beguile the Welsh public. The First Minister has made his response conditional on Barnett reform – or 'fair funding', as it is now referred to – safe in the knowledge that that is a long way from being on Mr Osborne's 'to do' list. The Conservative Party itself will be torn between an instinctive belief that there is a relationship between taxation powers and proper accountability and, on the other hand, its own 'slippery-slopers' who believe that devolution is getting out of hand. Even the Liberal Democrats and Plaid Cymru, who ought to be fully supportive of these changes, may fear the practicalities of a referendum on taxation powers not to mention how this will play in an Assembly election in 2016.

The job of civil society in Wales in the coming years must be to ensure that any incipient timidity on the part of our politicians, from whatever party, is exposed and challenged. It will not be long before the parties start thinking of their manifestoes for the 2015 General Election. Those manifestoes will have to take account of the result of the Scottish referendum on independence, whatever that may be. They must not be silent on this agenda for Wales. We have too much to lose.

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Cover: The Pontcysyllte viaduct that carries the Llangollen canal over the valley of the River Dee



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Coming Up

• Making Sense of the NHS in Wales

In association with the General Medical Council

Wed 16 January 2013 11.00am – 4.00pm, Novotel, Cardiff
The future of the NHS in Wales has never been more contested. There are unprecedented pressures on budgets, dire warnings about the unsustainability of the current package of services, and at the same time a general acceptance that we need to get the NHS and people working together to improve their health.

Keynote speakers: Professor Marcus Longley, Director Institute for Health and Social Care, University of Glamorgan; Rachel Podolak, Head of Welsh Affairs, General Medical Council; Professor Ceri Phillips, Swansea University; and Dr Stephen Monaghan, Public Health Wales.

£70 (£56 IWA Members)

• Launch of IWA Inspire Wales Awards

Thurs 24 January, 10.30am, City Hall, Cardiff

Official launch of the 2013 competition (Entry free)

• Renewable energy, devolution and development

Breakfast meeting

Cardiff February 2013 – date and venue tbc

Launch of two reports: one examining the economic impact of onshore wind power in Wales, and the other on how devolution has influenced renewable energy delivery.

Keynote speakers: Professor Max Munday, Cardiff Business School, and Richard Cowell, Cardiff School of Planning and Geography.

• IWA National Education Conference**Beyond PISA 2013: the next wave of improvement**

Cardiff, February 2013 – date and venue tbc

The PISA results that rank Welsh school performance against other OECD countries will be published in December 2013, with the likelihood that Wales will be still slipping behind. This conference examines what we should be planning now to ensure enhanced performance in our secondary schools.

£70 (£56 IWA Members)

• IWA National Economy Conference**Making Wales Competitive**

In association with PwC and CBI Wales

Fri 15 March, 2013 9.30am – 4.00pm, Parc Thistle Hotel, Cardiff

The Welsh Government is seeking ways to fund major infrastructure projects in Wales to boost the economy, improve employment prospects and build for the future of the country. What options does it have in pursuing these objectives? Could a new investment vehicle prove successful in attract city investors such as those controlling bond funds? What scope will there be for the Welsh Government to utilise borrowing?

Keynote speakers: UK Government Minister tbc; Gerald Holtham, special adviser to the Welsh Government; Rob Lewis, Chairman, Wales and West, PwC

£90 (£72 IWA members)

• The future of North Wales**North Wales branch research conference, Llandudno**

Late March

Further information on the IWA website

Just Published

• 25/25 Vision: Welsh horizons across 50 years

Edited by John Osmond and Peter Finch

£11.99

More information: www.iwa.org.uk

Symbol of the Welsh dream

Mererid Hopwood unpacks what we can learn about ourselves from our national anthem

Were I to ask *Who are you?* and you failed to remember, it would be fair to say that you had lost, at least in part, your sense of identity. The act of remembering is core to our sense of recognising and knowing who we are. To some extent, we try to discipline our memories, controlling how much time and value we divide between the unpleasant and the pleasant. This is part of the secret that allows us to survive and move on.

If this is true of individuals, it's equally true of a group of people such as a family or a nation. Reliving common memories creates a sense of shared identity and of belonging. Consider the adopted child. The child and parents don't have the same genes, yet they are members of the same family. They belong together because they share the memory of when cousin Anna got married, when the parrot next door bit John's finger, when Great Uncle Elwyn died ...

In English this 'remembering together' is called 'commemoration', a word that has become associated with celebration. Celebrating the act of remembering together is essential if we wish to confirm and strengthen the sense of belonging together. And while an individual might only be able to discipline his or her memory to some extent, a group can do so to a much greater extent. Celebrating a nation's memory is a matter of choice and will. Thus, studying what a group of people choose to remember and celebrate is important if we wish to understand who those people are.

In Wales, when we come together to celebrate almost anything we usually sing the National Anthem, and like every other, ours is an expression of our identity as a people. It doesn't take long to find that the anthem's main concern is the expression of patriotic passion through a love for the

Welsh language. The clues come early. After 'fathers', the next to be mentioned are the 'bards' for whom language is of the essence. The resounding refrain emphasises this with its plea for the survival of the old language, and the last verse declares that the creative energy of the Welsh language, in words and song, is stronger than the might of the sword. (I shall return to the fact that it is a singularly personal anthem, referring to 'my land', later.)

Thus it appears, that if we wish to use the anthem to learn something of our identity, we must first look at the concept of language and ask: what exactly is the relationship between the language we speak and our identity? Asking this takes us immediately to the realms of philosophy and that awkward conundrum about the link between language and thought - the way we think about ourselves and about everything else for that matter. How do we think *without* language? Indeed, *can* we think without it? But first, perhaps it would be useful to reflect on what makes a language, what are its constituent parts?

Every language has its own words. We have in Welsh words that are completely different from those in any other. But hold on... are they really *completely* different? Examining any good dictionary soon reveals that most words are promiscuous. Elements of so many Welsh words are found in dozens of other Indo-European languages. Take the Welsh *ieuanc* and compare it with *juvenis* (Latin), *young* (English), *jung* (German) *jóven* (Spanish) and *yuvan* (Sanskrit). Fine. So language is more than words. Aha! It is grammar too. Without grammar, a series of words, each of which can be understood on its own, may well make no sense (and after all, the main purpose of language must

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be to convey meaning). By contrast, with grammar even nonsense words can appear to make sense. Remember Lewis Carroll's *Jabberwocky*?

So is this what makes a language: the combination of words held together by grammar? Was it Stephen Pinker who remarked that an alien visitor to this planet would be more surprised by how similar the languages of the world are rather than by how different! Healthy humans everywhere control breathing, tongue and larynx to produce sounds that enable us to communicate meaning. But perhaps the ultimate wonder is that the grammar of every language allows them to differentiate between subject, verb and object - what Chomsky calls the 'universal grammar'. Some languages depend on pitch to achieve this differentiation. In Welsh we use mutations, while German uses the order of words in a sentence... one misplaced word could see you baking your husband rather than the cake.

Yet the 'tower-of-babel-effect' has occurred, and in spite of a 'universal grammar' and the similarities in the roots of words, we cannot really communicate meanings to each other across languages. There must therefore be some other constituent of language, something more that makes each language unique. This must surely be 'context' - and in the context (no pun intended) of this discourse, this could surely be labelled 'culture'.

When people migrate in order to flee wars or famine, today as ever before, those who move together necessarily grow closer to one another and more distanced from the ones left behind. This leads to a new 'context', a new 'shared-existence', which in turn leads to the creation of a new family or tribe. A new culture develops as a new way of co-working and a new way of thinking common to the group of migrants emerge. A new language evolves too. But the next step is the difficult-to-define moment. When does language cease to be merely a means of describing thoughts and actions, and become the very catalyst (or agent) for



Owain Glyndŵr - "symbol of the dream of the Welsh that one day they could live in a self-governing country". This portrait is a computer-generated image produced in an S4C documentary on 1 March 2012 by Wild Dreams Films. The process of creating the image started by making a basic mask from the Glyndŵr marble statue in Cardiff City Hall.

thoughts and actions?

Some philosophers hold that language circumscribes the range of possible thought, arguing: if we do not have a word or construction for something, then we cannot think it. I do not completely concur. But we must accept that once we speak a particular language it is surely difficult to measure how that language affects our ability to think. After all, it's much easier to think following a well-trodden path of familiar words than to try to think things that have no ready-made words to hand. (The pursuit of these kinds of thoughts is probably the spring for creative expression. When everyday language falls short, we turn to music, dance, painting, and poetry).

What clues do we have in Welsh to suggest that our way of thinking is different from others, or that the language offers at least the possibility for its speakers to think differently? Let's for a moment compare the English 'I want', 'I need', 'I fear' and 'I own' with the indigenous, idiomatic Welsh 'mae eisiau arnaf' (literally: there is a want on me), 'mae angen arnaf' (there is a need on me), 'mae ofn arnaf' (there is fear on me) and 'rwy'n meddu ar' (I'm in possession on). In English, these expressions are in the first person singular (with a capital I), while in Welsh (apart from 'rwy'n meddu ar') are third person constructions, but each relates back to the first person by the use of the preposition 'ar' (on) in its matching

declension. In other words, the want, need, fear or own does not seem to arise from within the speaker/subject, but comes to him or her from outside. The difference is subtle but significant. Or take the English phrase 'to talk to someone' and the Welsh 'siarad â rhywun' (talk with someone). The former seems more didactic, the latter conveys more the sense of dialogue.

Others scholars however place emphasis on the way the natural habitat influences a people's way of thinking, insisting that thought is at least as much a product of landscape as it is of language. There are three in this marriage. In his 1911 *Hanes Cymru* Part 1, O. M. Edwards observes that this land was populated by the small, dark Iberians before the Celts, and believes that the Welsh have inherited the dreamy understanding of the former and the energy of the latter. But he explains that we are described as Celts and not Iberians, because the Iberians lost their language and learned that of the conquerors. Not, however, before adapting the newly acquired language. His theory is that while Wales could lose its language many times again, the people here will always change any new language until that language can express the peculiar characteristics of their way of thinking, not perhaps through words, but through constructions and turns of phrase. He believes that there is something intrinsically Welsh about the way the people who live on this

particular piece of land think, as though the land itself - in partnership with the language and the mind - contributes to produce unique ways of thinking. In his collection published in 1972 *Cerddi'r Cywilydd* (Poems of Shame) Gerallt Lloyd Owen says something similar:

A chawsom iaith, er na cheisiem hi,
oherwydd ei hias oedd yn y pridd
eisoes,
a'i grym anniddig ar y mynyddoedd.

And we inherited a language without
seeking her,
because her passion was in the earth
before us
and her restless strength on the
mountains.

To ask 'Who was here first?' is pointless, in Wales as in any other country. What's important is that whoever is here now is humble and creative enough to tune into what and who has gone before, to listen out for the 'restless strength' and hear the 'passion in the earth', and having heard it, to respect it and adopt (perhaps adapt) its best attributes into the ever-evolving language of the land.

One question worth asking here, at least in passing is: when we try to teach or learn a new language, do we pay enough attention to its context, its culture? A Welsh speaker, on hearing 'calon lân' (a clean heart) will tacitly know that it is always 'llawn daioni' (full of goodness), or that a cry of 'A oes heddwch?' (is there peace?) is followed by a collective cry of 'Heddwch!' (Peace!). If you have mastered all the mutations in Welsh or know all the nuances of the subjunctive mood in Spanish say, and yet do not know the nursery rhymes and sayings of those languages, can you really claim to have 'crossed the bridge' into the land of the fluent?

Thus it seems that language encompasses words, grammar, place, people and peculiarities of thought processes, all melding to make sense within a particular culture and context that its speakers share together. And with this notion of

'togetherness', we return to the notion of 'commemoration', and are reminded that it's time to consider those 'brave warriors' who gain such prominence in the first verse of our anthem. And if ever there was one such warrior, Owain Glyn Dŵr was he.

In the blurb on the back of Professor Rees Davies's excellent pocket book, published in 2002, *Owain Glyn Dŵr; Trwy Ras Duw, Tywysog Cymru* (Owain Glyn Dŵr, By the Grace of God, Prince of Wales), the author is praised for having portrayed Owain as a man of "flesh and blood", as a "vengeful and cruel leader ... our chief national hero". And this is where I begin to feel uneasy, just as uneasy as when I sing about the said 'brave warriors' of the anthem. I find myself asking: do we really want a 'vengeful and cruel man' as our national hero? Is it such a good idea to commemorate 'brave warriors'?

In Brecht's play *Galileo* (1955), Andrea the laboratory assistant says: "It's a sad country that has no heroes", to which Galileo answers: "No, it's a sad country that needs heroes". You will recall that it was Galileo who challenged the Church by confirming Copernicus' findings that the earth goes round the sun, but recanted in the face of threats. The question Brecht poses is: how should we view such a man - as hero or coward? A coward for recanting, or a hero for buying his life and hence time to proceed with his research? I cannot answer that - but it does confirm for me that the question of defining heroes is a difficult business.

But returning to the review of Professor Davies' book, we see that it also says that Glyn Dŵr is "a symbol of the dream of the Welsh, the hope in their hearts that one day they could win the right to live in an independent self-governing country". Looked at in that light somehow things are quite different.

Let's go back to the anthem and those warriors. Praising a warrior, brave or otherwise, I find repugnant. But this phrase is coupled with the next: 'very good patriots', and things alter somewhat. The aim of the anthem's

warriors is virtuous, as is Glyn Dŵr's, namely Freedom. The anthem goes on to tell us that 'for freedom these warriors, these good patriots, gave their blood'. What we must ask is whether today we can separate the means from the ends? Can a government, like Britain's for example, really insist that its aim is to establish a just system for, say, the people of Afghanistan or Iraq, when it uses unjust means?

What does Freedom entail? It's more than the opposite of being shackled. Is it, as the review of Professor Davies' book suggests, living in an independent state which governs itself? Surely it's more than that too. It has to do with *how* we govern ourselves. It must surely encompass the idea of living in a civilised manner without violence and oppression. And I'm convinced that we, as a people, will never be free while we are part of a system that oppresses others. To be free is to be free from violence and the threat of violence. Is it not strange that we no longer keep order in the classroom by threatening the cane, yet still we insist that the way to keep peace in the world is by threatening the push-button-bomb?

Is Wales part of the system of oppression in the world? I'm afraid it is. And if 'Wales', then so, too, 'we' and 'I'. The anthem may speak in one breath of *her* noble warriors, but it also speaks of 'the land of *my* fathers' - these are *our* warriors, *yours* and *mine*. Consider how much of our country is under the control of the military, from St Athan to Anglesey, from Castle Martin to Epynt, and many points between. With the limited independence we have, we do not protest at these intrusions into our land and air-space, where the techniques of oppression and violence are learned. On the contrary, those who govern us seem to welcome them.

So, perhaps, when we commemorate Owain Glyn Dŵr in the 21st Century, we can consider the names of three different kinds of heroes, names which should be echoing throughout Wales in 2012 of all years:

- Gwynfor Evans, born 100 years ago,

the principled politician who on 12 July 1940 told a Military Tribunal in Carmarthen's Guildhall, "I am a pacifist first and a nationalist second".

- Born 200 years ago Henry Richard, the Apostle of Peace, who knocked on doors the world over to persuade people, the press and their rulers that negotiation was a better way of resolving disputes than war.
- Waldo Williams, whose bust, beautifully sculpted by John Meirion Morris, was unveiled in October.

These are three great names that give us a reason to commemorate; three heroes and not a single warrior. In his collection *Dail Pren* (Leaves of a Tree, 1955), Waldo Williams asks: "What is it to govern a kingdom?" and answers: "a craft that is still crawling". I should like to suggest that we shall be forever crawling as a self-governing people unless we begin to understand the relationship between us and our physical and cultural environment, our past and our future, the way we speak and think. We need to ask what is a goal suitable for us, and how shall we reach for it?

We must realise that it will not do simply to help ourselves to off-the-shelf policies made by others for others. Creating, even adapting policy is more complicated than merely translating it. For in translating, we must be careful that we do not unwittingly import another's way of thinking to the detriment of our own. We must always ask, not only are the words right, but is the content in sympathy with whom we are, and whom we wish to be? Do they reflect and create an appropriate context? And if the thoughts are another's, do they enrich rather than impoverish?

Let me give you just one example where the context has been respected. Recently I was told that in universities in England the term 'academic misconduct' is used for what in Wales we call 'unfair practice'. One thing, two labels. But what a revealing difference! 'Academic misconduct' focuses really only on the individual who perpetrates

it, while 'unfair practice' reflects the effect of the individual's behaviour on the wider community. It's tempting to romanticise and see in this a throwback to the philosophy underlying the laws of Hywel Dda. Be that as it may, it certainly reveals a different way of thinking, though in this instance, interestingly, not expressed in a different language – remember O. M. Edwards.

To progress from crawling, we will need to examine every model of governance. It's sometimes worth considering that an ancient Athenian, for instance, would not be able to comprehend our present version of democracy where one man or woman 'represents' at least 50,000 people. For, when, after the wars with Sparta, 30 represented 30,000 - one for every 1,000 - the Greeks described it as 'tyranny'. 'Democracy' was the term used when 6,000 represented 30,000 - one for every five. And what's more, these 6,000 were chosen by lottery. Every eligible name went into the hat, because everyone had responsibility for the state, and whoever came out landed himself a job. (Oh yes, 'himself', I'm not supporting the Athenian model wholesale, of course - it excluded women and depended on slaves). The ancient Athenian might well say that in voting for a representative we somehow cede responsibility.

Yet, we call our people 'Cymry', derived from 'Combrogos', indicating that we view one another as people who share a piece of land. And so perhaps it's time to create a governance that listens to its own language, treating common assets as personal responsibility, where we really do consider that Wales is 'my country', as we claim in the anthem – the country each *I* shares with each *you*. Perhaps we could then restore confidence in one another rather than in systems where the process is more important than the individual, and where one process only leads to further process devised to check on the first, and then ultimately, when all processes fail, the system drifts into a witch-hunt. Only, we are not witches. We are brothers and sisters, sharing a

common land. In ceding responsibility, we lose trust in one another, and when things go wrong, as they must do from time to time, we become less prepared to look sympathetically at the motives for the actions of others, and ultimately, less prepared to forgive.

Returning to Waldo's poem the next question is, "what is it to arm a kingdom?" Waldo answers: "it's putting the knife in the baby's hand". The horror of this image reminds us that kitting out a country with an army is madness - the baby will hurt itself and everybody else. To claim that we should seek peace or freedom through brandishing weapons is asking for bloody chaos. What's more, freedom gained thus is unjust, and therefore no freedom. The means and the end must be one. When Ghandi led the Salt March, he was right to insist on this. His was a march for freedom without weapons. Truth and freedom is one. Satyagraha: hold fast onto the truth.

By all means, let's continue to remember Owain Glyn Dŵr, and to sing the anthem with gusto. But let us, too, remember the aim behind the campaigns of those warriors of old. And, having learned from the past, let us no longer divorce the means from the ends. Of course we still want Freedom for Wales and the world, but let's campaign for that Freedom in a way that is appropriate for us. After all, we are a people who share a piece of land. We also know an old language that allows its speakers to think of the untranslatable *tangnefedd*, a word that means something like 'peace', 'peace-made', 'reconciled tranquillity' and much more. Let thoughts of this possible *tangnefedd* way lead us to Freedom.

Mererid Hopwood, a lecturer in University of Wales: Trinity St David's in Carmarthen, was the first woman to win the bardic chair at the National Eisteddfod, in Denbigh in 2001. This essay is based on the inaugural IWA Galeri, Caernarfon Glyndwr Day annual lecture she delivered in September.

S4C at 30

Gandhi and the owls



T. James Jones

It was in the 1960s that I got to know Gwynfor Evans well enough to realise that an essential element of his character was stubbornness. I lived in Carmarthen during the years prior to his historic triumph in winning the 1966 by-election, and witnessed his unstinting determination to fight against the odds to achieve his goals on behalf of Plaid Cymru.

But the wily George Thomas, his main rival in the House of Commons, soon began to set a trap for Gwynfor and Plaid Cymru by arranging the 1969 Investiture of the Prince of Wales. Controversially, Gwynfor refused to attend the ceremony at Caernarfon, but was obliged, as the local MP, to welcome the Prince to Carmarthen as part of the celebratory tour of Wales.

This action was perceived as an indecisive inconsistency on Gwynfor's part, and it provided his opponents with constant ammunition to contest subsequent elections, which finally resulted in Gwynfor losing the Carmarthen seat to the Labour Party in 1979.

But 1979 was also a disappointing year for Gwynfor because of the dismal failure of the Yes vote in the Referendum. This plunged him into the grips of a depression which threatened his political career and his own health. He regarded the 1979 losses, along with the earlier one suffered at Tryweryn, as his own personal failures. It seemed that his once acclaimed leadership of Plaid Cymru could be coming to a very sad end.

His relationship with Cymdeithas yr Iaith Gymraeg which was led and inspired by some of his own offspring became strained to breaking point. He became regarded by friend and foe alike as the 'fallen saviour' of his beloved Wales. He more or less confined himself to his home at Talar Wen, near Llangadog, enduring sleepless nights of personal guilt at his utter failure to lead Wales to the 'promised land' of his dreams. The owls in the trees surrounding the homestead seemed at times to mock him.

However, ironically 1979 also proved to be the year of his salvation. On 12 September of that year the Home Secretary, William Whitelaw, announced in a lecture to the Royal Television Society in Cambridge that the government was to renege on its manifesto election pledge to set up a Welsh language television channel. Gwynfor immediately seized on the opportunity to organise a strong body of opinion, which included leading members of the reconciled Welsh Language Society, against the Thatcher government's betrayal. Protests such as a refusal to pay the television licence fee were organised by Plaid Cymru, effectively endorsing a policy of unconstitutional direct action, a move which Gwynfor had been forced to reject throughout the years of his parliamentary election candidatures.

Then the thought of adopting the most extreme mode of direct action began to take root in Gwynfor's re-energised mind, namely his threat to fast to death unless the government changed its mind. His one initial doubt concerning this course of action was whether it could be reconciled with his pacifist Christian principles, and he immediately sought the advice of his trusted mentor in such matters, Pennar Davies. Among many other considerations, the example of their mutual hero, Gandhi, was cited.

As soon as Gwynfor's fears were allayed (Pennar even offered to join him in the threatened fast), the next painful step was to inform his wife Rhiannon and their children. The poignancy of the situation

was emotionally charged to the utmost during those days by the birth of Hedd, their tenth grandchild, at the beginning of April. And the celebrations of his sixty eighth birthday on the first of September must have been very muted. Rhiannon's steadfastness, loyalty and courage made her a true heroine of this story.

In the meantime, Gwynfor had been persuaded by his son in law, Ffred Ffransis, to postpone the start of the fast for a few months as a pragmatic move, not only in order to allow the Thatcher government time to deal with the situation, but more importantly, in order to set in motion a number of events that would galvanise support for the cause. Gwynfor came to regard it as his final opportunity to endow his leadership with an enduring influence on the political life of Wales. It is ironical that his threat to sacrifice his own life was his salvation as a politician.

Having got the support of his family and after sharing his intention with a very select group of Plaid Cymru members, on 3 May 1980 he finally went public by suddenly conveying his intentions to the Plaid Cymru executive committee members, but only when the chair was dealing with the 'any other business' item!

In spite of the division within the Plaid Cymru ranks caused by the announcement, Gwynfor, along with Peter Hughes Griffiths and Dafydd Williams meticulously planned a series of successful rallies to coincide with making the actual arrangements for the fast. That was to take place in Gwynfor's home at Talar Wen, Llangadog, starting on 5 October. The local public hall was booked for the anticipated press conferences. Umpteen television, radio and newspaper interviews took place. The story reached many countries beyond the British Isles. Cabinet papers show that it became one of the main issues of the Thatcher government.

Then on 17 September, ironically the very day that Gwynfor received by post the summons for refusing to pay the television licence fee, the 'not for turning lady' relented, famously being forced to make her one and only U-turn.

It had a very mixed reception at Talar Wen. Gwynfor yearned for a few more weeks of campaigning on behalf of the status of the Welsh language and of Plaid Cymru's cause. But although he felt that the game had ended too soon he was persuaded to accept the score painted on the walls of Westminster, 'Gwynfor 1, Whitelaw 0' as a win.

However, I have no doubt whatsoever, that had Gwynfor begun his fast, the unyielding stubbornness which he portrayed throughout his life would have taken him, if necessary, to the bitter end.

T. James Jones (Jim Parc Nest) is a poet, dramatist and Archdruid of the National Eisteddfod. He wrote the drama documentary *Gwynfor*, which recreates the critical year 1979-80 in the life of the Plaid Cymru leader, broadcast by S4C on 1 November to mark its 30th anniversary.

Semiotics of the first hour



Euryn Ogwen Williams

When the fader was opened on the dot of 6.00pm on Monday 1 November 1982, there was no going back. That first hour was not an all-singing-and-dancing celebration launch. It wasn't meant to be an award winner. The notorious launch of Harlech Television in 1968 had made the television industry in Wales rather wary of celebrity launches, anyway. But in S4C's case it was never an option. There were too many targets to hit in that first hour to risk a glitzy light entertainment show, even if we'd had the resources to make one.

That first hour is in the National Screen and Sound Archive at the National Library of Wales in

Aberystwyth and it is loaded with signs, signals and symbols communicating the key elements, some contradictory, that had to be nailed in that first hour.

For example, the hour begins with the station ident. The brand colours were red, black and white, dominant colours that symbolised confidence and an independent spirit. Inside the frame of each ident were specially filmed images of scenes from different parts of Wales to signify that S4C was a channel for every part of the country. Finally, and controversially, at the bottom of the screen WALES appeared from the left and CYMRU from the right and the letters WALE and YMRU disappeared leaving S4C at the centre. Sensing that this was a powerful but controversial signal, we had launched the brand concept with the idents a couple of months earlier to ensure that the debate would have run its course by opening night.

The concept was intended to give two signals. Firstly, S4C would not be a totally Welsh channel as there would be rescheduled English language Channel 4 programmes, too. Secondly, and more complex, there was a signal intended to address the fears of many Welsh speakers that we could be creating a ghetto for the language that would exclude the monoglot majority.

After the ident, Owen Edwards S4C's director, a charismatic and consummate presenter from his earliest days on television, welcomed viewers to Sianel Pedwar Cymru (an open invitation to the home of S4C). Every word was carefully chosen: *Croeso* (Welcome), *Cartref* (home) *aelwyd gynnes* (warm hearth), and *cynnau coelcerth* (lighting a beacon). All were clear signals that this was no traditional authoritarian broadcaster. Although it was inextricably tied to the politics that brought it into being, S4C would be a channel driven by the principles of public service broadcasting serving its community.

It is inevitable that S4C will always be associated with the passion of the reaction to the government's broken promise and the U-turn that followed in September 1980. The name of Gwynfor Evans is indelibly printed into its very

being. However, Gwynfor's threat and the subsequent resolution were about a much wider political vision than just a television channel.

The other key word on that opening night was *partneriaeth* (partnership). After long and difficult negotiations between S4C and HTV, which had engaged journalists over many months, this night had to underline the partnership, in Willie Whitelaw's words, of "good chaps", that would serve the people of Wales. The BBC was providing ten hours of programmes from the licence fee, HTV nine hours on a commercial basis, and the developing independent sector would, theoretically, provide three hours on a commercial basis. That made up the initial requirement of 22 hours per week of Welsh language programmes in 'peak'. The maths didn't quite work out that way and, because of the delay to HTV's supply, the independent producers took up the slack and were providing at least four hours per week. Programmes from all three sectors were shown on that opening night and promoted during the first hour.

The other partners were the Independent Broadcasting Authority and Channel 4. The former provided the funding (from the net advertising revenue of ITV) and broadcast the channel on its transmitters, while the latter provided the programmes in English that would be shown on the Fourth Channel in Wales.

The partnership with Channel 4 was very close and was demonstrated during the first hour when Jeremy Isaacs, Chief Executive of Channel 4, appeared in a chat with Owen. Channel Four had agreed that S4C would have the freedom to use its programmes in its own schedule. This was a massive concession as the expectations in the Broadcasting Act had been for an opt-out service, like the BBC and HTV in Wales. To make the statement, Channel 4 delayed its launch until the Tuesday and allowed S4C to show its opening night programmes a day early in Wales.

During that first hour too, we had the premiere of *Superted*. The little bear had become a mascot for S4C's early ambition. We actually only had one completed episode when we went on air, a fact that did not escape BBC journalists who made

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certain that the viewers of the news were informed at 7.00 that this was the case. But the little bear got in first and captivated the nation's children, of all ages.

That first hour also contained an expression of S4C's intention to have wide horizons and included good luck messages from all over the world. Bjorn Borg and Miss World were probably the most outlandish, but they were there as signals that S4C wanted to take Wales and the audience out to world as well as reflecting the community to itself.

For any fan of semiotic analysis, the hour between 6 and 7 on 1 November 1982, is a treasure trove of signals about S4C's positioning in the political and cultural structures of the time. Add to that the content of its magazine *Sbec*, which was distributed free of charge with TV Times, and you have a snapshot of the perception that S4C wanted to create in Wales and beyond. Doesn't it feel a long, long time ago?

Euryn Ogwen Williams was S4C's Director of Programmes from 1981 -1991.

Good chaps made it work



Chris Grace

"I give S4C a year before it is wound up," said a well known BBC Wales journalist and presenter to me in the summer of 1982, five months before our launch. That attitude was fairly typical, although no one else was quite so open and forthright. I had joined S4C almost a year before, inspired by the chutzpah of our Chair, Sir Goronwy Daniel, telling Leo Abse's Select Committee and the media that he knew nothing – 'Dim' – about broadcasting. A Big Man, I thought - I want to work for him.

It was a risky, life changing decision. I had a secure and well-paid management position at HTV. I was a Sais from Kent married into Sir Benfro with patchy GCSE Welsh. And S4C had been given only 3 years by a reluctant Mrs Thatcher to prove itself. So why?

I had arrived in Wales in 1970 as a television planner. With Welsh language scheduling a highly contentious issue, I became ever more aware of the linguistic divisions. Through Wendy, and then our children attending Welsh medium schools, I met and was moved by those who were fighting for a language and culture, some of whom had been imprisoned. Later I found myself in England vehemently defending Gwynfor Evans' courageous stance, one that finally brought a rare change of mind from the Iron Lady.

At heart I wanted our children to evolve in a nation at ease with itself. With a following wind I believed that S4C was central to achieving that and quite simply I wanted to be able to say in years to come 'I was there'.

The 15 months leading up to the launch on November 1st 1982, a day ahead of Channel Four, were progressively exhausting. My father dying that year made it the more poignant.

As with most start ups, we were woefully understaffed. With eight months to go, there were just 16 of us commissioning, purchasing, marketing, contracting, engineering, financing, and scheduling. When we went on air, there were still only 45 of us. Sir Goronwy assembled a brilliant Board. Alwyn Roberts and Glyn Tegai Hughes, both former BBC Governors, were wise and broadcasting savvy and gave no quarter when Goronwy was at his most imperious. Owen Edwards' leadership and integrity welded us into an ever growing family. He represented us compellingly and was outstanding at winning the all important battles in BBC London and Whitehall. In his black dog moments he was underpinned by Mair Owen, his chief of staff and the beating heart of S4C, and by Euryn Ogwen Williams whose flair and vision, with Emlyn Davies, created the conditions for the emerging independent sector.

Critical to the service were the two programme partners supplying the majority of the 22 hour service. BBC Wales under Geraint Stanley Jones was supportive from the start. However, the programme relationship with HTV was a commercial one and the contractual bargaining became fraught as transmission approached. Through the paper thin walls I could sometimes hear raised voices as different cultural mindsets clashed. With just weeks to go before 1 November, the deal was finally closed and the relationship with HTV under Huw Davies became as sturdy and fruitful as that with the BBC.

We worked as the S4C Headquarters in Sophia Close was rebuilt around us. For months our desks and papers were covered each morning in dust. One morning, late for a train to London and with reception blocked, Sir Goronwy with brolly, briefcase and bowler hat was seen coming down the two storey building via a vertical, and hazardous, fire escape ladder. Builders and staff alike watched open mouthed but we were fortified by his commitment. This tale went into the pantheon of stories about him. How when Lady Valerie left him for a weekend, she returned and upon opening the fridge found that instead of the delicacies prepared for him, Sir Goronwy had eaten the cat food. Or how when driving up late on a Sunday night from his Pembrokeshire home, he was listening so intently to a Learning Welsh programme, he completed a full circle of the Carmarthen roundabout and was nearly back in Letterston before he realized his mistake.

Aside from directing the launch campaign with the brilliant Ann Beynon, my role was to devise a weekly schedule that incorporated 22 hours of Welsh with 40 hours of Channel 4. The philosophies of both could not have been more different so I cherry picked. Out went Channel 4's hour long news, US basketball and *How to make a Quilt*. In came *American Football*, *Treasure Hunt*, and ..shhhh... a US import *Battlestar Galactica*. We hammocked weaker shows of either language between stronger ones and revelled in our devolved autonomy – the first UK channel to be completely free of London.

Our logo and branding caused controversy. Martin Lambie Nairn, creator of the Channel 4 logo, unveiled 'waleS4Cymru'. To this Sais, it seemed a brilliant design solution to a bilingual channel. But few Welsh speakers realized that their S4C would be broadcasting more English than Welsh programmes. Tensions and fears ran very deep. *Wales* coming ahead of *Cymru* in the logo provoked some graffiti - *Bradwr* (Traitor) - daubed on S4C's Sophia Close windows.

And then there was *SuperTed*, too English for some, originally offered by Cardiff born Mike Young to me at HTV but turned down by the company for fear of being sued by *Superman*. This bear now cleared the legal hurdles by meeting his fellow Super Hero in New York. *SuperTed* agreed to wear yellow not blue, to be powered by rocket boots not a cloak, and never ever to change in a phone box. He and *Superman* shook hands, *SuperTed* flew back to find *Wil Cwac Cwac* waiting for him in Mount Stuart Square and Jumping Juniper! the Welsh animation industry was born. The duo gave the launch campaign a colourful and distinctive boost.

Animation, expensive but of high quality, easily dubbable and with a long shelf life, gave S4C and Wales an immediate international profile. Subsequently this was complemented by documentaries, films such as *Hedd Wyn* and dramas such as *Joni Jones*.

The momentum was ratcheted upwards when the end of the Cold War inspired our new Chief Executive Geraint Stanley Jones to position S4C as a cultural and linguistic channel within the New Europe. Simultaneously, friend and colleague Geraint Talfan Davies suggested animating Shakespeare. At a time when animation was Disney, S4C turned away from Hollywood towards Moscow and Shakespeare, animated and then dubbed into over 20 languages, became a bridge between East and West.

Over the decade, with Huw Jones now at the helm, the channel facilitated pioneering partnerships with over 30 countries, amassing Oscar nominations, Emmies and Baftas. The Bible, opera, folk tales and literary classics such as *Y Mabinogi*,

Moby Dick, *Beowulf* and the *Canterbury Tales* were made accessible worldwide through a novel use of the art form, originated by and distributed from Wales.

But that was to come. In the autumn of our launch the UK press started to take a David/S4C versus Goliath/Channel 4 interest in us. Michael Buerk did a friendly piece and took away a *SuperTed* under his arm. In the *Sunday Times* Jan Morris was endlessly and authoritatively encouraging. But one leading journalist, Welsh but with no sympathy for the language and writing for the *Sunday Telegraph Colour* magazine, took us apart and had a revealing swipe at my messianic self. I still remember it. "Hells Bells," shouted Chris Grace as he rose from his empty desk. "It is so exciting!"

October passed in a blur as programmes began to roll into the Presentation suite to be timed and checked. Meanwhile all the scheduling, marketing and presentation elements, envisioned and started months previously, began to come together.

The countdown to 1 November began. We were all desperately tired and anxious. Had the campaign worked? Would the programming be strong enough? How would we assess the audience figures when we had nothing to compare them with? Above all, would we disappoint all those who had fought for the channel?

In that atmosphere I upset our esteemed Chairman and incurred the full blast of a former Mandarin's wrath. Without consulting him, I had arranged for a live feed of the launch to be fed to a London venue for MPs and the Welsh diaspora. Upon hearing this, the Secretary of State, Nicholas Edwards, said he would attend which in turn meant Sir Goronwy being in London not Cardiff for the launch. His dressing down was more a reflection of the strain he was under and typically he wrote a charming letter.

At six o'clock on Monday 1 November 1982 S4C came on air. The following night Channel Four did likewise. We waited anxiously for the ratings. They were good! We had beaten BBC2 into third place behind HTV and BBC1. Now we were helped by the UK press contrasting us favourably – and

unfairly - with the effing and blinding Channel Four/Bore/Swore. At the same time our on-air presentation was made to look amateur by an Equity strike which left great holes in the scheduled timings.

Six months later, with new programme stock running low, our ratings slipped and as night follows day the bad press followed. The *Sunday Times* called us "an ailing channel" and we felt frail and vulnerable through our first summer. But in the autumn HTV programming came properly on stream, and we steadied as, across the linguistic divide, audience loyalty and understanding of the channel grew. We even had an audience across the border. *SuperTed*, broadcast in Welsh six months ahead of the BBC's English transmission, was a hit in Liverpool!

So my journalist friend was wrong. Willie Whitelaw, Home Secretary when S4C was established, apparently said to a doubting senior civil servant, "Good chaps will make it work". He was right. S4C had a collection of Good Chaps that did make it work. The commitment of the Authority, staff and programme suppliers was like rock. All of us were driven by the knowledge that failure was not an option.

That commitment will always be at the heart of a channel that is still adapting to a monolingual, digital era. Happily the public service relationship of S4C and BBC Wales, the core of the service, is now strengthened structurally. My hope is that in a multi-channel environment increasingly searching for imaginative, well resourced content, S4C can revert to having an international role.

Our children have indeed grown up in a country at ease with itself, in a mature bilingual environment to which they want to contribute and in which to bring up our grandchildren. S4C was part of the engine of change that brought that about and I was privileged to be a part of it.

Chris Grace left S4C in 2003 to establish the Shakespeare Schools Festival www.ssf.uk.com, now the UK's largest youth drama festival.

Adventures of a young commissioning editor



Mari Beynon Owen

In 1987, I was appointed S4C's first Commissioning Editor for Youth Programmes. I was the Channel's first woman commissioning editor, at that time, the youngest in the UK and, to the great horror of several long established production executives in Wales, I had never even produced a television programme.

The appointment reflected the rather dare devil, confident mood which permeated the offices in Sophia Close and the collective desire to engage with a relatively untapped pool of musicians, video directors, performers, writers, poets and thinkers who could become creative drivers for the channel.

Perhaps 'Zeitgeist Editor' would have been a more appropriate job title for me, as my role was to pre-empt, promulgate and promote emerging talent, ensuring that the youth audience was reflected across all of S4C's programming. My brief was incredibly wide, incorporating factual, music, and drama programmes. But it was greatly facilitated by the collaborative cross-genre approach to programme commissioning adopted by the S4C commissioning team, in contrast to the defensive guarding of entrenched territorial divisions encountered at most broadcasters.

Due to S4C's arrangement to transmit programming by BBC Cymru and HTV Wales, there was already a 'youth' presence in the schedule with BBC Cymru's music programme, *Y Bocs*; HTV Wales' review show *Heno, Heno* and zany Eisteddfod spin-offs. With the arrival of independent *Criw Byw's Fideo 9*, presented by the enigmatic Eddie Ladd, and the current affairs strand *MC*, youth programmes were dotted across the schedule and

not confined to an isolated youth slot such as BBC 2's *DEF 2*. We held joint meetings with colleagues at BBC Cymru and HTV to review the programme mix, and shared the overall aim of further developing the youth audience.

Whilst flagship youth programmes such as ITV's *The Tube*; Channel 4's *Network 7* and *The Word*; and *DEF 2* were points of reference, the growing critical mass of creative activity here engendered great self-confidence. With John Peel also regularly featuring Welsh bands on his cult BBC Radio 1 show, there was a tremendous feeling that what was happening here was totally valid. Also it was becoming increasingly viable for our contributors to make a living out of their creative work. We were kick-starting a 'local' creative economy.

I was recently reminded of this by Gareth Potter's autobiographical show – *Gadael yr Ugeinfed Ganrif* ('Leaving the Twentieth Century') in which he conjures up the excitement and intensity of the period. He and collaborator Mark Lugg set up techno outfit *Ty Gwydr*. Mark designed T-shirts and provided graphics for *Criw Byw*; Gareth became an actor. In my mind they represent the aspirations of that generation – and indeed what should still be our aspirations – a credible platform for talented, creative people in Wales.

The overall ethos of Channel 4 and the promise of an independent sector willing to innovate really benefitted S4C, and youth programmes in particular, as by association, the fourth channel transmitted a sense of freedom. We were given permission to try out new ideas and most importantly to challenge the youth audience with completely different concepts in terms of Welsh language culture.

But our aspirations were not contained within Wales. From the outset, *Fideo 9* had a European and world music strand. Through S4C International we had access to international music videos which were shown alongside new video work directed by emerging Welsh directors such as Marc Evans. With bands now performing in Europe, music festival specials of *Yr Anrhefn*, *Jess*, *Maffia Mr Hughes* were filmed, which contributed to a real sense

of being part of European contemporary youth culture. I also commissioned an eclectic mix of programming, including *La Carrera*, a documentary on the famous road race in Mexico, directed by Richard Pawelko, and the fashion style series *Steil Eto* (Dressed to Thrill), a Teliesyn/HTV co-production with a Russian company.

In fact this series was the last production I oversaw as commissioning editor before leaving for BBC Network Television. I spent a surreal week in Moscow. The Russian crew were totally unreliable and so the Welsh crew ended up covering for them. If I remember rightly I was assistant wardrobe mistress. What was worse, there had been a mix-up at the hotel and no room had been allocated to me. For several nights I slept on a couch in a colleague's room as the management obviously did not think that a Welsh TV executive should take precedence over Russian guests.

On the last night we ended up by chance in the same restaurant as Luciano Pavarotti, who was performing at the Bolshoi. To our dismay he had ordered all the house specials in advance so we had to make do with the leftovers. As we joyfully toasted Pavarotti and our Russian hosts, I do remember thinking how wonderful it was that here we were playing our part in European media culture.

I had been encouraged and supported to help create new programme platforms, to widen the programme range, and most importantly, allow programme makers to develop their ideas. We were unhindered by the strictures of audience reach and viewing figure targets, and allocated generous programme budgets. It was a great time to follow instinct and let producers and directors indulge their creative passions.

In the nineties, as a genre, youth programmes quietly disappeared. Nonetheless, in Wales the legacy of that period of cultural adventure remains as many of those early pioneers are still creative 'drivers' across many different art forms and in the media.

Mari Beynon Owen is an Arts Management Consultant and Chair of Ymddiried, the Welsh Broadcasting Trust.

We need to burst out of our box



Ian Jones

30 years is quite a milestone, especially when you consider that I was here, working for S4C when it launched fully three decades ago. Back in 1982 I was a young programme finance manager who had ventured to Cardiff to work in the TV industry. There was a palpable excitement about the project that lay before us. We would provide a television service which would include programmes to meet the varying needs and tastes of the whole Welsh speaking population.

It was what TV channels did back then. In the mould of established services, S4C would be a home for children's programmes, as well as mature comedy, plus specific programmes for agricultural communities along with others for a more cosmopolitan audience. A full range of programmes to suit the full range of people – and we'd provide it all in Welsh.

Even in those days of relative stability within the UK broadcasting industry, the rumblings of change were already being felt. The BBC had long since been given a second channel – and used that channel to target specific audiences. It was a fairly subtle thing at that time, but such rumblings were the precursor to what would be an explosion of opportunities to provide specific content to specific groups of viewers.

As we now know, that explosion took place around the time of the millennium. As a result, we now have almost countless TV channels – many specialising in programmes for a specific demographic or interest group. We have online media available every minute of every day at the touch of a

button – from any device. It is a media environment we simply would not have believed possible on the day that S4C's first viewers watched Owen Edwards wander down the steps of our then headquarters to launch the service live on air back in 1982.

Given how the industry has developed, the challenge is completely different today to the one we faced in 1982. Now, it's time to forget the old-fashioned view of what a TV channel was. Our content has to break out of that box in the corner of the room and reach the people of Wales every hour of every day, wherever they are. The challenge is to provide Welsh speakers everywhere with all kinds of entertainment and information in our language – not just to reflect what's available in English, but to compete with what's available in English.

While language is of course at the core of S4C, modern Wales means a modern approach to fulfilling the needs of our population. Generally speaking we're a nation of two languages – but the dynamic is far more subtle than that. Some people are making an effort to speak Welsh and want programmes which help them to do so. This may not always mean programmes about learning Welsh – but it will always mean providing programmes which are genuinely interesting and pitched at a linguistic level that enables people to follow what's being said.

But the major challenge in this regard is for our programmes to speak in a voice that is accessible and familiar to the bulk of the population. This won't always please linguistic purists, but it will strengthen the connection between the audience and their channel. After all, unless we listen to the audience and provide what they tell us they want, one would have to ask what we are trying to achieve.

The proliferation of media and video in particular, means that now I can sit at home of an evening and choose from content from anywhere in the world to watch, listen to, play or interact with. And the fact that so much of that content is in English, means there is

no barrier to me – just as there is no barrier to the vast majority of the Welsh speaking population.

We cannot meet the challenges of the future if we sit back and expect that people in Wales will watch S4C because our programmes are in Welsh. We must prove to the people of Wales that it is not only relevant to their lives – but it can compete successfully for their precious time with what the rest of the world has to offer. For this reason, I'm focussed on recapturing S4C's historic ability to work with partners internationally to share our product and get the best of what the rest of the world has to offer on S4C.

We have to be on the look out for that programme idea, that spark in a storyline, that unique element that can lift a TV programme up and make it a must-watch. Sure, that is all the more challenging in a global market, but it is not beyond us to break new ground in entertainment as other cross-platform media organisations worldwide are doing.

At S4C, we already stream programmes on the internet – live and on demand. Innovative services like *Ti Fi a Cyw* shows how we embrace the age of social media, and the fact that many people these days are comfortable using multiple methods of communication at the same time.

As in all walks of life, there are limits to what we can afford to provide and we need financial security in order to invest in future-proofed services. However, the next step for us is to truly burst out of that box in the corner of the living room – the box that dominated our thinking back in 1982, and establish S4C as a constant information and entertainment machine which reflects and responds to the people of Wales wherever and whenever they choose.

Ian Jones is Chief Executive of S4C.

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1

Changing Union

Articles

Radical tax
varying powers
recommended
for Wales

Challenge facing
unionist parties
in Scotland

Why we need
devolution in
reverse

Radical tax varying powers recommended for Wales

John Osmond examines the Silk Commission's first report advocating more financial autonomy for the Welsh Government

In its first report *Empowerment and Responsibility: Financial Powers to Strengthen Wales* published in November, the Silk Commission recommended greater power for the Welsh Government to vary income tax than was granted to the Scottish Government in the Scotland Act 2012. The Commission proposed allowing Wales to vary the rate on each of the three current income tax bands separately, whereas the Scotland Act requires any variation to be the same in each band.

There is potential now for this recommendation to be taken up in Scotland, demonstrating the dynamism that is inherent in the asymmetry of the different devolution settlements across the UK. Normally it is Scotland that sets the pace. On this occasion it could be Wales. Following such interconnections is central to the *Changing Union* project being undertaken by the IWA in collaboration with the Wales Governance Centre at Cardiff University and Cymru Yfory/Tomorrow's Wales. The project, funded by the Nuffield Foundation and Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, is tracking and influencing the devolution debate across the UK between now and the Scottish independence referendum in autumn 2014.

A central part of this effort is to pull together evidence for the Silk Commission and it is noteworthy that its first report contains a number of references to the evidence presented by the project's Finance Working Group, chaired by former Finance Minister in the Welsh Government, Professor Andrew Davies. A key part of the Group's evidence, taken up by the Silk Commission, was that the Welsh Government should have the power to set the income tax rate separately in each of the tax bands.

The proposal is part of the Silk Commission's package of 33 recommendations including full devolution of business rates, stamp duty, landfill tax, aggregates levy and - with a nod to ongoing debates over the future of Cardiff Airport - long-haul rates for Air Passenger Duty. It also proposes giving the Welsh Government the power to create new taxes or levies, such as the so-called tax on plastic bags.

On income tax the Silk Commission proposed that each of the three rates – 20p, 30p and 45p – be reduced in Wales by 10p, allowing the Welsh Government to decide to what extent they wanted to restore the level in any of these bands, if at all, or even to increase them. If the rates in Wales were to be set lower than in England, the Treasury would deduct a sum equivalent to the lost revenue from the block grant. This change would be subject to a referendum that Silk suggests could be held in 2017.

The requirement in the Scotland Act that any income tax changes should be identical across all three bands has led many to worry that it may prevent the powers being used at all. Any increase or decrease in the rate the Scottish Government might wish to set for the basic rate would also have to apply automatically to the other rates. Similarly, any reduction in the top rate would also have to be applied to the basic rate.

The Silk Commission clearly believe this to be too inflexible, because the amounts raised in each band vary so much. In Wales a penny on the basic rate for our 1.3m taxpayers would be worth £180m – a not inconsiderable amount - while a penny on the 4,000 top taxpayers would yield only £4m.

Indeed, it is arguable that it might pay the Welsh Government to decrease the level of the top rate, by say 5p or even 10p, since that would encourage wealthy people to move across the border into Wales, with the potential of significantly increasing the Welsh tax take.

This speculation illustrates one of the commission's arguments in favour of devolving significant tax powers, that it would enable the political parties to offer the Welsh electorate a real choice on taxation and public spending. It also claims that its proposals would incentivise economic growth. If implemented in full they would be sufficient to raise about 25 per cent of the Welsh Government's budget.

John Osmond is Director of the IWA.

Challenge facing unionist parties in Scotland

Jeremy Purvis outlines the argument for Devo Plus

In the Scottish referendum debate roughly 30 per cent support independence, 30 per cent the status quo, with a large middle ground of 40 per cent wanting something inbetween. That something – Scotland remaining part of the UK but with more powers for its Parliament, is known as Devo Plus. The Scottish Social Attitudes Survey has revealed consistent support for it over the last few years, most recently in June, as shown in the accompanying table.

A key issue is whether the Unionist parties will coalesce around Devo Plus in the run-up to the independence referendum which will be held in autumn 2014. The signs so far are encouraging but there are major decisions to be made.

The Devo Plus group is a cross party body formed at the beginning of 2012 with membership of MSPs from the Labour, Liberal Democrat and Conservative groups in the Scottish Parliament. Since its launch the Scottish Liberal Democrats have published their proposals for a UK-wide federal solution. The Labour leader in Scotland, Johann Lamont, has established their party's devolution commission tasked with considering further areas where powers can be devolved. Meanwhile, the Conservatives have moved away from seeking to draw a 'line in the sand' with no further devolution, to a more open minded view on further powers after the 2014 vote.

Of course, these three policy positions are all different, and in particular we await what the Scottish Labour Party will propose. In addition,

the Scottish TUC will report on policy development work it has underway early next year. Even so it is possible to identify common ground between all three unionist parties, which includes:

- Greater tax accountability.
- Maintaining solidarity with UK funding support.
- Reforming UK bodies, including the House of Lords, to better reflect the permanence of the Scottish Parliament within the constitution.

All these are at the heart of the Devo Plus group's proposals. Its first report, *A Stronger Scotland within the UK*, advocated greater tax devolution to enhance fiscal accountability. A second report, *Improving Social Outcomes in Scotland*, outlined areas where more devolution of welfare can take place to ensure better social policy delivery. A third report, *A New Union*, to be published by the end of the year, will advocate:

- A permanent Scottish Parliament that can only be dissolved if it agrees.
- That Westminster cedes sovereignty over legislating in currently devolved areas.
- That the Barnett formula used to distribute block funding to the devolved administrations, is put on a statutory footing.

This approach has great relevance for the rest of the UK beyond Scotland

and especially in Wales. It is why we were pleased to be able to brief the First Minister Carwyn Jones on our proposals in November.

The unionist parties will have to decide whether they believe it is better to go into the 2014 campaign with three distinct positions and hope the people trust them individually to deliver some of this post referendum. Alternatively, and preferably, they could coalesce around a set of Devo Plus proposals so that the people can understand the positive consequences that would follow from voting No. Similarly, the Yes campaign will have to outline clearly what independence actually means.

We have been working very closely with all the parties, the trades unions and others, to build a coalition around which a unified position can be presented that the people understand.

The simple fact is that for the very large number of people in the 'middle ground' who support Devo Plus will make a judgement on the basis of their answers to the following two questions:

1. Will the proposition outlined by the SNP for a Yes vote best represent their best chance of gaining additional powers?
2. If they vote No can they trust the unionist parties to deliver further reforms to the devolution settlement?

Our approach, for the unionist parties to coalesce around Devo Plus, presents the strongest basis on which a deliverable and long term arrangement between Scotland and the rest of the UK can be secured. This is now a key part of the substance of the debate in Scotland. The outcome will have repercussions for the whole of the United Kingdom.

Jeremy Purvis was Liberal Democrat MSP for Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale from 2003 to 2011 and is the leader of the Devo Plus cross-party group in Scotland.

Thinking about Scotland's constitutional future, which of the following statements most closely matches your views on this issue?

Scotland should remain part of the UK with the increased powers outlined in the Devo Plus proposal	41%
Scotland should remain part of the UK with the same devolved powers it has at present	29%
Scotland should become a fully independent country, separate from the rest of the UK	27%
Some other view	4%

Source: IPSOS/ Mori 7th to 14th June 2012, sample 1003 adults in Scotland. Figures rounded by MORI

Why we need devolution in reverse

Adam Price detects a stirring of the tectonic plates that underpin Europe's political map

It's eighty years since events in Spain galvanised an entire political generation in Wales. The winds of change we are witnessing today in Bilbao and Barcelona may prove every bit as defining for the emerging 21st Century generation of Welsh leaders. As I write a majority in favour of independence has already been elected in the Basque Country, and Catalonia.

Even Galicia which remained loyal to the centralist *Partido Popular* of its native son and Spanish Premier Mariano Rajoy, saw nationalist parties achieving almost a quarter of the votes, a near-historic high. In Flanders the pro-independence N-VA has just taken control of Antwerp City Council, a potent symbol of their likely victory in the 2014 Federal Elections. Meanwhile, members of the Veneto Regional Assembly have voted 42-18 to hold an EU-monitored referendum within the year to become a sovereign republic within the EU.

Given this constellation of events it's difficult to avoid the conclusion that the tectonic plates of Europe's political map are shifting. For so long a Utopian dream, the breakdown of nations once prophesied by the Austrian visionary Leopold Kohr and the Breton advocate of *L'Europe aux cent drapeaux*, Yann Fouéré, at long last seems close to becoming a reality.

And then, of course, there is Scotland. How fitting it is that a descendant of the Cameron clan, fervent Jacobites all, should help pave the way back to Scottish independence. Even more



Parti Québécois leader René Lévesque acknowledging supporters during a provincial election in Montreal in 1973 that began the momentum towards the indecisive referendums in 1980 and 1995 when, in his words, Québec voted "yes, but not yet". Could Scotland follow suit in autumn 2014? In his concession speech in 1980 Lévesque called upon his followers to persevere *À la prochaine fois!* (until next time).

ironic is the fact that David Cameron's success over the next two years will be the biggest factor in determining the outcome of the referendum vote. Polled recently by the Sunday Times, a majority of Scots said they would vote for independence if they thought the Conservative Lib Dem Coalition would be returned at the next Westminster election. That result depends upon the prospects of an economic recovery. George Osborne's green shoots may yet supply the SNP their victory laurels.

But what does this mean for us in Wales? Well, don't discount the possibility of some kind of domino effect. It's happened before. A little over a year after Scottish independence was secured at Bannockburn, the Welsh in Glamorgan rose in rebellion under Llywelyn Bren. Edward Bruce, the King of Scotland's brother, wrote to the Welsh offering to help liberate them from the Norman yoke. Sir Gruffydd Llwyd wrote back to say that the Welsh were happy to accept. Llwyd was arrested for attempting to make Edward Bruce, already Overlord of Ireland, Prince of Wales in a Celtic Empire to rival the emerging Anglo-Norman State.

Modern Wales is far removed from the tribulations of the 14th Century. But the parallels are intriguing. In its current form the United Kingdom is a carefully constructed constitutional balancing act which nevertheless only functions through the tacit acceptance by the minority nations of the Celtic Rim that the Centre of Power ultimately reigns supreme. Challenge that – as Bruce and Wallace did in 1314 – and then the whole unwieldy structure can soon come tumbling down.

But herein lies the problem. The Mexican wave of *independentisme* sweeping through western Europe from the Ramblas to Renfrewshire is limited to those stateless nations that are more advanced economically than the central State they are seeking to leave. This is a club of the successful-yet-stateless whose membership to which we in Wales can only aspire.

When a youthful Dafydd Wigley, Phil Williams and Eurfyl ap Gwilym sat down to write their classic Economic Plan for Wales in 1970 we could boast a level of income of about 92 per cent of the UK average. Factoring in lower inflation, higher amenity value (Wales is, after

all, a beautiful country) and with some well-targeted pruning of an over-weening defence and foreign affairs budget, then self-government (as it was called then) was an imaginative but realistic political project. Today we are caught in the constitutional equivalent of Catch 22. Lack of self-government – and the levers of economic power it supplies – has immiserated the Welsh economy to just 73 per cent of the UK GVA per head. We need the powers of independence to prise us from this rut, but are deemed too poor to afford them.

This need not be a manifesto for Welsh miserabilism. So what is the alternative? Wales needs a grand historical compromise between what I call 'practical nationalism' and 'progressive Unionism'. On the economic front this means a pact to drive Welsh prosperity back up to levels close to the average in these islands. For nationalists this will be a platform of self-confidence for future independence. For Unionists this may represent a closer

economic integration with the rest of Britain. May the best narrative win. What matters is our ability to deliver, say, half a dozen transformational policies and mega-projects that can drive up our growth rate by 1 per cent a year over the next 20 years.

We need to do this whatever happens in the rest of the island. The Scottish people may end up sending something of a mixed message to the political class – as the Québécois did in 1980, and even more so in 1995 – in the words of the great René Lévesque, the urbane chain-smoking Premier of Quebec, voting "yes, but not yet". But if the break-up of Britain comes before the end of the decade, then we in Wales will need to display a degree of intellectual agility. A union of England-and-Wales simply will not work – look up bi-nationalism and Austria-Hungary to work out why. Yet, for the majority at least, independence is a step too far at this stage in our political evolution. Which is why we need a meaningful interim arrangement.

Getting agreement on that will require what Lévesque called a "*beau risque*" between nationalists and unionists, to create in Gwyn Alf Williams' term a Commonwealth of Wales, constitutionally sovereign but, in international law, in free association with the successor British State, choosing to share with Britain-wide institutions, including a directly elected confederal parliament, those areas where the continuation of common policies are in our own interest. In other words, devolution in reverse. The Commonwealth of Wales – like those other half-way-houses, the Irish Free State and the Dominions of Australia and Canada – will give us self-determination without separation, and the power to build up our wealth in common. It's an opportunity we can ill afford to squander.

Adam Price is the former MP for Carmarthen East and Dinefwr and Co-Chair of Plaid Cymru's Economic Commission.



2

Economy

Articles

New Severn Barrage design would exploit two-way tides

Wales beyond the wires

A new economic catalyst for the Valleys

Renewables versus nuclear

Wind power's economic impact



New Severn Barrage design would exploit two-way tides

Peter Hain makes the case for the biggest Welsh investment project in more than a generation

As by far the most exciting green investment project before Wales, the Severn Barrage would have a bigger and more positive impact on the economy than anything else for the foreseeable future. But that is not the only case for it. It is the biggest renewable energy project in Europe, the equivalent of around three nuclear power stations or over 3,000 wind turbines. It will make a greater contribution to tackling climate change than any other green energy project.

Alternative schemes for the Severn such as reefs and lagoons offer only a fraction of the power. No consortium has proposed building them and they would have other serious disadvantages, including navigational problems for shipping.

The UK has set a target to cut harmful emissions by 80 per cent by 2050 mainly by investing in renewable energy – a very ambitious objective dependent upon much more renewable energy. And there is no bolder commitment to delivering a greener Wales and a greener Britain than the Severn barrage.

With the second largest tidal range in the world in the Severn estuary, the Cardiff-Weston barrage would generate fully 5 per cent of the UK's electricity (16.5 terawatt hours a year) of clean, low carbon, predictable and therefore base load energy. Unlike any previous Barrage consortium, Welsh-based Hafren Power will finance it entirely by private investment with no Treasury grant required.

It will cost at least £25 billion to build and will be financed by Sovereign Wealth Funds and other infrastructure investors, providing the UK with a huge private-sector stimulus during a time of a chronic lack of private and public investment. This will be a massive boost to the economies of south Wales and south-west England, with 80 per cent of the investment being spent in the UK. In contrast, according to the UK Energy Research Centre, offshore wind imports 80 per cent of its equipment and services from abroad and only spends 20 per cent in the UK.

Construction of the Barrage will take nine years and employ at least 20,000 workers. Hafren Power plans to set up skills centres to train local workers – creating a highly skilled, well-paid jobs legacy. It is estimated that construction and manufacturing will indirectly bring about another 30,000 jobs. Given the scale of the project it is possible that this figure could be higher and the jobs longer-lasting than expected.

The Port Talbot area will receive a massive investment and jobs injection because the gigantic concrete structures (caissons) will be built and assembled and then floated out from its deep-water casting yard. The other benefit is a legacy of the largest deep water port in north west Europe which would be ideal for the new generation of container ships – ULCs, Ultra Large Container ships – which otherwise would have to find a port outside Britain.

However, the Barrage will not affect existing shipping to other south Wales ports, nor Bristol Port, because special locks would enable current size ships to pass through without charge. On the contrary – because of the new benign sea environment in the giant 'lake' behind the barrage – there will be enormous new opportunities for marine leisure and commercial activity currently rendered impossible by the Severn's fearsome current.

There are also plans for the Barrage's

1,026 turbines to be manufactured at a new factory at Port Talbot docks. And because these turbines have been specifically designed to be as fish-friendly as possible, they could be exported globally for a new generation of tidal power right across the world – another skilled jobs legacy.

The tidal manufacture industry is in its infancy. The Severn Barrage has the opportunity to lead in design, manufacture and research and export the industry across the world, with the world's second largest tidal regime being harnessed to produce 5 per cent of the UK electricity needs as the working example. Other countries have seized the opportunity in developing renewables, for example Germany which leads in wind turbine design and manufacture.

Hafren Power is also prioritising research to limit the environmental impact of the proposal. They are engaging with wildlife groups to minimise the impact of the Barrage on fish and bird life. There will be substantial funding for up to 50 square kilometres of habitat compensation and displacement, to ensure a legacy of sustainability for the Severn. I would not have backed the project had these key ecological issues not been integral to its mission.

Research suggests some aspects of the project could actually help to reinvigorate the ecology and wildlife that co-exist around the Severn where, for example, numbers of the iconic Dunlin wading bird have declined drastically over the last decade because of global warming.

The environmental argument is not between the status quo and the scenario post-Barrage. The status quo is changing all the time, and will do so because of global warming anyway – and for the worse. The real issue is how the new environment could be made most beneficial.

Previous Barrage schemes attracted big criticisms because they trapped the water at high levels and released it at low tide in a powerful surge. But Hafren have

adopted an entirely different system. Using Low-Head turbine technology and generating on both the ebb and the flow, it emulates the Severn's natural tidal pattern. This allows for integration into the local ecology, making it permeable to fish and invertebrates, and minimising its effects on the Estuary, its banks and tributary rivers.

The Barrage will also act as a flood protection barrier, without which 90,000 properties and 500 square kilometres of floodplains around the Severn are at risk from global warming induced rising sea levels, saving the nation billions in flood damage and defence costs.

The Coastal Habitat Management Plan forecasts a loss in coastal habitat of around 10 to 20 per cent in the next one hundred years and in the Severn Estuary the Cardiff Weston Barrage would be invaluable in avoiding this. The ecology of the Severn is highly important to Britain. The various species of bird and benthic (sea bottom) habitat availability around the Severn Estuary are part of the rich tapestry of Britain's heritage. Hafren Power recognises this and is putting a large percentage of its private investment into detailed academic research, ensuring a greater understanding of the impact and effect the Barrage will have on the Severn. The proposal will be adjusted and modified on the basis of that research, and angling and birdlife groups have been invited to assess this research.

It is encouraging that there was broad support in the recent debate in the Assembly and Carwyn Jones' backing in principle when replying to the debate was welcome. He was right to say that the Welsh Government should be involved in the consultations even if all the consents will be delivered by the Westminster Parliament through a 'hybrid' Bill.

However, after recent meetings with the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Energy at which we have made a strong case, the ball is very much in

Construction is 100 per cent privately financed and the cost of price support is offset by flooding cost savings of nearly half-a-billion pounds a year, according to Government estimates

the Westminster Government's court. The Barrage cannot proceed without Government backing in principle which is needed for the private investors to commit. Time will have to be made in Parliament by Government business managers to enable the necessary Private Bill to go through, providing planning consent. And, finally, an electricity contract will have to be negotiated containing the usual price support mechanism for all renewable energy projects over 30 years – after which it will generate freely for at least a

further 90 years.

Uniquely, however, for a renewable energy project of any kind, it costs the public almost nothing. Construction is 100 per cent privately financed and the cost of price support is offset by flooding cost savings of nearly half-a-billion pounds a year, according to Government estimates. It will reduce overall consumer electricity bills by 3.5 per cent a year on average over its life. So it would be the cheapest electricity source in the UK, 50-75 per cent cheaper than coal, gas, wind or nuclear for over 100 years.

One other potential benefit – though not one which is part of Hafren Power's plans – is an exciting option for road and rail link over the top of the Barrage between Wales and south west England, with both economic regeneration opportunities, and an alternative to the Severn Tunnel for inter-city trains. If the relevant authorities wished to pursue this, the Barrage could easily allow for both road and rail links on top. But Hafren Power is rightly focusing exclusively upon delivering the Barrage – that is more than sufficient a task on its own. All in all – and with the necessary wildlife safeguards being integral to the design – the Barrage should be a no brainer.

Peter Hain, MP for Neath, was Secretary of State for Wales and a Labour Government Minister for 12 years.

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Wales beyond the wires

Mike Joseph argues that Switzerland offers a template to follow in the provision of public transport across the whole country

In a few years Wales will lose membership of an exclusive but undesirable club of three - European nations without a single mile of electrified railway. One huge investment in electrification will at long last enable Wales to part company with Albania and Moldova, although the latter is now seeking EU funding for electrifying a line to Romania. In a few years, two in every three Welsh people will finally have modern commuter and high-speed electric train services.

This investment ends a century during which Wales has been bypassed, side-lined and starved of successive waves of rail innovation in Britain. Until this year's electrification announcement, the last time Wales was in the forefront of rail investment was 1912.

Of course, the decision, as finally amended to bring Swansea under the wires, is hugely welcome. Rail electrification means speed, energy efficiency, reduced noise, increased reliability, improved scheduling, better acceleration enabling more stops without sacrificing journey times. The social hierarchy of transport esteem has buses at the base, and electric trains

at the apex. They express modernity, timeliness, and connectivity. Everywhere it goes, electrification delivers a virtuous spiral of growing usage and investment. And by signalling confidence in the future, it becomes a major lever for economic and social development.

Electrify the line and the people will ride. Electrification has proved beneficial wherever and whenever it has been applied to a railway network. We have lost a century during which Wales has been denied electrification (or any other major rail investment) by London governments. It will be interesting to see if the long delay means that pent-up benefits will be all the greater.

But there is another side to this coin: one in three Welsh people will *not* be served by the new network. What transport future can be expected for the greater part of Wales from Llanelli to Llandudno? If Swansea rightly feared the consequences of being left out of the electric revolution, should Carmarthen, Milford Haven and Aberystwyth now fear their diesel-hauled future? Worse still, in much of the rest of Wales west and north of Swansea, there is

The Hauptbahnhof in Zurich, a similar city in size to Cardiff. Whereas on an average day 33,500 use the Welsh capital's railway station, the equivalent figure for Zurich is 340,000.

no rail network at all. There is only a series of disconnected rail fragments, supplemented by a declining bus network that, despite good intentions, has failed to integrate meaningfully with rail. How can west and north Wales possibly compete in economic and social performance, in contrast to and in competition with the electrified south-east? Will we remain an inefficient rural backwater, suitable terrain for preserved railways and Celtic theme parks? The transport playing field is about to become very uneven indeed.

This question is plainly one for Welsh Government and Welsh democracy. Are we content to see Wales further divided between an economically successful and modernising south-east, and a rural backwater? No London parliament or government can be expected to have such a debate. If we want the debate, we must have it in Cardiff Bay. The future of Welsh public transport in Wales beyond the electrified wires faces two problems:

- The absence of credible cases for further electrification.
- The challenge of sustaining even the current level of bus service for the vast tracts of rural Wales beyond the railway.

Scattered small and often ageing communities, significant distances and difficult terrain - the picture is familiar and daunting. Even so there are occasional positive signs. When a rural transport innovation manages to be established despite official scepticism - as with the successful revival of the Fishguard rail service - it turns out that people have the same travel needs and aspirations as anywhere else - commuting to college and work in Carmarthen, to shop and meet in Cardiff, to take time out in London, or flights from Manchester. There in microcosm is the challenge and the opportunity. Further decline is easy, while a public transport revival for the whole of Wales beyond the wires seems beyond reach, beyond imagining.

The usual response to this challenge comes in the form of the integrated transport debate. The convenience, independence and flexibility of the private car is taken as a benchmark, against which to assess the performance of public transport in delivering end-to-end journeys. Hardly surprisingly, public transport struggles to measure up. Indeed, poor connectivity, rather than an absolute

lack of services, is one of the most notable failings of public transport in Wales.

Disintegration is the common experience of regular transport users. For example, at first sight Fishguard seems well served by public transport. One rail and six bus routes serve the small town. Yet very few connections between these services are possible, and all proposals to integrate the timetables are met with well-reasoned objections. There is neither commercial motivation nor a statutory requirement to deliver at the roadside the integration that is discussed endlessly in Cardiff Bay.

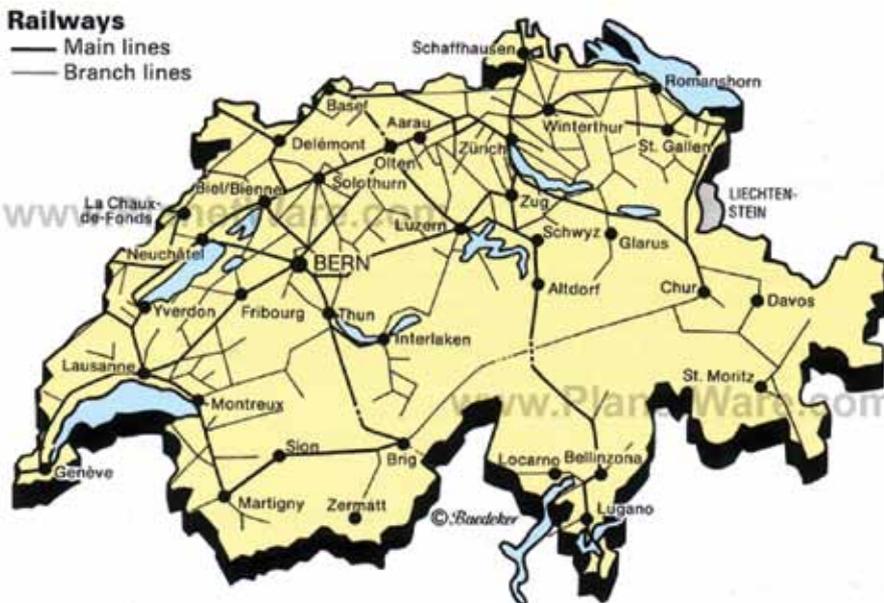
Nevertheless, the idea continues to guide public debate and consultation. The latest is being held by the Assembly's Enterprise and Business Committee. Their 'Inquiry into Integrated Public Transport Wales' called for written evidence by November. If talking about integration would only deliver it, we might now be in a better place. So what can be done to inject credibility, ambition and urgency into this debate?

Switzerland is often, and rightly, seen as a country that has got its public transport right. Trains run on time, and

they run everywhere. Where they don't run, post buses, cable cars and ferries do. Above all, the whole operation runs as one seamlessly integrated network. Because of this, the Swiss railway clock is an icon of the country. Is it possible to draw meaningful comparisons between Wales and Switzerland?

For all their contrasts of wealth, peripherality/centrality, and independence/dependence, Wales and Switzerland have surprising similarities. Both are mountainous countries surrounded by larger neighbours. Both have densely populated urban belts to one side of the country. The greater part of each country consists of extensive mountainous regions with small highly scattered communities. Tourism is a vital component of both national economies. Both countries have been, in their time, world-class pioneers of railway investment and innovation. And despite the majority of their population being highly urbanised, both countries draw strongly for their distinctive sense of citizenship and identity from the remotest rural parts of their nation – the Cefn Gwlad. Switzerland is slightly more than twice as populous as Wales, and slightly less than twice the size. So the population density of the two countries is similar, Wales with 382 people per square mile and Switzerland with 496.

Now consider three cities of similar size: Cardiff (346,100), Bristol (433,100) and Zürich (380,500). On an average day 33,589 people arrive and depart at Cardiff's main station, Cardiff Central. That equates to ten per cent of the city's population. That seems impressive, and even more so when compared to Bristol Temple Meads which can only manage 23,038, a mere 5 per cent of the city's population. The reason for the discrepancy is not hard to find. Coal gave south-east Wales a legacy of rail lines which survived Beeching to be reborn as a commuter network, today the most developed outside Britain's main conurbations. Moreover, Cardiff's main bus station is immediately outside Cardiff Central. By contrast Bristol's Broadmead



Switzerland's railway system, which seems oblivious to mountainous terrain.

Bus Station is a 20 minute walk from Temple Meads, and Beeching closed every Bristol branch line he could, bequeathing the city a legacy of congestion that it is only just starting to tackle.

And what of Zürich? Every day 340,000 people use its main station, the Hauptbahnhof. That is equivalent to 89 per cent of the city's population. The statistic is eye watering. It demonstrates the real meaning of integrated transport. For it is a consequence of every Swiss train, tram, bus, Postbus and ferry running in a synchronised transport system that reaches every remote valley and Alp. The Swiss travel on average 2,422 kilometres a year by train, making them the world leaders in train use.

The achievement rests on much more than a synchronised timetable. 2.3 million Swiss adults carry a half-fare travel card. A further 400,000 have a full-fare travel card, and another million have travel passes for specific routes. Thus well over half of all Swiss adults buy discount travel passes.

It is not hard to see why passes are so popular. They are valid for all 280 transport operators in Switzerland. Single tickets are also valid across all operators for the end-to-end journey. In addition passes offer entire-route discounts regardless of the terms of individual operators involved. The passenger and his or her journey is the central consideration, not the convenience of the individual operator.

It might be thought that Swiss transport reached this developed state many years ago and has since rested, perhaps even stagnated, but far from it. From 1992 to 2008, the number of stations and stops in the public transport network increased by 30 per cent, and the total route length grew from 21,709 to 28,075 kilometres, with recent growth being largely from new bus and Postbus services. In addition 90 kilometres of new rail routes including a 40 kilometre tunnel and a new urban underground have opened in recent years.

Has all this come about at huge public expense? It seems not. In 1998 the

taxpayer subsidy per passenger kilometre was 25.7 centimes. Ten years later, in 2008, this had dropped to 14.9 centimes.

Productivity gains have contributed to growth. Over the same period the number of people employed in public transport fell by 13.4 per cent, while the volume of transport services rose by 16 per cent. Passenger volumes have seen a 30 per cent growth in demand since 1996. Each seat in the Swiss public transport network is used eleven times a day.

Where should we begin in Wales? Perhaps with the plethora of transport operators. Is that a particular problem for us in Wales? In Switzerland, 280 separate operators combine to provide one seamless passenger service. Could that be done here?

In fact it turns out that Welsh public transport is already highly concentrated in just two boardrooms, in Aberdeen and Berlin. Stagecoach, of Aberdeen, owns First Group which holds the Great Western franchise and operates buses across south Wales from Cardiff to Haverfordwest. First Group was also expecting to hold the north Wales line as part of the West Coast franchise until UK Government miscalculated the risk, throwing all franchising into limbo. Deutsche Bahn in Berlin runs all other rail services in Wales through Arriva, and also operates buses across north and mid Wales, and from Aberystwyth to Cardiff.

Two operators in Wales; 280 in Switzerland. Given the political will, it is hard to see why the job of coordinating public transport in the public interest should be any harder in Wales than in Switzerland.

The problem, I suggest, is not the scale of the task but the lack of ambition. Wales has never been offered a comprehensive vision of what public transport can and should be, that comes remotely near the daily reality in Switzerland. With this electrification decision, London has handed the onus of a unified public transport future for Wales back to us.

Which brings this discussion back to 1912. In England, railway lines were

already being electrified, in south London and Tyneside. In that year, Wales' first and only high-speed rail line was opened, to carry the London boat train on its journey to and from the transatlantic steamers at Fishguard. The line bypassed the slow bottlenecks of Neath, Swansea and Carmarthen, cutting many minutes off journey times. The line is still open and used for freight and just one daily return passenger journey, the lunchtime Fishguard boat train, still timetabled as one of the fastest long-distance routes anywhere in Britain, Cardiff to Llanelli in about an hour. However, it is barely open, with the restoration only this winter of a double track between Swansea and Llanelli - it was singled by Thatcher in the 1980s. There is a serious threat of closure to the Swansea by-pass line and its survival should be a matter of concern for any long-term Welsh transport plan.

But the opening of the high-speed line in 1912 proved not a new beginning but a culmination for public transport in Wales. Within two years, we were at war and the transatlantic dream was at an end. We have had to wait a century for the next serious investment. So it takes an effort of memory to recall that until 1912, Wales had been at the forefront of railway innovation since 1804 - from Trevithick's first railway steam engine at Penydarren, to Brunel's broad gauge high-speed Great Western running (in 1845, two years before the first Swiss railway) the fastest rail service in the world, and of course producing and exporting the coal that energised the world's railways.

The world now rightly regards Swiss achievements in public transport with respect. It is equally worth remembering Wales' remarkable contribution to the first transport revolution, and very necessary to remember it, if we wish to believe that we can do it again.

Mike Joseph is a journalist and broadcaster.

A new economic catalyst for the Valleys

Sebastian Barrett believes the *Circuit of Wales* will be a game-changer

The Circuit of Wales, a £250 million motor sport development in Ebbw Vale will be more than a racing track. It will bring international events such as Moto GP, World Superbikes and Touring Cars to Wales. But it will also have the facilities to carry out high-end engineering together with a technology centre capable of attracting global automotive companies to undertake research into green transport. Alongside will be on-site industrial units and hotels.

The project is set to bring £50 million a year into the Welsh economy. It will bring more than 3,000 jobs during the construction phase, and over 6,000 permanent jobs once the site is fully operational. These will be across a broad

range of sectors. The development will attract upwards of 750,000 people a year into the area. In short the Circuit of Wales will drive change and transform lives in the Welsh valleys.

The Circle of Wales will have a central role in developing the concept of a 'city region' linking Cardiff with its Valley hinterlands. It will have a central role in addressing the imbalance between the Heads of the Valleys and the Welsh capital.

The Heads of the Valleys Development Company is the consortium driving the motor sport project. It comprises a range of global leaders in infrastructure and investment, as well as motor sport experts. They chose Blaenau Gwent over other locations in the UK for three reasons:

- Impact on the area.
- Natural topography, which makes for a more interesting racetrack.
- Good road links to the rest of Britain.

The project is well-timed, with the improvements to the A465 Heads of the Valleys Road scheduled to be completed prior to Circuit of Wales' proposed launch date in 2015. The Circuit should also contribute to the economic rationale for further infrastructure development in the Valleys, in particular the proposed high-tech Cardiff Metro system. This would put in place fast, regular, and reliable connectivity between Heads of the Valleys to the capital city.

Circuit of Wales will give a boost to those pressing the case for the Cardiff Metro because its flow of visitors will put numbers on the line, not to mention the people travelling to work. It will be as much about people going *up* the Valley, as coming *down*.

The combination of a world-class motor sport circuit and a new Metro system would re-establish the economic network between the more deprived areas of south Wales. Together they present Ebbw Vale developing Blaenau



Artist impression of the paddocks to the rear of the Circuit's main stand.

Gwent a quite different persona as a hub for activity within the region.

The Circuit of Wales will give the Valleys more to bring to the table, balancing the attention inevitably given to Cardiff when the city region concept is discussed. For many of the communities in Blaenau Gwent such as Blaina which have lost their economic role can now look forward to becoming dormitory towns.

Since the decline of coal and steel the Valleys have not experienced large-scale private sector-led infrastructure developments. *The Circuit of Wales* will provide just this in a sustainable way. With its world-renowned motor sport events, it'll be the equivalent of having four Ryder Cups a year in Blaenau Gwent, drawing a large proportion of people to spend money in the local area.

The Circuit of Wales will be a new

economic catalyst for the Valleys and its economy. As well as reinforcing the case for new investment in the transport network, it will provide spin-offs in terms of tourism. People who will be arriving at a big event will also want to explore the wider area, spending their money in pubs, restaurants, hotels and bed and breakfasts across the whole of south east Wales.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council is shortly to decide on the planning application for the Circuit of Wales. It has an opportunity to embrace this vision for a sustained economic regeneration of the Heads of the Valleys Valleys by building stronger links with the Welsh coastal region.

Sebastian Barrett is a freelance journalist involved in communications for some of the biggest construction projects in Wales.

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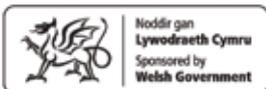
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Constructing Excellence in Wales

Renewables versus nuclear

Carl Clowes considers the implications for north Wales of Hitachi acquiring Wylfa

Hitachi's purchase of Wylfa is yet another episode in the saga that has beleaguered this site since the early 1980s. Then, under a programme driven by Prime Minister Thatcher, the UK was scheduled to have 11 new nuclear power stations. In the event only Sizewell B saw the light of day as, not surprisingly, following the Chernobyl disaster in 1986, the idea of a new generation of nuclear stations disappeared off the agenda.

That remained the response of successive governments until 2005 when Prime Minister Blair commissioned yet another energy review. An earlier one in 2002 hadn't produced the result he'd hoped for. "We don't want to see the lights go out," became the Ministerial mantra in anticipation of the outcome. When it was published in 2006, the report indicated that a new nuclear build was clearly back in business. This has remained the case at Westminster ever since, with Labour and now the Conservative and Lib Dem coalition fully behind the case for new nuclear power stations.

EDF bought the land adjacent to the Magnox plant at Wylfa in Spring 2007 only to sell it that same summer to RWE npower and E-ON who combined to form Horizon Energy. Horizon became the flag bearer for a new Wylfa B station and gained support from all levels of politicians on the island. The driver for this momentum was undoubtedly the need for employment and who can deny the need in a county which, with a GVA at 55 per cent of the UK average, is the lowest in the UK.

The development of Wylfa B was seen to be a panacea, an answer to all our economic woes in north-west Wales and, unquestioningly, diverted attention from a more meaningful – and balanced – economic development plan for the region. We then saw the impact

of the economic downturn throughout Europe. At the same time, the consequences of the Daiichi meltdown at Fukushima began to be realised and Germany agreed to phase out nuclear energy by 2022.

There was now a moral question. Should a country which was not willing to allow a technology within its own borders be supportive of such a development elsewhere? I recall attending the AGM of E-ON in Essen in 2010 when the writing was clearly on the wall. In response to a question, the Chief Executive made it abundantly clear before the 5,000 shareholders present that there was "no concrete agreement to go ahead with new nuclear build in Wales or elsewhere". These factors came to a head in March this year when Horizon formally pulled out of Wylfa and sought a buyer for the site.

Since March, Russian interest, through Rosatom, came and went as did interest from the state-owned Chinese company Guandong Nuclear Power in conjunction with the French company Areva. The arrival of GE Hitachi on the scene with an, as yet, unlicensed Advanced Boiling Water Reactor was a surprise to many.

The political response from Wales to new development at Wylfa has been confused. Wales does not have devolved responsibilities for energy production over 50Mw and yet Rhodri Morgan, as First Minister, made it perfectly clear in the Senedd in June 2007, and repeated frequently subsequently, that Wales did not need new nuclear. This view was borne out by the Environment Minister Jane Davidson who, in a written reply in 2009, quantified Wales's usage of electricity as 24TWhrs per annum whilst having a capacity of 33TWhrs per annum from renewable resources.

First Minister Carwyn Jones has

consistently supported the development of Wylfa B, both in his present role and previously within the OneWales Government with Ieuan Wyn Jones AM his Plaid Cymru Deputy also in support. Nevertheless, Plaid Cymru's policy remains opposed to new nuclear build.

Although Wales does not have responsibility for sanctioning the build of new nuclear power station, we do have devolved responsibility for waste management. So, since there can be no new nuclear station without waste, could this be a faultline in the Westminster programme should Wales perchance say "no"?

Throughout the early 1980s, and over the last decade, People Against Wylfa B (PAWB) has been deploying the very real arguments against nuclear power whilst, at the same time, offering practical alternatives both for employment and energy, recently published in *A Manifesto for Môn – a strategy for sustainable employment*. With 2,400 currently on the job-seekers list for the island, PAWB's manifesto has shown how some 2,650 sustainable jobs can be created, 1,650 of which would be in the renewable energy sector – primarily off-shore wind, sea energy, photo-voltaics and conservation. The strategy shows how a further 1,300 jobs can be created in the agriculture, tourism and IT sectors. Add to this the 600-700 jobs that will remain at Wylfa during the 25-year decommissioning period and a more than adequate number of jobs can be stimulated without any of the inherent risks found with nuclear.

Public attitudes towards new nuclear are sceptical. A study carried out by researchers from the Department of Social Sciences at Bangor University in 2010 (pre-Fukushima) showed that jobs in renewable energy had the support of two-thirds of the area's population with

only a third supporting nuclear. People are mindful of the many potential threats that Ynys Môn faces if Wylfa B goes ahead. Because the radioactive waste from the new generation of reactors is particularly 'hot', it will need to be kept on site for up to 150 years in a store equivalent to the size of three football pitches.

With RAF Y Fali just a minute's flying time away, and several near-miss air accidents reported in the area, there is little to reassure the public that the situation is safe for the next 150 years. Further, the threat of terrorism is no longer an abstract possibility and, with pilots from various countries being trained at Y Fali, the opportunities for 'green' on 'blue' style attacks have to be a cause for concern. We are told that technology has moved on but nothing can combat such threats and the reality is that human and mechanical error frequently underpin most major incidents. This was the finding in an independent report, following the Fukushima incident. According to the report, the crisis was the result of "a multitude of errors and willful negligence" by the government, safety officials and the plant's operator, Tokyo Electric Power (*Lessons from Fukushima*, by a group of independent scientists commissioned by Greenpeace).

Wasn't Wylfa fined £0.5m by the Nuclear Inspectorate in 1993 for breaches of safety guidelines? Further, the scale of the proposed development – eleven times the size of the existing site – would have a profound impact on the island community. The huge influx of some 6,000 temporary workers (many of whom would choose to stay) would exacerbate unemployment at a later date and worsen existing pressures on local people for housing and the Welsh language.

For those who doubt the way ahead as outlined in PAWB's manifesto, one only needs to look at the rest of Europe where the renewable energy agenda is developing apace. The majority of European countries have turned their back on nuclear energy. Even France,



Demonstration by PAWB (People Against Wylfa B) in Llangefnï.

generally regarded as the front-runner in nuclear energy, has decided to cut its reliance from 80 per cent to 50 per cent under President Hollande. However, Germany, the largest economic driver in western Europe, provides the best example of the way ahead. In June 2010 they produced as much energy from photo-voltaics in the one month as is planned by the UK for the whole of 2020.

The arrival of Hitachi in Anglesey is a distraction. At a time when Japan is phasing out its reliance on nuclear energy and Hitachi have lost a large part of their anticipated portfolio in their own country, they have paid an exorbitant sum for what is essentially agricultural land alongside a station scheduled to begin decommissioning in 2014.

This Hitachi decision coincides with a new study by Renewable UK which shows that, on current projections, renewable energy will power over one in ten UK homes by 2015 and will overtake the capacity of nuclear power by 2018. There is little doubt that the economics of new nuclear are flawed in the years ahead and there are serious questions as to why Hitachi would choose to invest here now.

Jeff Immelt, Chief Executive of General Electric, one of the world's largest suppliers of atomic equipment, has said that nuclear power is so expensive compared with other forms of energy that it has become "really hard"

to justify (*Financial Times*, 30 July 2012). More specifically, nuclear power is more expensive than offshore wind power. Generation costs for offshore wind are currently about £140/MWh with their costs expected to fall one-third by 2020" (*The Guardian*, 13 June 2012)

There is little doubt that the only way new build will take place at Wylfa and elsewhere is if the government is persuaded to offer a 'strike price' sufficiently high to subsidise the companies concerned. The reality is that, should new nuclear stations come on stream in the 2020s, their need would have largely disappeared as the contribution of renewable energy grows exponentially year-on-year. Sadly we, the taxpayers, would remain carrying the financial burden long into the future and the legacy of waste for generations to come is one for which nobody has a response.

There is now a commercial race around the world to take advantage of the rapidly-growing market for renewable sources of power. We should be competing vigorously in that market, reaping the benefits in jobs and earnings. We need strong political leadership which acknowledges that reality.

Carl Clowes founded the Nant Gwrtheyrn Trust in 1978, is Honorary Consul for Lesotho and authored the PAWB Manifesto.

Wind power's economic impact

Mark Fleming assesses the community spin-offs that can accompany wind farm developments

Wind farm contributions to local communities have long been hidden away, only spoken of in whispers prior to the outcome of planning for fear of prejudicing the decision-making process. Now, however, communities are far more benefits savvy, and there are high expectations of funds to accompany wind farm applications. Today no developer would consider making an application without including robust plans for community spin-offs.

Last year RWE npower renewables, one of the biggest operators in Wales, invested £313,000 in Welsh communities. And this could increase by a further £1.7 million if the company is successful in gaining consent for wind farm sites in development.

In south Wales RWE NRL is

developing four sites that offer substantial annual community investment opportunities - at Taff Ely, worth up to £90,000 a year; at Mynydd y Gwair some nine miles north of Swansea, worth up to £240,000 a year; and at Brechfa Forest in Carmarthenshire south of Rhydcymerau, worth up to £150,000 subject to the size of the finally approved wind farm.

But it is with RWE npower renewables' Gwynt y Môr offshore wind farm in north Wales that the potential is most evident. A €2 billion project that will be operational by the end of 2014, Gwynt y Môr will consist of 160 turbines off Rhyl in Liverpool Bay.

Since onshore construction work began in 2011, the project has invested over £80 million into Welsh

companies alone, sustained hundreds of contract jobs, while sparking a new apprenticeship scheme that will continue year on year to train and employ young Welsh recruits into skilled, engineering roles.

The windfarm will generate enough energy from wind to power almost a third of Wales' 1.2 million households. Over and above this, however, the project will result in an investment of some £19 million into north Wales communities over the 25-year or so lifetime of the scheme - £768,000 a year index linked to inflation.

To ensure that this money is invested according to the priorities of the communities themselves one of the largest consultation exercises ever undertaken by the industry was

commissioned a year ago, engaging with over 1,000 people including the general public, business community, voluntary sector, local authorities and elected representatives. The responses are currently being analysed and will inform the community initiative that will begin once the windfarm comes on stream in 2014.

A further £690,000 over the three years of construction has also been put aside and is being invested across Conwy and Denbighshire to support local tourism initiatives. Conwy and Denbighshire county councils are working together to suggest schemes designed to secure maximum match funding.

Competition for wind farm community funding is high, not least of all from cash-tight local and community bodies eager to find alternative ways of plugging public service funding gaps. The challenge is to deliver tangible, transparent benefits to aid sustainable development of communities, whilst supporting local and regional strategic priorities in Wales and continuing to engage local people.

Community investment funding has a key role to play in helping Welsh Government achieve its aim of maximising the economic benefits from the delivery of its green agenda. However, in some communities, the levels of funding offered are such that they could become



One of the two offshore substations at Gwynt y Môr in Liverpool Bay.

renewables are starting to 'box clever' and are looking at a range of options.

For example, with some of its larger funds in rural areas, the company is splitting its investment between community funding and a dedicated economic development fund. Proposals for this fund are being explored with the wider business, regeneration and economic communities. The aim is to find ways of generating longer-term income for the area, perhaps through

- Community ownership of turbines.
- Contributions to reduced energy fees for the surrounding community.
- Looking to significant supporting infrastructure, such as Grid upgrades, to become a source of community benefit.
- Giving consideration to top-slicing funding to contribute towards important infrastructure projects.

The challenge is to deliver tangible, transparent benefits to aid sustainable development of communities, whilst supporting local and regional strategic priorities in Wales and continuing to engage local people.

overwhelming for the very communities they are intended to support.

So, under the influence of the Government's Localism agenda, developers like RWE npower

skills development, support for higher education, or helping unlock local business barriers.

Other issues and ideas that are being considered include:

A smarter approach to investing in local communities is inevitable. The challenge for the renewables industry is to build on its history of engaging local communities and empowering community representatives to make funding decisions. Maximising the impact of the long term, reliable and highly flexible funding delivered by onshore wind farms is a great opportunity for the future regeneration of Wales.

Mark Fleming is Senior PR Officer for Wales with RWE npower renewables.

Articles

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underpins
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False prospectus underpins Natural Resources Wales

Jon Owen Jones identifies groupthink policy making behind the creation of Wales's biggest quango

In April next year Natural Resources Wales, with 2000 staff, will assume the functions of three very different organisations: one entirely Welsh body, the Countryside Council for Wales; a largely Welsh body with some shared Britain-wide functions, Forestry Commission Wales; and a completely integrated Wales and England body, the Environment Agency. The amalgamation has depended on a business case which forecast savings of £158 million over ten years. Even before the new body has opened its doors this forecast is falling apart. So why is Natural Resources Wales being created?

The policy began to develop two and a half years ago within the Environment Department of the previous Assembly administration. Its Minister, Jane Davidson, and her senior civil servant, Mathew Quinn, had enjoyed a high reputation amongst environment movements largely on the strength of their aspirations and the ambition of their targets. However, delivery was proving more difficult than declaration. Our biodiversity target had not been met, our wind energy programme was becalmed, and our ambitious target to reduce Wales's carbon emissions by 3 per cent per annum had no prospect of being achieved.

On top of that there lurked a looming crisis, with the department trying to avoid taking responsibility either for or against a £1 billion gas power station in Pembrokeshire. Its two regulatory bodies, the Countryside Council for Wales and the Environmental Agency, were at daggers drawn giving completely contradictory advice and probably would be again if Wylfa or the Severn Barrage were allowed to proceed. It's not hard to understand why the prospect of merging the two began to look attractive in Ty Hywel.

On the other hand the Countryside Council and the various environmental groups

that it supports were likely to be resistant to what would appear to be a take-over by the Environment Agency which has more than double the staff. I can see no other reason for inclusion of Forestry Commission Wales. A three-way merger looks more balanced and holds out the prospect to the Countryside Council for Wales of managing 6 per cent of Wales's land.

In December 2010 the Environmental Department attempted to get the then Labour/Plaid Cabinet to agree this proposal. Agriculture was unhappy about Forestry's inclusion and Finance was unhappy with the costs and so the proposal was withdrawn. What then followed over the months leading to the Assembly elections was a strange process of manifesto osmosis. A very small group of people have to write manifestos on a wide range of policies. On many issues they have long established policy but in other areas there is a blank canvas. Upon that canvas the influence of one or two politicians and civil servants can be profound and 'groupthink' can emerge.

For whatever reason, three political parties all made the same commitment to this merger. However, Labour included an important caveat, possibly as a result of last minute lobbying by the First Minister. This was that the proposed merger should be subject to a detailed business case.

With the benefit of hindsight I now think that the Forestry Commission and Mathew Quinn's department had a very different understanding of the caveat. We thought the business case was a test that the policy had to pass. On the other hand, they behaved as though the policy was a test that the business case had to pass. They had initially assumed that there were considerable savings to be made by separating Wales from England in the



Forestry Commission Wales is one of three organisations being merged in the quango Natural Resources Wales, along with the Environment Agency Wales and the Countryside Council for Wales, yet it is the only one that will have no representation on the new board – see overleaf.

Environment Agency. However, finding savings to justify the incorporation of Forestry proved difficult.

Forestry Commission Wales believed that some very optimistic assumptions were made because a positive business case depended on it. We requested that the case be examined by the Wales Audit Office before it was presented to the Minister. This request got a very frosty response from Mathew Quinn who instead appointed an external consultant, Nigel Reader, a Board member with Natural England. He pronounced that the case was “robust”. It is significant that he has now been appointed to the board of Natural Resources Wales (see panel overleaf).

After the business case was published there followed a consultation process. In an article in the Winter 2011 issue of *agenda* I argued that the case was hugely optimistic and even so could only make the thinnest of arguments for forestry. The supposed benefit of £158 million over ten years is almost entirely produced from the Environment Agency. The business case shows no benefit from Forestry for five years and only £11 million after ten years. That case depended upon what we saw as highly unrealistic assumptions on pensions, ICT and the costs of continuing to buy in services from the parent bodies.

In spite of our warnings the Minister, John Griffiths, accepted the “robust” case and presented it to the Assembly. His recommendation was accepted.

Now, some four months before the Natural Resources Wales begins its work, real figures are beginning to replace estimates and the “robust” case is disintegrating. As I write, the staff do not know what pensions will be offered or imposed upon them. What we do know is that none of the options in the business plan can be used. It seems likely that most staff will continue in their present scheme. That may suit some but this was considered unacceptable in the business case as it would involve maintaining staff in different schemes within the same body - an expensive and arguably unfair system.

On ICT, the business case assumes a basic joint system will be available on day one, with it gradually building more capability, allowing efficiencies and savings to grow. We now know that nothing will be ready on day one but it might, crossed fingers, be ready after six months. Even if they meet that expectation it still means that costs will increase and benefits diminish and be delayed.

As to buying in residual services, the business case assumes that as Wales will not require additional services the costs

should be the same or very similar than at present. The naivety of this assumption is staggering. Wales now has to enter new contractual arrangements, often with the private sector, in which we usually have no alternative providers. In other words they have us over a barrel. The new real costs are being closely guarded but I have heard that the Environment Agency functions alone are coming in at £28 million a year as opposed to the predicted £24 million. If that is borne out, it alone knocks a £50 million (allowing for inflation) hole in the headline benefit over the decade.

The Minister was presented with a false prospectus and that false prospectus was presented to the Assembly. I must assume that if the Assembly had been given more accurate figures they would not think it a good idea to disrupt the work of a highly regarded institution struggling to cope with a devastating disease on Larch, another huge threat to Ash, a massive wind farm programme, and an ambitious government target on increased woodland (without an instrument to deliver it). To do all of that within an administrative system that is now going to be more expensive than the one we had before is surely an idea that would be rejected.

Developing an idea or policy with a very small number of people and then ignoring all well placed voices to the contrary is not an isolated phenomenon in the experience of Welsh devolved government. Neither is promoting the silent or compliant and excluding the warner and the straight talker. Indeed, it has become a well-established practice. The way most of the European Structural funds were wasted, the demise of the Welsh Development Agency, the creation of 22 health authorities, the support of the Wales Ethnic Minority Association (AWEMA) are just some examples that follow the same pattern.

But let us be fair, there are similar examples of poor governance in other parts of the UK. The Welsh distinction is that no politician or civil servant has ever paid a price for conspicuous failure

Board of Natural Resources Wales

Professor Peter Matthews (Chair) has held a variety of positions in the environmental field, including chair of the Northern Ireland authority for Utility Regulation, deputy managing director of Anglian Water International, president of the European Water Association. He is a visiting professor at Anglia Ruskin University.

Dr Mike Brooker holds two non-executive positions at the Wales Audit Office and Natural Environment Research Council and was from 2001 to 2005 Chief Executive of Glas Cymru/Welsh Water.

Rev Hywel Davies is the Director for Tearfund Wales and a Minister in Llangefni, he was chair of Menter Mon and Vice Chair of Anglesey Local Health Board and is a Independent Member of the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board. He has served on a number of public bodies, including Sports Wales.

Dr Ruth Hall is a non-executive member of the main Environment Agency Board. From 1997 to 2005 she was Chief Medical Officer for Wales.

Dr Madeleine Havard is the Board Member for Wales for the Environment Agency. She has held a number of academic posts and served on several voluntary and statutory bodies.

Harry Legge-Bourke is a partner in the family-run Glanusk Estate centred in southern Powys, which has: farming, forestry, fishery and major event operations. A former officer in the Welsh Guards (1992-2001), he also runs and owns a number of companies providing security, crisis management, procurement, training, data and document storage. He is Chairman of the United Usk Fishermans Association.

Andy Middleton is a Countryside Council for Wales Member and founder director of the TYF Group, a sustainability education, consulting and adventure organisation and Wales' first carbon neutral business.

Morgan Parry is Chair of the Countryside Council for Wales, and a member of a number of statutory environmental bodies. His background is in science, local government and the third sector, from where he promoted the understanding of sustainable development in Wales.

Nigel Reader is a Board member with Natural England and of the Marine Management Organisation. He was formerly director of finance with the Environment Agency and the National Rivers authority.

Professor Lynda Warren has served on the Countryside Council for Wales, the Joint Nature Conservation Committee and the Environment Agency. She is Emeritus professor of Environmental Law at Aberystwyth University.

Sir Paul Williams, was formerly Director General Health and Social Services Welsh Government and Chief Executive NHS Wales.

in Wales. In Westminster politicians and civil servants often avoid the consequences of their actions but often they do not. The two DEFRA ministers responsible for the plan to sell the Forestry have been sacked and thanks to Branson's deep pockets the civil servants who messed up the West Coast rail franchise are suspended.

In England and in Scotland a failed policy can end your career but not so here. When John Griffiths had to decide if the case before him was really sound, he would know that there was no danger to him if it proved to be a disaster in the longer term. However, if he didn't go through with it there would surely have been paradoxical accusations of weakness in not pushing through the policy. In short, we have a system which punishes caution and fails to punish failure.

Though I am sure he would never admit it, I think the First Minister probably agrees with much of that analysis. Privately he would argue that the solution is a much larger legislature in which scrutiny is enhanced and regular ministerial reshuffles are possible. The trouble is that isn't going to happen any time soon. What you could do is value those who tell you the truth (as they see it) rather than those who tell you the 'truth' you would like to hear. In Welsh its *Y rhai heb flewyn ar ei tafod* (Without hair on their tongue).

One last point on that business case which originally acknowledged a risk to the forest estate. Before publication, and without any consultation, that risk was removed. Since it now seems quite likely that Natural Resources Wales will run short of money in the next few years it will have three choices: to cut back on staff and services, to get more funding from government, or to sweat its assets. The Forest Estate is worth hundreds of millions of pounds.

Jon Owen Jones is chair of Forestry Commission Wales.

Rise of the Twitter generation

Kevin Brennan examines the political impact of the internet revolution

In 2007 the Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, appointed me as a Minister in the Department of Children, Schools and Families. One of my responsibilities was 'cyber safety' for children. We commissioned a report by Dr Tanya Byron on the subject, and during the course of looking into the issue I decided to delve more closely into what my teenage daughter was doing online. I knew she was a huge fan of the Harry Potter novels, and that she liked to make fan videos on her computer.

I asked her why she did it, and she said "my fans like them". I said, "What do you mean 'fans'?" She then showed me one of her videos which had attracted over 100,000 viewings. I was flabbergasted, not least as most politicians could only dream of that kind of reach.

Frank Rose's *The Art of Immersion* explores this brave, now not so new, world in 319 pages which read a bit like a frenzied Google search. Facts and stories are pulled almost at random to tell his tale of how technology has impacted upon culture in the last two decades. To do so he reaches across the globe and back in time to describe how humanity's desire to tell stories, combined with the advent of the internet have led to a new form of public engagement with narrative.

Of course, this is not simply true of the novel, or film or TV or, more broadly, entertainment. Politics and journalism are being deeply impacted by interactive

technology in ways both professions have sometimes struggled to keep up with. As Rose points out, the events of 9/11 represent the last time a cataclysmic news story occurred before the age of social media.

When millions witnessed passenger jets flying into the World Trade Centre Towers in New York live on rolling television news, it was rightly hailed as an extraordinary news media event, as well as an appalling act of mass murder. But the reporting was largely linear and traditional. The cameras of CNN were fixed on downtown Manhattan as the talking heads of the networks tried to interpret events and the numbed public just watched.

If something similar occurred today there would be millions actively participating in the events via social media rather than passively receiving the news. Viewers tweets would have offered insight and commentary. And those at the heart of events would have had in their hands the means to film, photograph, write and broadcast instantly and immediately from the front line.

But social media played no part in 9/11. Just a year later, however, the new trend for blogging brought down the Republican leader in the US Senate. Senator Trent Lott made remarks praising the 1948 Presidential Campaign of fellow Southern Senator Strom Thurmond. In the rarefied and genteel atmosphere

of the US Senate he had made similar remarks before. The press lobby, with its cosy familiarity with the freemasonry of the Senate, paid little attention.

But the newly emerging crop of citizen commentators in the blogosphere took issue with an openly segregationist and racist campaign being praised. The furore grew exponentially online until eventually even the mainstream media had to take note and to report a story they had initially ignored. Senator Lott was forced to resign and social media had its first major political scalp; and all this within a year of 9/11. Now social media has become a preferred route for political resignation with even ex-Welsh Secretary Cheryl Gillan letting the world know of her demise on Twitter.

In the way that the printing press made books, and therefore knowledge, more widely available by reducing the cost of the distribution of information, so the internet has made information universally available to anyone with access to a mobile phone.

In 1984 I spent seven months in California with my future wife. Once a week I would go with her to the University where she was doing her degree. I headed to the library to eagerly devour week-old copies of the Sunday Times. This was the only way to get relatively up-to-date information on what was going on in the UK. For some reason BBC World service radio was nowhere to be found on the



The 9/11 attacks on New York's Twin Towers – "If something similar occurred today there would be millions actively participating in events via social media rather than passively receiving the news."

crowded Californian airwaves. A decade later the internet made global news instantly available. Now, combined with the power of social media, the internet has played a huge part in momentous events like the Arab Spring.

In political terms the implications could be even wider than the ability of the new media to change which politicians run a country. Representative democracy exists in part because of the impossibility up until now, due to practically and cost, of consulting everyone about everything all the time. Instead the people, or 'plebs' as the Tory Chief Whip might say, elect representatives to decide for them.

But what if a plebiscite could be held on any issue at virtually no cost and with instant decision possible? Through the development of social media direct democracy is now technically viable and affordable for the first time since the ancient Greeks met in the agora.

Information can be posted freely online in any form, it can be accessed almost for free, it can be discussed without limit, and it can be voted upon without cost. It leads to the question 'why not cut out the middle man?' Why do we need a professional class of politicians when

the people have their say directly? A dystopic or utopian vision? Pure democracy or cyber mob rule?

Should we go to war with Iraq? You decide – on Twitter.

Of course, the result might be a more brutal knee jerk politics with less consideration and respect for minorities; but perhaps I would say that as one of those whose role would be abolished.

And what of storytelling and the future of film, TV and the book? Rose points out how participation now goes well beyond reading the text, or

passively watching. In 2009 Betty Draper, a character from the US TV series *Mad Men*, started tweeting. This is odd because she is a fictional character, and what is more, a fictional character that lives in the early 1960s when tweeting was reserved for birds. A fan of the series had decided to adopt her persona on Twitter, and was joined by others playing fellow characters from the show. The success of their tweets in inhabiting the skin of these fictional folk attracted many followers on Twitter and the TV characters came to life online.

The response of the series' producers was the traditional one. In an attempt to protect their intellectual property they forced Twitter to shut down the accounts. The resultant outcry on social media led to a hasty retreat; anyway it was tremendous free publicity after all, even if the series creators weren't directly being paid for the use of their characters. Social media had given them lives of their own.

As Rose points out, it is natural for us to want to immerse ourselves in fiction. Traditionally this has meant being absorbed in a book, or film, but now can involve active participation in the narrative. Whilst it is common that authors will construct a back-story

for their characters, that information is now often accessible online and can be manipulated by readers and viewers. This more playful interaction with narrative is the expectation of a generation of digital natives.

When the web got going in the early 1990s it made the delivery of information to ordinary people possible. It seemed when the dot com bubble burst in 2000 that the internet might be little more than a fad. In fact, the opposite was true. The dot com businesses failed because they thought they could stake out territory and guarantee revenue by being the first to control the delivery of information. With the transition of the web from provider of information to enabler of participation, or web 2.0, as it became known, people now connected with each other online through tools that developed Myspace, YouTube, Flickr, eBay, Facebook and Twitter.

Just consider YouTube. Rose points out that if three leading US TV networks had broadcast non-stop for the 60 odd years they have been in existence their output would have been 1.5 million hours of programming. That is less than users of YouTube uploaded in the first six months of 2008. The cultural fall out of this revolution is still not fully understood. But it is clear that spontaneity, participation and self-expression are by products, as well as a blurring between publisher and recipient, fiction and fact, entertainment and advertising, story and game, politician and citizen.

Making sense of this new power of the reader, viewer and voter is a challenge for publishers, producers and politicians. Although at times exhausting in his Google-like flitting from topic to topic, Rose each time focuses in sharply on the deep cultural implications of the internet age.

Kevin Brennan is Labour MP for Cardiff West. *The Art of Immersion: How the Digital Generation Is Remaking Hollywood, Madison Avenue, and the Way We Tell Stories* by Frank Rose is published by W.W. Norton & Company.



Photograph by Shaun Dunmall



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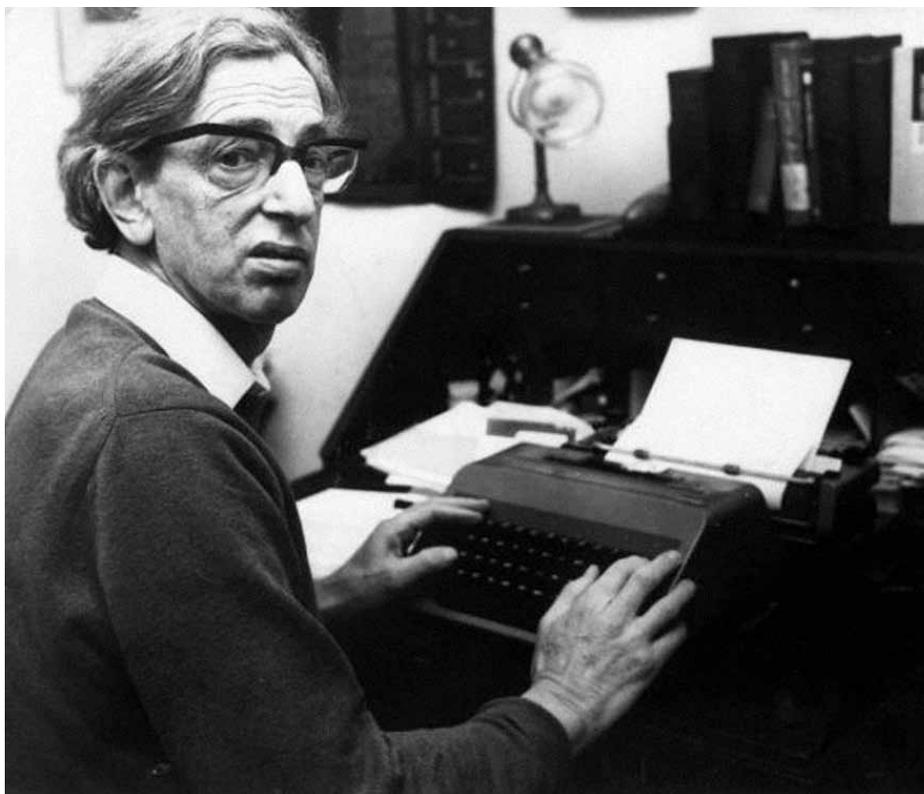
Public intellectual of world history

Dai Smith looks back at the life of Eric Hobsbawm, consummate myth-buster and uncomfortable truth-teller

No young historian setting out to work in the fields of social and labour history in the 1960s could have been unaware of the Colossus that E. J. Hobsbawm already was in our discipline. His essays, published as *Labouring Men* in 1964, had placed him securely amongst a cohort of writers and public intellectuals - notably the historian E.P. Thompson and the critic Raymond Williams - who were going beyond orthodox economic and political history to uncover lives and cultures hitherto hidden or mis-read.

Amongst this brilliant cohort of thinkers, Eric Hobsbawm (1917-2012) stood out for the range of his scholarly interests and the depth of his analytical mind. He was truly a global figure in ambition and achievement. As the publications followed, decade by decade - notably his overarching masterpieces, *The Age of Revolution*, *The Age of Capital*, *The Age of Empire*, *The Age of Extremes* - he covered world history from 1789 to the 1990s in masterful fashion.

And yet we in Wales, mining our own history-from-below, could see from the off, and indeed throughout, that he included us in his perspective on the entire world in ways which others, such as the dazzling Edward Thompson in his seminal



Eric Hobsbawm – "... a truly global figure in ambition and achievement".

influential *The Making of the English Working Class* in 1963, palpably did not. It was, in part, why Gwyn A. Williams, our generational equivalent in Wales, dedicated his 1982 volume, *The Welsh in Their History*, to 'Eric J. Hobsbawm, Master Craftsman'.

There is ample evidence of this mutual regard. If you consult the index of his reflective autobiography of 2002, *Interesting Times*, you will find amongst the great historian's encyclopaedic referencing of the countries of the world from A to Z, several name-checks for Wales. Yet there are none for Scotland or Ireland. Why was this?

In a nutshell, because at both the personal and professional level Wales was an important part of his life. Early on in his career, even from the 1930s, the deep interest lay in his conviction of the centrality of our marginal country to the practice of his politics and to the philosophy of his history. And, from the 1960s, it was literally his second home,

although there would be implications, later, in that phrase and a more conflicted sense of what he came to think of as our more diminished meaning.

The original meaningfulness derived squarely from his knowledge of the history of working-class struggle in south Wales. That was not common in academic circles, even if they were left-wing in sympathy. In 1959, in his breakthrough book, *Primitive Rebels*, a study of pre-industrial protests and millenarian rebellion in Spain and Italy, he showed his understanding of the different time capsules in which people lived in 19th Century Wales - their religious fervour and the spill-over into the riot and social discontent that affected us from Chartism to Syndicalism.

Typically, he cites Gwyn Thomas' carnivalesque novels of the 1940s as wonderful exemplars of worlds-turned-upside-down, such as ours had been. For Hobsbawm, the coalfield was a bastion of political solidarity to be placed

in the Pantheon of European Socialism, alongside Paris' Red Belt of Factories and Turin's militant Workshops. For he knew our more contemporary history, too, from Tony Pandy in 1910 to Madrid in 1936, and from Popular Front to Welfare State. His own adherence to communism, as a revolutionary creed beyond the pragmatics of Labour politics, had begun when he was a Jewish teenager in Berlin in 1931, and stayed with him as the orphaned boy left for England and his extended family in 1933.

Raymond Williams, who became a life-long friend, met him in Cambridge in 1939 where Hobsbawm, then a research student, was the leading light of the Socialist Club where invited guests like Arthur Horner, elected in 1936 as the Communist President of the powerful South Wales Miners' Federation, came to speak. Horner died, virtually forgotten, in 1968 but I can still remember the thrill I felt when I read that year in Hobsbawm's magisterial survey, *Industry and Empire*, that he regarded Horner as the outstanding trade union leader of 20th Century Britain - only overshadowed by Ernie Bevin because of the Welshman's stubbornly principled refusal to leave the Communist Party, no matter what his doubts and reservations (a bit like the historian himself).

At that time I had just begun my doctoral research into the history of the Fed, and of Horner himself, and when it was completed for submission for a PhD in 1976 it was Hobsbawm I requested as its external examiner. I was warned by the genial Professor Alun Davies at Swansea that he was notorious for not pulling his punches; more, that he could be ferocious in interrogation, unforgiving of sloppiness in scholarship, and that there were 'easier', just as suitable, examiners to consider. I persisted, and in a forensically challenging *viva* I was mauled, dissected, quizzed, scorned, corrected, advised, praised and, finally, awarded the Doctorate. Almost four decades later I still feel inordinately proud that I had no 'easy' examiner, only the

non-pareil Eric Hobsbawm.

Eric's own links with Welsh historians of my generation deepened as well as widened as he found our enthusiasm congenial, our conferences of both academics and trade unionists around *Llafur* welcoming, and even our work as it appeared in print worthy of his critical attention. He was a considerable influence on and benefit to that then burgeoning Welsh historiography which has, I believe, often made the intellectual weather in Welsh public life over the last quarter century.

His personal connection was also profound, albeit at the other end of Wales, in Cwm Croesor, Meirionydd, where a kind of 'Bloomsbury-in-Wales' holiday nest of metropolitan lefties flourished in the purlieu of the Kingdom of Clough (Williams-Ellis). They felt at home and thought and plotted and walked and gossiped, and drank in The Ring in Llanfrothen where a young Merfyn Jones gazed on and listened from behind his father's bar, until he went away to do work like their's, albeit not with their sometimes obtuse Anglophone slant.

Increasingly, Eric felt out of sync with the tides of linguistic affirmation and nationalism lapping around him there from the 1980s, and he moved his base in Wales further south to Powys where his arrival fortuitously coincided with the advent of the Hay Literature Festival. Its brand of international openness, on a border, well suited his Janus-like vision and he became, steadfastly, a supporting luminary and ultimately its President. I met him there for chat and challenge, year on year, and in 1994 was honoured to be asked by Hay's Director, Peter Florence, to be Eric's one-on-one interlocutor before a packed audience when *The Age of Extremes* was launched.

It happily fell to me, too, when Gore Vidal and Norman Mailer book-ended a fabulous week (Hay wasn't big enough to hold them both at the same time), to introduce Eric to a bedazzled Vidal. They sat down together, oblivious to the party buzzing around them, with Vidal, for

once, the one in awe of the other. Then, in the past few years, as I brought my much-delayed Life of Raymond Williams to a close, it was Eric who urged me on and who chaired the book's launch at Birkbeck, his longstanding base in the University of London, in the summer of 2008. It was an appropriately celebratory and abrasive occasion, no 'easy' examiner still.

Wales meant too much to him for him to be easy on us. It was his task to remind us of why he valued us. So, when he introduced me at Hay to give the Raymond Williams Annual Lecture, he spelled out what he felt had been the historic importance of this western peninsula of the British Isles in providing such an example to all who sought wider human purpose and commonality than the defensiveness of identity politics could ever offer.

He abhorred the adventurism of celebrity and mere political opportunism, and said again it was why he had supported Neil Kinnock in the 1980s in his fight to salvage the Labour Party in its institutional form - a very necessary and very Welsh fight - just as its culture needed saving again from the short-term Faustian electoralism of very un-Welsh New Labour.

He wished our literature written in English to be read widely in its own country and to be more widely appreciated beyond our borders. He admired our specificity for its universal application. He was a consummate myth-buster and an uncomfortable truth-teller, and just as much as he recognised the very best of what we did as a people of purpose in the last century, so I would say we should continue to recognise Eric Hobsbawm, our friend, as an intellectual presence tangential to our locale but central to the realisation of our better aspirations.

Dai Smith is Raymond Williams Chair in Cultural History at Swansea University and Chair of the Arts Council of Wales.

Education trumps coal in 21st Century Wales

Dave Egan distils the lessons we can still learn from the authors of *The Miner's Next Step*

A century ago a group of young, radical, largely self-educated south Wales miners published *The Miners' Next Step*. Along with the Tonypandy 'Riots' of 1910 and the epic Cambrian Combine Dispute of 1910-11, it helped to establish a reputation for the south Wales coalfield as one of the most militant and at times revolutionary areas of the United Kingdom.

The pamphlet was the handiwork of the Unofficial Reform Committee of the South Wales Miners Federation (SWMF). Its main authors were the future Labour MP, W.H Mainwaring, the pure syndicalist, Will Hay and the Ynysir-born, Noah Ablett.

Although a flawed individual, Ablett was one of the most influential thinkers produced by the labour movement in south Wales. As a SWMF scholarship student at Ruskin College he imbibed a heady mix of socialist, Marxist and other revolutionary ideas and fashioned these into his own brand of what he called 'industrial unionism'.

At Oxford in 1907 he had been one of the leaders of a revolt against the more orthodox teaching of the college authorities. With his fellow activists they formed the *Plebs League* to campaign for an independent form of working-class education intended to produce revolutionary socialists.

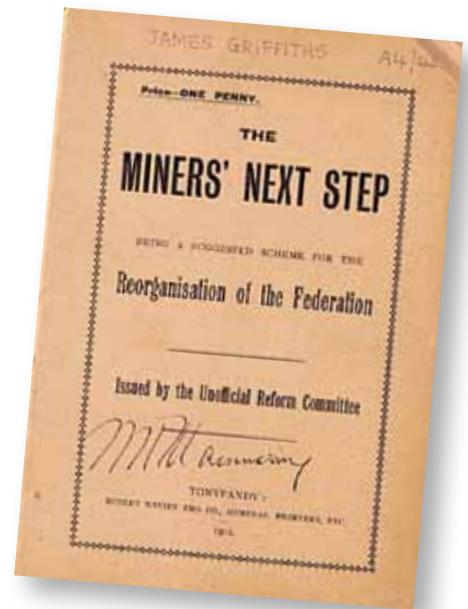
Back home in south Wales, whilst the ultimate target of their agitation was the capitalist system of the Coalowners, their immediate aim was to turn the SWMF away from conciliation to becoming

a 'fighting union'. Militant action would improve wages and conditions, achieve workers control of the industry and thereby contribute to the overthrow of the capitalist system.

The Miners Next Step was both a practical schema for the reform of the SWMF and a revolutionary socialist manifesto. It was an emphasis on the latter that soon earned it its contemporary notoriety with the Edwardian establishment. However, its enduring achievement, was the transformation of the SWMF into a militant union that would be at the forefront of the great labour struggles of the 20th Century.

A hundred years on, what resonance does *The Miners' Next Step* have for us today? On first reflection it might be thought very little. It was and reads like the product of a very different age. A much more confident one where, despite the vicissitudes of an unregulated capitalist economy with its periods of slump and falling wages, full employment and increasing living standards were the more general picture.

The Welsh coal industry was reaching the height of its remarkable expansion with a labour force of about a quarter of a million men. Most miners left school in their early teens with no formal qualifications and proceeded to largely unskilled employment but also skilled work learned through an informal apprenticeship system. In a period before the full development of the welfare state, the possibility of dire poverty was



always a real threat and strikes as well as economic slumps could lead to hard times. Nevertheless, this was a confident and buoyant economy and society that saw only future expansion in front of it. Dominated as it was by its major industry, it was 'Coal Society'.

In the early 21st Century Wales is faced by very different circumstances. The slow decline of the coal industry through the remainder of the 20th Century reached its peak after the 1984 Miners' Strike when through an act of callous vandalism the industry was virtually wiped from the face of Wales leaving behind post-industrial communities.

During the current recession the challenge of reviving the fortunes of these communities has become even greater, with areas such as the Heads of the Valleys being among the most difficult in the UK to re-generate. The main reason is its low skills and qualifications profile. Whilst in the heyday of the coalfield this didn't matter, now it is a major weakness. Today we live in an 'Education Society' where economic prospects and prosperity are closely linked to levels of skills and qualifications.

In recent years, led by a resolute Welsh Government Education Minister in Leighton Andrews, we have become very aware of the need to improve the performance of our education system.

Perhaps the greatest problem we face is the education achievement of those who live in official poverty in Wales, which lags well behind that of our more prosperous families and communities.

A third of our children in Wales live in official poverty and in areas such as the former mining valleys this is much higher, with some of its primary schools having 60 per cent and above of their children entitled to free school meals. Although there are children, families, schools and classrooms that buck the trend, overall the link between poverty and relatively low levels of educational achievement in our most disadvantaged communities is very strong and getting stronger.

At the age of sixteen it is two and half times more likely that children who are not on free school meals will achieve the basic standard of education - the equivalent of 5 higher grade GCSE including English/Welsh and Mathematics - needed for good future progression into education, training and employment than children who live in poverty.

It is, therefore, not surprising that of the 130,000 or so new jobs that have been created over the last few years in Wales despite the recession, that very few of these have gone to the south Wales valleys. This is precisely because the great majority of them require mid to higher level qualifications.

Quite simply, the 'Education Society' in parts of contemporary southern Wales is not providing a future for its citizens and particularly its young people that the 'Coal Society' once did for the communities from which *The Miners' Next Step* appeared.

Is there anything, therefore, in the acute analysis that the pamphlet offered of its society that may still have salience for us and the serious challenges that we face today? The authors of *The Miners' Next Step* argued that three things were essential if they were to achieve their objectives. Firstly, they wished to ensure that leaders and leadership (both of which they distrusted) were subservient to the authority of the rank and file. Secondly, they wanted a balance to be

Where we have success today within our education system and particularly where the tendency for poverty to lead to low achievement is bucked, outstanding leadership is absolutely critical.

kept between centralised control (the state) and local autonomy. Finally, they believed in the power of the producers (the miners) and their ultimate control of the coal industry as a first step to the creation of a new society based on industrial democracy.

From the standpoint of today their critique of leadership is not persuasive. For success within our education system and particularly where the tendency for poverty to lead to low achievement is bucked, outstanding leadership is absolutely critical.

In developing a devolved education system in Wales we have become expert at developing policies, plans and strategies. However, we have neglected the development of a leadership at all levels - national, regional and local- that is focused upon policy implementation. We may also have got wrong the difficult balance between centralisation and local autonomy.

In particular, the move to local management of schools begun under the Thatcher regime and continued by successive governments at Westminster and Cardiff has probably not served us well. We need a major reform of governance in education in Wales to restore this balance.

What of producer control? Again, this does not play well into our contemporary situation. The

possibility that the producer interests of teachers should be dominant within our education system is not supportable or sustainable in a modern democracy such as Wales. Indeed, we know from robust research evidence that the greatest influence on a child's educational development is the parent, followed next in importance by that of the community.

Of course, schools and teachers have a profoundly important role to play, particularly when they help to raise achievement of the most disadvantaged children and thereby contribute to the growth of a more egalitarian society. However, that influence should not be paramount and placed above that of 'consumers'.

So inevitably for us today *The Miners' Next Step* appears to have mixed messages. It was a remarkable product of a remarkable society produced by remarkable individuals. Let us remember and celebrate it for that.

That doesn't require, however, what the great historian EP Thompson called "the enormous condescension of posterity".

What endures most of all from *The Miners' Next Step* is its radicalism and its freethinking. That is what we need in education policy in Wales today. A belief that we can fashion a better society, that poverty and its influences can be eradicated, and that education can be a powerful weapon in achieving this. This requires a radicalism in leadership, governance and policy implementation that I'm sure the authors of *The Miners' Next Step* would wish to be their legacy for today's Wales.

Dave Egan is Policy Adviser to the Heads of the Valleys Education Programme. This article is based on a talk he gave to *Llafur: the Welsh People's History Society* in October to mark the centenary of the publication of *The Miners' Next Step*.

Tesco's law

Sarah Wyburn asks whether new entrants on the high street will give a distinctive edge to the Welsh legal system

In the fifteen years since the 1997 Referendum, devolution has led to a raft of policy initiatives that have changed the way Wales is governed, and has set a new public policy agenda. Last year's referendum gave significant new impetus to this momentum. Yet beyond constitutional law, you could be forgiven for thinking nothing has changed in the Welsh legal world.

The law that governs criminal, civil and family proceedings is actually "the law of England and Wales". There is no practical difference between a case being heard in Wales or England, save that cases in Wales can be conducted through the medium of Welsh.

Following the 2011 referendum, lawyers in Wales increasingly ask whether the next step could or should be a move to full law-making powers in further areas of public life. Naturally, much of this discussion has centred on whether there might soon come a time when a separate Welsh legal system exists. The UK Government's planned funding cuts, combined with a completely unrelated piece of new legislation, could unwittingly be providing additional momentum in this debate.

The legislation in question is the innocuous-sounding Legal Services Act 2007, which contains provision to allow non-lawyers to set up a law firm, or to buy into an existing one, in a new structure called an Alternative Business Partnership. This legislation could ultimately have far-reaching consequences for Wales.

At the time the Act was drafted, much of the debate centred on allowing professional staff who were

not legally qualified, such as chief executives and practice managers, to become equity stakeholders in their firms, or allowing firms to seek outside investment to continue growth. It soon became clear that the Act would also provide opportunities for non-legal companies, including big household name brands, to set up legal practices. The legislation was dubbed 'Tesco Law' although, ironically, Tesco have no plans to enter the market. It led many lawyers to fear a future dominated by big names squeezing out traditional high street practices.

The most commonly imagined scenario saw new entrants dominating the market, through a combination of economies of scale, marketing budgets, and a brand recognition that most law firms could only dream about. The new entrants' overheads would be lower (so the argument goes), and so

effect on the legal sector in Wales, its impact may not be as extreme as some predictions suggest. There will be an increase in external investment. Possibly some brand names will set up shop - the Co-op has already put its name down. However, it will not mean the end of the independent specialist law firm. Indeed, when the first three approved Alternative Business Partnership firms were named in March, two were small traditional law firms who had simply applied for authorisation to take on extra investors. The first Alternative Business Partnership in Wales is also a pre-existing Cardiff law firm.

Asking whether 'Tesco Law' is a threat to the legal sector in Wales is something of a red herring. The real question is what the legal sector in Wales will look like when the Act, combined with the UK Government's planned budget cuts, are in full force.

The legislation was dubbed 'Tesco Law' although, ironically, Tesco have no plans to enter the market.

the fees charged to clients would be lower. Their adverts would emphasise trustworthiness and loyalty to a known brand. Existing firms in profitable locations would be swallowed up or driven out of business. Those located in less desirable areas would become financially unfeasible.

Whilst the Act will have a major

Market research indicates that firms emphasising a local, personal service, especially those specialising in niche areas of law, can continue to differentiate themselves from new competition. For non-transactional work, people seem to want a bespoke service from a dedicated specialist, not a low-cost service mainly handled by a call centre.

I have found the fact that my firm specialises in family law a real asset when approached by new clients. They often say they have come to us because we are a niche practice rather than a 'jack of all trades'. I would expect any existing specialist high-quality firm to tell the same story, and do not see that being any different if the competition were a bank or a supermarket.

The real impact in Wales will be that outside investors will look for profitable work (not Legal Aid) to ensure a return on their capital. When combined with the Justice Secretary's announcement that Legal Aid funding is being withdrawn for almost all family disputes, this will make it much harder for individuals in Wales to secure Legal Aid representation.

The rates paid by the Legal Services Commission for Legal Aid family work are already so low as to make doing this work uneconomical. With the UK Government's further cuts, combined

with pressure from new investors, and competition from rivals who have this kind of investment in place, most firms are seriously considering giving up Legal Aid work.

The options for those who need legal representation, but are not in a position to fund it privately, will be severely restricted. In Wales, this could have a disproportionate impact compared to other areas of the UK, because of its existing levels of social disadvantage. There is already a growing surplus of clients needing public funding in Wales, and an increasing shortage of firms able to service them. Waiting times of over a month to see a solicitor are common.

The Welsh Government has pursued a progressive public policy agenda, and it should now give serious consideration to how it might seek to restructure the funding of legal services in Wales. It should consider how it can intervene to protect legal services for the most vulnerable in Wales.

Such a move by the Welsh Government would not only safeguard services for people most in need, but could moderate the approach of national 'brands' currently considering setting up in Wales. It could also pave the way for a more localised emphasis within legal services. This would open up new opportunities for community social enterprises, as well as existing independent legal practitioners, to fill.

The fifteen years following the first referendum on devolution have seen little change for the legal sector in Wales beyond constitutional law. The next fifteen years following the second referendum could see the most sweeping changes in centuries, and might lead to a 'Law of Wales'.

Sarah Wyburn is a Partner at Wendy Hopkins Family Law Practice.

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COMMUNICATIONS

4

Education

Articles

Welsh schools should focus on skills rather than knowledge

We need to make new Welsh-speaking communities

Welsh schools should focus on skills rather than knowledge

David Reynolds examines the challenges facing an education system trapped in a time warp of a world free from competition

You would have had to have been a resident of another planet in the past year to miss how education has become one of Wales' hottest topics. The international surveys showing us doing badly, the GCSE-based conflicts with Michael Gove in London, and the wide range of policies now being rolled out from the Welsh Government have generated a constant flow of headlines and controversy.

It really all started with the publication of the results of the OECD's PISA study in December 2010, continued with the announcement of the 20-point change strategy by Leighton Andrews in February 2011, and more recently culminated in the summer of 2012 with the examination marking fiasco.

Over that time, it was becoming clearer by the day what the problems of our Welsh education system are, and what measures may be necessary to turn the system around. Firstly, virtually all industrial societies attempted to reform their educational systems in the first decade of the 2,000s. In doing so they used policies for both the 'supply' of education, determined by the state and the producers of education, and the 'demand' for it from parents and other educational consumers. Using the mantra spoken across the world, this is the simultaneous 'supply side/demand side' range of policies we are also now implementing in Wales.

However, our situation is that the operation of the 'demand side' part of the equation has been stymied by a decade of 'producerism' associated with previous Welsh Education Ministers

- by policies determined from within the educational system by educational professionals. Welsh parents are therefore not used to performance data, and to 'banding' of the schools according to their quality. They are only used to choosing their local school for their children. Only slowly are they becoming quality monitors.

All this means that on the 'demand side' of the equation, 'consumerism' in the form that exists in England and in many other societies is not the powerful force it needs to be, given the need to get the simultaneous 'supply side/demand side' leverage. All this also means that the pressure on the 'supply side' to achieve the ambitious targets that now exist – on PISA performance by 2016 and GCSE results by 2015 – is huge. Whether it can provide the 'push' in the absence of the necessary demand side 'pull' is unclear.

Secondly, the 'supply side' of education may be finding it hard to do the kind of things necessary to improve pupil performance. Again, as a result of our policies through the last decade, we did not 'upskill' our professionals in the way that other societies did. Where were our literacy and numeracy strategies? Where were the information and training about the key educational levers affecting pupils? Where were the assessments of the effectiveness of classroom teaching?

All manner of opportunities to acquire the knowledge that the world's teachers acquired over the last ten years are coming on stream in Wales. One example is the Learning Wales website, with its best practice about Numeracy,



Education Ministers on diverging pathways – Leighton Andrews in Cardiff Bay and Michael Gove in Westminster.

Literacy, Behaviour and much else.

However, many Welsh educational professionals lack the foundations, the insights and the professional vocabulary to access and use this kind of material. For instance, ask teachers around the world what is ‘whole class interactive learning’ and they will know what you mean. Try the same in Wales and they may not.

Wales has a mountain to climb in reaching its aspiration for being a ‘top 20’ country in the 2016 PISA tests. These do not measure the ‘knowledge’ that children possess – how could they, given that different countries teach different knowledge bases? Instead, they measure the ‘skills’ that pupils have. Nowadays there is no point in schools teaching knowledge which can be obtained at the press of a computer or smartphone key. The important thing is to teach students how to access knowledge, the so-called metacognitive skills that are becoming a more important emphasis in the PISA tests over time.

But we have a twofold problem. The first issue is a *limited overlap* in the relationship between our existing curriculum and the PISA tests. It shows in our Science subjects, where PISA reflects the merging of the three sciences that are still taught as three distinct subjects in many schools in Wales. It shows in Mathematics, where the tests require the reading of large amounts of contextual information which is unusual in Maths at the moment in Wales. And it shows in Reading, where

PISA tests require more familiarity with non-fictional material and with non-continuous texts such as graphs than would be usual in Wales.

The second problem is *in the tests themselves*. They contain a lot of language whereas in Wales we have been trying to reduce this. They have variation in the typefaces used while we have been using standardised typefaces as much as possible. They are administered in long testing sessions – and children in Wales have not been used to external testing at all.

All these factors mean PISA tests do not easily relate to the way we are used to doing things in Wales. We need to make it clear to PISA deniers why all this matters. Children performing better on the PISA tests will possess the skills of the future and also perform better in other forms of assessment, including GCSEs.

We need a reform of the curriculum in Wales on a scale that has not been attempted before. This is not just a matter of the organisational structure of the curriculum, examinations and assessment. It goes deeper to what we teach in terms of the skills content of the curriculum. The Welsh Joint Education Committee, which has been asleep as a curriculum developer for a decade, will have to develop a different role. The material it has been trying to sell into schools across England and Wales is out of date and moribund. We simply cannot perform well in modern PISA tests using an out dated school curriculum.

Given these difficulties, are there

any hopeful aspects as we prepare for the publication of the 2012 PISA testing results next December 2013? The upcoming 2015 testing, to be published in 2016, will major on Science, where we already are at the average for all PISA countries. Today the Welsh system is less hostile to the need for change than in 2011 when the reform plans were outlined. There are fewer attempts to use alibis and excuses for our failure. There is a more self-confident feeling among educational professionals as they look at Michael Gove’s absurd desire to return the English assessment systems to a focus upon testing ‘knowledge’ rather than ‘skills’. As night follows day that will condemn the English educational system to rapid decline in its PISA scores. So there are some positives in our situation.

Even so, we will need to explore more radical education policies for Wales. How can we further develop the ‘demand side’ by encouraging Welsh parents to compare results between schools and vote with their feet for better standards? How can we give the teaching profession the skills to pick up all the materials that are now available to them? How can the WJEC be roused from its torpor and sleep? We’re only half way up that mountain we have to climb.

David Reynolds is Professor of Educational Effectiveness at the University of Southampton and advises the Welsh Government’s Department for Education and Skills.



We need to make new Welsh-speaking communities

Steve Morris reports on research into creating new spaces for the language in anglicised areas of Wales

A constant theme amongst adults on why they are motivated to learn Welsh is a belief that as a result they will become more integrated with their community. The following comments are typical:

"I live in Wales so I should speak Welsh."

"It's important to keep the language alive."

"I'm learning to understand and speak to members of the community in the language of the community."

Evidently there is a mismatch between the aspirations of learners to integrate with a Welsh-speaking community and the linguistic reality that often the majority of that community does not speak Welsh. How can this be addressed? What strategies can be

implemented to extend and expand the Welsh medium social networks of adult Welsh learners? As Linda Pritchard Newcombe puts it, in her 2007 book *Social Context and Fluency in Second Language Learners*:

"If learners do not receive a positive response when they first use the language, they may lose confidence and withdraw, believing their Welsh to be inadequate. Learners are not usually prepared for the gulf between learning in class and using/practising Welsh in the community."

Many teachers of Welsh to adults will be familiar with learners who prefer the safety of the classroom to the challenge of trying to use the language outside it. When these learners live in communities where the majority of the population only speak English the

challenge is obviously much greater.

One response in some areas has been to create Canolfannau Cymraeg (Welsh-speaking Centres) where classes are combined with activities for other Welsh-speaking groups in the community under the same roof. There may also be a Welsh language bookshop, bar or café in the same building. How effective can they be in integrating learners into Welsh-speaking communities?

Commissioned by the Welsh Government and the South West Wales Welsh for Adults Centre, Heini Gruffudd and I carried out research into this question. We looked at around a third of all adult learners of Welsh in higher level classes (those who are nearest to fluency in the language) in areas of both north and south Wales where less than 15 per cent of the population are Welsh speakers. Three settings emerged as offering the main opportunities for new

speakers to socialise in the language:

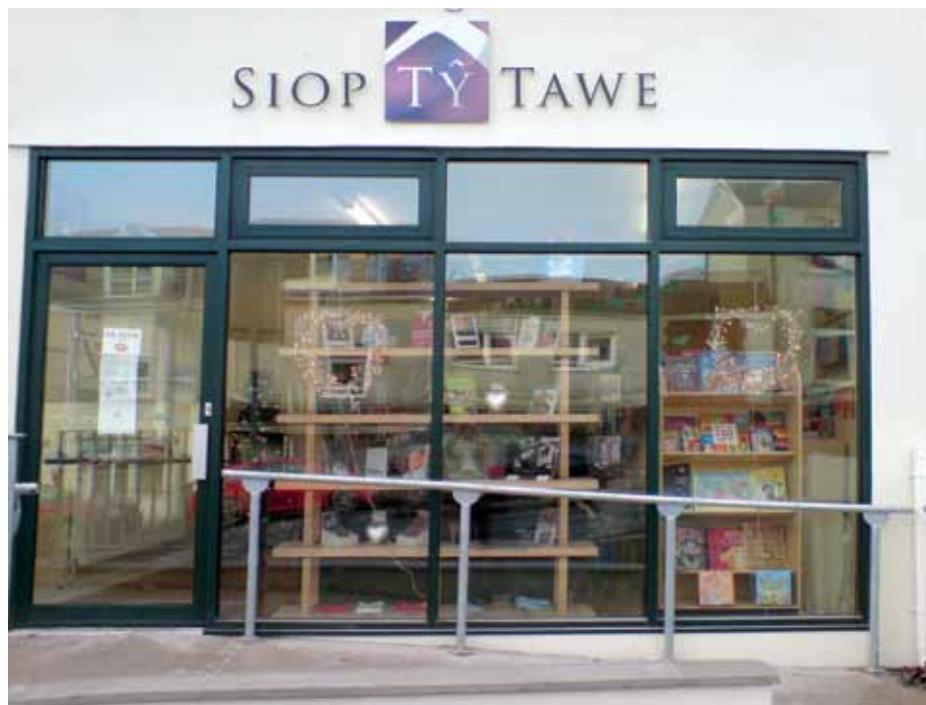
- Family
- Canolfan Gymraeg
- Activities and events in 'familiar' locations

It is notoriously difficult for language planners to influence the first setting to any great extent. However, the research showed that Canolfannau Cymraeg offer regular opportunities for these new speakers to use Welsh. Moreover, interactions with other speakers of Welsh could take place in a 'familiar environment' where they felt 'safe' and more confident.

By holding events and running activities through the medium of Welsh for all Welsh speakers, Canolfannau Cymraeg are a good way of increasing new speakers' confidence in using the language outside of the class environment. They also encourage Welsh speakers to persevere in speaking Welsh with Welsh learners. Crucially, from the point of view of language planning and policy for the less Welsh-speaking parts of Wales, Canolfannau Cymraeg also offer a rare opportunity for other Welsh-speaking groups, such as ex-pupils from local Welsh medium schools, to use the language and develop new Welsh-medium social networks. Activities such as these are vital to reversing language decline.

The research found there was potential for great success in a number of strategies for helping new speakers. Examples include persuading parents to raise their children through the medium of Welsh, encouraging new speakers to take more responsibility for organising events, raising awareness amongst Welsh speakers of the needs of new speakers and linguistic assertiveness sessions for learners to increase confidence. The effectiveness of all these strategies is much greater when they take place within a Canolfan Gymraeg.

In September a conference was organised by Academi Hywel Teifi at



Siop Ty Tawe provides a hub for Swansea's Welsh speakers.

Swansea University to discuss how to increase the number of these centres. Certainly, there needs to be more cooperation between the Welsh Government, local government, the Welsh for Adults Centres, the Mentrau Iaith and other key organisations and individuals to create more of them.

Efforts should be made to locate all the organisations which are involved with the Welsh language under the same roof. This is an obvious way to turn a building from merely providing office space for one or two organisations into a complete Canolfan Gymraeg where Welsh speakers can go with the confidence that everything happening there will be through the medium of Welsh.

We should also learn from the success of those centres that have already been established, especially in Merthyr Tydfil, Swansea and Wrexham. A first lesson is to ensure that there is local ownership.

The late Chris Rees frequently reminded teachers in the field of Welsh for adults that their main *raison d'être* was to create new speakers of Welsh. Few would disagree. But we should also

be mindful that this generally has been achieved in situations where Welsh isn't the natural community language. In our anglicised areas Canolfannau Cymraeg can be the basis for creating varied and innovative Welsh-speaking communities. They can bring together three categories of people who in combination offer hope for the future of the language, namely first language speakers, the new adult speakers of Welsh, and young people who have received their education through the medium of Welsh.

It is difficult to see how we can restore Welsh as a 'normal' language in the non-Welsh-speaking areas of Wales without the creation of more Canolfannau Cymraeg as a basis for new Welsh-speaking communities and social networks.

Steve Morris is a lecturer in Welsh at Academi Hywel Teifi, Swansea University and leads the national Welsh for Adults Research Committee.

Articles

The statins scandal

Iodine deficiency should be on Welsh Government's radar

The statins scandal

Stephanie Matthews says we are at risk of using mass medication to solve a lifestyle issue

One in three people who read this article will be prescribed a statin. The rationale for this is to reduce the cholesterol level in the blood which if high can lead to a heart attack. It has been suggested, albeit tongue in cheek, that statins should be added to the water supply and be available as the McStatin alongside mayo and ketchup.

There has been a seven-fold increase in the number of people taking statins in the last ten years. The cholesterol lowering drug budget is now over £500 million per year in the UK. Has the world gone mad? Is it really necessary to 'medicalise' a generation?

Maybe it would be acceptable if statins were perfect drugs. They are amazing, powerful and do what they say on the packet, but they also have side effects. These include muscle pain (a rare form can be fatal), fatigue, headache, tummy upsets, sleep disturbances,

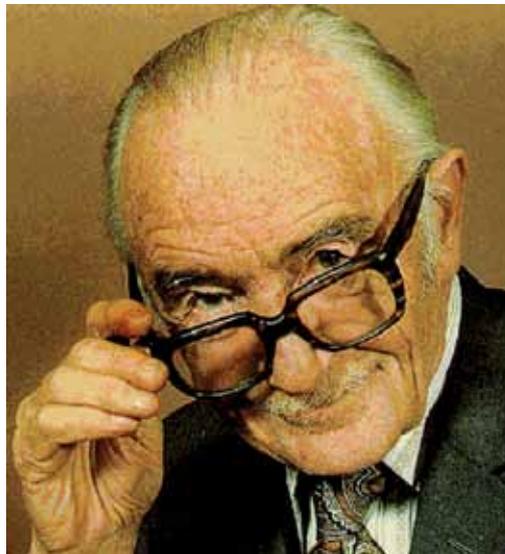
sexual dysfunction to name but a few.

Proponents of 'statins for all' say there are few side effects, but in my clinical experience there are lots. Many are low key and would be put up with if the alternative was a heart attack. However, they are severe enough to take the edge off enjoying life, and if the evidence of protection is not there, why spoil someone's wellbeing?

Everyone agrees that if the risk of having a heart attack is high, they should take a statin. The debate centres around whether everyone should be treated with a statin. The experts disagree and arguments in the medical community continue to rage. In the UK, the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE), the body which shall be listened to, says that statins should NOT be used if your 'risk' of a heart attack is low. This view is supported by a Cochrane review, internationally recognised as the highest standard in evidence based health care and named after our famous late fellow countryman, Archie Cochrane.

If NICE and Cochrane agree, what is the problem? An editorial in May this year, in the auspicious medical journal *The Lancet*, recommended that everyone over the age of 50 take a statin and this view has been given significant publicity. We are at risk of mass medication to solve a lifestyle issue. But who benefits from this whole population approach to taking drugs? And where did the funding come from to do the original research?

The pharmaceutical industry has fuelled the research into cholesterol since the 1950s. A juggernaut developed which could not stop, despite research findings that were not always supportive. In 1957 a committee of the American Heart Association declined to impose national dietary advice based on research findings. By 1961, two key scientists whose reputations and careers depended on the cholesterol bandwagon had got



Archie Cochrane, a Scottish doctor, undertook randomised control trials of treatments in the Rhondda from the 1940s, becoming a pioneer of evidence-based medicine. His experience with the International Brigade in the Spanish Civil War and later in a prisoner of War Camp during World War II persuaded him that much of medicine did not have sufficient evidence to justify its use.

Cholesterol

Cholesterol is made in the liver and needs to be transported around the body to all other tissues, where it is used to make membranes and hormones. It is carried in a structure called LDL (Low Density Lipoprotein). If there is too much LDL in the blood, the cholesterol comes out and sticks to the wall of the blood vessel furring it up. It is also dangerous if the LDL changes shape and becomes smaller and more compact. This often happens with diabetics and people on a bad diet. LDL has become known as the bad cholesterol. The body also has a mechanism to pick up rogue cholesterol and take it safely back to the liver. This is called HDL (High Density Lipoprotein) and the cholesterol in HDL has become known as the 'good' cholesterol. To increase your HDL, don't smoke and take some exercise.

Cholesterol levels you should aim for

	If you are at low risk of coronary heart disease	If you are at high risk of coronary heart disease
Total cholesterol in mmol/l	Less than 5	Less than 4
LDL cholesterol (the bad one) in mmol/l	Less than 3	Less than 2
HDL cholesterol (the good one) in mmol/l	More than 1	More than 1

themselves on the said committee. On presenting the very same research findings, the advice was changed. The low cholesterol goal was born. The authors now stand accused of selection bias in these studies. By 1980 we were in a situation where the whole population was being targeted, not just people at known risk of heart attacks. That dietary advice we now know, actually caused heart attacks.

Despite the lack of evidence, by the end of the 1980s the work of the vociferous and powerful cholesterol/diet campaigners led to a series of dietary guidelines by such auspicious bodies as the World Health Organisation, the Health Education Council (UK) and the American Heart Association. Wales played a significant role in this story as a

result of the Heartbeat Wales project which ran from 1985 to 1990. This was a vibrant programme led by dedicated, enthusiastic and energetic people. Many careers and reputations were made and many doctors and policy makers were carried in the slipstream.

We are left with millions of people taking statins when a healthy dose of will power, weight loss, dietary restraint and exercise would be cheaper, safer, and avoid side effects. The individual would be in control and feel so much better. But, why bother looking after ourselves when we can take a pill instead? And of course, the latter approach does not involve any profit for anyone, except perhaps sports shoe manufacturers.

Getting lost in all this argument is the tragedy that the smaller number

of people who really need a statin are going undiagnosed and will have their (probably fatal) heart attacks in middle age. There is a condition called Familial Hypercholesterolaemia (FH) which is inherited high blood cholesterol. Children and adults with FH have high blood cholesterol through no fault of their own and it can lead to changes in the coronary arteries from as young as ten-years-old.

Statins work brilliantly to reduce their cholesterol and their risk of a heart attack. There are estimated to be 10,000 people in Wales with FH but only about 20 per cent of them realise this and are treated properly. Could you be one of the 8,000 who don't know? If any close blood relative has heart trouble under the age of 60, or is known to have high cholesterol, go to your GP and get a cholesterol check. It affects men and women equally. If there are any problems with rationing in the NHS, these people should be high on the treatment list as their condition is totally preventable. The tragedy of early sudden death which devastates families is avoidable.

Finally a Health Warning: Don't believe everything you read and have a healthy scepticism. Don't change any drug treatment unless discussed with your GP. You may be one of the undetected 8,000. A piece of advice, when you have a cholesterol check done, always ask for LDL and HDL to be written on the blood test form. Only with both these results can your levels really be interpreted properly. And finally, take control. It's your life.

Dr Stephanie Matthews was a consultant (1988 to 2008) at University Hospital Llandough where she ran the adult and children's lipid clinic and set up a specialist unit to treat people with severe inherited high cholesterol.

Iodine deficiency should be on Welsh Government's radar

John Lazarus warns of a hidden dietary threat to the development of our children

One of the issues facing Dr Ruth Hussey, the new Chief Medical Officer for Wales, who took up her post this autumn, is the proposed Public Health (Wales) Bill which will, in the Welsh Government's own words, provide a "legislative basis for delivering improved life expectancy and well-being and for reducing health inequality in Wales".

In many fields Dr Hussey will need to exercise influence with her counterparts in the other countries of the UK because solutions will often have to be found on a UK or even European basis, especially if those solutions involve the collaboration or the regulation of the food industry.

One such issue, which is already an item in her in-tray, is the question of a deficiency of iodine in our food, a deficiency that can affect the development of a child's brain during pregnancy and intellectual performance later in life. Recent studies of school children in cities around Britain, including Cardiff, have confirmed the long-standing concerns of many who have been working in this field. Shockingly, the UK is now eighth on the list of the top ten iodine deficient countries in the world in terms of the number of schoolchildren with insufficient iodine intake. As the accompanying chart shows, we are placed between Angola and Mozambique.

This is now prompting a concerted attempt to engage with public health authorities and the food industry. Earlier this summer a meeting was held under the auspices of the International

Council for Control of Iodine Deficiency Disorders – a non-governmental organisation that works closely with the World Health Organisation and UNICEF - the British Thyroid Association and the British Thyroid Foundation. It was concluded that that the degree of iodine deficiency could be adversely affecting pregnancy outcomes and the cognitive development of children and that further monitoring of the iodine status in the UK is essential. It called for a national strategy to manage this public health problem.

Iodine was first produced from seaweed in 1811 and derived its name from the Greek for violet. It is essential for the synthesis of thyroid hormone which occurs in the thyroid gland in humans and animals. But it was not until the start of the 20th Century that the devastating effect of severe iodine deficiency was recognised.

In the western Himalayas people with large goitres were noted to be imbecilic and the term cretin (implying an IQ less than 40) was used to describe their intellectual status. This was shown to be due to iodine deficiency and subsequent studies found that this condition did not exist in areas of iodine sufficiency. Since that time many areas in the world such as mountainous parts of South America, large areas of Africa and Asia and parts of several European countries, including Spain and Italy, have been found to be grossly deficient in iodine.

We obtain iodine from our diet, mainly through milk, dairy products and sea fish. In the 1920s a survey by the Medical Research Council in the UK noted the presence of goitre in many areas of the country, particularly in Derbyshire. The term 'Derbyshire neck' was used for many

years to denote thyroid enlargement due to iodine deficiency. But iodine deficiency was also characteristic of large parts of western Britain.

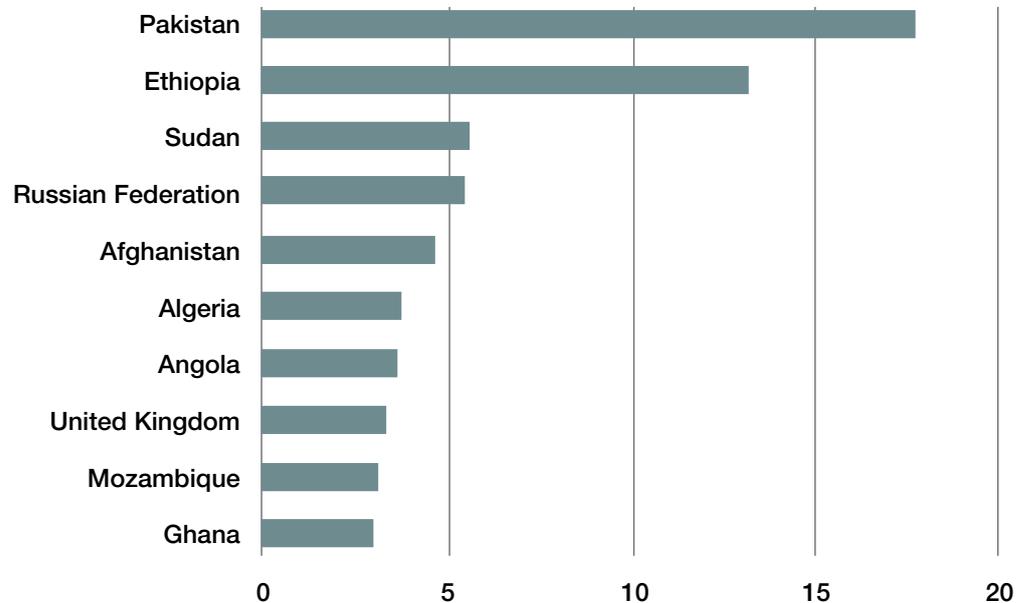
No specific legislation was enacted to correct the problem and a *laissez faire* situation was allowed to continue. In fact the iodine status of the UK improved due to the use of iodophors in the milk industry and the practice of feeding cattle cake to cows in winter. This cake contains iodine. In addition, periodic estimations of iodine intake by the government using an average food basket method had shown improvement in iodine consumption and a reduction in the incidence of goitre. But in recent decades we have seen not only the end of universal provision of milk in schools, but also a general decline in milk consumption throughout the population.

Meanwhile, advances in understanding of the role and action of thyroid hormones have indicated their critical importance in brain development both *in utero* and during childhood and adolescence. Iodine from the mother enters the foetus and can be used to synthesise thyroid hormone. This will not happen till the baby is about 16 weeks old. Hence the baby is entirely dependent on thyroid hormone derived from the mother and iodine is required for manufacture of this thyroid hormone.

In iodine deficient areas a reduction in maternal thyroid hormone occurs which means that the developing brain is at risk. So the disorder of iodine deficiency is not limited to cretinism and a large goitre. Those clinical presentations are the tip of the iceberg. More subtle effects on development and particularly intellectual performance can be seen even in mildly iodine deficient areas. The concept of the spectrum of iodine deficiency disorders from the very mild to severe is now accepted by the medical profession and associated disciplines.

During the 1960s it became apparent that iodine deficiency worldwide was one of the major causes of mental deficiency and, importantly, was potentially correctable. The solution was to introduce iodine into a commonly used

Number of school-age children with insufficient iodine intake (millions)



foodstuff or the water supply. Iodised salt is the preferred method of iodisation in many countries and this has been shown to be cost effective and a major public health success. Universal salt iodisation has increased significantly world wide in the last 20 years. The World Health Organisation has made recommendations for adequate iodine intake for the population as well as for pregnant and lactating women, which are substantially higher. It was to achieve this result that the International Council for Control of Iodine Deficiency Disorders was formed.

The standard accepted method of evaluating the iodine status in a population is to obtain an adequate number of urine samples to measure the iodine concentration. On a population basis this yields an accurate indication of the daily iodine intake. This method was used to survey 15-year-old schoolgirls in the UK in 2010 by collecting samples from around 900 girls from nine cities in the four countries in the UK. In Wales three schools in Cardiff were chosen to provide samples.

The results of the survey were striking and consistent. The median urinary iodine concentration was 80.1 microgammas per litre (WHO recommendation is 100) and this meant

that mild iodine deficiency is present in 51 per cent, moderate iodine deficiency in 16 per cent, and 1 per cent had severe iodine deficiency. More than two-thirds of schoolgirls in UK have low iodine intakes.

The results, which were published in *The Lancet*, suggest that the UK is iodine deficient. As developing foetuses are the most susceptible to adverse effects of iodine deficiency and even mild perturbations of maternal and foetal thyroid function have an effect on neurodevelopment, these findings are of potential major public health importance.

Randomised trials of iodine supplements given to schoolchildren have been performed in Spain and Italy and have shown positive effects on IQ. To underline these findings a longitudinal study of children and adolescents from the Bristol area was carried out. The as yet unpublished data have shown intellectual deficiencies related to the maternal iodine status. There is no reason to think that similar results would not be observed in Wales.

What now is the way forward?

Unfortunately there has never been any legislation in this country requiring the use of iodised salt. Consumption

of this type of salt in the UK accounts for only around 5 per cent or less. In most supermarkets iodised salt is not available. Iodine nutrition could also be improved if the food industry undertook to use iodised salt in the preparation of processed food. The fact that there is a public health drive to reduce salt consumption (which is supported strongly by the medical profession) should not deter the introduction of iodised salt.

While many countries in the EU have enacted a salt law requiring addition of certain concentrations of iodine to salt, not all these laws are being adhered to. There could be a need for general legislation across the European Union. But it would be better if the pressure came from below. It is important, therefore, that, if it wishes to take the lead in public health matters, Wales plays its part in putting this issue onto the wider public health agenda. For the sake of future generations it is not something we should allow to be kicked into the long grass.

Professor John Lazarus is Emeritus Professor of Clinical Endocrinology at Cardiff University School of Medicine.

6

Health

Articles

Transparency and scrutiny vital for future of NHS
Plugging the gap between health and social care

Transparency and scrutiny vital for future of NHS

Marcus Longley asks whether financial pressures will drive down quality of care in our hospitals

The governance of the NHS is probably not an obvious spectator sport, much less one you would think of taking part in. But we really should be pulling on our boots and getting ready to run onto the pitch because, quite literally, it's a matter of life and death, and our team is struggling.

Governance describes the ways in which an organisation ensures that it performs well. Derived from the Greek verb 'to steer', it covers all those systems, processes, policies and procedures which keep the organisation true to its purpose. In simple terms, it can cover both *internal* elements, how a Health Board discharges its own responsibilities, and *external* - the impact of bodies such as Inspectorates on the Health Board.

All are now in question following the events at a fairly average English hospital in Mid Staffordshire in the middle years of the last decade. In the words of the subsequent public inquiry – patients were “routinely neglected” by an organisation “preoccupied with cost cutting, targets and processes and which lost sight of its fundamental responsibility to provide safe care”. Some estimates

suggest that a staggering 1,200 patients may have died as a result of this regime presiding over the hospital unchecked for more than four years. And this was not an isolated asylum where few people saw what was going on. This was a busy general hospital, with thousands of staff, patients and visitors going through its doors every day. A patient recounted his experience to the public inquiry as follows:

“In the next room you could hear the buzzers sounding. After about 20 minutes you could hear the men shouting for the nurse, ‘Nurse, nurse!’, and it just went on and on. And then very often it would be two people calling at the same time, and then you would hear them crying, like shouting ‘Nurse!’ louder, and then you would hear them just crying, just sobbing, they would just sob and you just presumed that they had had to wet the bed.”

An isolated aberration? Not in the view of the House of Commons Health Committee *Patient Safety* report in 2009:

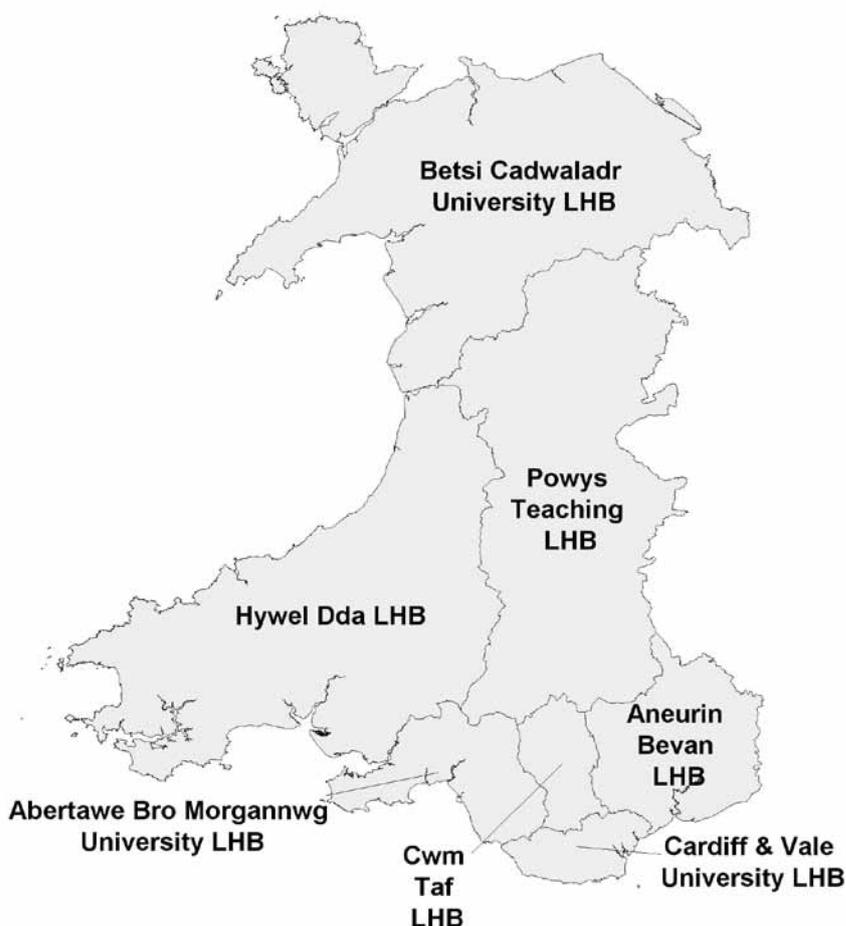
“Several recent investigations have shown in detail how senior managers and Boards have failed in their most basic duties as regards patient safety, with disastrous consequences. In each of these cases, patient safety was found to have been crowded out by other priorities, including the meeting of targets, financial issues, service reconfigurations...”

But this all relates to England. Wales hasn't had such a scandal for decades. Things are different here. Maybe. But the NHS in Wales faces its worst financial squeeze ever in the coming few years: Can we be sure that massive pressures to balance the books couldn't have a similar impact here?

At a minimum, we need to take stock of our governance arrangements in NHS Wales. The picture is currently quite complicated. Health Boards and Trusts are in pole position on governance, since they actually provide the services. Their governing Boards – made up of executive directors (employees) and non-executives (appointed by the Minister) – have access to all the information, and can have no greater responsibility than for the safety of their patients.

But there are many challenges for those 15 or so people. One is actually knowing what is going on in an organisation that employs as many as 18,000 staff, across many hospitals. How can you be sure, as a Director, that you're measuring the right things? Another is making acceptable trade-offs. How low should staffing levels get, or how many patients should you treat, before the risk becomes unacceptable? This is particularly important when you have a statutory obligation to balance the financial books at the end of the financial year, but quality of care is far less easy to define, let alone measure.

If they get it wrong, there's the classic question: *Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?* Who will guard the guardians? There are various external bodies whose job



The seven Welsh Health Boards.

this is, including Healthcare Inspectorate Wales, Wales Audit Office, Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales, and a host of inspectors with specific roles in relation to health and safety, mortuaries, information and so on.

And then – unique to Wales – are our eight Community Health Councils. Their role is to bring a patient and lay perspective to all these issues, to spot what experts don't see, and to ensure that patients and the public get a good deal from their healthcare. Welsh Government is currently consulting on how they should develop to fit this new world, based on a review which colleagues and I recently carried out.

This is where the sport analogy comes in. The eyes, ears and intelligence of lay people should be a crucial component in the governance of the NHS in Wales. We all need to be on the pitch (at the least,

virtually). At one level, it's a matter of logistics – the more people the better. At another, it's about opening up the NHS to the shareholders – all three million of us in Wales. The NHS is huge, complex and often obscured by jargon and mystique, and sometimes beset by self-interest. If we could mobilise patients, carers and potential patients to share our knowledge and views, that would be a powerful aid to those 15 or so Directors sat around the board table in each Local Health Board each month. We need a multiplicity of ways of getting this intelligence: social media, the Internet, simple things such as routinely and sensitively asking every patient to say what they found good and bad, collecting patient stories, and a host of alternatives, so that everyone can contribute in the way they find convenient.

There are probably four governance

functions that must have an element of independence from the provider of services (the LHB or Trust).

1. Individual patients who wish to complain must have easy access to effective and independent **advocacy**. For many people, complaining about the care you have received is too daunting even to try, without help. Currently, about 10 per cent of complainants to Health Boards are supported by an independent advocate, employed by the Community Health Council.
2. The plans of Local Health Boards must be subject to **scrutiny** from the perspective of the local public and patients. They should do this as part of their planning, but probably shouldn't be left to do it alone.

3. We need lay people to **monitor** service provision, from the perspective of what matters most to patients, and without fear of displeasing your manager.
4. We need to provide a **voice for the voiceless**. Sections of every community who will never, for whatever reason, wish to engage directly with powerful public bodies, but whose health needs are probably amongst the greatest.

We need to be clear about who should do which of these priorities. For example, what is the role of local government? It has a democratic mandate and the resources to quiz and investigate, and it has massive local intelligence. Should we in Wales – as in England – ask local government to play a scrutiny role over the NHS? Or could it be a job for the

third sector? What is its role in providing a voice for the voiceless?

These are complex but crucial questions. We have to be sure that we have got a robust, efficient and proportionate system of governance for our NHS, that ensures the active involvement of patients and the public. The NHS in Wales is aiming to be 'world class', to have services best suited to Wales but comparable with the best anywhere. What does that mean for patient and public governance?

.....
Marcus Longley is Director of the Welsh Institute for Health and Social Care and Professor of Applied Health Policy at the University of Glamorgan.



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Plugging the gap between health and social care

Helen Birtwhistle says NHS and local authorities must work together to provide a seamless service

Social care is rarely an issue that hits the headlines. In the public debate, it is often overshadowed by its close partner health and the latest stories of hospital reconfiguration or waiting time targets.

While much has been made of financial pressures on the NHS, there has been less attention to how social care will cope with similar financial challenges. Both are facing real-terms budget cuts. Last year the Wales Audit Office said that social service budgets were facing real terms cuts of almost 2 per cent, while the NHS is preparing to make 5 per cent savings every year for the next three years.

At the same time, both the NHS and social care will need to deal with rapidly rising demand due to the ageing population. In 2011 there were more than 430,000 residents aged 90 and over in England and Wales compared with 340,000 in 2001 – a 26 per cent increase in just ten years.

We should celebrate the success story that we are

living longer. However, we also need to recognise the reality that this success increases pressure on health and social care services.

At a time when budgets are tight, it is more important than ever that NHS and social care organisations work together to provide an effective service. Experience shows that social care and health are so interdependent that savings made in one budget can simply transfer costs to the other.

There are indications that when people's needs are not met by the social care system, they turn to the NHS. The impact is seen through increased demand for emergency and unplanned work, and delays in discharging people from hospital.

And sadly, it is the individual who suffers as they fall in the gaps between organisations. Too many patients stay much longer than necessary in a hospital bed while there are difficult and complex discussions about who should fund the long-term care package.

In Wales, there has been a strong emphasis on integration between health and social care over the last few years to avoid these sorts of situations occurring, and there are many examples of where health and social care staff have been brought

together into integrated teams.

However, integration and seamless working on a widespread scale is something that has proved elusive. There have been any number of ideas and pilots, including pooled budgets, shared offices, integrated teams and joint appointments.

But there still remain many barriers that hinder completely integrated working across health and social care. Complete structural merging of the two functions has proved problematic, largely because of the fundamentally different governance arrangements between NHS and local authorities, with local government's direct democratic accountability inconsistent with the more complex governance arrangements that exist in health.

The complexity of financial flows and the difficulties of separate IT systems are other reasons often given to explain why integration can be so hard to achieve. Encouragingly, some successful projects have shown there are ways and means around these obstacles without costly, time-consuming and distracting structural change. One project often cited as an exemplar is the Gwent Frailty Programme. This is designed to provide an alternative to hospital admission for older people at times of acute illness and to enable people to leave hospital earlier.

Our aim should be to enable people to have a single point of access covering both health and social care, which they can understand how to navigate.

All localities in Gwent have established integrated health and social care Community Resource Teams. These work with people with the aim of supporting them to stay independent in their own homes. They manage this by providing care at home, helping people return home sooner, and by speeding up the process of



Springfield Day Hospital at St Woolos is part of the Gwent Frailty Programme designed to provide an alternative to hospital admission for older people at times of acute illness.

finding the right complex care package.

The programme was launched April 2011, but a lot of the groundwork was done in the months leading up to it. Joint work streams were created to look at information sharing around performance and evaluation to make sure that all aspects of integrated working were taken into account. There was recognition, too, of the importance of well-motivated and supported staff. A workforce work stream worked through the logistics of training, induction, team-building, and ongoing supervision and development prior to the programme 'going live'.

It is an approach backed up by research by the NHS Confederation, which found that examples of successful integrated working have been brought about through creating the right culture, encouraging the right behaviours and setting the right values rather than formal structures.

It is something the Welsh Government will be looking at closely in the next year, as it seeks to introduce legislation on social services. The intention is to set up a legislative framework for more integrated

services that could well include the use of pooled budgets - something that has been talked about in Wales for some time.

This legislation offers an important opportunity for Wales to lay the foundations for more effective and integrated services. Our aim should be to enable people to have a single point of access covering both health and social care, which they can understand how to navigate. Certainly, there is a clear expectation for local authorities and other public service organisations, including health, to demonstrate that they are working together.

Success will come down to strong local relationships and leadership and commitment from both the NHS and local authorities at the local level. We have an opportunity to get health and social services working together effectively on a widespread basis across Wales. Whatever the outcome of the Bill, integrated working is too important not to get right.

Helen Birtwhistle is Director of the Welsh NHS Confederation.

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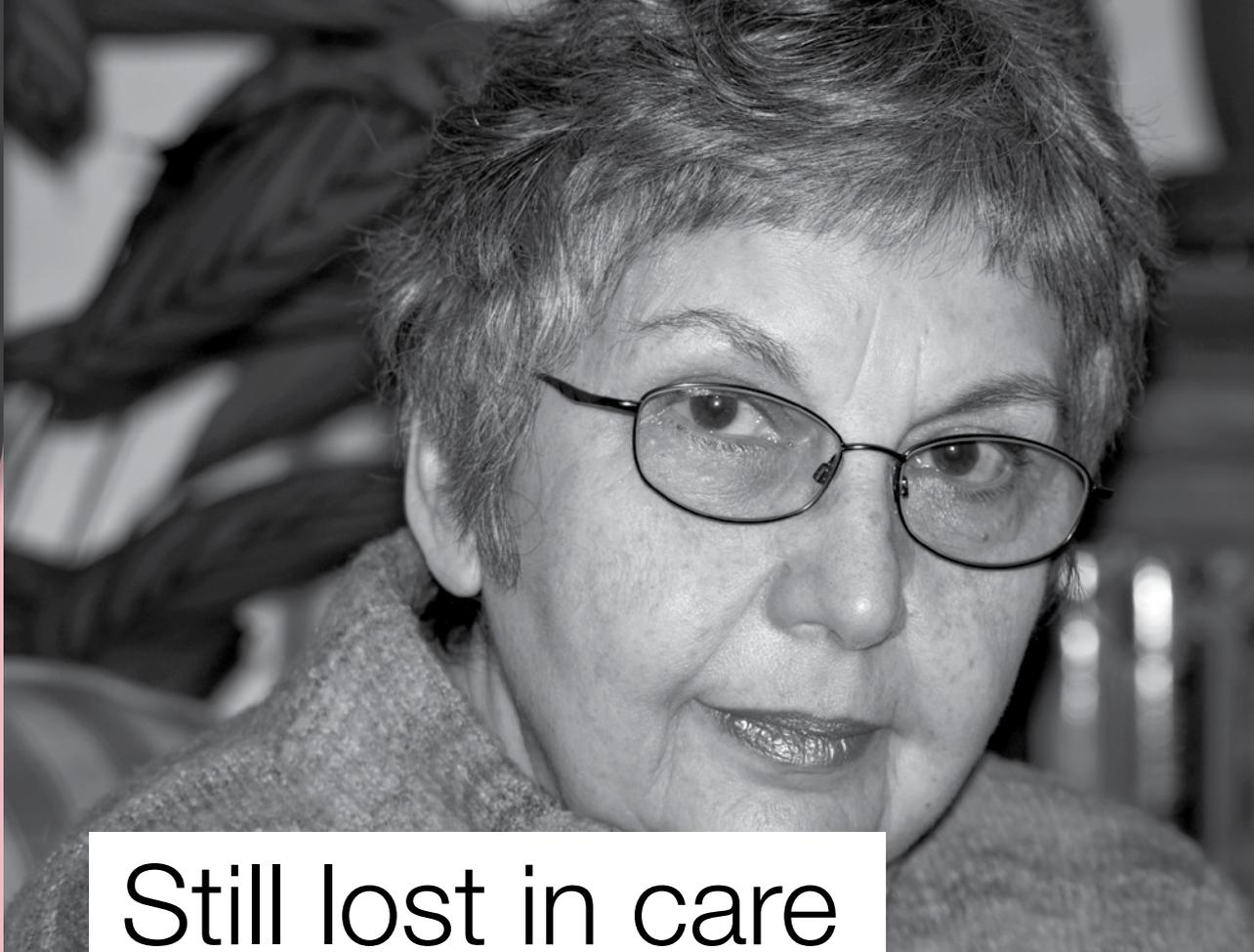
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Articles

Still lost in care

Level playing
field needed
for the
disadvantaged

Still lost in care

Alison Taylor describes her long struggle to bring the north Wales child abuse scandal to public attention

Alison Taylor

In 1976, from a tough background of psychiatric social work and probation, I became deputy head of Gwynedd County Council's flagship children's assessment centre. Twenty four years later, the North Wales Child Abuse Tribunal (the Waterhouse inquiry) condemned the chronic understaffing, underfunding and abysmal management oversight at the centre. This had resulted in the abuse, mistreatment and neglect suffered by so many in care, and had allowed the head of the centre, former Bryn Estyn housemaster Nefyn Dodd, to create his own fiefdom in which even the Director of Social Services dared not interfere.

I first reported physical abuse to the council in 1976. The perpetrator disappeared on sick leave and I unwittingly marked my own card. Expressing concerns about the quality of social work we were able to offer simply drew fire in my direction. In 1985, with

a small dossier of abuse allegations that the council had wilfully ignored, I contacted a county councillor who then alerted North Wales Police.

The Waterhouse Inquiry described that first police investigation as "sluggish and shallow" and condemned its attitude towards the complainants – one boy was described as "dull and wicked". I was judged manipulative, with my own very suspect agenda.

Inevitably, I was suspended, then dismissed on the grounds of gross misconduct for allegedly causing a "breakdown in professional relationships". Other social workers had witnessed and reported abuse but let themselves be silenced by threats of meeting the same fate. I hold no brief for them; clearly, the council could not have succeeded with multiple dismissals. There was other underhandedness including, I later learned, a deal with the union to drop my case in return for the

creation of some manual jobs.

During the Waterhouse Inquiry I learned that an external investigation into alleged abuses by Nefyn Dodd had taken place several years before I voiced my own concerns and recommended his removal. The council suppressed the whole matter.

Presumably, the council expected me to be vanquished. I sued for unfair dismissal and began lobbying the Welsh Office, Parliament, even Margaret Thatcher. Again, the Waterhouse Inquiry condemned the collective apathy of government, its willingness to believe that I was the source and extent of abuse allegations.

Intent on denying me a public platform the council settled my claim out of court. But north Wales is a small place. People knew why I had lost my job. More and more abuse allegations came my way, pointing to rottenness at the heart of childcare across Gwynedd and Clwyd. Word spread beyond the border and reached the UK media.

In 1991 HTV's *Wales This Week* current affairs programme and the *Independent* published hard-hitting and shocking exposes. *Private Eye* took up the fight. Without the intervention of a handful of brave journalists, some of whom paid a heavy price, this dark chapter in social work's history would remain unwritten.

That media coverage forced hands. North Wales Police mounted a new and wide-ranging investigation and some successful prosecutions followed, but the Crown Prosecutions Service's refusal in many other instances to accept police recommendations for prosecution caused huge disquiet. Government's eventual response was to order the Waterhouse Inquiry. On the day it was announced a Conservative MP told me that in his opinion, children in care were "vermin".

The Waterhouse Inquiry published its report, *Lost in Care*, early in 2000. Within days, the *New Statesman* published an article by self-styled investigative journalist and abusers' champion Richard Webster, claiming that I had

Within days of the *Newsnight* broadcast David Cameron announced new investigations into the old investigations.

fabricated most of the abuse allegations and conspired with young criminals to fabricate allegations for money. Webster had sat through every day of the Inquiry's hearings. For this article he cherry-picked what suited his thesis and ignored the mountain of very compelling evidence to the contrary. He adopted the same tactics in the many articles on his website and in his self-published book about Bryn Estyn, for which Claire Curtis-Thomas, the former MP for Crosby, threw a launch party at the House of Commons. His was the voice of a backlash movement intent on demonising those who complained of abuse and anyone who supported them, and he had powerful backing from many quarters, including the legal profession. Although he died in 2011, his website is maintained, his word still current.

Twelve years on, abuse in the north Wales children's homes once again dominates the headlines. On 2 November *Newsnight* broadcast an interview with Steven Messham, one of the many victims of the depraved individuals – like Fred West – who target children in care knowing they are essentially alone and uncared for and, therefore, easy pickings.

Messham's *Newsnight* claims about establishment figures were made to the 1991 police investigation and the Waterhouse Inquiry. Rumours about the identity of these shadowy figures have long circulated, along with caveats about possible mistaken identity. *Newsnight* should have known that but instead relied on the shoddiest journalism imaginable. One

of their journalists contacted me and admitted that he had not even seen *Lost in Care*. No surprise then that Lord Alistair McAlpine, wrongly identified by Messham through absolutely no fault of his own, is now considering legal proceedings, and that George Entwistle, briefly Director General of the BBC, had to fall on his sword.

Within days of the *Newsnight* broadcast David Cameron announced new investigations into the old investigations. The embryonic National Crime Agency will investigate North Wales Police and Mrs Justice Macur will investigate the Waterhouse Inquiry. But why? Was Cameron responding with a knee-jerk or are there long standing concerns within government that previous investigations stopped too short?

The NSPCC states that one in four children are abused, many within the family, and that abuse occurs throughout the social spectrum. I know from harrowing experience that it is almost impossible for young people to make that huge leap of faith to report abuse. They believe the system will punish them for so doing, and are usually right. Even as adults, many keep quiet, particularly male sex abuse victims, who carry the shame of that abuse like a millstone round their neck.

From my perspective, the *Newsnight* debacle is a gift from the gods to the many like Webster who are determined to vilify the victims and deny the horrible reality of child abuse. Messham has apologised to Lord McAlpine, stating that the police showed him a photograph of his abuser and themselves identified Lord McAlpine. The facts have already been skewed and condensed. We read now that Messham made "false allegations".

Alison Taylor was a senior childcare officer with the former Gwynedd County Council and is now a novelist and journalist. She was long listed for the 2012 *Sunday Times* short story competition.

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Nick Morris says that most of all deafblind people need early intervention support

Level playing field needed for the disadvantaged

“When I wake up in the morning I don’t know if I’ve opened my eyes or if I’m in this world or the next,” says Fred, a deafblind man in south east Wales. “The only way I know I’m alive when I wake up in the morning is that I can feel my wife breathing next to me.” Over the years he has worked as a navy signalman, newsagent and publican. He is deaf, has sight loss and runs a group for visually impaired people in his local area.

Deafblindness is a combination of both sight and hearing difficulties that can vary from slight to profound loss. Most of what we learn about the world comes through our ears and eyes, so deafblind people can often face problems with communication, accessing information and mobility. One research estimate in 2010 suggested around 570 per 100,000 have co-occurring vision and hearing difficulties across the UK. This is higher than rates found by Welsh local authorities, which suggests deafblind people are not being identified in Wales.

Deafblindness can affect people at any age. Congenital deafblindness occurs if someone is born deafblind or becomes deafblind before they develop language. It has many causes, including infections during pregnancy, premature birth and rare genetic conditions. People born deafblind often have additional disabilities, including learning and physical disabilities. They will have little or no formal language and limited understanding of the world because



Joyce Costie, from Cardiff, attending the tenth anniversary celebration of the Deafblind Guidance in Cardiff Bay earlier this year.

they have never been able to watch and listen to other people and what is going on around them. Therefore, they need intensive support to develop.

Deafblindness can also affect people as they grow older or through illness or accidents. People may also be born with a genetic condition, such as Usher syndrome, which may mean that they have some sensory loss at birth and progressively lose their sight and/or hearing after language development.

Sensory loss during adult life brings many challenges. People become socially and emotionally isolated if communication is limited. When people lose mobility it affects their confidence,

independence and daily living skills. Without access to information, people cannot make informed decisions which leads to further loss of independence.

It can also be a ‘hidden’ disability. “I get terrible depression and have to take antidepressants,” a Sense Cymru member told a consultation event. “People can’t see that. But on one occasion, when I hit my head and was wearing a bandage, I lost count of the people giving me sympathy.”

Social support is necessary to enable deafblind people to lead independent lives. Communicator-guides are provided by local authorities or organisations like Sense and they act as the eyes and ears

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of a deafblind person. This includes guiding their client and communicating with them using various methods, including adapted sign language (if their client has some useful vision) or deafblind manual spelling (a tactile method, where words are spelt onto a person's hand through touch). A deafblind person in north Wales, who is a Sense Cymru service user, commented: "To have help with my communication means a lot. Without it I wouldn't have the confidence to go out alone."

The statutory Deafblind Guidance to Welsh local authorities (2001) is the key document for access to publicly funded support. It gives responsibilities to local authorities to identify and contact deafblind people, to give them assessments of their needs by a specifically trained person and to ensure support is appropriate.

The Welsh Government is now proposing a new system. It is not clear whether it will provide generic guidance covering all social services across Wales. This is concerning because even now – with statutory guidance – almost a third of deafblind people surveyed by Sense in Wales have not had a specialist assessment despite their legal entitlement. However, Sense is encouraged that Social Services Minister Gwenda Thomas has written to a deafblind person who asked about the future of the guidance to say she will "strive to ensure that the specific needs of deafblind people, their families and carers, are fully integrated into the framework of support".

The Welsh Government is undertaking a major process of social service reform, including the Social Services and Wellbeing Bill due in January 2013. The context of the reforms is familiar: tightening public finances, an ageing population and growing demand on social services.

The first step to appropriate service for deafblind people is a specialist assessment, as the Deafblind Guidance requires. Non-specialist assessment can lead to inappropriate support that can cause problems. For example, Ann, an



Gethin Plant, from Wrexham who has multi-sensory impairment, pictured with his father Kevin exploring the tactile aspects of some feathers.

elderly deafblind woman, lived alone and until her sensory impairments impacted during her early eighties she was active and took part in voluntary work. She was given two hours per fortnight of support. However, she became increasingly confused due to her deafblindness and the decision was made, against her wishes, to place her in residential care.

But the staff at the residential home did not know how to support her. For example, they would leave her food on a tray in front of her but did not inform her the food was there. She developed depression and talked of suicide. The Sense professional working with Ann believes that if she had been given just two hours a day of support from a communicator-guide to help her adjust, and thereafter three hours twice a week of one-to-one support she could have remained in her own home. In Ann's case 'specialist' did not mean more expensive but merely support that was suitable for her needs.

Another part of the challenge facing the Welsh Government is reforming the culture of social service delivery – away from cost and expectation management and towards proactive, preventative and responsive services. A key role for the Welsh Government is a continued emphasis on making sure local authorities carry out prevention and early intervention work to prevent needs escalating.

Local authorities face difficult decisions. Not supporting 'lower level' needs can be a false economy. There is

a short term cost saving, for example, to avoiding giving mobility training to a person with new sight loss. However, if the person then falls at home and suffers a bone fracture, there are costs to the NHS, social services and to the individual's confidence. As a deafblind person in south Wales commented: "My support has been cut down to about an hour. My support worker needs that long just to sort all my medication. There's no time left to deal with letters. I ended up contributing my own money to keep my support going." The issue is not just one for deafblind people. Sense Cymru is working with other disability charities to ensure that the separate value of early interventions and ongoing support are given a statutory basis in the Bill.

Public spending cuts and reforms to welfare are a threat to deafblind people. But there is the opportunity of reform, to ensure that people can be supported to lead independent and fulfilled lives. As one Sense Cymru member put it, "I was reluctant to ask for help at the beginning. I didn't want to feel inadequate. I prefer to do everything myself with some support... I just want to have a level playing field with everyone else. I just want to be independent."

Nick Morris is Policy and Campaigns Officer for Sense Cymru and RNIB Cymru. Sense Cymru can be contacted on cymruenquiries@sense.org.uk Names in this article have been changed to preserve anonymity.

Article

The Arctic sea ice collapse

The Arctic sea ice collapse

Gareth Wyn Jones explains why the loss of cover across the North Pole is doing much more than merely bringing us bad summer weather

During August and early September most of Britain bathed in the golden glow of the Olympic and Para-Olympic games. A minority may have found the coverage too jingoistic but most were enveloped in the feats of the athletes and the Union Jack. It was a huge and entertaining diversion from an unrelenting and unresolved economic crisis. However, far away in the Arctic, a much more significant drama was being played out.

The Arctic sea ice was collapsing in extent, area and volume at an unprecedented rate to record lows not observed in recent history. This is illustrated graphically in **Figure 1a**. But the most important metrics are the ice's thickness (**Figure 2**), and volume, with an 80 per cent loss in a decade (**Figure 3**).

The crash is well documented, being recorded by satellite feeds in Norway, Denmark, Germany, Canada, the EU, Japan and several US agencies as well as by various vessels in the area. By September little thick multi-year ice was left.

Undoubtedly, there is residual ice in areas apparently ice free and, vice versa. There are also areas of open ocean where the satellite images show only ice. However, the annual and seasonal trends are all too clear. No doubt ice extent will recover rapidly this winter but this thin, annual ice will probably be subject to rapid melt in 2013. One of the most experienced specialist observers, Professor Peter Wadhams of Cambridge University who has been studying the Arctic sea ice for decades, is predicting that the Arctic Ocean

will be effectively free of summer ice by 2016, give or take three years. That is to say it could even, but with a low probability, be 'free' by next September.

We must appreciate the huge significance of this phenomenon, one that has caught some in the scientific community off-guard. The official climate change projections of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and others, while recognising that arctic warming would be significantly greater than changes in the global mean, were nevertheless only anticipating major losses of Arctic sea ice in several decades. But these are occurring now.

No doubt ice extent will recover rapidly this winter but this thin, annual ice will probably be subject to rapid melt in 2013.

An obvious conclusion is that this year's Arctic summer has terminally undermined the position of the 'denialists' and alerts all sensible, pragmatic people to global warming and the need for much more urgent action to combat the threats posed. Certainly this was the case following the impact of Hurricane



Figure 1a:
Decade changes in seasonal Arctic sea ice melt area

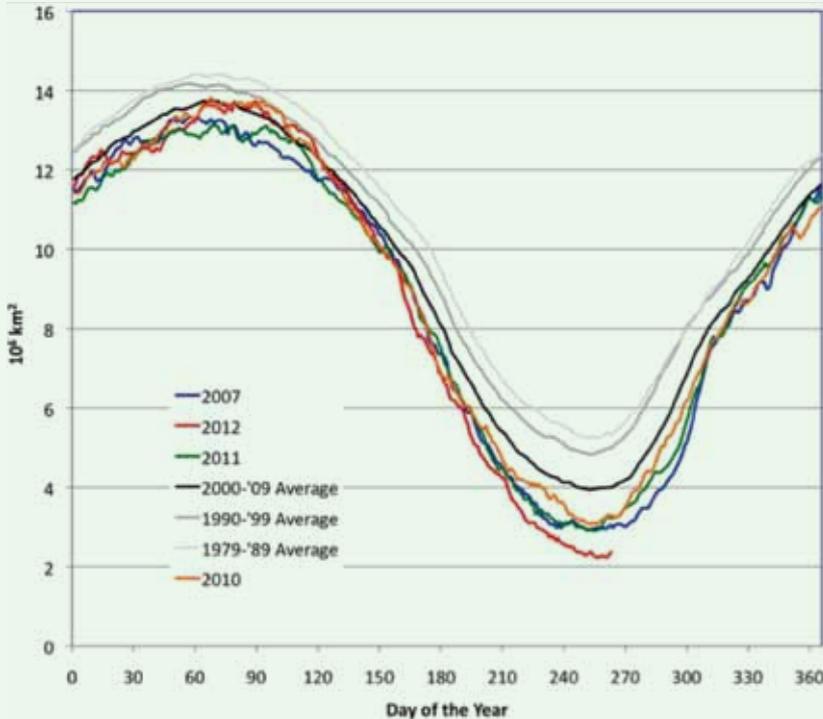
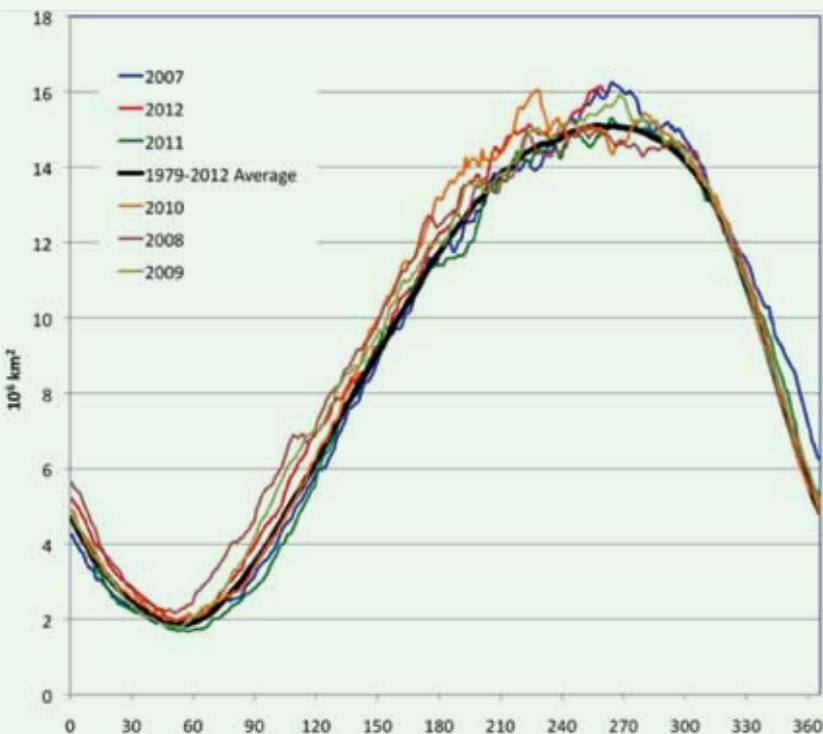


Figure 1b:
Decadal changes in seasonal Antarctic melt cycle area



Sandy on the coast of the eastern United States in October. As New York-based *Bloomberg Businessweek* put it in banner headlines, “It’s global warming, stupid.”

Warmer oceans make hurricanes more likely and more severe. But on this occasion there was the critical factor of the blocking ridge of high pressure over Greenland which diverted the storm westwards from the sea to the land. The blocking high – rare at that time of year – is likely to have been caused by the record ice melt in the Arctic.

Nonetheless, ‘denialist’ websites are still rubbishing the observations from this Arctic summer and are already at play weaving their disinformation. Two main arguments are being advanced:

- It’s all happened before so it doesn’t matter much and it’s part of ‘natural’ cycles.
- Look at the Antarctic where the winter ice extent is very high.

It may well be that during the climatic maximum in the Northern Hemisphere some 6,000 years ago, the Arctic was largely or entirely ice free but since then the natural Milankovitch cycles should be causing a gradual and continuing hemispheric cooling which the current Arctic warming shows has been overwhelmed. Of course, 6,000 years ago the human population was miniscule by modern standards and our society far less complex. Interestingly this summer the 31 foot *Beelzabub 2*, achieved a first North-West Passage by a sail yacht in a couple of months compared with Roald Amundsen’s first passage in his 15 horse power *Gjoa* in three seasons from 1903-5. This was after many heroic, sometimes disastrous, attempts from Elizabethan times until the last century. Sadly it is doubtful if Richard Parks’ amazing feat of reaching the seven highest peaks on each continent and the three Poles (North Pole, South Pole and the summit of Everest) in seven months can even be repeated (see **Figure 4**).

Figure 2:
Arctic ice thickness

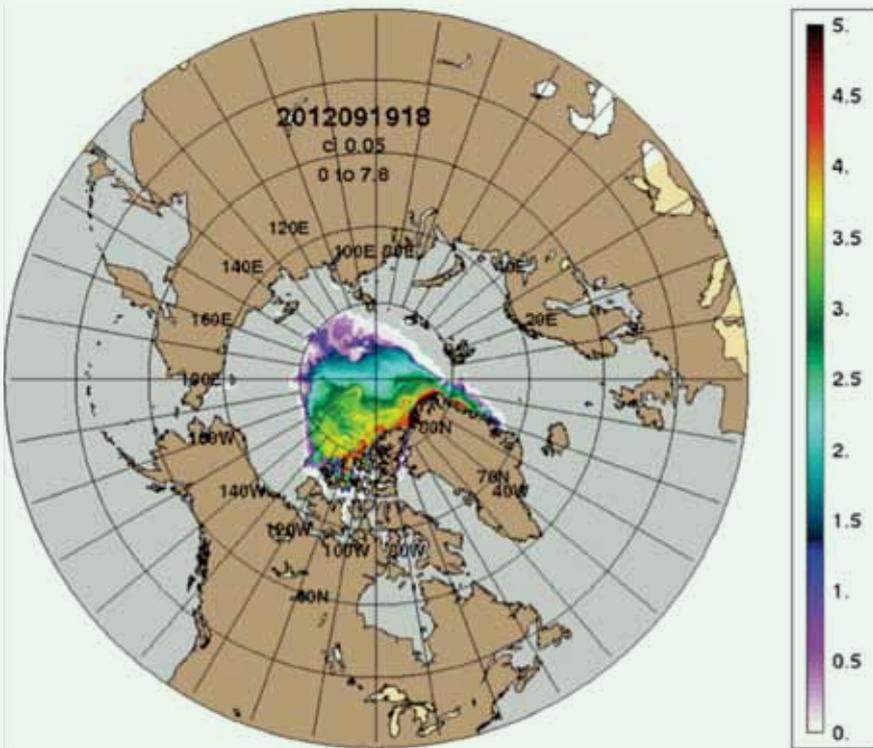
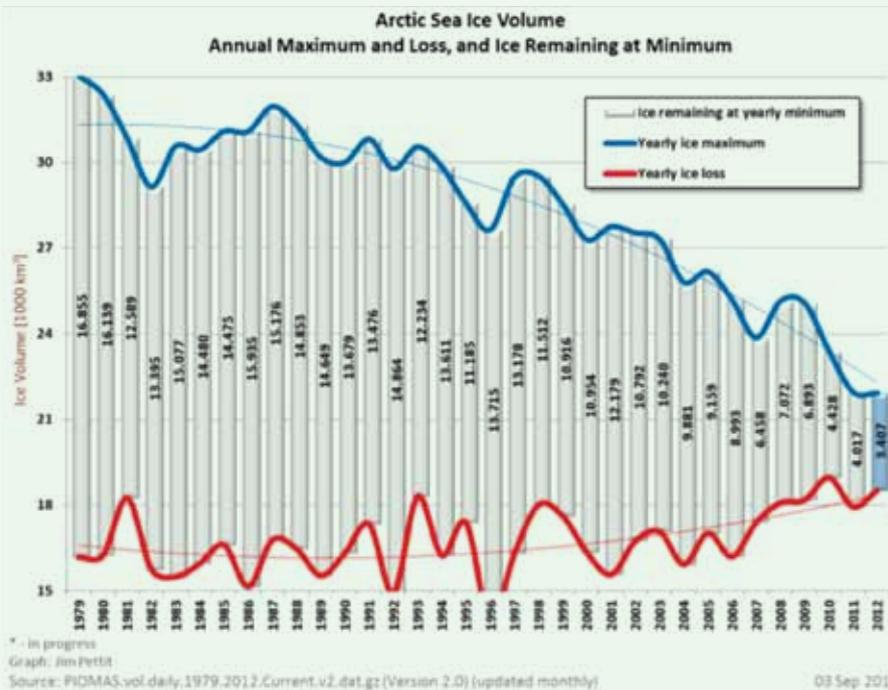


Figure 3:
Changes in sea ice volume



Conflating large summer Arctic changes with small changes in winter Antarctic accumulation is deeply misleading for a raft of reasons (compare **Figures 1a** and **1b**). Even in the much more insulated and isolated Antarctica continent, there are strong indications of change and loss of sheet ice. Arctic sea ice, by contrast, is highly dynamic and sensitive. Every season millions of tonnes of ice are exported through the Fram Strait between north-east Greenland and Svalbard to be lost to the North Atlantic Ocean warmed by the Gulf stream and historically replenished in winter. That is to say, the summer ice cover is the result of a dynamic equilibrium. As shown in **Figure 1b**, the Antarctic sea ice changes are small by comparison.

The implications of the Arctic sea ice crash extend even beyond the compelling evidence for an alarming rate of global climate change in this region. These changes expose us to a number of self-generating, positive feed forward reactions and unknown risks. Part of the Arctic refrigeration system is the reflectivity of white ice but when this is replaced by dark seawater, especially as Arctic summer days are so long, the sea absorbs more energy and heat, thereby naturally contributing to further melting. This is called a change in surface albedo. Professor Wadhams calculates this new heat gain is equivalent to several decades of growing CO₂ emissions.

Similarly the peaty tundra is warming and decaying. As it is very wet, its anaerobic degradation tends to produce methane, itself a greenhouse gas but with a potency 100 times that of CO₂ on a 10 year time frame, and about 24 times on a 100 year time frame. Aerobic breakdown of the arctic peats will, of course, produce CO₂. Additionally there are deposits of methane clathrates beneath the Arctic Ocean, especially the shallow Laptev Sea where Russian

scientists report finding methane plumes bubbling from these waters. It cannot be over-emphasised that the dangers of self-reinforcing, feed-forward changes in the Arctic are very substantial.

So far no mention has been made of the huge Greenland ice cap, nor the decrease in the northern snows. While melting of sea ice has no direct influence on global sea level, the melting of the terrestrial ice caps does. As well as observing the collapse of sea ice, this summer has seen a record melt and runoff from the Ice Cap and the calving from some large glaciers. The ice fields are losing their protective skirt of sea ice

While officially the EU, UK and Wales target an 80 per cent decrease in emissions by mid century, the Arctic data pose the question is this too slow, too late and may be too little?

as well as being directly affected by the rising temperatures. The melt may also be accelerated by soot from the Siberian fires decreasing the albedo of the glaciers and ice cap. Many now believe that the International Panel on Climate Change estimates of possible sea level rise of tens of centimetres by the year 2,100 are too conservative and values of one to two metres should be factored in.

If the Arctic were insulated from the main planetary circulation system, it might be possible to view even the observed changes with greater equanimity but this is not the case. The Arctic is a major determinant of the thermo-halide circulation system of our oceans and of the behaviour of

the North Atlantic jet stream. We are the beneficiaries of one component of this conveyor, namely the Gulf Stream whose decay might mean that, paradoxically, while the planet generally warms, we in Wales (and North West Europe more generally) might be subject to a climate more typical for 53°N or S – that is, Labrador, southern Alaska or Tierra del Fuego -- God forbid!

However, such a threat is not our immediate concern. Briefly, the jet stream at a latitude of around 60°North flows at the interface between the Arctic and Ferrel weather cells. It appears that Arctic changes are now influencing the strength and path of this jet stream as well as allowing standing, blocking meanders (Rossby waves) in it. These have caused this summer's great heat and severe drought in the USA and parts of Russia and Ukraine as well as previously similar events in France. In addition it has given North West Europe a disappointing wet and windy summer as the jet stream threw an unremitting series of Atlantic lows at us. And as we saw with Hurricane Sandy, other areas have been subjected to damaging blocking highs.

The root cause of the Arctic ice loss is the greenhouse gas accumulation from our dependence on cheap energy from fossil fuels, despite the best efforts of the deniers to confuse and dissemble. Their tale is told with chilling clarity in *Merchants of Doubt* by Naomi Oreskes and Erik Conway who document the way science, in general, and climate science in particular, has become seen as a threat to a dogmatic version of free market economics and libertarian individualism. While officially the EU, UK and Wales target an 80 per cent decrease in emissions by mid century, the Arctic data pose the question is this too slow, too late and too little?

The meandering and stalling of the northern jet stream has been responsible for the massive heat waves and many

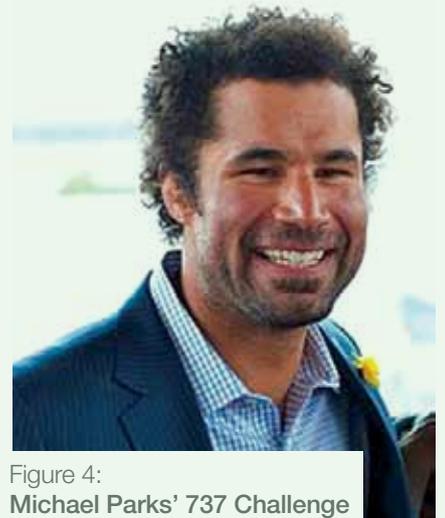


Figure 4:
Michael Parks' 737 Challenge

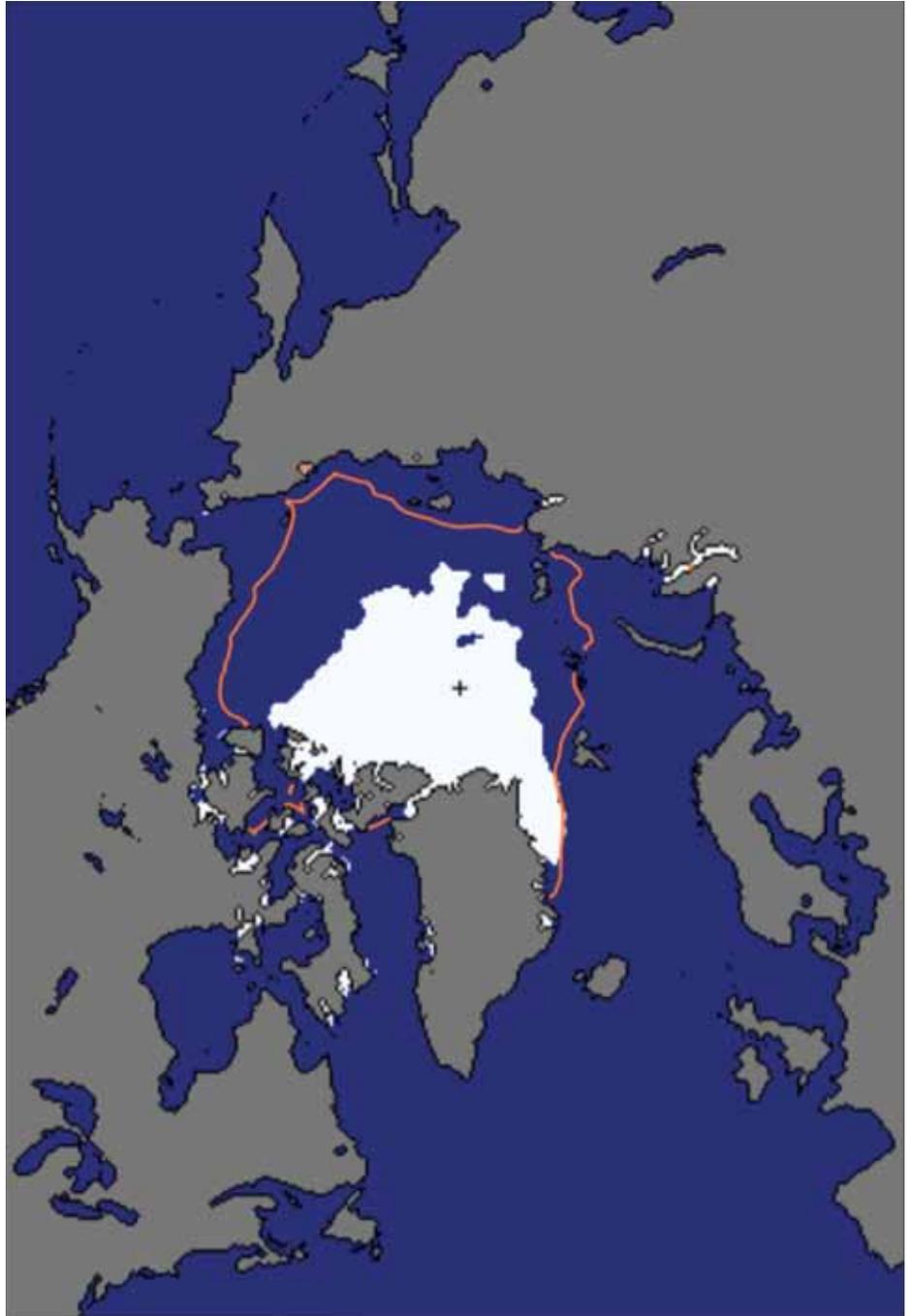
Melting of the Arctic ice-cap means it is highly doubtful whether former Welsh rugby international Richard Parks' epic journey to reach the seven highest peaks on each continent and the three Poles will ever be repeated. Following his injury-induced retirement from rugby, Parks embarked on the challenge to climb the highest mountain on each of the world's continents (the Seven Summits) and venture the last degrees to the South and geographical North Poles within seven months. He began his journey in Cardiff on 12 December 2010 – the centenary of the departure of the ill-fated Terra Nova Expedition, led by Robert Scott – and reached the South Pole on 27 December. Over the following three months he climbed Mount Vinson (Antarctica), Aconcagua (Andes, highest mountain in South America), Kilimanjaro (Africa) and Carstensz Pyramid (Indonesia), followed by reaching the North Pole in April. He completed the epic journey over the next three months by climbing Everest (on the border between China and Nepal), followed by Denali (Alaska, highest mountain in North America), and Elbrus (Caucasus, highest peak in Russia). On 12 July 2011 he made history becoming the first ever person to stand on all continental summits plus the two poles, finishing more than two weeks ahead of his self-imposed 7-month deadline.

excess deaths in the USA (2012), France and Italy (2003), and Russia and the Ukraine (in 2010 and 2012) as well as the disastrous Indus floods. As far as I am aware, it cannot be proved that these are linked unambiguously to the Arctic changes but the link is highly plausible, as is the case with Hurricane Sandy. It is not just 'in-country' excess deaths, harvests have suffered and world food prices risen. In 2010 riots ensued. In our interconnected but vulnerable world, effects cascade. No one is immune.

In truth we have made little progress even towards existing CO₂ emission-reduction targets. Governments of all colours obsess about debt, fiscal imbalances, spending cuts and restoring economic growth, as traditionally understood. The nature and environmental impact of that growth is a second or third order issue. 'Green growth' sits at the margin. In my essay 'Overshoot Limits' (in the collection *Wales' Central Organising Principle*, published by the IWA in May) I analyse at some length the problems associated with indefinite GDP growth and our demands on planetary sources and sinks. This summer's Arctic events demand we focus on energy as the most pressing issue and immediately do-able actions that will make sense to people. This is because of the dangers of positive feed forward reactions I alluded to, and the present behaviour of northern hemisphere weather patterns, with 'known unknown' and 'unknown unknown' threats.

Welsh Government data show total energy use in Wales to be about 125 to 130 TWh per year. Of this only some 20 per cent [~25 TWh] is electricity - the rest being from direct burning of oil, coal or gas for transport, space heating, both commercial and domestic, and industrial processes. Ambitious plans are being discussed to generate renewable and relatively low carbon electricity. If we gradually convert a proportion of our transport to electric power, the proportion of electricity in the mix should increase. However, it is quite

Figure 5:
Illustration of recent loss of summer Arctic ice extent



clear from these simple figures that we have major issues. The lead-times in schemes such as Wylfa B or the Severn barrage are long, about eight to ten years and then only generate electricity. They will be subject to huge controversy and especially in case of Wylfa B

beg many questions about waste management and hidden subsidies. The costs will be enormous despite 80 per cent of the energy issue still being unresolved. Anyway, the schemes will make no impact until the 2020s.

Many experts suggest that we waste at

least 30 per cent of our energy, electricity and otherwise. If in Wales we could save ~30% of the 130TWh this amounts to about 40TWh. It equates to an installed capacity of ~4.5GW at 100 per cent load or more realistically 13 to 15 GW capacity at load factor of around 30 per cent. Note this is much more than our current total electricity use. If we assume an investment of £1 billion per 1.5 GW capacity, then one might ask: how much could be saved by an equivalent investment of, let us say £10 billion, in saving energy and to complement it, dispersed renewables owned by the community or members of it? Would not the social and community and indeed the economic impacts, be much greater and an example of real 'sustainable development'? Albeit somewhat rhetorical, these questions are pertinent for four main reasons:

- Firstly, the alternative project should enable us to save energy and greenhouse gas emissions with much shorter lead-time compared with major infrastructure works and be less contentious.
- Secondly, it would be labour intensive. Work will be created for small local companies and the wealth dispersed at a time of economic recession. It would enhance local multipliers.
- Thirdly, it could save all the participants fuel costs, both electric and directly burn fossil fuels, and help insulate them, not only against cold weather, but against rising fuel prices on the world markets.
- Fourthly, it could be combined with a real drive to exploit, *at a local level*, Wales' renewable energy resources: wind, solar PVs and heat, wood biomass, micro-hydro, AD (both agricultural and non-agricultural), ground and air source heat pumps. Energy saving and localised

Given physical realities, how much will we in Wales and the UK broadly, still depend on external energy sources, be that Saharan sun or Icelandic geothermal or power stations with carbon capture or indeed as a very last and temporary resort, nuclear plant fuelled by imported uranium?

production are mutually reinforcing as bringing greater awareness of costs and benefit makes everyone more careful. It becomes 'my' energy to conserve and cherish not your external right to waste. Unfortunately I have seen no detailed, *quantitative* analysis of Wales' renewable energy resource nor how of these can be locally owned.

All this this may well not be enough. The potential of major tidal lagoons, barrages or flow schemes, wave energy, offshore wind or indeed nuclear stations which must perforce be owned by large corporations, cannot be ignored. Given physical realities, how much will we in Wales and the UK broadly, still depend on external energy sources, be that Saharan sun or Icelandic geothermal or power stations with carbon capture or indeed as a very last and temporary resort, nuclear plant fuelled by imported uranium? However, might we not make real progress towards decreasing Wales' high per capita greenhouse gas emissions and sustaining good living standards, while making a practical and political contribution towards a reasoned response to the Arctic ice collapse, by new thinking?

There are many fundamental problems. In seeking a lower energy footprint, as the key indicator of better sustainability, how can we engage with, not discourage, people whose natural scepticism is fed by denialists? Can they be convinced such changes are in the

best interests of their own families and communities? Central governments look instinctively to dramatic large schemes that they can readily control, boast of and tax. The National Grid and power company business plans are based historically on distribution from point sources – large power stations or refineries - to the clients, you and I.

Having many thousands of producers and web of supply and demand would be an entirely different game. How can this be accomplished? Could it give rise to healthy rivalry- who can enjoy the best living standard with the lowest energy footprint and cost? An obvious problem is finance. Governments are near bankrupt although able to refinance the Banks. Will they help finance such schemes? Can we leverage local investment? How much will come from the participants?

Our Government in Wales is committed to a Bill to make sustainable development their "central organising principle". If this is to be more than empty rhetoric, then the collapse of this arctic summer must be faced with energy policy taking centre stage.

Professor Gareth Wyn Jones chairs the Welsh Government's advisory group on Land Use and Climate Change.

9

Heritage

Article

Beyond the towpath

Beyond the towpath

Mark Lang celebrates the contribution canals are making to 21st Century Wales



Pontcysyllte aqueduct, built by Thomas Telford and William Joseph opened in 1805, and carries the Llangollen canal over the Valley of the River Dee. It is the longest and highest aquaduct in Britain and became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2009.

This year, which has seen the birth of Glandŵr Cymru - The Canal and River Trust in Wales, also marks the 200th anniversary of the Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal which we are celebrating with a year-long programme of events. In Wales we also have the Llangollen Canal, with Thomas Telford's extraordinary feat of engineering, the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct as the centre piece of the Trust owned World Heritage Site; the Montgomery Canal, which threads its way down the Wales-England border; and the Swansea Canal.

The waterways are no longer the responsibility of the UK Government. As a third sector organisation, Glandŵr Cymru represents a major opportunity to forge closer links with Welsh Government and the National Assembly for Wales, as well as other public, private and voluntary sector organisations in Wales.

Across England and Wales the Canal and River Trust represents the largest ever transfer of assets from the public to the third sector. The Trust is among the UK's largest charities, with responsibility for 2,000 miles of canals, rivers, docks and reservoirs, along with museums, archives and the country's third largest collection of protected historic

buildings. We own, manage and operate the waterways for public benefit, use and enjoyment. Our financial security is underpinned by our property dowry created over the last 20 years by British Waterways' shrewd recognition of the potential of waterside property, and a 15-year contract with the UK Government in recognition of the £500 million public benefits delivered each year from the waterways.

The canals of Wales were originally constructed to provide connectivity in the Welsh economy, a role overtaken by the railways. Today their major role is to support tourism, including the two world heritage sites at Pontcysyllte and Blaenafon. Although one abiding image is the narrow boat, 96 per cent of the people who visit and use the canals today are on the towpath and that is also where 90 per cent of the visitor spend is generated. That supports over 800 jobs, local facilities and services, and the pubs and shops that are such valuable community hubs.

What we are now seeking to do is ensure the full potential of our waterways is realised. The waterways are a major opportunity to contribute to health and well-being, and at a recent meeting of the Assembly's Cross-Party

Group on Waterways we received an excellent presentation on how they are the absolute ideal location and setting for the restorative health effects of green space. Canals are a flat, accessible and safe free outdoor space for people to walk and cycle. The waterways also provide an excellent outdoor classroom for learning about our environment and industrial and cultural heritage.

We already work with schools across Wales through our *Canal & River Explorers*, but we want more children to benefit. We want to widen participation. Half of the population live less than five miles from a canal, and we want more people, particularly from disadvantaged communities, to benefit.

Across the UK our inland waterways have experienced a renaissance, transforming some of our largest cities and smallest towns creating new destinations and hot spots for investment and growth. Schemes such as the Olympic Park in London, Brindley Place in Birmingham, and the Falkirk Wheel in Scotland show what an extraordinarily diverse range of regeneration and economic development potential our canals have. We believe there are similar opportunities in Wales that are yet to be exploited, and we are working with national and local government to identify these.

As a charity we are, of course, seeking to secure additional funding to fulfil our goals. The Canal and River Trust is seeking regular donors through its Friends scheme and are also seeking to significantly increase our volunteers. Our canals are here today thanks to the efforts of volunteers over the last 60 years, but we want to increase both the diversity of volunteers and opportunities. Volunteering plays an important community development role, and it is something we wish to support, encourage and develop.

We have well developed relationships with Welsh Government, the National Assembly, and with local authorities and other agencies, businesses and charities across Wales. Discussions are ongoing about how we



The Monmouthshire and Brecon Canal at Goytre.

strengthen our links as a result of our new constitution. Our guiding principle in these discussions is that the waterways of Wales are as much an asset to Wales as they are to the Trust, and in working together we can realise their full potential and contribution to Welsh life.

Glandŵr Cymru has now started the process of writing a ten-year strategy for the development of Wales' waterways. The aim is to look beyond the towpath to identify the areas of Welsh life where the Trust can play a full and active part.

In the post-War period canals were often seen as dangerous. Many were filled-in and many more had roads built over them – such as the Glamorgan Canal much of which is now underneath the

A470. Thankfully attitudes have changed dramatically over the last 20 years. I want future generations to look on our canals with as much cause for celebration as we now look on the 200th anniversary of the Mon and Brec, and to be as much inspired by the people who saved them and secured their ongoing relevance, as we are by the people who built them.

Mark Lang is Chairman of Glandwr Cymru - The Canal and River Trust in Wales. A former political advisor at the National Assembly for Wales, he is Senior Researcher at CREW Regeneration Wales.



Fishlock's File

We're more Kyber than the Kyber

Trevor Fishlock observes how Wales shares the magic of the movies with the stars

Articles

Fishlock's File:

We're more Kyber than the Kyber

Swans fly high

Book reviews

Welsh questions that inform global understanding

Epicentre capital for the stag and hen

Last of the analogue alternative poets

When everything has a price, less has value

Film makers scouting a location for their film *Carry On Up the Khyber* in 1968 found a likely canyon in Snowdonia. For the sake of verisimilitude they recruited an army veteran who had served on the North West Frontier to take a shufti. According to Gerald Thomas, the director, the old colonel declared, "It's more Khyber than the Khyber." The rest is film history. To save money the uniforms were recycled from the film *Zulu*.

Cinema and television companies spend around £22 million a year making dramas in Welsh settings. If we can't actually eat scenery we can rely on our noble mountains, beaches and estuaries to earn some of our living.

Perhaps the Sunday Times over-egged things a bit recently when it described the coast between Stack Rocks and Stacpoole as "dynamite", but the fact is that Wales is a stand-in, or body-double, for China, Afghanistan, Scandinavia, India and many other places. We've grown rather blasé about blokes creaking about in chainmail, King Arthur galloping around his birthplace and Robin Hood in Fforest Sherwood.

A film extra told me he'd been killed many times in mounted combat in Wales but never hurt. A farrier by trade, he revealed, interestingly, that the herds of horses brought in for medieval dramas really enjoy meeting up again on the set. I imagine them having a good neigh about Russell Crowe.

In my treks across the landscape I am

frequently struck by the sheer variety of our country. Within its 8,000 square miles there's a tightly constructed mosaic of photogenic and evocative landscapes: think rugged Rhinog, mwynder Maldwyn, gorgeous Gower. Given such a jigsaw of vistas and vignettes it's not surprising that so many films are made here.

I like to think that much of the visual spadework was done years ago. Richard Wilson, Thomas Jones, Paul Sandby, Moses Griffith, J. M. W. Turner and other trailblazers of the 18th, 19th and 20th Centuries immortalized the grand panoramas. No doubt the Wales Film Commission has maps with GPS coordinates showing modern cameramen where their tripods will fit into the easel-holes left by the artist pioneers. The Conwy valley and Betws-y-coed, for example, must be riddled with these intriguing triangular indentations.

Movie-makers are notoriously hard-headed and Wales has to compete with the world when directors hunt for locations. Even the great Welsh desert doesn't compare with Monument Valley, but then Monument Valley is for Stetsons only. On the other hand, Wales is notably versatile and convenient and specializes in bespoke landscapes for the discerning. Leafing through the catalogue I see dramatic, dreamy, sleepy, stirring, stark, dark, forbidding, fantastic, charming, scary, medieval, industrial, riverine, littoral, sylvan and cute. If asked we do rainy.



Ingrid Bergman in a scene in the 1958 movie *The Inn of the Sixth Happiness*, based on the real-life adventures of missionary Gladys Aylward in China. Here a starring role is given to the Snowdonian landscape.

“This is soul food, so real, and this place is real, and the people here, they’re real, too.”

We also do authenticity. Years ago, sharing a supper of cawl with people filming *Under Milk Wood* in Pembrokeshire, I heard one of them say dreamily, “This is soul food, so real, and this place is real, and the people here, they’re real, too.”

Wales has been film country since Aberdare’s William Haggart launched himself as a producer in 1901 with *The Maid of Cefn Ydfa*, a fifteen-minute crime drama which was probably the first screen fiction in Britain.

Even if we pretend not to be, we’re impressed when stars step from their clouds and come to earth. Actors and directors stay a few days or weeks and move on, but the magic endures. A plaque in Beddgelert commemorates the making of *The Inn of the Sixth*

Happiness. That was in 1958 but people have never forgotten the excitement of having Ingrid Bergman in town. A man who played an extra at a pound a day told me about the wonder of it all as if it happened last week. In the nearby mountains they filmed a long line of Chinese children playing refugees and singing Knick Knack Paddywhack. Reliably resourceful, Wales hired the requisite number of kids from countless Chinese restaurants.

Dr Merris Griffiths, who teaches at Aberystwyth university, published a study of the impact on her home town of New Quay during the making of a film there in 2007. Most people were thrilled to be involved. There was a sense of togetherness in the creation of a unique local experience. Some people

were extras or part-time workers. Others were happy to see how the movie was made. Called *The Edge of Love* it was about Dylan Thomas and his wartime adventures in New Quay. Not everyone liked it: some locals still disapproved of the poet’s scandalous behaviour. Nevertheless, Dr Griffiths told me, “It created a community buzz. People thought it wonderful to see their town on screen. For them the town itself was a key character in the film.”

Bunny Evans was recruited as an extra and paid a price. He had to submit to a shave and a close 1940s haircut for the part. He noted ruefully that in the end he wasn’t in the film. His performance had joined his pony tail and his beard on the cutting room floor. He didn’t mind, though, he said, and he enjoyed the experience, the taking part.

As it happened I stayed in the hotel where some of the actors in *The Edge of Love* had been quartered during the filming. Showing me to my room the manager said, “This is where one of the stars stayed. Just think, the person who last looked in your bathroom mirror was Keira Knightley.”

Come to Wales. Share the magic of the movies and a mirror with the stars.



The Swans celebrate a victory over Arsenal in their debut season in the Premier League last January.

Swans fly high

Peter Stead examines a 100-year sporting story of tragedy mixed with farce that has ended in triumph for Swansea City

To celebrate the centenary of Swansea City AFC, famously and proudly known as ‘the Swans’, Geraint Jenkins has written a delightfully elegant, highly readable and evocative history of the club. No centenary could have been more fittingly set up, for on 13 May 2012 the Swans completed their first season in the Premiership, the most widely followed and competitive league in the world, by beating Liverpool and finishing eleventh. In a season in which many pundits had predicted relegation the Swans had not only beaten highly-fancied Arsenal and Manchester City, but had been praised for their sophisticated passing-game by those more discerning commentators whose standards were set in Barcelona rather than domestically.

This new set of circumstances had many veteran fans pinching themselves. The Swans were now the eleventh best team in the country with an average home gate of 19,946. Yet in 2003 they had finished the season as the 88th ‘best’

team in the land, whilst the season before that their average attendance had been 3,690. Not surprisingly, this centenary history begins with both club chairman Huw Jenkins and Professor Jenkins referring to the club’s history as having been something of a ‘roller coaster’. Of course, football fans throughout the land fully realise that this is part of the price one pays by becoming a football fan. The author Harry Pearson was once asked why he supported Middlesbrough and ruefully explained that it was “because I’m a glory seeker!” In his 1992 book *Fever Pitch* Nick Hornby had articulated what all true fans really knew, that to support any team is bound to involve more anguish and frustration than pure pleasure.

By any standard, however, Swansea’s 100-year journey has involved more drama than almost any other British club. At the increasingly dilapidated Vetch, their home for 93 years, the Swans had provided a highly varied menu that included a fair

amount of tragedy and not a little farce. The story includes lost matches, injuries to key players, successful players and managers deserting the ship, boardroom crises, relegation, possible eviction from the league structure and even legal closure. And yet the club survived, perhaps even miraculously. Professor Jenkins' first and successful aim had to be the telling of this story. His match descriptions always suggest that he must have been there, and he brings alive all the rich cast of characters and eccentrics that the Swans seem to attract. Yet all the while he is subtly offering an explanation of why the Swans have not passed into oblivion.

To survive, any club has to develop personality, a distinct character, some quality that allows a bond to develop between management, players and fans. From their first match in 1912, a 1-1 draw with Cardiff, the fans had developed an affection for these white-clad 'Swans' and an appreciation of the excitement generated at the Vetch. From the start there were heroes and characters who were identified and developed by the local press. Soon the Swans were making their mark nationally, first in the FA Cup and then after 1920 in the English Football League.

Players had initially been recruited from all corners, but soon there were Welsh heroes with Ivor Jones and Billy Hole not only playing for their country but establishing local dynasties. Between 1919 and 1926 the Swans were managed by Joe Bradshaw and their star was the great goal-scorer, Cardiff-born Jack Fowler. As this side gained promotion and then beat Arsenal in the Cup they gained a reputation as a good and stylish footballing side. An expectation was created that was to withstand all crises and which persists to this day.

From 1925 until 1965 the Swans normally operated in the old Second Division. However, their modern identity as a club was forged first by a very good team that, after a two-year aberration, gained promotion back



Another Swans triumph in their debut season, this time over Manchester City in March 2012.

into that league in 1949, and then by an astonishing flowering of local talent. For a while Swansea could boast of the best schoolboy side in the land and many of those youngsters soon became internationally acclaimed stars. In the 1950s there were several players, all born in the terraced houses of Swansea's inner-suburbs, who could have been justifiably named in any perspective all-star European team. Some of those players like John Charles and Jack Kelsey never played for the Swans but others such as Ivor Allchurch, Mel Charles and Cliff Jones

did. Given this talent, to this day the question is asked why the Swans did not achieve more in that era. Professor Jenkins explains that it has been the memory of that golden era that still fuels the hunger for footballing excellence that characterises life in Swansea. The statue of the great Ivor that stands outside the Liberty Stadium is far more than a tribute to a peerless player, it is a reminder to all and sundry of what Swansea expects.

Since 1965 the roller-coaster has gone berserk with the Swans experiencing eight relegations and nine promotions. Famously the Cardiff-born John Toshack took the Swans from the Fourth Division to the First where the Swans finished sixth in 1982. Within four years they were back in the basement division with an average attendance of just over 4,000. The fans had been thrilled going up on the escalator but on the way down it was soon apparent just how badly the club had been administered. Debts had run up and the club that 'had lost its grip on financial sanity' was wound up in the High Court in December 1985. Inevitably, as Professor Jenkins guides us through this era he has to inject some titbits of Board Room analysis into his narrative and we begin to realise the complexity of running a successful

Reporting on a premier club

Geraint H. Jenkins,
*Proud to be a Swan:
The History of Swansea City AFC,*
Y Lolfa, 2012, £14.95

Mel Nurse (with Pete Welsh),
Mr Swansea,
Y Lolfa, 2009, £9.95.

Garry Monk (with Peter Read),
*Loud, Proud and Positive,
My Autobiography,*
Y Lolfa, 2012, £9.95.

AWR DDAEAR WWF 2013 WWF'S EARTH HOUR 2013 MAE EIN BYD YN WYCH OUR WORLD IS BRILLIANT



Nid dim ond mater o awr o dywyllwch ond mater o ddyfodol disgleiriach.
Diffoddwch eich goleuadau am 8.30pm ar 23 Mawrth 2013.

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football team. All too often fans, journalists and even historians confine their interest to what happens on the pitch and just throw in the odd insult to managers and directors. Only gradually, as football has become even bigger business, have fans and writers begun to combine both football as a game and as a business into a unified analysis.

Today any writer seriously wanting to reveal the real character of teams like Chelsea and the two Manchesters, let alone Cardiff City, would necessarily have to take us into the Board Room every bit as often as on to the field of play. One writer who has done this is Anthony Clavane in his examination of Leeds United, a great side whose

his *Mr Swansea* in which he guides his readers through some of the hair-raising moments that fans had only imagined in their nightmares.

Fortunately Geraint Jenkins is telling a happy story and one can sense the purring as his narrative develops pace. All the ingredients come together as if in some divine plan. Perhaps understandably, he allows football to squeeze out politics and business. However, he could have placed more emphasis on the vital role of Swansea Council and of individual directors, not least Martin Morgan. The heroes of his story are the chairman Huw Jenkins, the managers Martinez and Rodgers, the crucial mid-field axis of

well and there are rumours of player discontent. Earlier this year, Garry Monk's revealing autobiography explained that a real camaraderie had developed amongst Swansea players, largely because they all lived cheek-by-jowl in the centre of Swansea. He went on to show how that allowed the players to develop a degree of opposition to the approach of Paulo Sousa who managed the Swans for only a season between the regimes of Martinez and Rodgers. Now one wonders how the players are reacting to the very different style of their very famous and cerebral Danish manager. Running a football club involves juggling of many balls. Fans spend years believing that 'things can only get better' and then suddenly find themselves asking 'can it all last?' Is there anyone who doesn't believe that 'football is a funny old game'?

The Swans are flying high and they have given Wales an example of how politicians, businessmen and ordinary punters can together create the right atmosphere for excellence and flair to flourish. As the Swans celebrate their centenary the publication of *Swansea 'Til I Die*, a volume of fan memories put together by the Trust, and the announcement of the development of new training facilities and links with Swansea University all point to the filling out of a community context and the building of sure foundations. A huge corner has been turned and everyone is determined that there shall be no going back. Certainly the great hope remains that once again the city will be able to breed its own talent. Meanwhile nobody is forgetting that goals need to be scored and matches have to be won. For players, directors, management and fans there is only ever the League Table, unavoidable, unforgiving and absolute.

Peter Stead is a cultural historian of 20th Century Wales.

The heroes of his story are the chairman Huw Jenkins, the managers Martinez and Rodgers, the crucial mid-field axis of Britton and Allen, and the goal-scorers Trundle, Scotland and Sinclair.

roller coaster has become even more emotionally draining than that of the Swans. Clavane brilliantly evokes the essential identity of his club and then traces its corporate destruction as it was "devoured from within by a toxic combination of excessive debt, self-doubt and bitter in-fighting" and "plummeted like a stone in the well".

Swansea fans could have done with this kind of analysis in the bad years when their only recourse was to stay away or mutter curses on the almost deserted terraces. Fortunately David Farmer, the club's pioneering historian, was first and foremost a fan but one who was prepared to become involved in the running of the club. In his writings Farmer stresses the huge importance of the way in which the City of Swansea saved the day by purchasing the Vetch off the club in 1975. Then there was the subsequent constant search for local business people prepared to invest in the club. One of the most generous and caring of the club's 'saviours' is former player Mel Nurse. In 2009 Y Lolfa published

Britton and Allen, and the goal-scorers Trundle, Scotland and Sinclair. The directors are real fans and they know their history. As a result common sense and foot-balling flair have become the hallmarks of the new club now strutting it out in their classy new stadium. And very significantly the fans are integral to the story for the Supporters Trust, born out of frustration in 2001, now has 16,000 members, a 20 per cent stake in the club and their own director on the Board. For the Swans the Liberty and the Premiership form a new chapter but anyone wanting to understand that needs to know the story so far.

When the hitherto saintly and evangelical Brendan Rodgers deserted the club after just the one season in the Premiership, the Swansea Board appointed as his successor Michael Laudrup, once regarded as one of the greatest players in the world. "They've done it again," was the phrase on everyone's lips. Another rabbit had been pulled out of the hat.

In the event it hasn't been quite like that. The Swans are not playing

Reviews

Welsh questions that inform global understanding

Owen Dudley Edwards



25/25 Vision ---

Welsh horizons across 50 years

Edited by John Osmond
and Peter Finch

IWA, 2012, £11.99

Those concerned with the culture of Wales, Scotland and Ireland are wearily accustomed to charges of parochialism emanating from scholars from England, the remaining, smaller, portion of the British Isles. And we must be on guard against such indictments. This collection of autobiographical studies in Welshness begins with Trevor Fishlock's record of self-integration with Wales. Its readers will have little difficulty identifying dazzling allusions to Welsh cultural leaders, from Hywel Dda to Clough Williams-Ellis. However, the editors should have supplied some footnote explaining who Bernard Levin was. The name is tolerably easily recalled by septuagenarians such as myself but unlikely to mean anything to the most important readers of this book, those reading it 25 years from now. And it will be

a vital book for them.

The word 'perspective', however pompous, conveys something of the book's glory (I utilise the lexicographical finding by H. Dumpty in L. Carroll, *Through the Looking-Glass*, 'glory' meaning 'a nice knock-down argument'). Menna Elfyn, for instance, quotes her own poetry but, in grim awareness of the pig-ignorance of so many of us, does so in translations by other hands such as R.S. Thomas (which may make her feel a little like Sophocles being translated by Yeats). This makes its own excellent point about Welsh identity. A poet writing in one language cannot translate their own work satisfactorily. If they did they would show they were half-thinking in the tongue into which they translate.

As a rule a poem cannot be translated at all, but if it can, then it requires another poet as translator who will make the translation a work of art of its own, in Wilde's sense of the critic as artist. (And nobody has ever made a good translation of Wilde's *Salome*, including his own revisions of Lord Alfred Douglas's.) Menna Elfyn very neatly shows the importance of her witness by quoting from Octavio Paz that being a poet is to be

not the voice of history
or the voice outside history
but the voice within history
which is still trying to say
something different

Speaking as a historian I am happy to agree that we cannot understand the past or its wars with present and future unless we can hear that voice. Two of the greatest poems written by Englishmen about Wales are Thomas Gray's *The Bard* and A. E. Housman's *The Welsh Marches*, both of which are clearly unhistorical and both of which sound unique perspectives of Wales.

Many of *25/25 Vision's* portraits of the artists are somewhat angular, a little self-critical but seldom reaching Joycean moroseness. Some did not have Welsh

birth and one or two no longer live in Wales. Iconographically, some conceit spreads itself rather in the way the current Prime Minister promises to spread out Privilege. Each of the 25 essays opens with a photograph of the author, some endearing, some quizzical, some superior, some smug, some capturing your allegiance before you have read a word. All are reproduced, suitably cropped (or, as we art-folk prefer to say, detailed) to appear three more times, on front cover outside and inside, on back cover inside. We (if not the authors) could live without at least two of these identical galleries for identification ('Look carefully, take your time, see if you can pick out the person who ...'). Maps of north and south Wales could have been more useful on front and back inside covers, reminding us more than the authors do of the polarisations and partings dividing the two regions (far more drastically than the excessively vaunted examples of Northern Ireland versus the Rest, or Highland versus Lowland Scotland). It used to be a rudery in Ireland to say someone's face looked like the map of the country, but these faces are maps of Wales in a truer as well as a politer sense. They still leave us geographically underwhelmed.

But would maps of what is now officially Wales be sufficient? The smallest country of our islands' four, it has also been far the most ruthless and successful conqueror of the unfortunate English. The Norman and French kings were assimilated when driven out of their continental homelands, the Stuarts were ultimately only acceptable when Dutch and childless, the German kings of Britain had even less lasting cultural effect (save possibly for Prince Albert). The Tudors planted inefaceable feet on the face of England. Shakespeare's lost lines in Welsh originally spoken in *Henry IV Part One*, his habitual Welsh victors (Fluellen, Sir Hugh Evans, Henry VII, Owen Glendower (by surviving his tormentor Hotspur), his Welsh myths originating *King Lear* and

Cymbeline, his supposed Welsh descent on his mother's side, Warwickshire's place on the Welsh frontier in his time, all support the Welshness of Shakespeare proclaimed in Gray's *The Bard*.

Its other triumph of Welsh cultural mastery, Milton, derives from the giantism of that poet's youth asserted in *Lycidas* (whose high point in all senses is the shaggy top of Mona high, coupled with Deva's wizard stream rising in Merioneth) and in *Comus* (a masque performed at Ludlow Castle). This is at once the glory and the ruin of Wales. It made a success of its domination of England by conquest in depth where Ireland and Scotland simply intimidated and classified the English culturally without remodelling them. The Welsh were still at it in the early 20th Century, whose greatest Prime Minister until Attlee was David Lloyd George, a Welsh nationalist who extended his frontiers as he rose in the power game.

Gwyn Alf Williams is "the great Marxist historian" to Menna Elfyn. She means this as a compliment although Daniel G. Williams certainly does not when declaring Eric Hobsbawm "Britain's leading Marxist historian" to introduce his sneer at a historical article on blacks in 18th Century Wales "not in itself a particularly central subject": however Marxist, Hobsbawm was a centralist (Oxbridge-London) snob. Williams entitled the masterpiece he wrote (and anthologised) *When Was Wales?* but should also have asked 'Where Was Wales?' The question is particularly appropriately in relation to Scotland whose oldest surviving poems were the work of Taliesin (in what is now Glasgow or at least Lanarkshire or Dumfriesshire) and Aneirin (in what is now Edinburgh or at least the Lothians). Here John Williams is so well immunised in accordance with such intellectual health warnings as to begin his essay "I don't speak for Wales. I'm not sure what or where it is, or when it was". Would that other historians of all our countries had such realistic humility! It is this elasticity of Welsh frontiers which poses the greatest threat to Welsh identity. To triumph is to vanish (as Grey's Bard concludes by



Charlotte Williams pictured on Llandudno pier – "I had long been puzzling my fate as a Black (sic brown) woman in a small seaside Welsh town..." Photo: John Briggs

doing). Nothing fails like success. England is a graveyard of Welsh victories. So *25/25 Vision* shuns the limits of its conquests (apart from apologetic exile memories to heighten contrasts with true Wales). Yet the temptation to identity-suicide is omnipresent. "Our vicinity was Wales, our vision was England," remembers Grahame Davies in a roll of Cymric doom.

John Osmond's *The Divided Kingdom* (1988), confronted the bitter couplet:

There ain't no black
In the Union Jack.

There ain't no dragon either, but that was usurped so ruthlessly into the English Royal Family that it reminds us Representation may be Exploitation up to and including the present Prince of Wales's hi-jack of the country's name to be military alias or pseudo-surnames for his sons. Charlotte Williams turns identity enquiry on the Blackness or otherwise of Wales. Among her essay's many rich gifts to her readers is a fine sense of time not always so visible in other contributions, although many others make it clear that their quarter-centuries are starkly divided by the historic

rejection of Welsh devolution in 1979 (following the great evangelical crusade setting the Valleys on fire against it under the preaching of Neil Kinnock) and then by the last-minute cliff hanger-salvation of 1997). Back to Charlotte Williams:

"When the politics of belonging rose to ascendancy in the 1990s, with all the associated paraphernalia of identity rhetoric and neo-nationalist revivalism, I had long been puzzling my fate as a Black (sic brown) woman in a small seaside Welsh town, trying to find a language that spoke to my predicament. What the heck was I doing here? Why? What god or gods had thought this one up?"

Seldom has so potentially painful a problem been put with such infectious and enchanting good humour. But the smile on her face pulls no punches:

"... back in the 1980s the connection between race and place was a very different matter. We weren't Welsh, we were 'local'. We weren't ethnic minorities, we were 'Black'. We

weren't a collective in any Wales sense, but scattered, largely invisible peoples. We were the dispossessed. Back in the 1980s, if asked, one of our number might say something like I'm a Mardy boy or I'm from Butetown or I live in Llanrhaeadr, Llanrumney, Llangollen. None of us were prepared to say 'I'm Welsh' even if we knew it somewhere in our private lives. We wouldn't have publicly claimed Welshness because that would have been far too risky. We were not simply local but localised by a powerful set of assumptions that determined where Black people could or couldn't be."

Quite apart from its value in its own right, this mode of autobiographical analysis is in the supreme tradition of Welsh questions informing global understanding. It is simultaneously unique and universal, and nothing in its indictment is diminished by its applicability to innumerable counterparts such as Catholics and/or gays, with the difference that 'Blacks' unless much 'whiter' than their own norm had

in my native Dublin it meant 'beat up' in the 1950s; and thanks to the man who made politics a four-letter word at the turn of the century, Mr Alistair Campbell, 'do' means 'trade in', 'stock', 'manufacture' as in his "we don't do God here" (meaning 10 Downing Street), although in the ancient or modern sense of the term his puppet Tony Blair proved that one way or another Blair did. God has reserved His reply.

Happily Professor Patrick McGuinness follows with a chapter political enough to suit any of his Irish namesakes (however spelled) and shows us how Welsh nationalism and the Welsh language were 'done' around 2002 with charges of racism from Labour votaries against their very existence. He quotes a friend wondering what language would be left to characterise the British National Party should it bring its ugly face into Welsh politics (as it almost certainly will). Or, to put it another way, cheapening the English language to bankruptcy levels renders the user/abuser incapable of seeing what is happening in the USA where President Obama has battled with an Opposition

Morgan's establishment of his Welsh Labour leadership by the humiliation of Whitehall/Westminster Labour might prove that Wales has political lessons to teach Scotland. His leonine presence may have insured himself against trying to be a Tudor. Alas for Scottish Labour, the sweets of office currently destroying the Liberal Democrats remain too succulent for the Opposition to renounce and so Alex Salmond will hold his power and may well increase it while the Douglas Alexanders and Margaret Currans keep their Holyrood Helots jumping through increasingly tightening nooses. As of now Scottish Independence preached by Salmond means the conservation of Labour's welfare state, National Health, rejection of nuclear weapons, and free university education, while Scottish Labour, under London Labour's whiplash, jettisons them all. Messrs Osmond and Finch should really have baited their editorial hooks sufficiently to get Rhodri Morgan to tell us whether he thinks he is unique.

And so, 'quis custodiet ipsos custodes?' Or, to translate, how should we edit the editors? Peter Finch should have learned more from his contributors about self-contextualisation historically: early on he remarks that

"Gwynfor's hunger strike might have changed media attitudes to the language's direction, but it cut no ice whatsoever in the suburban reaches of the city that dominates us all."

Presumably the city in question is London: it can hardly be Cardiff, though that is the only city he has so far mentioned. If he thinks suburban Cardiff did no ice-cutting over Gwynfor Evans's threat of a hunger strike he is on another planet (neither Ned Thomas's nor John Redwood's). And if, as I assume, he means London, he is wrong again. His way of writing may lead readers in 2037 to imagine Gwynfor did go on hunger strike. One would naturally hope that Welsh people of that year will know the realities of that inspirational life, but an editor should give ignorance on Welsh matters no hostages. Gwynfor

Professor Williams continues her superlative charming by hard hits, to end her essay on her daughter's frequent 'Mum, we don't do politics'. She is obviously too kind a mother to point out that if we don't, politics will do us.

no choice of closet or 'Out'. Mind you, at the height of apartheid in Northern Ireland 'local' Catholics and Protestants could almost always tell at a glance (or a sniff) whether they were the one or the other.

Professor Williams continues her superlative charming by hard hits, to end her essay on her daughter's frequent 'Mum, we don't do politics'. She is obviously too kind a mother to point out that if we don't, politics will do us. A Welsh context makes its reader a more linguistic thinker: 'do' meant 'swindle' in the 1930s;

determined to deny the right of him or any other Brown or Black to inhabit the White House. Curiously, Welsh Labour's anti-Welsh campaign coincided with a London fashion of despising everything Welsh, no doubt including Welsh Labour (Bethan Gwanas documents a little of it for us here.)

While a convert to Plaid from Labour himself, Professor McGuinness generously hints at Rhodri Morgan's opposition to Welsh Labour's equation of demand for Welsh speaking as racist. In fact Rhodri

having become convinced that the want of a Welsh-language TV station would kill the language at the heart of Welsh nationalism, he determined on a hunger strike till death to force the Thatcher government to grant it. I am unlikely to forget it, because I broke down and cried in my interview with him during what looked like the last weeks before he embarked on it. He patted me on the arm and said, "It's much worse for my friends than it is for me". Michael Foot later told me how he went up to Willie Whitelaw and said, "Chap means it, and if he dies, the whole place will go up in flames". He nodded: "I will say for Whitelaw, chap isn't a bad chap, he went to the bloody woman and said she'd have to do it, she'd have to give them a Welsh-speaking television station, made it clear he'd resign if she didn't and she couldn't afford to lose him then. So she gave in". But what was Finchley if not suburban reaches?

Which brings me to the other of the book's editors, John Osmond. His essay is indeed sublime, from its opening with the best of all couplings of nationalism to the environment by personal glory in his surrounding landscape which (apart from apposite if astonishing epiphany of the author as 2012's (and 2037's) answer to the Reverend Eli Jenkins in Dylan Thomas's *Under Milk Wood*) drives him to cite James Lovelock in favour of the idea that "the planet should be regarded as a single living organism".

So far, so geophysical, but the idea is older than views of the planet from spacecraft which inspired Lovelock. In the last year of his life 1929-30 Arthur Conan Doyle wrote *When the World Screamed*, which is very scientifically fictional. In it the Earth is proved to be a living organism, whereupon Professor Challenger, the discoverer, builds vast equipment to drive a mighty needle into Earth far below the surface with the result that volcanoes around the world practically blew themselves into space while devastating their surroundings. It was an all too accurate comment on human ambitions for glory at the expense of the environment. Osmond is in fact

demanding a nationalism identifying itself with Earth and its protection:

"Closeness to the land and the people who share the same horizons seems to me to be the beginning of Welshness. Later I discovered it was a starting point for others living close to the edge of the British Isles."

In similar vein the Cardinal Archbishop of Edinburgh, Keith Patrick O'Brien, compared the Earth to the Holy Eucharist, each as sacred gifts of God to us. As the Cardinal has been prominent recently in denunciation of same-sex marriage legislation I had better make it clear that while one of his flock I don't agree with him there, and in saying that I can congratulate Osmond-Finch on the gay essay by Mike Parker, a most instructive exploration whose perspective as with so many others here is both entertaining and enlightening. The Cardinal, like John Osmond, brilliantly integrates our ideological identities with the custody of the planet which our own creeds enjoin on us.

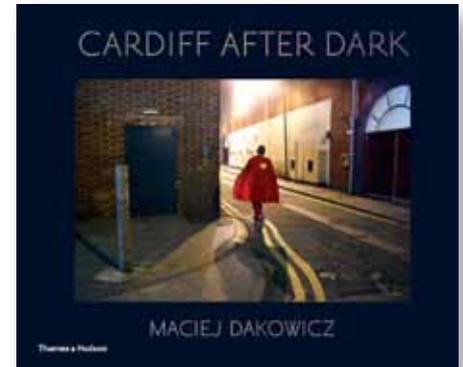
It should not be thought that the book as a whole can be written off as nationalist or crypto-nationalist. For instance, Owen Smith MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Wales, contributes 'Why Labour needs the nation'. In it he dissects a phenomenon we noted earlier, Welsh Labour's discovery of national identity in contrast to disharmonies in other countries, or indeed Scotland's case where Scottish nationalism occupies territory once proudly held and even pioneered by Labour which Scottish Labour now discards. That Owen Smith has written this article is in itself a tell-tale contrast to the barren waste which replaces the productive Scottish multi-author discussions such as *The Red Paper on Scotland* edited by Gordon Brown.

On the other hand, *25/25 Vision* makes it clear that Wales is still sparkling with ideas and will continue to do its thinking for itself.

Owen Dudley Edwards is an Honorary Fellow in the department of History at Edinburgh University.

Epicentre capital for the stag and hen

Peter Finch

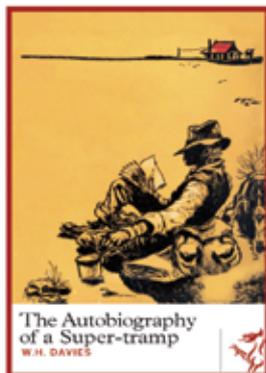


Cardiff After Dark
Maciej Dakowicz
Thames & Hudson, £24.95

Drinking a lot isn't new. The world has always been filled with drunks. But the idea has got around that in the burgeoning Welsh capital drinking has taken on epidemic proportions. It never used to be like this. That's the complaint of our steady and suburban council taxpayers. They lie abed listening to the josh and clatter of inebriated youth staggering home. In my day, they say, we'd have a pint or two, certainly. But we always knew how to behave. This barbarism they see, or think they see in the city's sparkling streets, is new. They are worried. It's a respectable fear. The world has once again gone wrong. What can you do?

But is it all new? Certainly the mass falling about in public is but then that's what you get when cities are developed so that indoors and outdoors merge. Today the centre of Cardiff is one great well-lit pedestrianised precinct. The smooth oft-swept plazas are rich in street furniture – bins, benches, booths, revolvers, statues, billboards, plantings. They are illuminated by lines of shop windows like giant televisions. In fact, in front of St David's Hall there is a giant television. Half the concert hall's frontage now broadcasts rolling sport and news. Some of these exteriors are now more comfortable than

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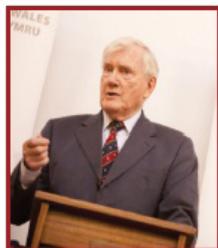
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their user's homes. Little wonder we search for joy within them, ambling slowly in soft shoes.

Across Wales, and indeed across the UK, public houses have been closing at a prodigious rate. This is nothing to do with the population losing its taste for alcohol. It is entirely down to how we now consume our drink. We like it cheap, we buy it in supermarkets. We drink at home. Together, alone. We drink with impunity in our gardens, leaning on our front walls, walking down the streets, swaying inebriatedly across the city's centre with our open lager cans in our hands. It's an economic driver, a swift hit at a quarter of the price we'd pay in an old dark wood, wilton-carpeted public saloon. So the Taff Vale and the Moulders Arms, and the Salutation, The Bristol Hotel, the Marchioness of Bute, The Vulcan, The Lifeboat and the Greyhound have all closed. Their badly-shaven regulars, fags in hand, have gone to the winds. The land the pubs once occupied have been redeveloped and profit has been made. Cardiff's stock of watering places has been severely reduced.

In those lost pubs drinkers of many generations mixed. The old stager would be in the corner, the young buck with his brylcreamed hair at the bar, the travelling salesman in his cheap suit ensconced in the lounge. There were darts and cards, crisps and conversations. Behaviour was cordial. The rising pissedness that alcohol brings was controlled by the generational mix. These pubs certainly had their beer-fuelled moments but the norm was calm. You could go into them and feel safe. Nobody ever felt out of place.

Today in the recessing 21st Century it's different. If we do venture out to drink then it's likely to be to a suburban tavern near where we live. These places mix food with coffee mornings and offer families a complete package: games machines, sizzling steaks, bouncy castles, cakes, wine, death by chocolate, cider with ice cubes in it, high chairs. The city centre with all its lights is too far off, you can't park there readily, it's full of marauding youth.

We've been here before, sort of. In

1863 with a population a quarter of the city's number today, Cardiff had 211 places where you could drink – inns, pubs, hotel bars. According to Brian Glover's excellent *Cardiff Pubs and Breweries* (Tempus) Adam Street back then had seven pubs while Bridge Street boasted eight. The density of available watering holes was unmatched. Working men, these pubs' main clientele, would spend their entire leisure hours inside them, staggering home at stop tap through the poorly lit streets to their homes in the walking suburbs of Butetown, Grangetown, and Splott.

Today this mesh of sawdust-floored town-centre drinkeries has been largely replaced by the new phenomenon, the vertical bar. These gleaming palaces are spread throughout Cardiff's revitalised

Photographer Maciej Dakowicz has captured it all in his exhilarating night photography. He has spent much of the past five years staying up late and not drinking. He follows the revellers, men dressed as superheroes and women dressed as Playboy bunnies. He takes their photographs. He depicts them from when they start, full of smiles and upright vitality, to when they finish, lying pale faced and dishevelled among Caroline Street's discarded chip wrappers.

"Photography is nothing", the great photojournalist Henri Cartier-Bresson once said. "It's life that interests me." That's Maciej's approach, too. In his collection, *Cardiff After Dark*, the capital's street nightlife is revealed in a way that many will find both amazing and shocking. Amazing because

He takes their photographs. He depicts them from when they start, full of smiles and upright vitality, to when they finish, lying pale faced and dishevelled among Caroline Street's discarded chip wrappers.

heart. They are vast and built from glass and aluminium. They have pinewood floors and laser lighting. In them you stand, vertically, in your hundreds. You crowd their long bars and down shots and cocktails and lager stuffed with chillies. You shout and yell. You do it with your jacket at home and your skirt as short as it will go. You have body art tattooed on every available surface. You wear thumb rings and earrings and rings on your toes. You enjoy it all. You are young.

This is the new and frightening to non-participant world for which Cardiff has become famous. Cardiff is the UK's epicentre for the stag and the hen do. Coachloads arrive from Swindon, Gloucester and Portsmouth, dressed as nuns, or supermen or fairies. They stay for days. They have a blindingly staggering time.

they had no idea that the city's night life was this extensive, and shocking because they will no doubt disapprove of what they see. Cardiff, the binge drinking capital. Cardiff, no simple centre of Welsh culture and Welsh Government, but the place you come to revel in and then be sick.

Maciej's approach is to stay out of the action. He awaits Cartier-Bresson's moment and then he takes the shot. He reached Cardiff in 2004 to study at the University of Glamorgan and as for many of his compatriots found the city's atmosphere to his liking and stayed. Like Cartier-Bresson he takes an enormous number of photographs. On a good night, he says, he'll shoot five hundred. This splendid Thames & Hudson full plate and full colour hardback narrows that vast collection to ninety-nine.

Nothing is taken with a flash which gives the photographer the chance to slide around the action unnoticed. The results are stunning. Revealed in all their glory are the leisure times of the young: their pains and their joys, their rollicking up yours attitudes, their relentless pursuits of the hit and the high. People sit and lie in the gutters, on pavements, on street furniture, in doorways. They sprawl in ungainly fashion, grope each other, suck their cigarettes, drain their stomachs onto pavements, stare blind-eyed at their mobile phones.

In the queue outside Walkabout they simultaneously text each other. Outside the Prince of Wales they squat eating chips. A woman in hair curlers and a respectable man in a double-breasted suit sit on a street bench as if this were a park. Around them the wash of Macdonald's wrappings rises like an incoming tide. On St Mary Street a mid-thirties couple in short-sleeve shirt and fawn jacket lounge on the pavement imagining the place to be Barry Island. Behind them revellers queue for endless fast food. There are pole vaulters, bench sliders, knicker revealers, head holding ill faces, dissolutes surrounded by police in high-vis vests, and men praying at the windows of patrol cars. A woman carrying a seven foot plastic penis comes out of Wood Street to meet the man with the tennis racket from the 118 118 advertisement. Blokes take their tops off, kiss each other, show their bums. Captain America has his head up someone's skirt. A guy with red hair and the words 'One Life One Chance' across his back leans on a bar. There are inflatable women and inflatable men, fatties with their shorts bursting. Women wearing L plates. Men dressed as women. Women dressed as men. Waitresses out of their minds. Dancers and singers. Gropers and fondlers. The young of this part of the wider world all having a good time.

Maciej Dakowicz spent seven years living here. He founded the Third floor Gallery at the bottom of Bute Street. He now lives in London. That's our loss. He's gone, the bars stay on.

Peter Finch is a poet, psycho-geographer and literary editor of *the welsh agenda*.

Last of the analogue alternative poets Ifor Thomas



Cusp: Recollections of poetry in transition
Edited by Geraldine Monk
Shearsman Books 2012, £12.95

This is a collection of essentially autobiographical recollections of that period between the end of the second world war and the advent of the internet. The poets who have contributed are of the avante garde - the envelope pushers, explorers of the boundary, or as Iain Sinclair would have it - *Conductors of Chaos*. You will not see Andrew Motion and Gillian Clarke mentioned here except, in the case of Motion, as a figure of opposition.

It is almost inconceivable, I imagine, for a young poet writing today, to envisage a period of no internet, no social networking, no texts. In the time under consideration, there isn't even a fax machine tucked away in the writer's office. I remember when hitching alone around Europe in the sixties, the sense of being cut off from my family and friends back home was total. Not only was there no mobile phone network, my parents didn't even have a landline. The postcards I wrote home arrived after me, as if they too were reluctant to get to the end of the big adventure. When I ran out of money, I had to beg. But the sense of freedom was exhilarating. When I see a twelve year old on her way to school chatting into her mobile, I feel for her loss.

Whether this period led to bigger

and better things, as a psychological cusp is defined, is a moot point. The stapled magazines and hand-duplicated pamphlets have now disappeared. In their place digitisation rules. This review for example is being written on the cloud. It doesn't exist at all, yet it can exist anywhere - everything, everywhere. EE as my current provider is called.

And probably, presentationally, the end product is better. But these writers and poets were the resistance, the almost secret army who waged an attritional campaign against the poetry establishment.

There are probably few better poets to corral these disparate souls than Geraldine Monk. She was a significant figure on the scene during the period in question and her story is typical. She was a misfit, unable to find a literary direction until a chance encounter with a kindred spirit or a lucky find in the local library, then the journey of self discovery, the finding of a poetic voice. It is interesting that she neglects poets emanating from London or Cambridge and I cannot quite believe her when she apologises to "the fine poets that have

The analogy of a war against the establishment is not far from the mark. Some of the essays testify to the persecution of the poet by local authorities and the police.

been connected with them". The thesis of this book is that the real poetry innovators were born in the Midlands, northern cities and Cardiff. They were born out of grime of post industrial Britain, post war austerity and, as in the case of the West country, provincial boredom.

The analogy of a war against the establishment is not far from the mark. Some of the essays testify to the persecution of the poet by local authorities and the police. No more so than in Tom

Pickard's case, a moving account of his commitment to the cause against the prejudice of the council and the bullying and outright violence of the police. The right to practise experimental poetry was hard won in a few of the stories told here.

Female poets did not figure significantly in those early days, although they represent nearly 25 per cent of the contributors to this volume. Women it seems had not only to fight against the establishment to get heard but they also had a struggle to strut their stuff with those who espoused the same poetic values. Glenda George remarks that "the majority of those visitors was male, when women visited it was part of a couple". She and her poetry were not part of a feminist agenda. She saw "no virtue in analyzing the female situation". She was more interested in art and literature - "how could they change the world?" The representation of women improves as we go through to the latter half of the pre-internet period, but as Francis Presley postulates, "the role of women poets has been neglected".

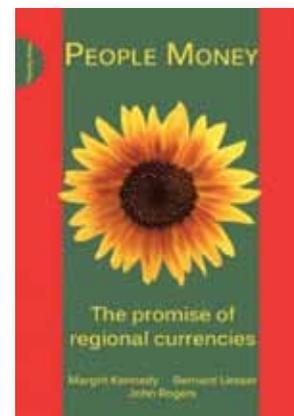
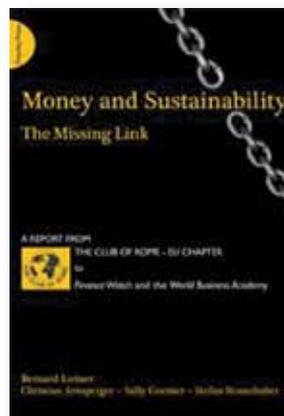
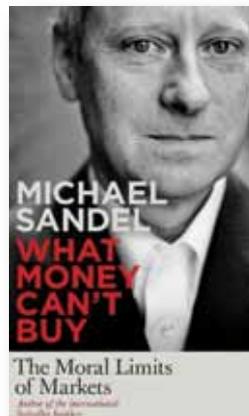
What stands out is that though the subjects of this collection were often geographically widespread with widely differing experiences of their development as poets, the influences that keep recurring are the same. Americans like Robert Creeley, a guest reader in Newcastle as he was in Cardiff, Ed Dorn, Charles Olsen; and British poets like Basil Bunting, Bob Cobbing, Eric Mottram, Barry MacSweeney (probably the most frequently name checked). Poets began to group together - The Morden Tower in the north-east, Cabaret 246 in Cardiff, the poetry exchange in Plymouth.

Key figures drove the scene, in Wales Peter Finch in Cardiff, and Chris Torrance - the creative force behind Cabaret 246. Somehow everybody connected. This was a web before the world wide web was invented. One or two contributors are nostalgic for the glue and staples era, but Tilla Brading sounds the warning "to be content and complacent spells textual stagnation". Good to close a review of a particularly important period for alternative poetry with a call to the future.

Ifor Thomas is a poet and architect.

When everything has a price, less has value

Rhys David



What Money Can't Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets
Michael J. Sandel
Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2012, \$16.00

Money and Sustainability: The Missing Link
Bernard Lietaer, Sally Goerner,
Stefan Brunhuber
Triarchy Press, 2012, £24

People Money: The Promise of Regional Currencies
Margrit Kennedy, Bernard Lietaer,
John Rogers
Triarchy Press, 2012, £20

A new form of investment based on other people's life insurance - 'viaticals' - has become current in the US over recent years. Suppose someone has a terminal illness and needs funds now for medical insurance. Someone out there can be found who will pay, say \$50,000, for the unfortunate individual's \$100,000 life insurance policy and will collect on his or her death. In 2009 Wall Street took it a stage further - and called it securitisation. Big financial groups were reported to be interested in packaging up life settlements such as these as bonds and re-selling them to investors. The bonds would generate an income stream for ghoulish investors from the insurance pay-outs when the original policyholders died.

At the other end of the world in New Zealand the national airline chose a different means of demonstrating anything can be bought or sold. It hired 30 people to shave their heads and wear a temporary tattoo saying "Need a change? Head down to New Zealand". Back in the US, you can earn a healthy \$15-\$20 an hour to stand in line for a lobbyist who wants to attend a Congressional hearing but is too important to queue overnight himself.

These and other examples - children being paid to read, warfare being contracted out to private security firms, 'sportsmen' buying the rights to shoot endangered species, prison cell upgrades, and solo drivers paying to travel in car pool lanes - are all examples that Harvard moral philosopher, Michael J. Sandel, gives in *What Money Can't Buy*. They are just a few instances of the way in which over the last few decades market values have intruded into spheres of life where they do not belong. And he believes this is as much an explanation of the near catastrophe inflicted on financial markets in the 2008 crash as the usual candidate for blame - unremitted greed.

Sandel believes we should rethink the role that markets play in our society for two reasons. The first is inequality. Where all 'good' things can be bought and sold, having money makes all the difference, further intensifying the inequalities that have come to exist in rich societies. Just as importantly, putting a price on the good

things in life corrupts them. Paying children to read – as happens in some US states – might get them to pick up more books but can turn the act into a chore. The use of mercenaries might spare the lives of citizens but corrupts the meaning of citizenship.

Sandel believes we have to decide

1970 and 2010. For all the steps taken and planned by Governments and international organisations since the 2008 crash, they believe another global financial disaster will occur at some point if we fail to construct a new paradigm.

Their argument is with ‘modern

The conventional approach to dealing with the world financial crisis has, of course, been to recapitalise the banks and to seek to repay debts through the imposition of austerity policies. Yet, in the view of these authors, these further exacerbate the problems by making it even more difficult to finance recovery.

again how to value ‘goods’, such as health, education, family life, nature, art and civic duties, and establish a way of valuing them – in other words stepping back from being a ‘market society’ – as has happened over recent years to once again simply having a ‘market economy’. He claims market reasoning has emptied public life of moral argument so that we no longer ask whether some ways of valuing goods are higher or worthier than others. As he puts it:

“A debate about the moral limits of markets would enable us to decide... where markets serve the public good and where they don’t belong. It would also invigorate our politics by welcoming competing notions of the good life into the public square.”

Former central banker and hedge fund manager Bernard Lietaer and his co-authors from the Club of Rome EU Chapter agree with Sandel that greed is not the sole explanation for the dysfunction of the markets. However, they believe there is an even more fundamental problem that needs to be resolved if the world is to achieve safe and sustainable economic growth. They argue in *Money and Sustainability* that the existing monetary system is not fit for purpose. In support of their contention they cite the 145 banking crises, 208 monetary crashes, and 72 sovereign debt crises tracked by the International Monetary Fund between

money’ – the monopolistic issuance of currencies by national governments to support bank debt which, they argue, is an historically recent phenomenon. Far from being the neutral and passive medium of exchange most people assume ‘modern money’ is responsible for shaping a range of deleterious behaviour patterns. These include:

- The tendency for banks to provide or withhold funding to the same sectors or countries at the same time, thus amplifying the business cycle towards boom or bust.
- The imposition of unsustainable exponential growth on the world economy through the mechanism of compound interest.
- The concentration of wealth as money flows to the top of society and flees the bottom, thereby creating inequality and social problems.
- The erosion of social capital through the promotion of selfish and non-collaborative behaviours.

Yet, as they point out, the need for a money system that will achieve social and environmental sustainability has never been greater. Over the coming decades society worldwide will have to face up to two huge and costly issues – climate change and population ageing – both of which will require massive investment if they are to be resolved.

The conventional approach to dealing with the world financial crisis has, of course, been to recapitalise the banks and to seek to repay debts through the imposition of austerity policies. Yet, in the view of these authors, these further exacerbate the problems by making it even more difficult to finance recovery. Instead, Lietaer and his colleagues believe we should tackle the problems caused by the monopoly held by Government money creation systems with a new monetary ecology – in effect the creation of complementary monetary systems that run alongside the national.

They suggest how just such an approach could help Greece overcome its mounting problems. Instead of leaving the Euro Greece would continue to use it for international business such as tourism, shipping, exports and imports. Taxes levied in Euros would be used to service the national debt. However, Greek cities or regions could issue their own local currency “Civics” – an electronic payment for services provided by the community in support of important local social and environmental programmes. The Greek economy retains the benefit of the Euro while the Civic helps each community to solve its own social and environmental problems and mobilises households to participate. A separate business-to-business currency could also inject working capital into small businesses and accelerate the recovery of mainstream jobs paid in Euros.

People Money follows on from the previous work, making the case for regional currencies in much more detail and providing the historical precedents. A new English-language version has been updated and edited by John Rogers, founder of the Wales Institute for Community Currencies at Newport University, which he co-directed from 2003-2007. Perhaps surprisingly, the authors can demonstrate that parallel currencies have until recent times been the norm not the exception and that all over the world new examples are constantly being invented, re-moulded or copied to meet differing local conditions.

Some use currencies exchangeable into national currencies. Other business variants operate on a system of mutual credits and debits. In Germany, for example,

the Chiemgauer has some 600 businesses, 2,400 consumers and 220 voluntary organisations in participation trading in a local currency exchangeable 1 for 1 with the Euro. In Massachusetts in the US, BerkShares has more than 3.5m shares in circulation at near parity with the dollar in a project designed to mobilise spare business capacity and revitalise high street businesses as well as make local money go further.

In Britain examples include the Brixton Pound and more recently the Bristol Pound and the Totnes Pound. Here in Wales the Blaengarw Time Centre has involved 1,000 members, 30 community groups and 15 social enterprises since its foundation in 2006. Local individuals are invited to become involved in a range of helping activities at the Time Centre based at the Workmen's Hall. Each hour's work is paid for with a voucher that can be spent on an activity of choice. The primary aim is to engage individuals to help the whole community, by assisting in after-school clubs, passing on skills, helping with social

events or by participating in community-based projects. The project is credited with creating an active learning culture in one of the remoter and more deprived parts of the former south Wales coalfield.

Regional currencies, the authors argue, complement and enhance national policies, enabling regions to mobilise their own resources to address issues without burdening taxpayers either at the national or regional level. And because circulation of money spent in local businesses stays in the area it can work many times harder in supporting the local economy than funds spent with multinational firms that are then siphoned off to a corporate headquarters in a distant region or land. Because they are outside conventional money-issuance methods such systems have the advantage, too, of being non-inflationary.

There are issues, the authors of *People Money* admit, that need to be looked at. Some schemes fail, often after the visionary and charismatic founder moves on. The proliferation of formats is a strength when it

meets local needs but also a drawback if it prevents the movement acquiring the scale even to spread across an entire territory rather than remaining a local novelty. However, their work is a manual intended to guide would-be community currency developers through all the steps they need to take and the pitfalls they need to avoid.

There is a considerable amount that could be learnt from it by policy makers in Wales, a country that has, such as a strong sense of community, and many of the issues. After all, we have many of the traditions that make a complementary currency a serious contender for adoption. These include social and economic deprivation, and swift leakage of spending power across the border as a result of the absence of strong local companies.

Rhys David is an Associate Editor of the *welsh agenda* and a trustee of the IWA.

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Peter Stead

Wales turns corner into zero growth politics

Of course I was disappointed to realise that the new BBC Wales Sunday evening programme *The Wales Report* meant that I would have to wait thirty minutes for *Match of the Day*. It was only during Huw Edwards's opening remarks, and as he gave a welcome reassurance that his programme would cover all aspects of Welsh life, that I realised that thanks to the miracle of satellite television I could go directly to the football on BBC One London.

Just as I reached for my remote I noticed Huw pause, take a breath and look down as he apologetically explained that there would necessarily have to be 'some politics' in his new series. 'Give us a chance', Huw was essentially pleading, 'it's not going to be the usual suspects'. Welsh television producers know exactly where they stand with regard to confrontations with politicians and their tired arguments. They are never going to compete with chefs or ballroom dancers.

Huw's hurried apology revealed far more than ratings anxiety, for in the last few months it has become clear that politicians are finding it increasingly difficult to retain our attention. There was a time when the British party conference season offered a whole programme of compelling debates in which the political big fish tackled major issues, often in heated exchanges with rank-and-file delegates.

This all became too risky for party leaders who therefore arranged for the conferences to become merely a beauty parade of senior figures, none of whom were allowed to eclipse the Leader. Now each conference is just about one speech by the Leader, written late at night by a group of aides just down from university, in which there has to be a couple of jokes and one catch-phrase short enough for a front page banner headline. Politicians have little to say precisely because they have no idea how to broach the awkward facts that need to be confronted. The punters are not yet ready

for honest appraisals: our party leaders still proceed as if the Emperor is fully clothed.

This is far from being a purely British phenomenon. The contrast between the language of his campaign and then the subsequent story of Francois Hollande's Presidency is the latest example of the dilemmas facing every elected politician in the free world. The most dramatic illustration has come in the form of the theatre provided by American presidential debates. As a lifelong Democrat I had initially sniggered at the thought of a Romney challenge, although I did give him a second look-over when I heard about the Nantylfyllon connection. In the event however it was the Obama campaign that gave me cause for concern.

There have been many suggestions as to why the President's performance in the First Debate was so woeful. Was he ill or was he just taken aback by Romney's new found coherence and aggression? My own reading of his performance was that he was bored with what he was expected to say. The challenger of 2008 had revelled, as any preacher would, in the rhetoric of 'Hope'. By 2012 he had learnt that the realities of 21st Century politics do not readily lend themselves to rhetoric. Obama was far better in subsequent debates and by the end there were glimpses of his charm. His voice, however, was still too light and he could not generate sufficient enthusiasm to convincingly convey social and economic information. It was still not clear that he had done enough to beat a confident smooth-talking opponent whose simple message was that the way forward for America was for everyone to just trust and pamper those who make money.

The great historic fact of de-industrialisation has left democratic politicians floundering. Quite simply industry had offered jobs and career structures for the masses and in attendance came affordable housing, pension schemes, health and

welfare benefits and a vibrant community culture. In the best decades of the last century all that politicians had to do was tax and then ameliorate. As industry essentially migrated to Asia and western bankers lost their senses it became apparent that what had seemed to be the panacea of Growth had become problematic if not a chimera.

Zero growth calls for a different kind of politics and a different form of language. In the new economic dispensation, one in which it is clear that the banking and currency crises are far from over, elected politicians have to do two things. First they have to put aside party considerations and embark on a policy of partnership: their task is not to direct but to work with entrepreneurs, bankers, educationalists and professional groups. In such an approach there has to be an emphasis on far more diversity and experiment than has hitherto characterised what had become the hegemony of the public sector. At the same time politicians have to speak directly to every citizen in their respective countries. They have to spell out that it is the responsibility of every individual to fulfil their own economic and social potential.

In many respects Welsh politics have turned a corner since the last Assembly elections. There is a new frankness and sense of reality in our political discourse. Certainly some Cabinet ministers are far more aware of having to work with the private sector and professional bodies. But that still leaves us with our national mindset. In *Boomerang*, his stimulating account of the international crisis, Michael Lewis cruelly identifies the national traits that abetted disaster in particular countries. What would he have made of a Wales that respected cultural and community values and yet allowed an underclass to develop and educational standards to fall, whilst all the time leaving everything to a monolithic political system?

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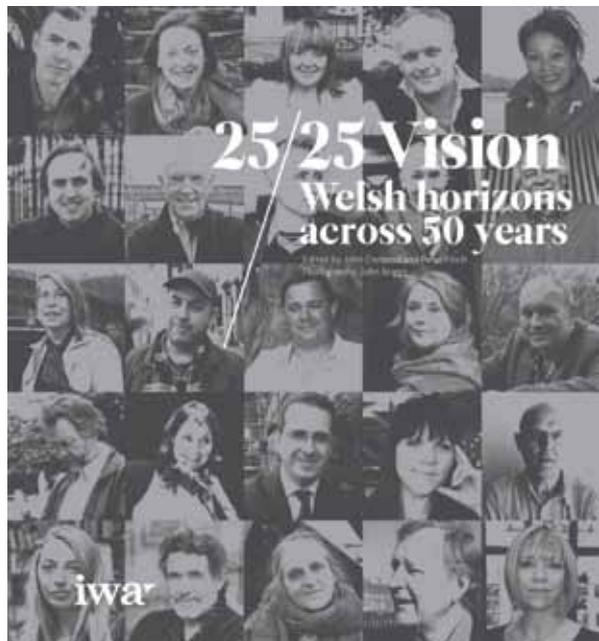
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To mark the 25th anniversary of the Institute of Welsh Affairs 25 authors cast their minds back over their experience of the past quarter-of-a-century and reflect on what this inspires them to hope for in the next 25 years.

Contributors: Trevor Fishlock, Catrin Dafydd, Nigel Jenkins, Menna Elfyn, John Osmond, Jane Aaron, Grahame Davies, Rhian Edwards, Ifor Thomas, Rachel Trezise, Peter Finch, Charlotte Williams, Patrick McGuinness, Tessa Hadley, John Williams, Daniel G. Williams, Angela Graham, Jon Gower, Zoë Skoulding, Osi Rhys Osmond, Bethan Gwanas, Mike Parker, Adam Price, Owen Smith, Geraint Talfan Davies.

The contributors were given no specific guidance as to what they should write about, other than they should relate some of their own experience to that of Wales during the fifty-year horizon. Two events in the last 25 years stand out, the miners strike of the mid-1980s and the devolution referendum in 1997. The reflections in this volume make clear the interconnections between the two. They provide the essential background for all that has followed and is likely to emerge in the coming decades.

“There’s not a dud essay in the collection.”

Professor Dai Smith, Chair, Arts Council of Wales

“This autobiographical analysis is in the supreme tradition of Welsh questions informing global understanding.”

Owen Dudley Edwards, Honorary Fellow,
Department of History, Edinburgh University

25/25 Vision on tour

Photographer John Briggs was commissioned to photograph the contributors to *25/25 Vision*. As well as featuring in the book the photographs are touring Wales in an exhibition during 2012-13. The tour, organised in association with Literature Wales, began at the Old Library, Cardiff, and is currently at Oriol Pendeits, Caernarfon, until 6 January 2013. It will be at Theatr Soar, Merthyr Tydfil, from 1 January to 26 February; Aberystwyth Arts Centre from 2 March to 28 April; Barnabas House, Newport, from 3 May to 30 June; and the Dylan Thomas Centre, Sansea, from 5 July to 28 August.



The 25/25 Vision Exhibition at Oriol Pendeits, Caernarfon.