

the welsh agenda

Exclusive
Charles Burton:
The lost War
paintings of the
Rhondda Boy



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Spring/Summer 2016 | No.56 | £4.95
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The Institute of Welsh Affairs gratefully acknowledges funding support from the **Jane Hodge Foundation**, the **Welsh Books Council** and the **Waterloo Foundation**. The following organisations are corporate members:

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The publisher acknowledges the financial support of the Welsh Books Council.

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Charity number: 1078435

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Bringing energy to the debate

It seems we face an energy 'trilemma' - yes, it is a new one on me too.

The phrase refers to a trio of challenges we face in the way that energy is consumed, generated and supplied.

Much of our supply of oil comes from politically unstable parts of the world, coal fired powered stations are being closed down and not replaced, new nuclear plants are struggling to get off the drawing board and there's an imperative to address global warming by developing 'low carbon' forms of energy. All of these come together to produce a headache.

'We must accept that we have to make hard choices in this generation to bring about real changes for the future generation and the planet. Politicians and the industry must get real,' the World Energy Council says.

The future of energy production was one of the key areas identified by the IWA last year in our report on the need for an economic strategy to close the wealth gap between Wales and the rest of the UK.

To catch up we need to be growing our economy by 4% a year more than the UK average over 20 years. It is a tall order.

To be in with a chance we need to play to our strengths. As our report pointed out, 'just as the City of London and south east England exploit their comparative advantages of financial muscle, political power and geographical location, we in Wales must

leverage our own comparative advantages'.

Wales has substantial zero carbon renewable energy resources. But how do we unleash them in the face of practical, political and legislative barriers?

The IWA has just succeeded in securing the first package of funding for this multi-disciplinary project to lay out a blueprint for Wales to address the energy 'trilemma'. Our aim is to boost the Welsh economy through a detailed programme of energy saving and generation to exploit Wales' renewable energy resources. We have assembled an impressive group of experts to work out how can meet future energy demands and cut energy-related greenhouse gas emissions by 80% by 2035.

Working with practitioners, as well as distinguished experts from Bangor, Cardiff, Glyndwr and Swansea Universities, the project is to be structured in a series of work packages focused on addressing the different facets of an energy strategy for Wales. Broadly these cover technology, policy, community, end users and economics/markets with specific skills sets assigned to each work package.

We have secured funding for the first element of this three-year project from the Jane Hodge Foundation and are continuing to seek further funds for additional elements.

We are conscious that our members are our greatest assets and we'd value any help you feel you can give to making this project a success.

As we approach the 30th anniversary of the Institute of Welsh Affairs next year, we are embarking on what promises to be the most ambitious project yet undertaken by the think-tank.

Lee Waters
IWA, Director



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With over 5,000 members and 100 representatives, Prospect is well placed to speak on behalf of specialists, managers and professionals in Wales wherever they work: in the public or the private sector.

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A Love Letter to Wales

John McGrath was the inaugural Artistic Director of National Theatre Wales. After leaving to become AD of the Manchester International Festival, McGrath sends a letter 'home'

I'm sitting in Heathrow airport waiting for a two-hour late flight to Bangladesh and I find myself dreaming of the A470. Perhaps it's the delay. Being stuck on a bench outside the departure lounge's Pret A Manger and sitting looking at the arse end of a very slowly moving tractor involve much the same frustrations: inability to move from the designated waiting zone; incapacity to do anything constructive to solve the problem; a lack of surety as to whether it's man or machine that is more dedicated to screwing with your day. But no, it's not just the similarities that flash Wales' great grey artery across my mind with a strange, sweet lighting bolt of longing. It's what I'm missing. Having gone from running a National Theatre, to leading an International Festival, suddenly my life is less about the particularities of place, and more about the exchange of thought, ideas, people. Some things are gained, others could be lost. The A470 symbolises much of what I realise I need to hold on to as I replace my dodgy driving with frequent flying.

The A470, winding up through a country united over a fair few things, but divided by mountains, gorges, valleys; Wales, a multiplicity of peoples, each with their own very deep relationship to their location. The A470, with all its delays, taught me to look at a place slowly, carefully, to see that,

in Wales perhaps more than anywhere else I've been, the landscape presents a surprise around every corner - a new way of dividing land from sky, a new way of imagining the shape the ground can take.

The landscape, and equally the stories it tells. With city eyes, it's easy to see nature in Wales. But with a little more experience, every limestone outcrop, every grassy mound whispers of centuries farming, mining, living in a battle with this stubborn, lovely land. And so every inch matters, because every inch tells its own unique tale.

Place: it was our constant inspiration during my time at National Theatre Wales. From the tough beauty of the Valleys to the breathtaking slate-scars of Snowdonia. Not the empty landscapes of the postcards though, but locations brought to life by the people that make lives in those places. Arwen and the shepherds of Hafod y Lan; Rhiannon, Lynnett, Alison and all the other wild women of Merthyr; the citizens of Port Talbot. Again and again I learned that the more time you spend with people, in their place, their places, the better the work you make there becomes. Most of NTW's best achievements came from time served (sometimes if felt like that at first). A prison of the unfamiliar, or even the deadly dull - and yet it was never that, but always a chain of unexpected consequences, gentle nudges, wandering conversations, landing in a shared moment of theatre.

And so, sitting in another departure lounge, teeth gritted against the delays,



emails redundantly reviewed for the umpteenth time, the A470 reminds me of the real need for journeys - the need to stop, to stay along the way. To push the body with the effort of the walk and the spirit with the quality of the encounters. Wales is not a slow country - it's a country of wise-cracking wits and fiercely made friendships, but it is a country that can teach you to slow down, to recognise the value of this very particular corner on which you have, for now, settled, to resist the sweeping overview - the bird's eye.

It's not necessarily a fashionable lesson - yet. But it will become so, more and more as we look for a response to the endless march of over-familiar brands, attitudes, politics - the same rhetoric everywhere. A response that is not a rehearsal of old imagined certainties, but rather a demand for constantly shifting specificities. You had to be there.

'Will you miss Wales?' The question I was constantly asked both before leaving and on arriving in my new elsewhere. What's to miss? So many shades of green that the word falls apart. A politics so far from Westminster's post-Thatcherite certainties that it's hard to translate across the border. A belief in deciding things together that creates the dullest of committees but the deepest of communities. An easy fetishising of the notions of *hiraeth* and the square mile that nonetheless expresses something beautiful about the guts of place - a place that gets you in the guts.

Can you have *hiraeth* for an adopted home? As Wales becomes a place of migrants other than English incomers, it's an important question. Can you become Welsh? Can you become Welsh not in some easy parody of assimilation but in a new way of walking, a new call in your bones. Sitting in an airport language between nowhere and somewhere, I feel my bones, and that old grey road winding through them, answer a full-voiced Yes.

John McGrath is the outgoing Artistic Director of National Theatre Wales. He leaves the post to take up the position of Artistic Director at the Manchester International Festival

Europe – In or Out?

—Remain

When considering my decision as to whether we should remain or leave the European Union, I listened to and read many arguments both for and against. However, when it came down to finally deciding, the biggest factors in my decision were based on two things that have been a major part of my adult life, policing and security.

I have witnessed for myself, in Eastern Europe as a member of the National Crime Squad, the improvements and strides that have been made in criminal justice systems. The police forces, judges and security officials who have worked hard, through the cooperation and guidance of other nations' police apparatus to improve the system of justice in their country. The rule of law and the security of justice is central to the welfare of any state and we have been a hugely important part of supporting and improving that in many EU states.

The European Union has contributed to improving these fundamental building blocks of states and that is something that should not be overlooked. There are failings of the European Union, as there is in any major institution, state or project. Just because we are sceptical of certain aspects of Europe should not be a barrier to understanding areas where it has succeeded. We must not look to the past, but to the future and I believe that the Prime Minister has achieved a lasting deal for change in Europe that does address some serious concerns regarding the concern that many had about an 'ever closer union'.

There are deep uncertainties regarding our security from the Syrian Civil War, Daesh, Russia's intentions in Eastern Europe among a plethora of other possible risks. We would also need to think about our role in policing and security institutions in Europe. We are part of Europol, operational agreements, security sharing arrangements and crucial partnerships that help catch criminals, prevent crime and work to tackle extremism and possible acts of terror. Now is not the time to tear up those agreements and have to renegotiate our way into new provisions. The art of Policing, the acts of crime and the pursuit of justice doesn't stop whilst we enter into discussions over what role we play in the security apparatus of Europe post Britain leaving the European Union. Now is not the time to take a leap into the dark, we must ensure that Europe is united against the major threats of our time. Now is not the time for Europe to be divided. I do not believe that it would be in the interests of our country to vote to leave the European Union. That is why I will be voting to remain and keep us within a safe and secure partnership within Europe.

Byron Davies, *MP for Gower*



—Leave

At present too many of our laws are coming from the EU, but not from the MEPs, who are at least elected. Instead they come from the unelected Commissioners or from the unelected judges in the European Court. The lack of accountability angers people with widely different political views, including large numbers of Labour voters who are concerned at the forthcoming TTIP free trade treaty, the impact it could have on the NHS and the power it will give multinationals to sue governments if they object to legislation which they enact.

I am concerned at the huge costs of EU membership. We currently pay in £12.9 billion and receive around £4.4bn back making a net cost of £8.5bn. This money has never been properly accounted for – the EU's own Court of Auditors will not sign off the books. I cannot possibly continue to ask constituents to pay their hard earned money into an organisation which cannot account for it. If we exit the EU we could comfortably continue making all CAP and other EU payments and still have billions left over.

EU leaders like Angela Merkel have created a migration catastrophe by encouraging millions to enter Europe illegally with the promise that they will be able to stay. Having created a mass migration the EU now want all countries including the UK to take a much greater numbers of migrants. This will simply create further problems. Whatever happens, within a few years the millions of young men arriving will have the right to move anywhere in the EU and many will head for the UK in numbers which will be very hard to deal with.

So on 23rd June I will vote for Britain to leave the EU because I believe that we, the British people, should have control of our laws, our money and our borders.

David TC Davies, *MP for Monmouth*

Why can't we be honest about healthcare choices?

Marcus Longley advocates honesty, clarity and choice in the 'marvellous, frustrating' Welsh NHS

The NHS has always had multiple objectives. Health Boards in Wales, for example, currently have about 60 nationally prescribed targets – something like half of which have never been achieved, and show little prospect of being so. They range from long-term, multifactorial issues such as obesity and smoking, to the number of hours spent waiting in an A&E department. All are non-negotiable, all equally important. Except of course they're not. There is an unspoken hierarchy which dare not speak its name. Woe betide any Board that massively overshoots its cancer waiting times or its financial targets, but show me one that will reduce obesity. So why can't we just be honest about this, and

back at least a decade - to Derek Wanless, and arguably back to the early 1990s and the late lamented Welsh Health Planning Forum which gave birth to WIHSC. I mean the need to concentrate some specialist services in fewer hospitals, while simultaneously shifting large tranches of care out of hospital and into the community. 'Care closer to home' is so commonplace, it has almost become a cliché. Yet how much of it do we want? How would we even measure it? What's the target? We don't know. We can say the same for health and social care integration. How much of it do we want, and by when?

First we pretend that 60 objectives are all vital and equal; second, key strategic shifts go undefined and unmeasured. Our third problem with honesty is around pretending to care, yet doing almost nothing about it. Take health inequity. We say we're against it, yet we have no coherent, measurable and accountable plan to reduce it. And what's happening? According to the latest ONS data, in the 25 years from the early 1980s to the late 2000s, the life expectancy gap between the most and least

of getting on for 20 years in healthy life expectancy. Do we care? We say we do. But there is no plan – and we have tolerated 25 years of things getting worse. If surmounting the problem is just too difficult, let us at least admit it.

Because we are not honest with ourselves and the public, we don't face up to the options and trade-offs which are unavoidable – my second challenge. For example, do we want to reduce health inequalities, or raise average life expectancy? We've been doing the latter, and not the former. Have we made clear to people that the current pattern of hospital care institutionalises people and may even kill them, and have we told them how many lives could be saved? Research published last year in the British Medical Journal suggests that just short of 800 babies a year are dying because they were born at the weekend, rather than during the week. Do we make people aware of this, or pretend that somehow it doesn't apply in your local hospital? It's no wonder that the public hasn't bought into the case for change. Have we really asked people about

“the NHS usually gets an allocation, it seldom gets a budget”

acknowledge the reality?

There are other top priorities where we don't even have targets. Take one of the biggest objectives of all, which dates

prosperous women in the UK increased from 3.8 to 5.3 years, and that of men from 5.6 to 6.7 years. In Cardiff, as in most UK cities, a simple bus journey can map a difference

which of the 60 targets matter most to them? Have we explained the opportunity costs of prioritising one over another?

This muddled thinking and allergic

reaction to plain speaking goes further. We need to grasp the difference between a budget and an allocation. A budget is a binding agreement to deliver a quantified amount and quality of something in return for a sum of money, where - crucially - both parties have agreed that the input is reasonable for the output. An allocation is a sum of money, with no agreement that the amount is right. I would argue that the NHS usually gets an allocation, it seldom gets a budget. Following the allocation of funds, targets are imposed, usually in piecemeal fashion. We don't acknowledge the real trade-offs and the consequences; we would rather not have to choose. The result is a series of disappointments, and public criticism of apparent failure. Another term


efforts a mile wide and an inch thick. Choices don't get made - and this is my final challenge. Progress in crucial areas - productivity improvement, adoption of 21st century ICT, even maintenance of the estate - is always just about bearable, but never great. It is frankly unacceptable, for example, that every year we - all of us, managers, politicians, voters - fail to allocate enough money to maintain our estate and major equipment, and rely on our technical professionals to patch, repair and keep things going. Talk about false economy and poor stewardship.

But one of the great paradoxes of the NHS is that all of this flawed decision-making goes on in parallel with what many would consider the real business of the

the rate of chronic tooth decay is starting to come down. Modest changes, but real health benefits. The cardiac surgery team is in the top three in the UK and Ireland, where the most heroic, challenging and quite frankly awe-inspiring surgery is provided. Fantastically dedicated and meticulous care means that lives really are being saved every day; people are sent home after a few days in hospital, lives restored and with hope for the future. Another shining example is the small mental health charity, supported by NHS funds, located in a deprived inner-city community in far-from-ideal premises, where people with long-term and sometimes quite complex mental health problems are supported on their road to recovery by each other - and a small team of patient and empathetic staff, there every day, helping to chip away at the emotional, economic, housing, relationship and other issues which their clients face.

Both worlds constitute the paradox which is our NHS. On one hand, a fear of honest and grown-up debate about the real choices that have to be made; on the other, all those thousands of daily acts of highly skilled compassion for which the NHS exists. It is marvellous, it makes you proud, it moves you to tears. And yet on a collective basis, it frustrates you, confuses you, makes you angry.

We could do so much better to support those 70,000+ staff and three million citizens for whom we hold the NHS in trust. And it all starts with a bit more honesty, clarity and explicit, deliberate, informed choices. If you like, it's another aspect of co-production - bringing the public and staff into the real choices - and it's certainly about being prudent.

 **Marcus Longley** is Director of WHSC and Professor of Applied Health Policy at the University of South Wales. This article was first given as a speech at the WISCH 20th anniversary conference, 'Your Life Might Depend On It: The Future of Health and Social Care in Wales' on 26th November 2015.

“On one hand, [there is] a fear of honest and grown-up debate about the real choices that have to be made; on the other... thousands of daily acts of highly skilled compassion”

for this approach is 'muddling through'. Divisions and Departments within Health Boards receive their share of the often arbitrary, euphemistically-termed, 'efficient savings'. And the game goes on.

It is very much to the credit of clinicians and managers throughout the service that, by and large, no-one is actually harmed. Patients usually get good, or even great, care - and amazingly service provision actually seems to get better. At the end of each year the NHS, somehow, breaks even, albeit with one or two bailouts en route. The jumbo jet lands, if not on the postage stamp, then pretty much nearby!

But the cost is that we spread our

NHS. In this parallel world, human dramas are played out every day; individual staff and clinical teams enact and embody the essential humanity and decency of our NHS for the hundreds of thousands of citizens for whom they care.

Let me offer three examples of this 'real' NHS, which all come from Cardiff and the Vale, but are repeated in similar stories everywhere across Wales. There is the Health Visitor who has been working consistently and loyally with gypsy and traveller communities. After four years of building trust and working in partnership, every child is now up to date with their vaccinations at the age of five, and at last

“Because we are not honest with ourselves and the public, we don't face up to the options and trade-offs which are unavoidable”

This election year we wanted to take a different look at the issues facing Wales. We've given a platform to voices you won't hear in the lead-up to the vote on May 5th

Which Welsh Muslims are we listening to?

Abdul-Azim Ahmed outlines the diversity within Muslim communities in Wales and laments the lack of nuance in the dominant media narratives

'A venerable patriarchal gentleman wearing a green turban and white and green robe is a familiar figure as he walks about followed by a tall slim man clad in a white burnoose and white turban - the Sheikh and his secretary.' This is how the eminent sociologist St Clair Drake described Sheikh Abdullah Ali al-Hakimi and his student, Sheikh Hasan Ismail, in his thesis that described the lively and multicultural life of Tiger Bay, Cardiff in the 1940s. Abdullah Ali al-Hakimi was a scholar and teacher who founded Cardiff's first mosque in the 1930s, on Peel Street. He was instrumental in securing a Muslim cemetery in Ely, and often met with officials and politicians, putting the case forward for South Wales' small but growing Muslim population. When, in 1941, during

a horrific bombing campaign that saw many landmarks in Cardiff flattened, and many lives lost, the Peel Street mosque was decimated. It was Sheikh al-Hakimi who kept the morale of Cardiff's Muslims high, setting about immediately to rebuild the lost place of worship.

There are a few important lessons we can glean from this short pen portrait. The first, and perhaps most important, is that Muslims are not newcomers to Wales, nor Britain. The second, is that the fortunes of Welsh Muslims are no different to that of the wider population. In Blitz and recession, Muslims are part of the fabric of Welsh society. Finally, it is possible to see through the example of Sheikh al-Hakimi how civic engagement has always been a relevant concern for Muslims.

The era of Sheikh al-Hakimi is far removed from today, in which Muslims are viewed primarily through the lense of security and terrorism. Perhaps ironically, the British government were much more concerned in the 1940s and 1950s about potential communist sympathies amongst

the Muslims in the Docks than any form of religious extremism. The way in which Muslims are discussed in the media and amongst politicians today is often far removed from the day-to-day realities of Welsh Muslims. The community is not divided, as some suspect, between moderates and radicals. For the vast majority of British Muslims, the only extremists they know of are the ones the television tells them about. Nor are there latent sympathies for the so-called Islamic State in British mosques - it is, after all, easy to forget that the primary targets of Isis are Muslims, and those fighting Isis on the ground in Syria and Iraq are also Muslim.

So who are Wales' Muslims? The 2011 census records 45,950 Muslims in Wales, the bulk of whom live in South Wales, spread between Cardiff (23,656), Newport (6,859) and Swansea (5,415) with smaller communities in the valleys and across rural and North Wales. Around half of Muslims in Britain are born in the UK rather than abroad, and just under half are also under the age of 25. A Welsh Government audit on Welsh

Image: Abdul-Azim Ahmed



Image: Abdul-Azim Ahmed

Muslims found them both more likely to be low-waged than the wider population and more likely to be in professional employment than the wider population. What this tells us so far is that Welsh Muslims are a young, largely British-born demographic. Yet the social challenges they face in terms of employment and education are significant. Ethnically, the heritage of Muslims is perhaps unsurprising. Two-thirds of the population are South Asian, either

Bangladeshi or Pakistani, having migrated (on invitation of the British government it should be remembered) during the post-war economic boom. Middle-Eastern and Arab populations account for an indeterminate figure, most likely around 10%, the bulk of whom are professional migrants. This should be put alongside a significant and growing population of converts, both white and black British and Afro-Caribbean. Muslims in Wales are diverse, incredibly so, both in

terms of ethnicity, migration history, and economic circumstances.

Theologically of course, Muslims present diversity too. Most Muslims in Wales (as globally) are Sunni, and in Wales, Shi'a Muslims represent perhaps 10% of the total population. However, despite simplistic descriptions of 'sectarian war in the Middle-East', the Sunni-Shi'a divide is not as wide as some would imagine. The doctrinal and practical differences are certainly less pronounced and less significant than the differences between Catholic and Protestant Christians. Amongst Sunni Muslims, one can trace differences in religious authority, worship, and different approaches to tradition. There is no equivalent of an Archbishop, there is no overarching Pope; rather, religious leaders (whether called Imam, Sheikh, Mufti or Pir) are leaders in a rather democratic, egalitarian way, each holding influence in their particular mosque or movement. The average Muslim is likely to be a worshipper at several mosques, not just one, and would take religious instructions from a variety of religious scholars and leaders. Those who know about chapel Christianity and Welsh nonconformism may find the fluid religious authority of Islam familiar.

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**MAKING
WALES
BETTER**

There is an old joke that if you have three Muslims in a room then you have four opinions.

In this brief sketch of religious, ethnic, and economic diversity of Welsh Muslims, you may wonder how there can exist any common ground or unity. It's certainly a challenge, but no more a challenge than representing the diverse views of university students, or teachers, or any other group. In the Victorian era, an English gentleman convert to Islam, Abdullah Quilliam, was given the title of Sheikh-al-Islam of the British Isles by the Ottoman Caliphate. Within Sunni Islam, to be called a Sheikh-al-Islam of a particular area is perhaps the closest analogy to an Archbishop one will come across. However, Abdullah Quilliam was Britain's first and only Sheikh-al-Islam, and though the title no doubt gave him a degree of influence, even amongst the early Muslims in Britain, it was unlikely to go unchallenged. In a survey of influential Muslims in the world, the Cambridge University Professor and Muslim, Tim Winters, is often ranked as the most influential British Muslim – and though he is one of the foremost British Muslim scholars, he himself concedes he prefers the life of a scholar than the life of a representative of British Muslims. It is unlikely there can, or will ever be, a single voice or individual who can represent all British Muslims.

Despite this, it isn't uncommon to find people presented as a voice for Britain's several million Muslims. This happened to me once. As Assistant Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Wales, I'm sometimes called upon to speak on television or radio. In one particular instance a few years ago, I was horrified to discover the caption below my

name indicated I was a 'community leader'. I received dozens of text messages afterwards from friends poking fun at the description. The notion of a 'community leader', self-appointed or otherwise, is an outdated one. It perhaps applied during the 1980s, when Muslims were first thrust into the spotlight of media attention and without appropriate representative structures, deferred to senior members of their communities to speak on their behalf. Since then, however, Muslims have developed structures of representation and organisations.

Indeed, some Muslims looked to a more established minority faith group for inspiration: following the model of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, the Muslim Council of Britain was formed. Rather than try and provide religious authority, however, it seeks consensual politics, and operates more like a union, with affiliates, members and elections and consultations. Following devolution, the Muslim Council of Wales was established, and works with the Welsh Government on devolved issues. The model used by the Muslim Council, much like similar organisations such as the National Union of Students, has its merits in participatory politics, but as a body formed through mosques, Muslim organisations and charities, it is designed to provide voices to communal groups rather than individuals.

Of course, much of this is almost irrelevant. The question of who speaks for Muslims is sometimes more about *which Muslims are heard* – and more often than not, it is the media which chooses who does or

does not speak for Muslims, and the result is not always positive. The same month that Lee Rigby was killed, it was Anjem Choudary who was invited on to *Newsnight* on the BBC, *Daybreak* on ITV and *Channel 4 News* to speak. A dangerous radical, with a small following, was given prime-time opportunity to speak for Islam on three different channels. Not only does this leave an absence for those all important, and authoritative Muslim voices that condemn extremism, but it also gives him legitimacy and validity. There is not a single mosque in the country at which Anjem Choudary could speak, yet he is repeatedly given the type of prime-time coverage that would make the Archbishop of Canterbury green with envy.

In Wales, the picture is more nuanced in most cases, with a variety of Muslim voices included in the media and political circles. There is still however a tendency at times to fall victim to the idea that Muslims constitute a single, homogenous and uniform block, for which there can be a single view. That's never the case. There is an old joke that if you have three Muslims in a room, you'll have four opinions. It seems rather than seeking a single representative Muslim voice – a 'community leader' – it is healthier to view the issues of representation of Muslims in the same way as other groups. Before working with the Muslim Council of Wales, I was an elected officer at the National Union of Students Wales. The NUS Wales could never, of course, provide a single authoritative voice for all students, but it did work to provide a platform for engagement for students, via their students unions, and thus bring an important and largely consensual voice on issues that mattered to students. I like to think of the issues related to Muslim representation in the same way. There will never be a uniformity of Muslims views on a topic, but it is possible, working with a range of partners, to get the key messages out there.



Abdul-Aziz Ahmed is Assistant General Secretary of the Muslim Council of Wales.



Taxing Bedrooms in Betws

Images by Sebastian Cooke

Seb Cooke meets Kay Harris, a south Wales grandmother who has found herself, through circumstances, at the forefront of a campaign to fight the everyday ravages of the Bedroom Tax

Kay Harris lives with her family in Betws, a small ex-mining community near Maesteg in the south Wales valleys that has been her home for the past 27 years. 16 of those years have been spent in the same three bedroom council house where she has raised her two children and now lives with her husband, Terrence, and her son, Gareth, 25. For the first time in Kay's life, this family home is under threat.

The house sits on top of a hill, and

when you stand outside you can see the surrounding valleys, where once the spectre of coal mining marked the landscape. Inside there is a wood panelled fireplace that was handmade by Terrence. The centrepiece of this is an electric coal imitation fire that reminds Kay of growing up in the nearby Gawr valley. When she was a child she would bathe in a tin tub next to a coal fire in her parents' living room. The surrounding area was heavily mined, and most people worked in the pits. Coal was cheap and plentiful.

'I'd love to have my coal fire back,' she says. 'That's why I have the electric fire. It's never on because it takes all my electric but it's there as a feature, because it looks like coal.' She pauses for a moment. 'Them days are gone'.

When I meet them, Kay and her family are facing eviction from their home if

they do not pay the bedroom tax. Officially referred to as the 'under-occupancy penalty', the bedroom tax is applied to anyone in a local authority or housing association run property who is deemed to have an unnecessary spare room.

In the case of the Harris family, the spare room in question is their third bedroom. Kay takes me upstairs to show me what it looks like: a small box room that just about fits a single bed on one side and a toddler's bed on the other. She explains that her husband is seriously ill with heart disease and has recently had an operation after being rushed to hospital. Due to his condition, Terrence sleeps by himself in this bedroom every night during the week. On weekends, he vacates the room so that their grandchildren Damien and Maisy can come and stay. 'But according to them,' says Kay, 'they don't take that into account.'



'Them' are the local housing association, Valleys To Coast.

Bedroom tax rules are incredibly strict. The only reason a person would be automatically exempt from the charge is if they were a disabled adult and needed an overnight carer. Factors such as having relatives come to stay, having a disabled child, the length of tenancy or having dependants who use the room are rarely taken into consideration, and if they are it is often as a result of long drawn out appeals.

For one bedroom that is deemed surplus to requirements a tenant can face a 14% reduction to their housing benefit, meaning that they have to pay back that amount to make up the shortfall on their rent. If they are unable to pay back the money, bailiffs can be sent in to evict them. The government have said that people can be rehoused in smaller

properties instead of being evicted, but the number of people who would require a one or two bedroom house massively outweighs the number of those properties that are actually available. This gaping hole doesn't seem to have deterred the Department for Work and Pensions from enforcing the bedroom tax with little remorse. It is no overstatement to say that the effects of this 'no nonsense' approach have quite literally been deadly.

On 4th May 2013, Stephanie Botrell took her own life in her home in Solihull. Next to her was a note to her son titled: 'Don't blame yourself for me ending my life. The only people to blame are the government.' Stephanie had lived in her three bedroom council house since 1995. She raised her two children there but was living by herself after they had both left home. When the bedroom tax came

For one bedroom that is deemed surplus to requirements a tenant can face a 14% reduction to their housing benefit, meaning that they have to pay back that amount to make up the shortfall on their rent.

into force in 2013, she was told that her housing benefit would be cut by £80 a month and that she would have to make up the rent or leave. On the day before she killed herself, Stephanie visited her GP and said she felt she was being pushed into deciding whether to stay or move and that she couldn't cope with the stress. A year after she was found dead, a coroner ruled that Stephanie Botrell had been worried about the bedroom tax before committing suicide. In a statement defending the measure after the incident, the DWP said that it was 'returning fairness to the system and making better use of social housing stock'.

This unshakable commitment to 'return fairness' manifested itself again this year when the court of appeal ruled that in two cases the bedroom tax was

discriminatory and unlawful. The people at the heart these cases were a Welsh couple who cared for their disabled grandson and a victim of domestic abuse. Both had houses that were deemed 'under-occupied'. After a two year fight against the DWP, they won. It was hailed as a landmark ruling; one that could help thousands of others who found themselves in such a position. However, no sooner had the verdict come through than

the government announced they would appeal the decision in the Supreme Court, where the ruling would be final. Those who had been following the case were left stunned.

In the case of the woman, 'A', she has been raped, beaten and had her life threatened by a former partner. The DWP claimed she was 'under-occupying' her house as she had a spare room: a specially equipped secure 'panic room' that was

“My mother’s neighbour said you want to leave Labour because it’s coming into New Labour and go to UKIP. I said I’m not even voting for UKIP, I’m not voting for any of them. What’s the worth? They’re not listening!”



installed for her to go to in case her abuser returned. Both lawyers represented their clients effectively, and together they inflicted a rare and potentially devastating blow to the solid exterior of the DWP. Then, as news of the appeal filtered through, it suddenly became clear that the government was prepared to spend potentially millions of pounds in order to force a woman who could be murdered by her abuser into paying a penalty of £11.65 a week on a room that could save her life.

The way that the bedroom tax is administered means that people can quickly get into a huge amount of debt with their council or housing association. This happened to Kay Harris when the charge first came in. She was quickly in debt to the tune of £172, placing her under enormous financial pressure. The bedroom tax amounts to £127.60 a month for Kay and her family. This exact figure is made up of various charges. As she explains, 'We're paying £127.60 a month. Because [Terrence] claimed the PIP (Personal Independence Payment) they're charging us £26.25 a week, plus I gotta pay £4 off the arrears. That only worked out at £120 but the other £7.60 is coming back off the arrears again.'

Hearing Kay talk about her budget is confusing, but only because it's made up of so many different calculations, subtractions and penalties that seem to tighten around her all the time. She can talk about this mix with ease, knowing the figures down to the last penny. But if talking about her finances is easy, then deciding how to divide them up is not. Her total income is £610 a month. This has to pay the Bedroom Tax, feed her family and pay for gas and electric, as well as covering anything else that comes up; clothes, Christmas, travel, things for her grandchildren. 'I'm shopping once a fortnight and I'm struggling doing it because of the amount of money I got left. I can't even afford to have my haircut or buy a pair of shoes!'

Speaking to others, it's clear that Kay's situation is not rare. The community is close, and often people socialise in Kay's

"The Conservatives have got a heck of a lot to answer for. Heck of a lot. Because they've ruined this country."

kitchen, something she is very proud of. 'They just come in and make it their own' she says, 'That's the way I like it. It's not bickering or arguing all the time because there's no need for it. This complete street is just one clique as you can see. In this street everybody knows everybody.'

Kay plays a big part in this closeness, regularly organising trips for the children in Betws to go to theme parks like Oakwood and Alton Towers during the summer. 'There's six weeks summer holiday and going away just once, it helps. It relaxes them and everything and gets them out of the village,' she says. 'I'm only doing it because there's nothing round here for the kids.'

When hearing about what Kay does, I can't help but be reminded of past speeches by various politicians where they hail this kind of community spirit as integral to their vision for Britain. In fact, the term 'community' has been used to sell so many hollow policy initiatives over the last ten years it's become almost meaningless. By far the most obvious of these was David Cameron's Big Society, a vision of Britain where people apparently help each other out. The deep irony of this only begins to sink in when you realise that it is another of Cameron's ideas, The Bedroom Tax, that could see this very real community spirit in Betws ripped apart.

'Almost everyone here has had a Stage 2 eviction notice,' Kay tells me, waving hers in the air. These get sent to anyone who has failed to keep up with their payments, and can result in a court appearance followed by eviction.

According to Kay, some are now finding it hard to pay for their children to go on the trips that she puts on. 'We've organised this trip since February and some are giving me so much a week for the bus fare, you know, which helps them to afford it. They have been struggling to pay for it.'

Unemployment in the borough of Bridgend is above the national average at 7%, a figure that rises dramatically to over 20% if you're unlucky enough to be aged 16 – 24. 'All the jobs that are out there now you need qualifications for,' says Kay. 'Well, some people haven't got the qualifications. It is hard, but especially for the youngsters. It is hard for them. Like they go to college and what's it worth because there's no jobs when they come out.'

The mines around Betws used to provide work for thousands of local people. The biggest of these was St John's Colliery in Maesteg which employed 700 workers in the 1970s but was closed in November 1985. 'The mines closing had a heck of a lot of an effect on an area like this,' Kay tells me. 'It disrupted everywhere, because as I said I wouldn't have minded working down the pits. A job is a job at the end of the day. But it affected everywhere. Not just mining villages but everywhere. The Conservatives have got a heck of a lot to answer for. Heck of a lot. Because they've ruined this country.'

Kay informs me that her father used to be the secretary for Ray Powell, the Labour MP for Ogmore from 1979 until his death in 2001. Despite this association, Kay says she retains little faith in politics. 'I don't trust Labour, I don't trust any party. My mother's neighbour said you want to leave Labour because it's coming into New Labour and go to UKIP. I said I'm not even voting for UKIP, I'm not voting for any of them. What's the worth? They're not listening!'

Many modern political commentators would describe Kay's attitude fairly sweepingly as part of the new 'anti-politics'. But as we go on talking, it's quite clear that Kay is far from anti-political or apathetic, and such a description seems patronising at best. Kay has seen Conservative and Labour Governments come and go and come back again. So



why, when those governments have presided over a haemorrhaging of good jobs and increasing poverty, should she retain any faith in the political system that gave them power?

It would also be wrong to describe this disillusionment as anti-political because it would ignore the activism that Kay is involved in locally. In fact, she holds regular organising meetings about the Bedroom Tax in her kitchen: 'We held a meeting last Tuesday,' she tells me.

Kay is involved with South Wales Against the Bedroom Tax, a broad alliance of trade unions, faith leaders, campaigners, charities and homelessness organisations. They estimate that 31,850 people are affected by the Bedroom Tax in Wales and are lobbying the Welsh Government to copy Scotland and end the measure here. Last year, they successfully stopped a disabled woman who quickly got into over

£700 of debt with her housing association being evicted from her home. Had it gone ahead, it would have been the first eviction of its kind in Wales.

There is now a far bigger fight over housing, which has grown sharply across the whole of the UK since 2010. This movement has been led mostly by working class women, the worst affected group when it comes to housing policy. A key moment in this battle came through the E15 Mothers, an incredibly successful campaign led by mainly single mums who faced down Newham council and halted a series of potentially devastating evictions.

Kay is now part of this wider movement. As well as organising against the bedroom tax, she also helps others in appealing against it. One person she gives special credit to is Alan Short, a local man well into his seventies who spends his spare time driving people to and from

their appeals and helping them to win their cases. 'If it wasn't for him, this campaign would be nowhere,' Kay says, explaining how they work together. 'I take the phone calls and get the details and then Alan goes to see them and measures it up and he goes to court with them.'

Alan recently put Kay's number in the local paper for people to get in touch if they want help with their appeals. 'I'll get a lot more calls,' Kay says. 'But I don't mind that coz I'm fighting for our rights. We're being walked all over is how I feel, but no more. We're going to fight and we're going to fight until the end. It's the only thing we can do isn't it? Keep going...'

Seb Cooke is a photographer and documentary film maker based in Cardiff.



How feminist is the Welsh Assembly?

Image courtesy of the National Assembly for Wales

Liz Silversmith surveys the facts and asks some difficult questions

As we draw to the end of the Fourth Assembly, it can be declared fairly 'feminist'. From 2011 to 2016 we've seen 24 female and 36 male AMs. A 40/60 rather than 50/50 split, but many of these women have been in strong positions within the Welsh Government: stalwarts Jane Hutt and Edwina Hart have been in Cabinet since 1999. This term's Cabinet has also included Lesley Griffiths in numerous Ministerial positions and in Deputy Ministerial positions we've seen Julie James, Gwenda Thomas and Rebecca Evans - but it's not often women control health or education. At this point, the Cabinet has five women and seven men. Again, not quite 50/50.

The Assembly did have equal

representation back in 2003, and many regard that achievement as a high tide mark for equality. The Assembly has won numerous awards for being a family-friendly, LGBT-friendly and disability-friendly place to work. Its Tuesday and Wednesday afternoon sittings are much more conducive to AMs having a family life when compared to say, the Westminster Parliament, and the very nature of a small country like Wales means AMs don't have to travel as much as certain MPs do.

But what about the next Assembly? There's a worrying downward trend. Hopefully we'll see the strong women in opposition continue in leading roles, particularly if there are coalition

arrangements. Leanne Wood became leader of Plaid in 2012 and brought the party to a prominent position by appearing in the General Election debates. After this, she became more widely recognised than the First Minister, quite a coup for an AM known for her rebellious ways: calling the Queen 'Mrs Windsor' and being arrested for protesting against Trident. But as Plaid's chances of securing a majority are very low, it's more likely Leanne Wood might take a Deputy First Minister role in any Plaid-Labour coalition than fulfilling her ambition to be Wales' first female FM.

Kirsty Williams could be another potential coalition partner, if Labour need just a handful of AMs to make up the numbers. She's widely admired and

Looking ahead to the elections, how many female AMs are we likely to see return? Candidates are still being chosen, but there's a worrying number of influential women leaving and not seeking re-election.

known for collaborating with the Welsh Government where possible to secure Liberal Democrat policies in budget deals. She has also pushed through a Member's Bill on safe nurse staffing levels and, despite often working together with Welsh Labour, is frequently the strongest performer in FMQs when subjecting Carwyn Jones to scrutiny. Many people across the spectrum in Welsh politics hope that the hardworking Brecon & Radnorshire AM holds on to her seat.

Regarding the Welsh Conservatives, only four of their 14 AMs are women and they have never had a female leader. However all four have held shadow policy positions to good effect: Angela Burns has been particularly strong on the education brief, as was Antoinette Sandbach who left to be an MP in May 2015. However, without positive discrimination measures like All Women Shortlists, it doesn't look likely the Tories will increase their female representation by much this time around.

All Women Shortlists are the main reason the Assembly saw a 50/50 gender split in 2003. Labour's use of them frequently causes local upset amongst male members who want a go at a particular seat, but most advocates really do wish they didn't need them. Unfortunately, they're the only way the party can ensure progress. If all parties used them, perhaps 2003's 50/50 high watermark would be a common fixture of the Welsh Assembly.

But representation alone is not the whole picture. How feminist was the Fourth Assembly in policy terms. It

doesn't help to stuff the Senedd with women if none of the Bills they pass help to tackle gender inequality in wider society. The Fourth Assembly has seen the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act passed, but not without a battle from the third sector to change the title from the 'Gender-based Violence' Bill, to recognise the disproportionate impact on women. This is important not only symbolically, but to recognise that there needs to be more women's refuges (whilst never ignoring the need for services for men too). There was also a fight from Jocelyn Davies to ensure 'healthy relationships' are taught in schools, as she pushed for the Welsh Government to take a long-term view to tackling harmful attitudes between genders. The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act works towards a 'more equal Wales', but this is legislation is yet to be fully tested and has been criticised as woolly, although its aims are admirable.

Looking ahead to the elections, how many female AMs are we likely to see return? Candidates are still being chosen, but there's a worrying number of influential women leaving and not seeking re-election. In Labour, this includes Edwina Hart, Gwenda Thomas, Christine Chapman, Sandy Mewies and Presiding Officer, Rosemary Butler, who in the last few years has led a 'Women in Public Life' campaign.

From Plaid, Jocelyn Davies is leaving, which is a great shame given her valuable scrutiny and experience. No Conservative women are confirmed to be leaving, but in the Welsh Liberal Democrats,

Eluned Parrott will have a hard battle in Cardiff Central against Jenny Rathbone. Jenny Rathbone herself is the Labour backbencher who was - worryingly - removed from a Committee chair position simply for voicing her own opinions.

Even if plenty of women get selected as candidates, how many are in winnable seats? Yet again, many of the safest seats with male candidates are nearly guaranteed a win, with women left with the hardest and most difficult majorities to tackle. This means plenty of male candidates will be confident of their success, whereas the women will have to work much harder to beat their opposition.

Looking ahead to 2016, the turnover of AMs bring into question how much further away the Senedd might move from equal representation. UKIP is not known for its equality policies and the number of seats it is expected to gain (up to nine, potentially) will be unlikely to feature many women. We're a long way off a female First Minister, but we might see the female opposition leaders take on roles as junior coalition partners. It would be remiss not to mention the Women's Equality party fielding candidates in South Wales Central, and the new female Wales Green Party leader, Alice Hooker-Stroud, but unfortunately these smaller parties look unlikely to gain many seats. However, they are likely to grab the opportunity to ask voters specifically for their regional votes, rather than waste efforts on constituency campaigns.

The Assembly set itself an admirable benchmark in 2003 - and temporarily in 2006 after a by-election, when it actually had 52% women - but if parties get complacent about propelling Wales to gender equality, it won't be able to reach it again.



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



Images by Louis Herron

It is, rather, a 'song of a plant in a pot', I guess. How dare a potted plant put out roots; reach out for air, water and the minerals required for its growth? The flowers and fruits a plant in a pot can bear are restricted according to the size and shape and location of the pot itself. The truth is that any plant can be kept in a pot, separated from its native species. Plants in pots live in a world of conformity and oppression; a situation of standing choked, feeling trapped, or living only in part. This is the song of a potted plant.

Culture, politics, religion and educational systems are all forms of pots in which people find themselves. In most cases, these pots are forced upon people. You do not choose and neither can you refuse the particular pot in which you find yourself.

I come from Uganda, where sometimes culture overrides reason, religion in most cases conflicts with culture and more often than not education does not help out at all. Politics of tribe and religion is regrettable in all aspects. Since independence in 1962, apart from the eight years from 1971-79 when Idi Amin, a Muslim, ruled Uganda, there has always been an Anglican Protestant president. The incumbent has ruled Uganda since 1986. Goodness gracious! Thirty solid years - and in the last month he has been elected again!

Song of a Potted Plant

George W. G. explores the migrant experience from the inside

What a hard and concrete pot this is. We have seen inequality, discrimination, persecution, poverty. Culture and religion in Uganda provide no chance for divergent thinking or living, lest you become 'the enemy of the people'. Needless to say: in Uganda, culture, religion and education are manipulated to propel a narrow political agenda from the national level to the grassroots.

When I chose to stand for the inclusion of marginalised individuals in schools, I knew it was a matter of time. Admittedly, I appreciated my culture, religion and education; these were the concrete pots I had grown up to know, even when I felt squashed, like so many other unheard voices. Sometimes transplantation can be to the benefit of a plant, but I was uprooted completely. I was rejected, persecuted and told I was vile. I no longer had a place in my motherland.

When migrants leave their countries of origin, the loss is immense. Loss of self, culture, profession, possessions and family. I grew up in a culture that believes a child is a communal responsibility but that is also quick to condemn: more often than not inequality, exclusion and violence are more prevalent than the virtues of a 'tight-knit community'. The state lends no hand of help to the victim. Individuals are crushed as much as organised social groups. In the face of persecution, I lost confidence and self-esteem. When death was imminent, I fled to the UK.

For every refugee, there is at least one thing that reminds them of the journey's long days and nights. For me it is the belt my brother made, its markings and extra

holes symbolic of happy days and years of struggle. Tefiro from Eritrea carried a traditional bead necklace his father gave him as he fled the country. 'It is the only point of connection I hang on without despair.' Abed, from Iraq, holds small denominations of currency from different countries across Europe, connecting the dots of his story. Turkey, Greece, Italy, France. One more little story that remains outside of the big story that continues to engulf individual lives.

In 2014, after several years in England, I arrived in Wales, carried by the mighty tidal River Usk into the heart of Newport. Local people have been happy to respond to my questions, sharing a heritage that I have understood to involve hard work in coalmines and steelworks, a love of music and sport, and many previous waves of immigration. We attended rugby matches at Rodney Parade where I made friends with locals in an effort to understand the rules of the game. And at the local library, I learned of the Irish 'mudcrawlers' who made their way to the workhouse on Stow Hill, a hundred and fifty years before many now make the same walk in search of community and belonging. Personally, I have found help whenever I needed it, enabling me cope with my situation. I feel a sense of belonging to the community here, contrary to what I experienced in England.

Attending a traditional Sunday dinner provided by Bethel Community Church, we counted 25 nationalities at table, excluding the hosts from Wales, England and Ireland. Discussing the contents of our plates, we found it difficult to use the

word 'food' – to each of us this general term means something specific. To most Ugandans, food refers to matooke (plantain). From Kenya southwards in Africa food is cornmeal called by different names: ugali, shima, saza; from Nigeria across the Democratic Republic of Congo, food is fufu (pounded yam and cassava). Of course, rice is the staple across much of Asia, notwithstanding myriad styles of preparation. After our roast beef, potatoes, carrots and other vegetables, the conversation continued with open minds.

Noticeably, food and language take the centre in migrants' recovery of the self they lost in the process of fleeing their countries of origin. Refugees keep 'community clusters' for good reasons. People like to eat food that they are used to and speak their native language, which is healthy for self-identity. Nonetheless, the local language (in this case, English) is paramount if one is to access local services. And I have observed among my fellow asylum seekers and refugees that a lack of English language is a major impediment to integration.

Having a professional background in teaching English, I took up the challenge of teaching the male asylum seekers and refugees attending the Sanctuary project run by the church I had attended. The class started with just two men. By the end of 2014 we had about 20 learners. In 2015, we saw the average attendance rise to 45 per session. Imagine 45 men from over 20 nationalities and cultures, with varied abilities and attitudes, working together to fit into yet another culture and language!

Scholars seem to agree that language and culture are intertwined. As I set up to teach, I need to plan for the inevitable. Cultural crash and clash in relation to language use. Even body language and nonverbal communication cause problems. One student from Iran got into trouble when indicating the number two to a lady who took offence at the way he was holding his fingers. After years of exposure and practice, I find it easy to make eye contact as expected in the West – yet in most cultures among my fellow migrants,



eye contact is seen as a sign of disrespect.

As the language sessions progress, there is noticeable integration as a result of sharing good practice. Open discussion comparing the similarities and differences of body language with intent to understand the meaning has been the way forward. I must admit that owing to my own culture, it has taken me a while to cope with some common aspects of body language in the West – especially a wink.

Migrants endeavour to recover the lost self in many ways. Dress is another, especially for women. Observing the long trails of migrants in our news media, you hardly see the traditional 'faith wear' – all we see is 'crisis wear'. After the crossover, steadily people begin to rediscover themselves. But in some instances, women break out of the pots in which they have lived their entire lives, refusing to be replanted. From my understanding, many days spent on land and sea are sometimes enough to bring about a more lasting change in lifestyle.

Despite the reality, many migrants (asylum seekers and refugees) struggle to accept their status quo, as their past seems fresh daily. Winnie Byanyima, Executive Director of Oxfam International, says that the anti-migrant language that seems to place hierarchy on the value of human life leaves migrants as equal bystanders: 'Something terrible is happening when

political leaders and the media are able to drip disdain on unspeakable human suffering. Without this sense of common humanity, it is no wonder that policy interventions are so hollow.'

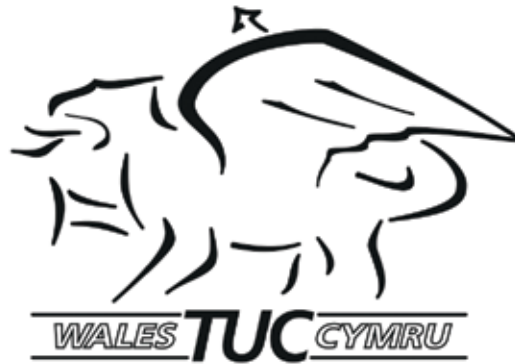
You cannot shake hands with a clenched fist, yet how easy can it be for a refugee to accept freedom when they have known oppression their whole lives? Migrants will tell you that it takes a little while to realise they are around people who love, care and listen.

People exist as individuals so much like plants. Take garlic mustard; it produces chemicals poisonous to the growth and existence of other plants. Tamarisk consumes all the water, regardless of other plants and aquatic habitats. Yet plantain is gentle and able to coexist with most plants.

I thought I could find a point relevant to all migrant plants in the words of actor D'Andre Lampkin: 'Groom yourself and your life like a shrub. Trim off the edges and you'll be stronger in the broken places. Embrace the new growth and blossom at the tips.'

Let the potted plants sing their song, after all.

George W. G. teaches English at The Sanctuary, a project for refugees and asylum seekers in Newport.



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The pragmatist at work

Manon George and Huw Pritchard say recent announcements on the Wales Bill are encouraging.

The reserved powers model is generally considered to be the best way of delineating power, where the legislature can make laws on any matter except those matters reserved to the UK Parliament. However, as Stephen Crabb, Secretary of State for Wales, acknowledged on Monday 29th February when announcing changes to the Wales Bill, 'the devil is in the delivery of the detail'.

The clarity and workability of the model depends on its design, the tests for competence and the list of reservations.

Some aspects of the original Bill were welcomed from the start by followers of Welsh devolution. For example, the Draft Bill provided that the Assembly would be a permanent institution and put the convention that the UK Parliament should not legislate on devolved matters without the Assembly's consent on a statutory footing. It also transferred more powers to Cardiff Bay, including powers over Assembly elections.

However, the list of reserved powers in the Draft Wales Bill as first introduced contained over 200 matters. This was seen as a 'roll-back' of the National Assembly's powers especially following the decision of the Supreme Court in relation to the Agricultural Sector (Wales) Act where five Justices unanimously held that as long as an Assembly law 'fairly and

realistically' relates to a devolved matter it does not matter whether it might also be capable of being classified as relating to a subject which has not been devolved.

The Supreme Court held that the competence tests in Part 4 and Schedule 7 to the Government of Wales Act 2006 must be interpreted as intended to create a 'coherent, stable and workable' system for the exercise of legislative power by the Assembly. Likewise, the fourth constitutional settlement through the current Draft Wales Bill was intended to be a 'stronger, clearer and fairer devolution settlement'. However, in introducing a new ten-part legislative competence test, it would most likely lead to even more debates about what is and is not devolved. In fact, Welsh Government lawyers suggested that around 20 Acts or

And in this five-year remembrance of the Great War in which the UK is presently engaged the resonance of these works has sharpened again; how could we have thought that they were consigned to history?

Measures would have failed to pass this new test.

Critics of the original draft will therefore welcome the Secretary of State's 'significant and substantial changes' to the Wales Bill. With the aim of removing 'constitutional red tape', he will work with Whitehall departments to shorten and simplify the list of reserved matters. It remains to be seen whether this will go as far as the Silk Commission's recommendation that Welsh devolution should be based on the principle of subsidiarity, so that the UK Government should only reserve what cannot be done effectively at a devolved level.

Some of the most controversial details in the Draft Bill were the restrictions on the modification of criminal law and private law. Despite the fact that many existing Assembly laws modify general principles of the law, modification would only be allowed where it had 'no greater effect otherwise than in relation to Wales than is necessary to give effect to the provision'. According to the UK Government, such restriction was necessary to protect the unified legal system of England and Wales. It is hoped that the final Bill will provide the Assembly with more flexibility as the Secretary of State went further than the Welsh Affairs Committee's recommendation that the test of necessity should be replaced, and

decided to remove the restriction as it applies to the general principles of private and criminal law altogether.

He also announced that he will remove the restriction that the Assembly needs the consent of the UK Government to legislate on Minister of the Crown functions in devolved areas which existed before the 2011 referendum. This restriction under Part 4 of the Government of Wales Act 2006 currently creates great uncertainty as to the boundaries of the Assembly's legislative powers. The problem is that these powers are very difficult to ascertain due to them not being defined or listed anywhere. Determining the full extent of all powers of UK Ministers of the Crown would involve a detailed trawl through all UK legislation prior to May 2011 to identify the relevant functions. In Scotland on the other hand there is a general transfer of existing Minister of the Crown functions in devolved areas.

As with the removal of the necessity test, the Assembly will hopefully enjoy more flexibility in legislating without this restriction. However, more detail is required on how this will be achieved as there seems to be a gulf between the Scottish approach and the proposal by the Wales Office of looking at each function 'with a view to devolving as many as possible'. This implies a much more

specific and detailed approach rather than a general devolution of functions as in Scotland. There is no change in the Wales Office position against a separate, or distinct, jurisdiction for Wales. Yet, there is recognition of the need to look at justice in Wales in light of the growing divergences in some areas of Welsh law. A working group will be established between the Ministry of Justice, the Welsh Government and the Lord Chief Justice's Office to consider what 'distinct arrangements are required' to recognise the needs of Wales within the current jurisdiction.

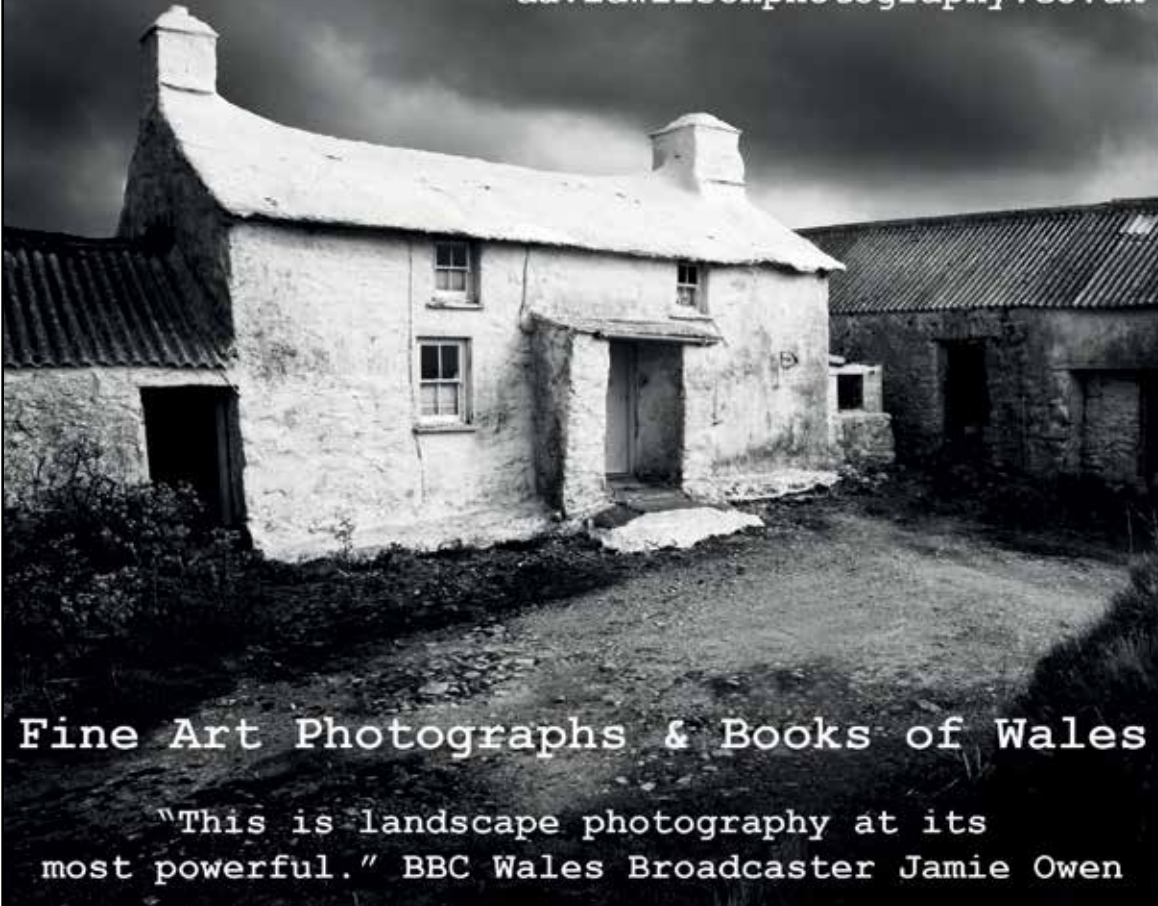
This is a significant step from the St David's Day announcement which did not really consider justice in much detail. In fact, it may be argued that it is a return to the Silk Commission recommendation of reviewing the devolution of justice matters within the next decade. The Lord Chief Justice has been vocal of the need for a 'dedicated justice function' which would 'enable legislation to operate effectively' in Wales. Administrative developments since devolution, such as unifying the Wales circuit and establishing the administrative court in Cardiff, mean that this work has already commenced to some degree under the umbrella of the current legal system. It is hoped that the working group will have the remit to provide a structure and plan of how this could be taken forward.

The detail of the delivery of a reserved powers model for Wales is still somewhat unknown and very much at the mercy of Whitehall departments until we see the next version of the Bill. However, the Secretary of State's willingness to pause in order to 'devolve more powers and remove constitutional and legal red tape' is certainly encouraging.



Manon George and Huw Pritchard are Lecturers at Cardiff University's School of Law and Politics.

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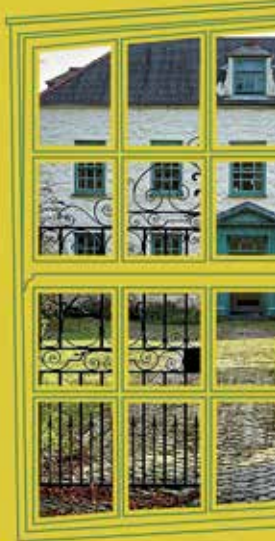
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Ambulance men at work, Charles Burton

Charles Burton:

The painting's in the pity

Tony Curtis uncovers the Rhondda Boy's unseen war paintings

All pictures by David Wilson

In this anniversary year of the Battle of the Somme a remarkable body of paintings and drawings has come to light: these engage with those soldiers of the British Army which was decimated in that campaign. Charles Burton, one of the 'Rhondda Boys' group of painters who travelled down to Cardiff School of Art on the train in the 1950s has worked on the theme for a number of years and there is now a body of some two dozen works which have never been exhibited, but which have a powerful, cumulative effect, that of evoking the whole range of emotions of the Western Front – determination, fear, humanity, resilience, trauma.

Charlie Burton, born in 1929 in Treherbert, along with Ernest Zobole, Nigel Flower, Gwyn Evans and Dave Mainwaring, formed a group of Valleys young men who through their education and teaching careers took their vision of the south Wales coalfield to Cardiff and beyond. Charlie went on to the Royal College of Art and a successful career in Liverpool School of Art and, in his forties, as Head of Art at the South Glamorgan College of Education in Barry. It was there that I, a young lecturer in English, first met him. When the college closed we saw less

of each other, but when I began work on my series of interviews *Welsh Painters Talking* (Seren, 1997) Charlie was one of the first artists I visited. There were paintings of his domestic life, family, his time in Egypt doing National Service, paintings of Valleys railway lines and terraced streets and many still lifes. There were no actual mines, no miners in the cage or at the face as in Valerie Ganz and Joseph Herman, none of the winding gear and pit-heads that our contemporary resident in Barry, Jack Crabtree, would be so fascinated by. Charlie hated mining: this was the industry to which his father was drawn each morning, the danger that the young boy feared would take his father from him, the black hole into which he would disappear. His father was eventually seriously injured underground and never worked there again, though he survived, with "dust" into his nineties. The Burtons outlast their times. Charlie has said that he was glad the mines had closed: it was a personal, unequivocal and deeply felt emotion.

So what had drawn Charlie to the First World War and those Tommies at the Somme? Of course, he could have had no direct experience of the war, he was born in 1929; but he does remember seeing in Treherbert and Cardiff the crippled survivors, the crutches, armless sleeves, the wild-faced men damaged by the war. After

all these years Charlie cannot distinguish them in memory from the injured miners. In a sense, his figures from the Somme can be seen also as a correlative to those other suffering Welshmen. Most of the Somme works are black and white pen and ink drawings. Apart from the second work, a large oil of an officer gripping his swagger stick, all the serving men are non-combatants, 'Ambulance Men on the Somme', being an almost generic title. They are gaunt, haggard, damaged themselves. Their faces are distorted, strung between horror and resilience. When his boss, the college Principal W. J. Norman, saw Charlie working on the officer painting he stopped to look at it and then said that he'd walked into an R.A.F. hangar in the last war which was completely full of coffins. The painting had triggered that memory. It was the only conversation Charlie remembers having with him.

In the drawing in our collection and which I used as the cover of my 1998 poetry collection *The Last Candles*, the bodies of the three soldiers fade into paleness and begin to disappear as one's eye moves down the picture: the mud, their blood, their meaning is draining away. In the 1960s it must have seemed as if they were being forgotten, though 1968 was the fiftieth anniversary of the ceasefire and the



Exhausted ambulance men,
Charles Burton



Gentleman on the Somme,
Charles Burton

Treaty of Versailles. And in this five-year remembrance of the Great War in which the UK is presently engaged the resonance of these works has sharpened again; how could we have thought that they were consigned to history?

Visiting the house of Charles and Rosemary Burton in Penarth is always an exhilarating experience: it is one of the finest Victorian properties in that posh town and is full of art – from Rosemary’s deceptively simple still-life collages to Charlie’s large characterful chairs, his sixties semi-abstract plant-forms and those strangely un-peopled Valleys scenes. There is only one war work hanging, on the first landing, an ambulance man. Charlie tells me that is the very first. ‘I was sharing a house in Liverpool for just a few weeks with the Welsh artist John Roberts, who also taught at the school of Art. We were drawing, doodling, one evening, using the cross-hatching we did, and the ambulance man appeared out of it.’ Roberts (1923-2003), now largely neglected, is an artist recently championed by Robert Meyrick at Aberystwyth University. A fine print-maker

whose figures are often from a circus of the imagining, like Charlie he had left the valley, Tredegar, studied at Cardiff with Ceri Richards and gone on to the Royal College. He had served with the South Wales Borderers in India, so why had Charlie’s doodle led to war and not John’s? Charlie cannot explain the manifestation of that first Somme ambulance man. He resists my attempts to draw some influence

from his time in uniform in Egypt; though he had a house in France for many years, he never visited the battlefields; he has no firm recollection of the monumental *The Great War* BBC TV series of twenty-six hourly episodes in 1964 which was one of the landmarks for my generation of sixth-formers. Though he was familiar with the work of Spencer, Nash and Nevinson.

Charlie recounts the story of his

And in this five-year remembrance of the Great War in which the UK is presently engaged the resonance of these works has sharpened again; how could we have thought that they were consigned to history?



Ambulance men resting,
Charles Burton



Red Cross Men,
Charles Burton

This body of work must surely be seen by a wider public, and before 2018, when, perhaps, these men will again begin to fade away.

paternal grandfather from London, who enlisted and was, remarkably, taken for active service, despite the fact that he had only one eye. He was seriously wounded and died of those wounds after the war, a decade before Charlie's birth. I encourage him to go online and retrieve details of his grandfather's service: might he have served on the Somme? Four years back Charlie shared with me the story of a young valleys boy returning wounded from the Front, his greatcoat growing heavier and heavier on his journey. It gifted me a poem: 'The King's shillings, the people's pennies/slipped quietly to the boy while he'd stood or slept/by the men and women he'd travelled with.' ('Shillings and Pence').

There was one Great War soldier who Charlie talked with. He had a short hospital stay in his Liverpool years and the old man in the next bed was one of those rare men prepared to share

their Western Front experiences. He had fought in the 1915 Battle of Loos: as a German attack began and he and comrades held their fire a French rapid artillery barrage swept across the advancing line of Germans and none was left standing. The Tommies had not needed to fire their rifles. It was carnage. But on the British side too almost 60,000 men were killed or wounded.

The task of retrieving bodies, dead or alive, and patching up survivors at field dressing stations was left to the 'ambulance men'. Charlie insists, 'I couldn't possibly have drawn someone with a gun.' His figures are unarmed: their uniforms and webbing, shoulder straps and helmets are detailed, their faces unforgettably pained, their eyes darkened or reduced to little more than sockets, but the red cross armbands they wore are the constant motif. 'They are my dark side,' he says. The background



Two ambulance men,
Charles Burton

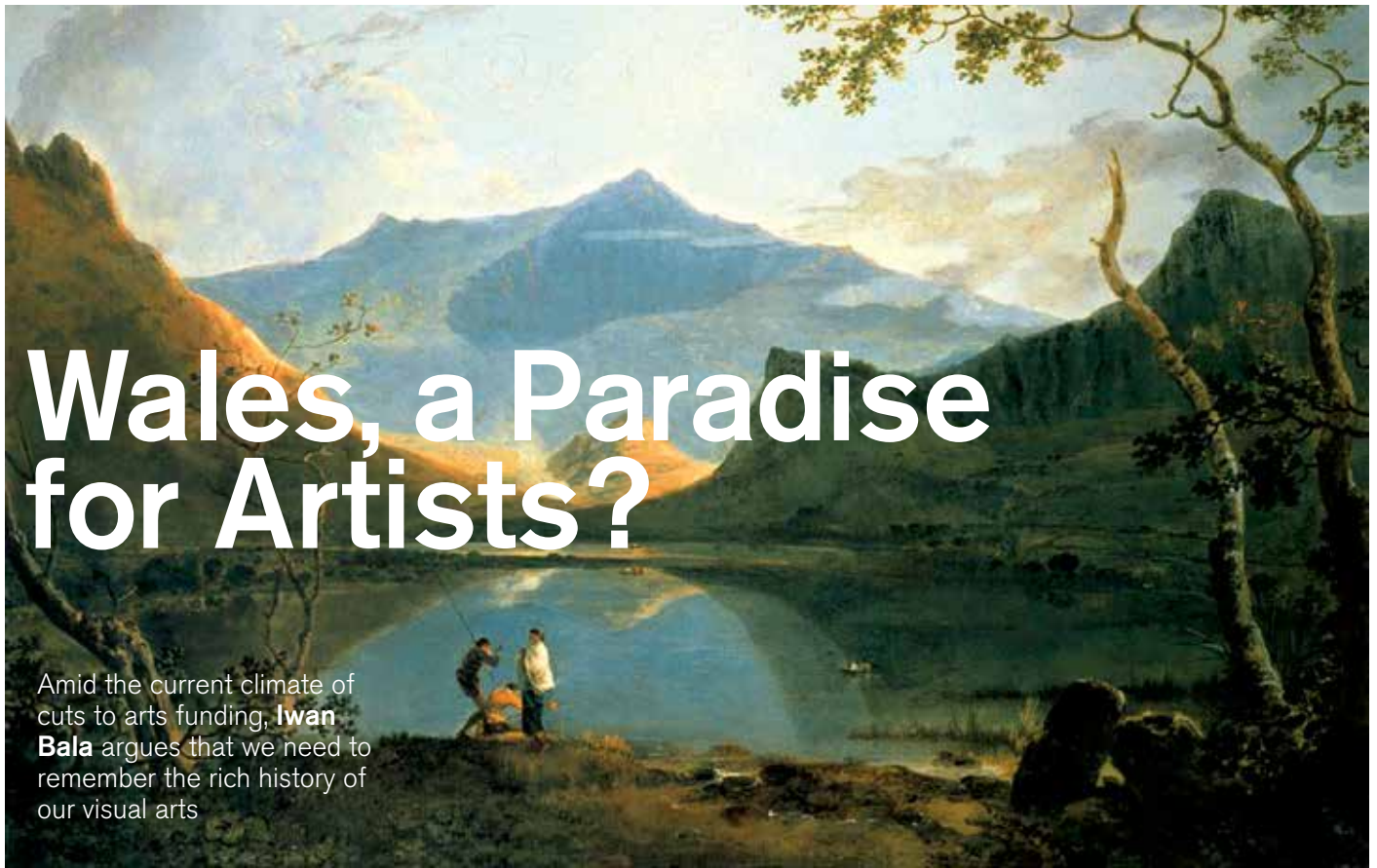
is often an unlikely rising slope with an ambulance lorry crawling up it. There is barely the hint of sky. In my visits to the Western Front the highest piece of ground I've seen was Hill Fifty-Two, which is fifty-two feet above sea level. Such meagre elevations were tactically crucial in the lowlands of northern France and Belgium. But Charlie's incongruous hills are necessary to the composition of the picture. He is not a faux documentary witness. He tells me, 'It is not my job to paint ideas, my job is just to do the picture. The ambulance men are an excuse for something else.'

This series of pictures is a remarkable, unique reimagining of the Great War. In its entirety it has not been exhibited. Four pieces are in private collections - one bought by a medic, one by a psychologist and I have two in my collection: *The Last Candles* cover work and a smaller, coloured painting, again with those three

ambulance men, this time almost faceless torsos, with the distant ambulance lorry and a sweep of bruised sky curving at the top left hand corner. It is inscribed 'Charles Burton probably 1968'. I used this second work as the cover for *After the First Death: an Anthology of Wales and War in the Twentieth Century* (Seren, 2007). Over the last thirty years my poems have included dramatic monologues to explore others' experiences of war: an English nurse on the Eastern Front during the Russian revolution, 'The Last Candles'; Elie Wiesel in Auschwitz, 'Soup'; a guard/executioner at Sachsenhausen, 'Holsteins Black and White'. Charles Burton's engagement with conflict in our century has been focused on the Somme; his haunted ambulance men stare out at us and demand our engagement. This compelling series of works are his silent, dramatic monologues, each man essentially separate in his thoughts while working with his fellows.

They pause in their dreadful work and say: 'Look at what you have made us do; look what we have done for you. See what we have become.' This body of work must surely be seen by a wider public, and before 2018, when, perhaps, these men will again begin to fade away.

Tony Curtis is Emeritus Professor of Poetry at the University of South Wales. His *New & Selected Poems: From the Fortunate Isles* is published by Seren in October 2016. His *Some Sort of Immortality: New & Selected Stories* appears from Cinnamon Press in 2017. www.tonymcurtispoet.com



Wales, a Paradise for Artists?

Amid the current climate of cuts to arts funding, **Iwan Bala** argues that we need to remember the rich history of our visual arts

Snowdon from Llyn Nantlle by Richard Wilson

Small but perfectly formed, Wales is a landscape fit for Turner and Richard Wilson, and Kyffin Williams, Gwilym Pritchard, David Tress, Peter Prendergast and a host of others who have followed. A land often feminised by poets - 'Hon' of R. Williams Parry comes immediately to mind ('God preserve me, I cannot escape from her') - the country has plentiful inspiration for landscape painters, whilst also being relatively easy to access. Yet for centuries poetry seems to have been the primary and quintessential art form associated with Wales, whose poets are mightily celebrated. I might have said, as I did in my essay for *Encounters with Osi* (H'mm Foundation, 2015) that visual artists have historically been neglected in comparison to poets in Wales. Well, perhaps I exaggerate, but few artists in Wales are as well known as the poets. Despite the presence in Wales of one of the world's greatest contemporary sculptors, David Nash, we see little of his work in the landscape of the country he has made his home. In Blaenau Ffestiniog where he lives, there could be a park dedicated to his work, and for other sculptors to show in - something like the Yorkshire Sculpture

Park that commemorates Henry Moore.

Tradition has it that the practice of oral recitation, of 'performing' poetry, has a long history in Welsh culture, predating anything written. The Mabinogi, for example, the cycle of 'tales of youth' that contains the mythology of the Britons, spans back to pre-Roman times, though it was only transcribed much later, in the 12th and 13th centuries, by monks. But the tales also create vivid visual experiences, and we know that anthropomorphic ornament and visual metaphor was as much part of Druidic/Celtic culture and artefact as storytelling was.

Is it more recent history that has sublimated the visual? Is it the iconoclasm and reliance on the 'Word' rather than 'Image' of the Protestant movement that has relegated visual art to a sideshow? This is an attractive theory - but even within the Methodist/Protestant movement, portraiture of leading preachers were made by 'Folk' artists such as Hugh Hughes (1790?-1863), paintings that the art historian Peter Lord has identified as the 'aesthetics of relevance' in Welsh visual culture of the 19th century. There was still

a definable 'iconography' in this period - and the architecture of Welsh chapels itself points to a somewhat 'minimalist' sensibility. Perhaps a more reasonable explanation is that Wales was ever a relatively poor country. Poetry (and singing) are easier on the pocket than the expensive process of painting and sculpting.

And yet we have produced many notable practitioners. Richard Wilson (1714-82), born in Penegoes near Machynlleth, is known as the father of 'English' landscape painting, and was one of the founder members of the Royal Academy in London. His disciple Thomas Jones (1742-1803), of Pencerrig near Builth Wells, is another leading painter who should be celebrated with a major presence in the culture.

Betws-y-Coed in north Wales was home to Britain's first artists' colony between 1844 and 1914. Among the best-known of this group were David Cox and Clarence Whaite. For the most part, these were English artists who were no longer able to travel to the Alps to paint, due to the Napoleonic Wars. Wales was a convenient Romantic landscape, easily accessible.

A century later, Ceri Richards (1903-



Yorkshire Sculpture Park

71) was born in Dynfant near Swansea; he was a thrilling modernist painter who should be celebrated with a dedicated museum in Swansea. Though not, like another interesting Swansea artist, Alfred Janes, a close friend of Dylan Thomas, Richards devoted a lot of his energies to visualising Thomas' poetry. The Glynn Vivian and the National Museum and Gallery in Cardiff hold a number of his works, but more should be acquired for the nation. In David Jones (1895-1974), though born in Kent of Welsh descent, we have an artist remembrancer who combined the skills of drawing and painting with those of a poet. He returned to the sources of 'the Matter of Britain' in the Mabinogi and in early Arthurian literature for his complex artworks and literature. He also spent time at Capel-y-Ffin with the celebrated sculptor, engraver and calligrapher, Eric Gill. Jones' work was shown at the Venice Biennale in 1934.

Polish-Jewish emigre Josef Herman famously settled for a while in Ystradgynlais, becoming popularly known as Joe Bach; others, like Heinz Koppel, escaped the war in south Wales. Whether because of, or in spite of this - possibly a bit of both, but let us not suggest that these Europeans arrived as 'missionaries of modernism' - a host of artists emerged in the south Wales valleys: Charlie Burton, Ernest Zobole, Osi Rhys Osmond, Christine Kinsey, Robert Alwyn Hughes, John Selway (an émigré initially), Glyn Jones, Roger Cecil, David Garner, Anthony Shapland.

At last, on his eightieth birthday, Ivor Davies of Penarth has received the honour of a major one-person survey exhibition at the National Museum, work that spans decades and includes his archive of information on the 'Destruction in Art' avant-garde movement of the 1960s, in which he was a major participant (working at one time with Yoko Ono). I wonder, had he not been there in the 60s, whether he would have been given this major survey at our national institution? Shani Rhys James, born to a Welsh father in Australia, has made her home in Wales and was recently given a major exhibition at the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth. Why not Cardiff? Why not huge TV coverage, so we all get to know her work and her name?


Beyond the 'names' of artists who should be more widely known in Wales, there is a strong 'collective' sense in which artists collaborate and create, many forming studio groups and ideological groupings. Beca, which was formed in the early 1970s by brothers Peter and the late Paul Davies from the Mumbles (and later joined by Ivor Davies and others, including myself) has become almost a mythic presence by now. Its aim was to operate as a collective and to produce political and 'protest' art. It also heralded the arrival in Wales of performance art and public art. Most parts of Wales now have artist-run enterprises that bring visual culture into the public realm consistently and constantly, as well as having many public art projects. We might argue that Art collectives are part of a tradition in Wales, following the Betws-y-



Anthem (RS Thomas) by Iwan Bala

Coed instance in the 19th century. And Wales still attracts artists from beyond its borders.

So, the question remains: why are so few artists household names in Wales? Could it be the Anglocentric establishment's past indifference and a lack of infrastructure to exhibit? Whereas poets could recite and publish, and musicians compose and perform, artists, historically, had little opportunity to have their work shown publicly in Wales. There were few commercial galleries even up to the 1970s, and the Gallery of the National Museum was loath to show Welsh artists work unless they had prior 'sanction' by gaining fame in London. Primarily it was run as a 'colonial institution'. The situation has changed somewhat from the 1990s onwards, though our 'home grown' institutions are still more partial to sung poetry than visual arts, but now, with austerity measures, we see once more that the art and culture section is the one targeted heavily by our own Council cutbacks. Cardiff County Council threaten £700,000 cuts this year, affecting the future of many initiatives including the Artes Mundi Art Prize and Cardiff Contemporary. Such economically short-sighted action displays the 'culture cringe' our established political system clings to. And that, in the end, has always been our problem, ruled by philistines of our own making, not by the rulers 'outside'.

 **Iwan Bala** is an artist, writer and lecturer.

City Regions – Deal or no Deal?

Lee Waters & Jess Blair

After four years of introspection the City Region agenda has finally shown signs of life. As austerity deepens in Welsh local government, the prospect of cash from the Treasury has focused minds in Cardiff and Swansea, with both the Cardiff Capital Region and the Swansea Bay City Region submitting bids to the UK Government for a 'City Deal'.

With just four local authorities to bring together, and under the single-minded leadership of Sir Terry Matthews, the Swansea Bay project submitted an imaginative £1 Billion bid focused on technology, health, energy and ultra-fast broadband infrastructure.

The 'Internet Coast' theme of the bid has a clear narrative - placing south west

Wales at the centre of the next industrial revolution of genomics and cloud-based IT - and a funding package drawing on private and EU funds. 'I can clearly see a Swansea Bay that is globally recognised for innovation and economic acceleration once again, ideally located on a digital super-highway connecting the UK and North America - London and New York', Sir Terry Matthews said at the bid launch.

South-east Wales, meanwhile, without a clear lead figure and with ten local authorities to corral, appears more hesitant. At the time of writing the details of the £1.28bn City Deal bid from the Cardiff Capital Region have not been published beyond an indication that it is focused on improving local productivity, creating new

jobs and reducing worklessness.

One council leader felt moved to reassure his local paper that while the City Deal 'is not committing the council to anything at the moment', it is 'a fantastic opportunity... empowering communities to really drive economic growth' and that 'detailed discussions would be fleshed out in the coming months'.

So one year on from the report of the Cardiff Capital Region, chaired by Roger Lewis, why has progress been so difficult to discern?

On the anniversary of the report's publication in mid-February the IWA and Cardiff University assembled a roundtable discussion, held under the Chatham House rule, to hear from a broad range of people involved with work in the 'city region' to assess progress.

Unsurprisingly nobody argued with the concept, or the potential, but there was palpable frustration - both with the lack of leadership and drive, and also with the fact that such an absence was too often used as a reason for not taking action, when in fact there is nothing stopping progress being made.



'The long debate around governance is a side-issue, the city region exists. The question is what can organisations do to make things happen', one contributor said in exasperation half-way through the discussion.

Examples were pointed to where progress is being made. Some success is being achieved through developing clusters of activities linking firms and universities in the city region, but it needs to be supported and strengthened. After a slow start progress is also being made on the South Wales Metro Project in particular. 'It's like a super-tanker slowly being nudged in the right direction' one attendee noted.

And yet, time and again participants felt the full potential had yet to be unleashed. 'We've had enough of the debate, the focus must now be on pace, urgency and delivery' said one.

However, as many noted, not everyone is pulling in the same direction. 'There are policies that take the wider perspective. The issue is that they're all with different ministers', said one attendee.

Contributors said the new City Region Transition Board being chaired by former BT Wales Director, Ann Beynon, has work to do with groups and people who felt marginalised under the last Board, and also needs to build in effective business engagement. Whilst the Board is accountable to the Welsh Government, it also needs to operate at arm's length so that it can respond quickly to need and opportunity with its own statutory powers; 'Unless we can drag powers down- there's no point even starting'. Another attendee agreed but questioned Wales' precedent on giving away power, 'Power and control are big words in our nation and I don't think we have the confidence to let go and trust'.

Another felt the recent discussions around a City Deal had distracted from getting on with delivering:

The City deal is just a source of funding. What about the others? European funding etc. We're spending hours and days trying to get sorted- for £1.2 bn over 20 years. It's a drop in the ocean.

Let's get this in perspective. What is the economic vision? Get that together then hopefully post election we'll have a strong Welsh Government that can look outward and inside have clear roles and responsibilities. If a regional body is best model then so be it. Make it clear, forceful and stick to it.

One of the less discussed issues around a Cardiff City Region is the perspective from people living within it. The span of the region is much wider than the city of Cardiff itself, and there were concerns that a fundamental blockage is present between Cardiff and the rest of the region. From the outside of the political discussion of the City Region it is difficult to see the vision and narrative and buy into it, claimed one attendee:

There is a communications problem generally in that people see this as being about getting into Cardiff and growing Cardiff and not supporting the wider region. There is a real job to address that. People pull against it as they don't think their interests are aligned with the region.

There is a lack of leadership at many levels in this debate, some felt, and the political cycles are detrimental to that, 'so much is driven in five year cycles. What we need is some kind of acceptance about the anchors - and when they get down they stay down.'

Pulling the evening's discussion together, the Facilitator highlighted the commonality within these themes 'What all of these things have in common is that we need new, better and more robust relationships'.

Yet, with so many elements still in play; the City Deal, local government reorganisation and the possibility of an Elected Mayor, and most importantly a new Welsh Government, the ability of the Cardiff Capital Region to realise its stated aim of 'fundamentally transform[ing] the lives not only of the people living within the Region, but of all of the people throughout Wales' is hardly certain.

Participants

Mark Barry,
M&G Barry Consulting

Ann Beynon,
CCR Transition Board

Jess Blair,
IWA

Rachel Bowen,
FSB Wales

Donna Coyle,
Wales Co-operative Centre

Sheila Davies,
Newport City Council

Cllr Peter Fox,
Monmouthshire County Council

Adrian Healy,
City Region Exchange

Justin John,
Life Sciences Hub Wales

Prof Calvin Jones,
Cardiff Business School

Gareth Jones,
Welsh ICE

Paul Matthews,
Monmouthshire County Council

Chris Meadows,
IQE

Prof Kevin Morgan,
Cardiff University

Rob Rolley,
General Dynamics

Chris Sutton,
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Stevie Upton,
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Derek Walker,
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Lee Waters,
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 **Lee Waters** is Director of the IWA. **Jess Blair** is Policy and Projects Manager.

Turning threats into opportunities

Ieuan Wyn Jones outlines the implications of an English Northern Powerhouse for the north of Wales economy

How seriously should we in Wales take the UK government's recent pronouncements on the setting up of a Northern Powerhouse? Since George Osborne first introduced the idea in June 2014, a number of publications and announcements have followed. Of these, perhaps the most notable are the proposals to devolve power to the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (November 2014), the Northern Transport Strategy (March 2015) and a £250m nuclear research fund announced in Osborne's 2015 Autumn Statement, much of which will be allocated to research hubs such as the Dalton Institute and the University of Lancaster.

There is no doubting the ambitions of the programme to develop the Northern Powerhouse; if all the investment plans are delivered, it would amount to a very significant injection of funds and the completion of massive infrastructure projects - in addition, of course, to the plans already outlined for the HS2 project. The scale of the plans and the political impetus behind them puts them in a different league to, say, Peter Walker's Valleys Initiative in the 1980s. Those plans, despite the hype and PR surrounding them, amounted in the end to little more than recycling existing Welsh Office funds.

The scale of the political challenge in turning the Northern Powerhouse from a concept (so described by the think tank IPPR North) to a physical reality is enormous. The plan - not easily achievable - is to bring the northern cities

of Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield and Hull together on the premise that in the global economy, size matters. With their combined population of 10 million, and a total of 23 universities and internationally renowned research hubs, the north would be in a better position to take on the economic might of London. However, bridging the 127 miles between Liverpool and Hull and all the historical and cultural differences in between will be a monumental task. The journey between Ealing and the East End in London - all of 14 miles - is a stroll by comparison.

The economic challenge is also enormous. According to the latest figures, the Northern Powerhouse contributed 13% of the UK's GVA. London, with a similar population contributed 22.6%. Wales' share, albeit with a much smaller population is 3.4%. It will take a significant amount of political capital and funds delivered over a generation to turn the Northern Powerhouse into a genuine

being delivered.

But despite the challenges faced by the Northern Powerhouse project, it would be foolish to assume that it does not pose a threat to the economy of the North of Wales. In one sense, if George Osborne is right that size matters, then we could be on a hiding to nothing. How could a region whose total population of 695,000 (less than the city of Leeds) compete with an economic powerhouse of 10 million inhabitants? If only some of the transport infrastructure projects come to fruition, such as HS2 and the improvements to TransPennine links, it would improve the region's connectivity at the expense of neighbouring areas. By also investing in the knowledge economy over a consistent period, improvements to GVA, however modest, would be a threat as talent moves east to capture higher wages and a higher standard of living.

As every student of the 'SWOT' analysis will know, all threats are accompanied by opportunities. We cannot

The plan - not easily achievable - is to bring the northern cities of Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, Sheffield and Hull together on the premise that in the global economy, size matters.

economic powerhouse. Consistency over a 10-year period, never mind over 25-30 years, is extremely rare in politics. Due to likely changes in the political complexion of UK governments over the period, changes in political priorities and the fact that governments need to respond to short term difficulties it is difficult to see all the plans for the Northern Powerhouse

compete on size, obviously, but by being smart we can work on our strengths and capture economic opportunities which many have thought to be traditionally outside our grasp. We can improve our connectivity, by making improvements to the A55, creating better links with the motorway network and through electrification of the North Wales mainline.

Realistically however, these can only be achieved if the Welsh Government's borrowing powers are enhanced significantly and it makes judicious use of its new tax varying powers.

But we cannot prosper on the promise of transport improvements alone. A key part of the Northern Powerhouse drive is based on investment in R&D and there are a number of world class research institutes ready to use that investment to grow the region's GVA. It is no good looking to the UK Government alone to deliver similar investment in our research institutes. The Welsh Government has to show a clear commitment to investing further in R&D and to link that investment to the market and commercialisation end of the research cycle. That is why the Welsh Government's support for the Menai Science Park project is so vital. That's also why the campaign to maintain funding in our Universities' research base in the Welsh Government's 2016-17 budget was so important. Once the basic funds are

in place, we could then be in a better position to capture Innovate UK funds, increase our share of UKRC and staircase into high value Horizon 2020 funds.

We need to congratulate the North of Wales' local authorities for setting up the North Wales Economic Ambition Board (NWEAB). It has developed into an effective body aimed at bringing investment into the region and identifying the skills requirements of new employers. It has already forged links with the nascent Northern Powerhouse, as well as making the case for further Welsh government support. It is already a powerful voice for the north, but by enhancing its powers and providing it with meaningful resources, it can make a large contribution to develop the region's economy.

The 'threat' of the Northern Powerhouse can be seen by some as reinforcing the argument that our economic future is more closely aligned to the north of England than to the rest

of Wales. Yes, there are economic ties, but there are real opportunities for us as well. A powerful voice for the region such as the NWEAB and all political and business leaders should be making the case for transport improvements and further investment in R&D. Growing our economy by concentrating on key enabling sectors such as low carbon energy and advanced manufacturing will provide a better platform for future prosperity. Menai Science Park will play its part in this new agenda. But we need more and the next Welsh Government needs to address this by making an early commitment to a sustained programme of investment in the right areas.

Ieuan Wyn Jones is a former leader of Plaid Cymru and Deputy First Minister of Wales; he is now Director of the Menai Science Park at Bangor University.

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Welsh Wizard... Gentle Giant... Golden Gareth?

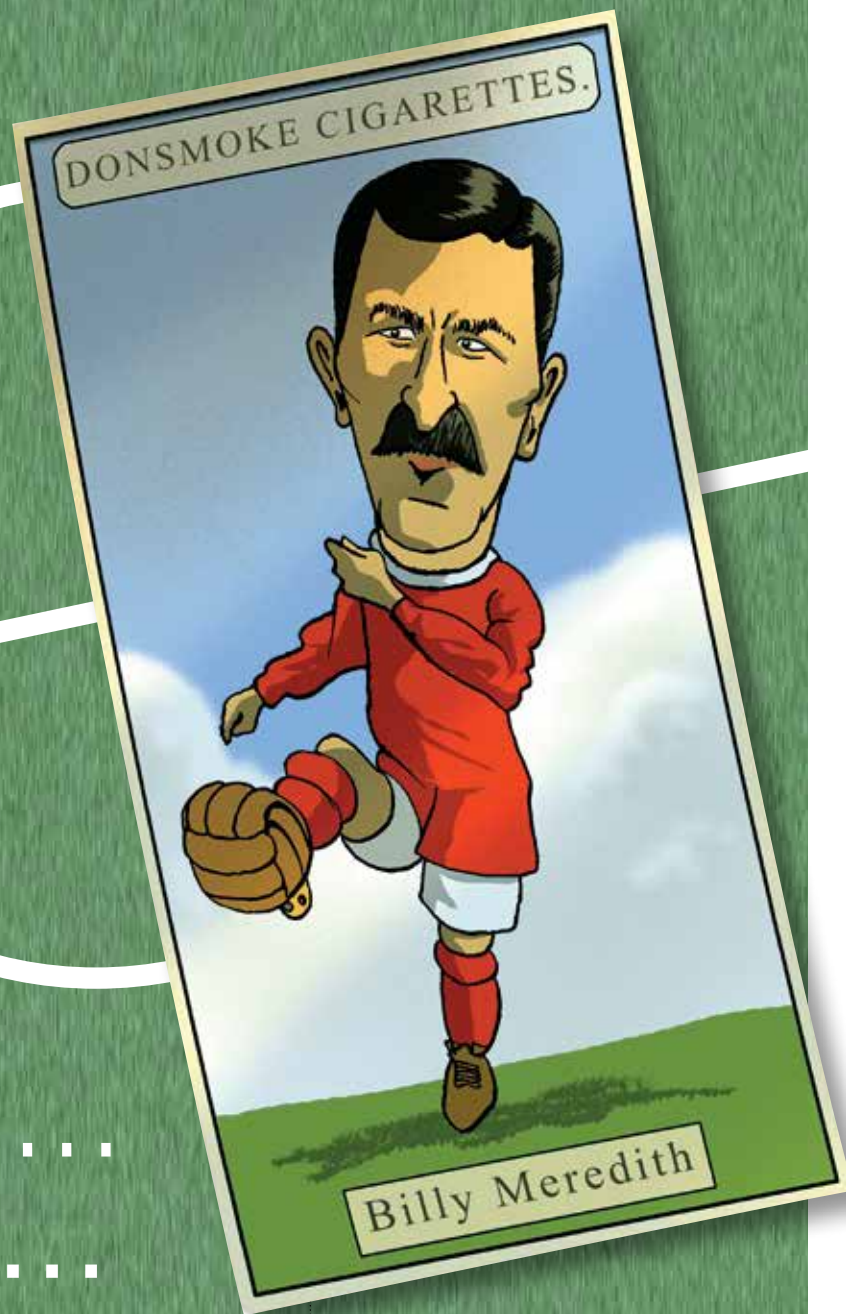
As Wales' footballers prepare for Euro 2016, Dylan Moore goes in search of the superstars who prefigured the world's most expensive player, Gareth Bale

Images: Mumph

Together, Stronger was the marketing masterstroke that supported Wales' blazed trail to the Euro 2016 football tournament that takes place in France this summer. It was based loose translation of the national team motto *Gorau Chwarae Cyd Chwarae* (Team Play is Best Play), first stitched into the famous red jersey in 1951 to celebrate the anniversary of the world's third oldest football association, which had by then

already clocked up 75 years.

For a country whose national sport - certainly if measured by number of participants or number of spectators - has often been more a source of division (football and rugby, north and south, Cardiff and Swansea) than of unity, Together, Stronger was a slogan designed by a newly media-savvy FAW to capture the imagination of the social media





generation. It could be used as a Twitter hashtag, and therefore be seen, publicly, to unite 'all those connected with football in Wales - players, coaches, medical, administrators, volunteers and fans'. If the slogan's success barometer was on the pitch, the arrow burst through the glass: Chris Coleman's players shattered records in an amazing charge toward the finals.

It was as if the team - and the fans - had imbibed the spirit of togetherness emblazoned hopefully around the Cardiff City Stadium, the new home of Welsh football, which had a complete refit for each home qualifier. Goalkeeper Wayne Hennessey and a defence expertly marshalled by captain Ashley Williams limited goals conceded to just four in ten qualifying matches, a record bettered in the whole of Europe only by Spain, England and Romania. Midfielders like Aaron Ramsey, Joe Ledley and Joe Allen helped the team develop a reputation for neat, attractive football, providing service for exciting forwards like Hal-Robson Kanu to excel on the international stage and propelling the team to an all-time high of eighth in FIFA's world ranking system. And then, of course, there was Bale.

It is difficult to exaggerate the

importance of Gareth Bale to the current Welsh national team. Neither his manager nor his teammates pretend that the Cardiff-born 26-year-old is anything other than a talisman, a player whose perfect combination of outstanding individual skill and dedicated team ethic makes it impossible to exaggerate his contribution. It is perhaps fitting that Bale wears the number 11 shirt, given that at times he appears to carry the whole team on his back.

While Bale has certainly not excelled in every one of his 54 games for Wales, and it would be a real disservice to the rest of a really good team to suggest the country's first major tournament qualification in 56 years is down to Bale alone, the statistics tell a stark tale. In ten qualifying matches Bale scored seven of Wales' eleven goals, including three crucial winners (against Andorra and Cyprus away and the pivotal victory over eventual group winners Belgium at home). It is not only fair to say that without Bale's contribution Wales would not have qualified, it is a fact. It is also logical to suggest the country's fate in the finals tournament this summer largely rests on the fitness and form of the world's most expensive footballer.

Doubly cursed by its population size and the fact that even at schools level football has to compete with rugby for the nation's best sportsmen, Wales has produced many talented individual footballers but not many great teams. A dispassionate history of the world's third oldest football team would comprise a litany of near misses, tragedy, comedy and tragicomedy as well as a raft of oft-told hard-luck stories. Mario Risoli's account of the 1958 World Cup campaign is called *When Pele Broke Our Hearts*. Other chapters of the story might have been named *When Scotland Broke Our Hearts*, *When Russia Broke Our Hearts* and *When Bodin Hit the Bar*. Another, kinder, history of Welsh football would simply reel off a list of stellar individuals. Much is made of the fact that Northern Ireland's George Best never graced the World Cup. But neither did Toshack, Southall, Rush or Hughes, Speed or Giggs or Bellamy.

The very first footballing superstar was Billy Meredith, a Welshman. Born in Chirk, Denbighshire in 1874, Meredith's larger-than-life stature was a result of his phenomenal longevity as a player (740 appearances spanning 27 seasons either side of the First World War, for both of the big Manchester clubs, amongst others), his colourful extra-curricular activities - being banned for bribing an opponent, founding the Players' Union, running a pub and a chain of cinemas - and his habit of chewing a toothpick during matches. Meredith was both a product of his time and a harbinger of the future. A miner, a Primitive Methodist, a lifelong teetotaler and a supporter of Lloyd George's Liberal Party, his extraordinary life careered through the big political, social and sporting issues of Edwardian Britain.

The contrast between Meredith, who commuted between coalmining in Denbighshire and footballing at Manchester City, and Bale - who earns £15m a year, the equivalent of Barack Obama's salary every five days - is stark. But Meredith was instrumental in laying the ground for today's millionaire playboys. His Players' Union waged war with the

Football Association over the issue of the maximum wage, resented because it perpetuated amateurism and set footballers apart from other 'industries'. Meredith thought it highly unfair that he personally could not be rewarded fully for the sacrifices he had made to become the best player in Britain. A salary cap was not finally abandoned until 1961, four years after another iconic Welsh footballer had become the best of British and joined Juventus of Turin for £65,000, a fee that doubled the then transfer record.

John Charles (like Billy a William by birth) was six feet tall and had such a powerful physique he was equally adept at centre back or centre forward. Born in Cwmbwrla, Swansea in 1931, Charles made some appearances as a youngster for Swansea Town reserves, but was

scouted by Leeds United while playing for a local youth club, Gendros. Leeds were dubbed 'John Charles United', such was the Welshman's influence on the club's fortunes; in his final season at Elland Road, Charles scored 38 times in 40 games, securing the team an eighth place top flight finish.

At the 1958 World Cup, Charles was injured for Wales' legendary quarter final defeat to Brazil. A 17 year-old Pele scored the only goal of the game, but Wales' manager Jimmy Murphy contended, with good reason, that 'with John Charles in the side we might have won.' Charles is remembered and respected throughout the game, not only as 'one of the greatest footballers who ever lived' but also, in the words of former England manager Bobby Robson, 'one of the greatest men to play

the game.' In Italy, he earned the nickname by which he is remembered: Il Buono Gigante (The Gentle Giant).

If alliterative nicknames suited the outspoken 'Welsh Wizard' Meredith and the humble but brilliant and galvanising Charles, attempts by the shorthand-hungry Spanish sporting press to endow Gareth Bale with a suitable moniker have only been a partial success. Bale wears superhero nicknames like his superstar Alice-band: awkwardly. At first, Marca, the Real Madrid paper, called him El Canon - 'the Cannon' (as Bale enjoyed a fairytale end to his first season at Madrid, scoring in the Champions League final against city rivals Atletico and the winner against Barcelona in the final of the Copa del Rey). Then it tried a composite - 'the BBC' - to designate the all-galactico forward line of Bale, (Karim) Benzema and Cristiano (Ronaldo), who had scored 97 goals between them that season - but even that felt a little forced.

Bale does have some of the qualities expected of a twentyfirst century footballing superstar. His trademarked 'heart' goal celebration has become a global phenomenon, a universally understood symbol of love that many the world over would immediately associate with the Welshman. But mostly, to use the parlance of sports journalism, Bale lets his football do the talking.

This summer, Gareth Bale and his teammates will have a unique opportunity to rewrite the entire Welsh football saga. If things go badly, Euro 2016 will perhaps turn out, after all, to be just another chapter: when Slovakia, Russia and - please, no! - England break our ever hopeful hearts. But if things go well, and Wales at least progress from the group phase - a realistic target - then this generation will truly be seen as Golden. And, just maybe, like his gigantic and magical predecessors, Gareth Bale will get a nickname that sticks after all.



Dylan Moore is the IWA's Comment & Analysis Editor.

Bridging Wales' Oxbridge Gap

Lord Paul Murphy talks to **Dylan Moore** about why Wales has an Oxbridge problem, the Seren project that aims to support Wales' brightest - and how we might eventually tempt those graduates back

When Paul Murphy, later to become Lord Murphy of Torfaen, went up to Oriel College Oxford in the late 1960s, only 5% of the UK population went to any university at all. 'Things have changed,' says Murphy, a mantra repeated throughout our conversation. It is, of course, true. Wales has changed; Oxbridge has changed; the world has changed. But one thing has remained: a Welsh inferiority complex when it comes to Britain's finest two universities.

Murphy's is a familiar story. Son of a coal miner, he was the first of his family to go to university, let alone the best in the land. As a young man, he 'never thought Oxford was within my reach' but, benefitting from his education at West Mon., the Pontypool grammar school for boys, which had built something of a tradition of sending its brightest students on to Oxford and Cambridge, he ended up having a 'brilliant time for three years.' There was, of course, a huge academic benefit - Murphy read History under the tutelage of, among others, AJP Taylor - but this was coupled by an 'entire widening of horizons'. Oriel allowed Murphy to

indulge his passion for classical music, an opportunity he may not have been afforded elsewhere, and he was also able to join the Oxford University Labour Club which paved the way for his eventual political career (after 17 years back in Wales as a teacher in Ebbw Vale).

What Oxford did for Murphy is something he is determined that today's Welsh sixth formers should not miss out on. As Oxbridge Ambassador for Wales, his report for Welsh Government has resulted in the adoption of a Wales-wide initiative to support the country's brightest students. Seren hubs allow Wales' Year 12 and 13 students to meet university tutors and Oxbridge alumni from their own area in the hope that we might close the Oxbridge gap. Murphy's report had found that fewer Welsh students apply to Oxford and Cambridge than their counterparts in Scotland, Northern Ireland and the English regions, and that application success rates were also proportionally lower.

Wales has an Oxbridge problem. But why? 'The biggest single issue' Murphy had to confront in the course of his research was the idea that 'it's not for me'. Overwhelmingly, what Murphy calls 'the myths' of Oxbridge - Bullingdon Clubs and *Brideshead Revisited* - were able to flourish in a culture where, often, Wales' brightest and best students do not know anybody else who has been. Encouragingly, Murphy notes that, if they do get in, Welsh students actually do marginally better than their peers from elsewhere; perhaps, posits Murphy, 'they are used to having to

try that little bit harder'.

Murphy is keen to stress that Oxbridge is not the be all and end all. Only 20% of the total number of applicants to the colleges of Oxford and Cambridge are successful, so it is inevitable that the majority of those students selected for the Seren programme will end up in other Russell Group universities. 'We have very good Welsh universities, and some students would prefer to stay at home, or go to London, or another big city; there's no exclusivity,' Murphy says. 'But there is a big *but*: Oxford and Cambridge are two of the finest universities on the planet.' The former Torfaen MP lives up to his role as Ambassador. 'It's a two way street,' he says, advocating for the colleges as much as for Wales: 'Wales has to come up to the mark.' Oxford and Cambridge, he argues, 'have changed. One or two colleges in both universities are still snooty, and dominated by public schools, but overwhelmingly they take increasing numbers from state schools.' He was impressed by how seriously both universities took the ambassadorial project, each seconding a full-time member of staff to look at the issues.

One of the issues, of course, is devolution itself. Wales and England have different, and diverging, education systems - and Oxbridge has had to adapt. In England, the abolition of AS Levels has led to a return to the days of the admissions test, at least in Cambridge. And in Wales, the introduction of the Welsh Baccalaureate has created other issues. Murphy is pleased the qualification is now graded, but is still unconvinced

One of the issues, of course, is devolution itself. Wales and England have different, and diverging, education systems - and Oxbridge has had to adapt.

about its value to able scientists. 'It can help with politics, history, the arts subjects,' he argues, hinting at widespread disillusionment with the Welsh Bac's value among students themselves. 'The other issue, of course, is the Welsh language.' Murphy has done much work alerting Oxbridge admissions tutors to the potential difficulties faced by those educated in Welsh who may have a lack of fluency regarding highly specialised technical terms in English. He is pleased

to report however there is an even balance between English students studying in Wales and Welsh students crossing the border into England.

Murphy 'keeps in touch' with the Seren programme and is impressed with its early successes. He recently attended the launch event for the South-East Wales Hub, at Ebbw Vale College, and was heartened by the sight of students from different schools working together and teachers comparing notes. 'It will be,' says

Murphy, 'a couple of years before we start seeing the results of the Hub system,' but he is certainly hopeful that many more Welsh students will be following in his own footsteps in the near future.

On the bigger question, of the potential for brain drain and the ability of Wales to attract its brightest academic stars back to the country, Murphy strikes a balance. On one hand, he sounds a note of circumspection - 'We are only three and a half million people' - the implication being that the big wide world will inevitably have its draw: 'If you want to work in international banking, you will go to London - but you'd go to London even if you were born and educated in Paris.' On the other, Murphy throws down a gauntlet. 'That's up to us,' he says, 'we need to make sure there are opportunities for them to come back. Hopefully a lot [of Oxbridge graduates] will come back to Wales, and bring their experience and intelligence - but we need to create more jobs for top graduates and professionals.'

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Oxbridge: A confidence trick?

Rhea Stevens gives a personal reflection on her time at Oxford

'We sometimes have a habit in Wales of talking ourselves down. I will have none of that. The Welsh pupils and students I have met over the course of my study are as bright as any anywhere. Whatever path they choose in life, our job is to equip them to aim for the stars'. These are the words of Paul Murphy, former MP for Torfaen, in his foreword to the *Final Report of the Oxbridge Ambassador for Wales*, written for the Welsh Government.

I couldn't agree more. The role of education is surely to equip people with the knowledge, skills and confidence to 'aim for the stars' and achieve whatever they put their mind to.

Where I take issue with the sometimes myopic focus on Oxbridge is the assumption that the stars to aim for are pre-determined: endorsed by prominent alumni who believe that since Oxbridge did great things for them, it's a useful measure of success for the generations of students that follow. But that's only part of the story.

Like Paul Murphy, I attended Oriel

College, Oxford. I had much of the support available to me that Murphy identifies in his report as helpful for Welsh students. I attended a Comprehensive school with a strong record of students progressing to Oxbridge; had access to teachers who were Oxbridge alumni; parents who were supportive. I am acutely aware that without this support, I would not have applied to Oxford.

I am equally aware that not every student in Wales is as fortunate as I was and this must mean that some, for

whom Oxbridge is their personal star to aim for, are not getting the support and opportunities they deserve. For these young people, who actively pursue Oxbridge as an informed choice, Paul Murphy's hard work is immensely important.

I am just not convinced that the debate is informed. Who decides which ambitions are better than others? Are we taking the time to understand the aspirations and choices of our brightest young people, or are we judging what ambition should look like through our own,

The role of education is surely to equip people with the knowledge, skills and confidence to 'aim for the stars' and achieve whatever they put their mind to.

We cannot on one hand decry young people in Wales for lacking self-esteem or confidence, and then on the other continue to assert that we know best, and that is Oxbridge.

sometimes nostalgic, lens?

Some of the commonly articulated barriers for Wales' low application rate to Oxbridge are low self-esteem and a lack of academic self-confidence. From personal experience, I know that both those factors can still be in place even when young people gain a place at Oxbridge. I also know that Oxbridge was not necessarily the best destination for a bright student who lacked confidence. Factors which build resilience such as pastoral care, social networks, the community surrounding a university weren't part of the conversation when I was applying. If confidence and low-self-esteem are the root of the problem in Wales, shouldn't these factors count equally if not more?

Looking back, I wonder what choice I would have made had I questioned the accepted truth that if you are bright enough to go to Oxbridge then you have an obligation to try. If I had been more confident in my views, might I have considered whether a different university with a different culture was the right choice for me? Or whether university was even the right choice at that time? I'll never know the answer, but I know now it's a question worth asking and should be part of the conversation.

Aspirations are built from a belief in yourself and the belief of others around

you; the two are not mutually exclusive. With that in mind, I am not convinced the popular narrative creates the space for young people to determine their aspirations for themselves. We cannot on one hand decry young people in Wales for lacking self-esteem or confidence, and then on the other continue to assert that we know best, and that is Oxbridge. Is it true that students in Wales have lower aspirations, or is it possible that the state, both public and political, don't recognise the choices they make as worthy enough? It is surely possible that at least some of the brightest students in Wales are actively deciding that Oxbridge isn't right for them.

I could understand if we had the same public fascination with the Russell Group, and celebrated the fact that Cardiff University has an international reputation for excellence. Or if we celebrated and created opportunities for our young entrepreneurs and businesspeople with the same zeal. But these equally valuable choices don't get the same airtime. There are a number of reasons why this is likely to be the case, but at least one of them must be that Oxbridge has powerful and public international alumni who champion their own choices.

It wasn't until many years after Oxford that I had the confidence to define

my own personal aspirations. My instinct tells me I have gained more confidence and belief in the value of my choices from my time beyond the dreaming spires. I am better able to connect my experiences as a barmaid or as a social work assistant as developing the social skills that have driven some of my proudest achievements to date, than I am my time at Oxford. My degree brought me valuable learning and experiences, certainly, but without my wider experiences and the inspirational people I have met outside Oxford I would not have built the confidence to put that learning into practice.

Confidence, aspiration and self-belief are deeply personal, and everyone's journey towards them will be different. Oxbridge doesn't have the monopoly on aspiration - and we should stop pretending that it does. It is part of a whole range of options for able students. If we really want the best for our young people, we have to tell the whole story and let them judge for themselves what is best.



Rhea Stevens is a member of the editorial board for the Welsh agenda. She writes this in a personal capacity.

Lost Leaders?

Two women have stood out since the Assembly was established. As one stands down and the other fights for her political life we offer our assessments.

Edwina

As one of the Assembly's stalwarts - and most divisive figures - retires from office, Rhys David runs the rule over Mrs Hart's record as minister for economy, science and transport



Wales is not the hand most economy ministers would want to be dealt from a selection of West European countries. Our near neighbours, Scotland and Ireland, both have their problems but also aces - the enduring appeal worldwide of whiskey and, even in its devalued form, oil, in the one case; in the other a world class pharmaceutical sector and the European bases for many US technology companies. Wales' top cards are - the universities apart - mainly in engineering, notably Tata Steel, Airbus and Ford, and two of these three are facing tough times.

Ah, but it's all about services now, it might be said. Wales has, indeed, developed a burgeoning service sector over recent years. Nevertheless, the highest level services in finance, business and the law are under-represented. The bars, restaurants, hotels and other elements of the consumer service sector that have sprung up in our city centres act in large measure to ensure money brought into Wales by students, sports fans and other visitors, together with the money spent by local people, is channelled back

to corporate headquarters elsewhere.

So, how to judge the impact of retiring economy, science and transport minister Edwina Hart? The most pugnacious holder of the office to date, to some she is, to paraphrase the famous description of Israel's Golda Meir, the only man in the Welsh Cabinet. An ever-present in various posts since the first Assembly back in 1999, she has held the economic portfolio since the last election in 2011.

To say Gower AM Mrs Hart divided opinion would be one of Welsh history's great understatements. Those who like Mrs Hart, first woman president of BIFU, the banking union for which she worked, are very complimentary. Those who feel she has treated them roughly can be vitriolic. Nor does her aversion to interviews - including in this case - make it easy for the outsider to come to conclusions.

Her supporters talk of a private and cultured person. She was born and brought up in Gowerton in her own constituency, attending the town's Grammar School, and still lives there. She played cello in the National Youth Orchestra of Wales

while at school (the composer Karl Jenkins attended the boys' school in the town and played oboe in the same orchestra several years ahead of her). She lists as interests her local countryside, music and literature and she is acknowledged as having been a consistent supporter of the arts. Indeed, she is given considerable credit, as finance minister in the first Assembly Government, for ensuring the funds were made available for the Wales Millennium Centre, despite the rather lukewarm support of some of her most senior Cabinet colleagues. The good relations she enjoyed with the then Sir (now Lord) David Rowe-Beddoe, whom she helped to appoint as WMC chair in 2001, were a big factor in creating the platform on which has emerged one of the great post devolution successes.

Her admirers also recognise what some might describe as that rare quality in Welsh politicians - the ability to be decisive, quoting examples of proposals that had lain unanswered for years in the in-trays of her predecessors. These received her attention and endorsement very soon after she took over the portfolio. One leading business

To say Gower AM Mrs Hart divided opinion would be one of Welsh history's great understatements.

figure puts it this way. 'Business seeks many things from Government but the ingredient it wants most is the minimisation of uncertainty. The initial reaction to her appointment had been largely one of suspicion but her willingness to make decisions where others had prevaricated quickly secured her the approval and confidence of business.'

Others, too, mention the good relations she developed with business and her willingness to look outside the usual Welsh Labour tent and bring forward leading figures from within business, academia and elsewhere – such as Sir Terry Matthews at the would-be Swansea Bay City Region – to head up the various reviews and task forces charged with coming up with ideas for pushing forward Wales' economic growth. She is credited, too, with repairing much of the damage caused to Wales' inward investment performance with the disappearance of the Welsh Development Agency brand. New structures now in place – though not a revived WDA – have seen an improvement in recent years in the number of businesses choosing to invest here.

Some, however, question what, fundamentally, has been achieved during her tenure of this latest portfolio. Unemployment is indeed down, and activity rates are up, inward investment has been encouraging but we are not talking here about a Leicester City miracle – from bottom to top in one year. To continue the football analogy, Wales is still bobbing along at the foot of the tables. Our economy has still to solve its chronic Gross Value Added problem, and incomes are barely half those of the richest region, London. Scotland, by contrast, is much closer to UK averages. Crucially, her opponents argue, economic ministers of

successive Governments in Cardiff Bay, including Mrs Hart, have failed to develop an overarching economic strategy that will work, linking all the various initiatives and proposals that have spilled out over recent years. Firefighting has often been good but too much activity has been reactive. There have been reviews aplenty but the bricks and mortar have seldom followed.

The great issues that have occupied so much airtime and print space over the past decade will – despite Mrs. Hart's famous decisiveness – be passed on to her successors. The Swansea Bay Barrage is still on the drawing board and fighting to make it further; the first stanchions carrying electric power to the new Cardiff and Valleys Metro have not left the steelworks and the Brynglas tunnels remain a more formidable obstruction to entering Wales than high winds on the Severn Bridges. And so it goes on.

How much of this mixed picture can be attributed to Mrs Hart is, of course, moot. The Tata cuts at Port Talbot make it clear that pricing decisions taken in the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of the State Council in Beijing can have far more influence on the lives of Port Talbot and other Welsh workers than anything that could happen in the Senedd. The same is evidently true of the powers of Westminster and Whitehall in a globalised economy. In this respect, this famous survivor of Welsh Cabinets is no different from any of her predecessors or successors. It is only fair to say, too, that the UK Government controls the purse strings for the big infrastructure projects that its Welsh counterpart has been trying to get built, with Welsh ministers less able even than their local government colleagues to raise finance through the sale of bonds. 'The Welsh Government does not hold the levers,'

one observer notes, 'It's not as if they can say, here's the money, let's go and build it.'

Yet others say Mrs Hart's uncompromising, take-no-prisoners style has not helped and that although she has been prepared to listen, she has not been a team player. She is reputed to have been the least collegiate among her Cabinet colleagues and prepared to take decisions or change policies with the minimum consultation or reference. She has also kept a very tight rein on her civil servants and on their cross-departmental dealings. She has also been notoriously frosty with Whitehall and Westminster, jealous of her territory and determined to evict intruders. Famously, in 2011, she responded to an invitation to appear before the Parliamentary select committee on Welsh Affairs looking at inward investment with the reply: 'I will not be attending.' A second sentence went on to say the economy was her responsibility and she was quite capable of doing her job.

For all this there would be few who would argue that it has not been a distinguished career of public service across several portfolios, requiring high levels of stamina, determination and commitment. Her legacy is undetermined at present but if Wales can look back in a few decades to a higher-skilled labour force working in biotechnology and other advanced sectors; Cardiff and Swansea City Regions being talked about in the same breath as the great exemplar, Stuttgart; a 70 mph journey skirting Newport by road (for those wanting to travel further!); views back at Swansea from the barrage; a north Wales link to high speed rail; and a four times an hour 30 minutes service from Merthyr Tydfil to Cardiff on attractive, modern trains, it may well be said she played a big part in laying the foundations.



Rhys David is an Honorary Fellow of the IWA and a former Financial Times journalist. He is the author of *Tell Mum Not to Worry: A Welsh Soldier's War in the Near East 1915-1919*.



Kirsty

Dewi Knight provides an insider's profile of the Welsh Liberal Democrats' outsider-insider and survivor, party leader Kirsty Williams

Photo: Natasha Hirst

The core campaign team was gathered in a Mermaid Quay restaurant. It was one of those huddled together on the food quarter's upper deck, but having gone through so many changes - both of name and cuisine - it's impossible to remember what it was called in December 2008. But there was definitely champagne.

The newly elected leader went around the table, toasting all for their contributions during the campaign: drafting a detailed manifesto; thousands of calls and conversations with members; media management, and above all, believing in Kirsty's vision for the party and country. Then the 'other' leader called.

Nick Clegg had got in before the starters. He hadn't taken a position during the campaign but the tone of the conversation, from what we gathered,

suggested a shared optimism. A page had been turned in London and now in Cardiff, new leadership representing a new generation.

Seven years on and, well, things have turned out rather differently. But Kirsty kicked off that conversation bringing some Bynea bluntness to the 'Feds' (as she always describes the 'federal' party leadership). Playing to the gallery celebrating with our champagne, she teased Nick: 'We'd welcome that, it would be good to see the transition plans you used. I'd find it useful to know exactly when I should tell the press how many people I've slept with...' (a personal revelation that overshadowed one of Clegg's first major interviews as leader).

Teasing gave way to a different tone over the years. These conversations with

A page had been turned in London and now in Cardiff, new leadership representing a new generation.

On becoming leader, she claimed a success for the party in ‘breaking the mould’ of tired, middle-aged male political leadership in Wales.

the ‘Feds’ – and Clegg and Danny Alexander in particular – were not always comfortable. But unlike other Wales-Westminster dialogues, the channels were always open, and with a proper sense of parity.

Her responsible, and constructive, leadership during the UK coalition may have surprised commentators who cling to the one-dimensional ‘rainbow wrecker’ caricature. There remains a sense of frustration amongst close colleagues that Kirsty’s not received the proper recognition for the wins on regional pay, the St David’s Day agreement and the promise of rail electrification.

All too often during that five-year period, it was Kirsty and her immediate team who nursed the better sense of party policy and principle. Her post-election analysis of the coalition (available on the IWA’s Click on Wales) ranks as one the most cogent offered by any senior Lib Dem figure. But despite her undoubted strengths as a parliamentary performer and constituency campaigner, it is her skill and nuance in the close combat of negotiation that’s become Kirsty’s strongest suit. In recent years, wins on the Welsh government budget provide further evidence of this.

It is perhaps a quality that others wouldn’t have expected of Kirsty during the squabbling Lib Dem group meetings of the early Assembly. But peers such as the First Minister or Nick Bourne would surely attest to that ability, as would those ‘Feds’ – friends and sometime foes – Clegg, Alexander, Ed Davey et al.

Kirsty’s reluctance to invest substantial time and effort playing the

Bay bubble’s parlour games may have contributed to that continuing caricature and lack of credit for those achievements during the coalition. Back in Brecon, amongst the family and other animals, is the preferred environment these days.

That lack of care for coalition-building across the spectrum of Welsh civil society may be a vulnerability in her leadership.

The burden of fronting the party has been taken squarely on her own shoulders, and Kirsty can be reluctant to draw upon the encouragement and advice of allies and supporters. Yet she enjoys immense loyalty from current and former members of staff, as well as enduring vaulting attempts from London-based fixers to get her a seat in Westminster to ‘save the party’.

Despite her frustrations with the Bay’s political culture, expressed as far back as 2007, it is the challenge of trying to provide better public services, social mobility and rewarding enterprise that continue to motivate. The Senedd is the place to fight for these causes. Yet that paradox of the frustration and the fight is one of many for this outsider-insider.

On becoming leader, she was still under forty, and yet she’d been a parliamentarian for almost a decade. The first female leader of a mainstream party in Wales but her manifest destiny for 15 years. An excellent empathiser and natural communicator, yet as much a political geek as readers of *Agenda*, joining the Liberals at just 16 and canvassing for Clinton in 1992. The girl with roots in Blaen-y-Maes but a product of St Michael’s School. On the centre-left by instinct and inclination but never tempted by Labour, a committed

advocate of home rule but unmoved by romantic nationalism; a Tinopolis ‘townie’ at home on the farm in Powys, yet born in Somerset (to Welsh parents).

She’d always been the great white hope of Lib Dems in Wales. But she’s been dealt the hardest hand imaginable. Who knows what might have happened if she’d been at the helm in more clement conditions? In 2007 for example – could the party have reached nine or ten AMs? It’s a reasonable counter-factual. Of course, she would then have had the headaches and hopes of a sharing-government leadership. But if the last seven years are any evidence, then I’m pretty sure that Kirsty Williams would have met those two imposters just the same.

On becoming leader, she claimed a success for the party in ‘breaking the mould’ of tired, middle-aged male political leadership in Wales. The landscape is rather different now, and the trials she has faced in the last few years would have defeated those many pale and male MPs and AMs who lack anything close to Kirsty’s talent and resilience.

The denizens of the bars and cafes of Mermaid Quay wrote her off five years ago – and she delivered a result that comprehensively outperformed the party in Scotland and England. There are sure to be twists and turns before May’s election, so let’s see how this campaigner-to-the-core capitalises on those opportunities.

Those with the champagne on ice, ready to celebrate the disappearance of Kirsty Williams and the Lib Dems, may just have to wait a bit longer.



Dewi Knight works on education and government relations between the UK and China. He previously held policy, strategy and communications positions for the University of Bedfordshire, The Open University and the Liberal Democrats.

In Parenthesis: music, mayhem and majesty

David Pountney explains the sense of destiny behind Welsh National Opera's forthcoming adaptation of David Jones' epic poem of the Great War, *In Parenthesis*

Like so many of the best ideas, an operatic version of David Jones' text, *In Parenthesis*, found me – I take no credit for discovering it. Following a chance conversation about Richard Burton, David Jones and *In Parenthesis*, Emma Jenkins quite independently got in touch with me on January 24th 2012 to say that she and her husband, David Antrobus, had been working on a stage version of the text, and did I have any ideas about a composer?

When I realised on the train back to Cardiff that 2016 was not only the 100th anniversary of the Battle of the Somme but also WNO's 70th anniversary, it was merely a question of bowing to the inevitable. What's the point of resistance if something taps you firmly on the shoulder? The result of this serendipitously pointing finger will be unveiled a mere four and a half years after Emma's email.

Destiny is an appropriate topic for this particular opera project, because the continuum of time, of experience, of history lies at the heart of Jones' work – described by T S Eliot as the greatest artwork to have emerged from the First World War. The war may have been branded as the first 'modern' war, but Jones is quick to point out that the men trudging forward in their chalk-caked sheepskins looked like medieval shepherds. Indeed, he not only saw a connection, he saw no difference.

The central thesis of his understanding of his experience in the trenches, and the one that makes this such a perfect operatic subject, is that

for him the soldier, i.e. he Jones/Private Ball, standing in the muddy water of the trench, is sharing a timeless experience of grassroots warfare. He is at one with the men who retreated from Moscow, at one with the men of Crecy, he fought with Caesar and Alexander, and was always and everywhere and for all times the same poorly shod bastard eating his miserable rations and nervously shitting where he prays a sniper can't blow his balls off.

This sense of the timeless experience of the private soldier (we are not talking at any point here about the experience seen from an officer's viewpoint, even though Jones' officers are admiringly and sympathetically portrayed) is also an essential element of Jones' experience of comradeship – a vital and sustaining experience for Jones' vulnerable and disturbed personality. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the very tender and personal sketches Jones made of soldiers,

These are the very human aspects of Jones' vision – the repetition through history of the humble soldier's experience, and the compassion and love of comradeship in dire circumstances.

caught in idle moments, inadvertent seconds of repose before the onslaught resumed.

These are the very human aspects of Jones' vision – the repetition through history of the humble soldier's experience, and the compassion and love of comradeship in dire circumstances. But Jones has another string to his very long bow – one that he doubtless pulled at Agincourt too! This is his understanding of the mythic presence hovering over everyday life. The towering figures of the

bards, whether condemning him to march further, or drawing him seductively into the mayhem of the wood, or sympathetically bidding him *in extremis* to lay down his rifle against the majestic and magical oak, are there as the ever present voices of myth and therefore, by extension, music, for what is music if not the language of myth?

How to ally music with the cacophony of 'modern' warfare? The mythic muse that Jones summons to articulate his vision is the key, for this makes clear that this vision of warfare, created, deliberately, eighteen years after the too, too vivid experiences of battle, is one of musical and literary imagination – an imagination which opera is precisely designed to convey.

Jones, the visionary private soldier, has been somewhat overshadowed by the more articulate voices of the officer poets who so brilliantly pinned the terrible events of 14-18 to the literary wall. Jones, as Eliot

recognised, goes even deeper, articulating the experience of the working class private soldier as, surprisingly, the mouthpiece of the Gods of war and violence. He does not ask for pity, or even understanding: he defines the dimensions of this titanic experience, and then, in the interests of his unsurprisingly fragile sanity, puts the whole thing (In Parenthesis).

The dimensions of this extremely rich topic mean that it has not only formed the basis of a very ambitious new opera



Courtesy of WNO

(from composer Iain Bell and librettists, Emma Jenkins and David Antrobus), but we are also able to use its multiple facets to extend our message and remembrance of the experiences of war to young people across Wales and England.

Our 'Engage and Participate' programme, in association with Literature Wales, Can Sing, National Museum of Wales and National Library of Wales will stimulate community enquiry into family history and heritage, especially focussing on areas connected to David Jones' Division - the 38th Division of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers - in locations from Caernarfon to Southampton. All the young people

engaged in these projects will have the chance to visit a WNO opera performance in either Cardiff or Llandudno and also to visit a National Museum of Wales heritage site. There are 'Come and Sing' events based around the famous Welsh song, *Sosban Fach*, which is referenced in the score of *In Parenthesis* and was a traditional song in the WW1 trenches.

There are also digital composition and animation programmes being rolled out in six schools in Communities First areas of South Wales. The young people participating in these programmes will be invited to the Wales Millennium Centre to see a short performance from the opera

and, through a backstage tour, to get a feel for the diverse working opportunities available within the arts.

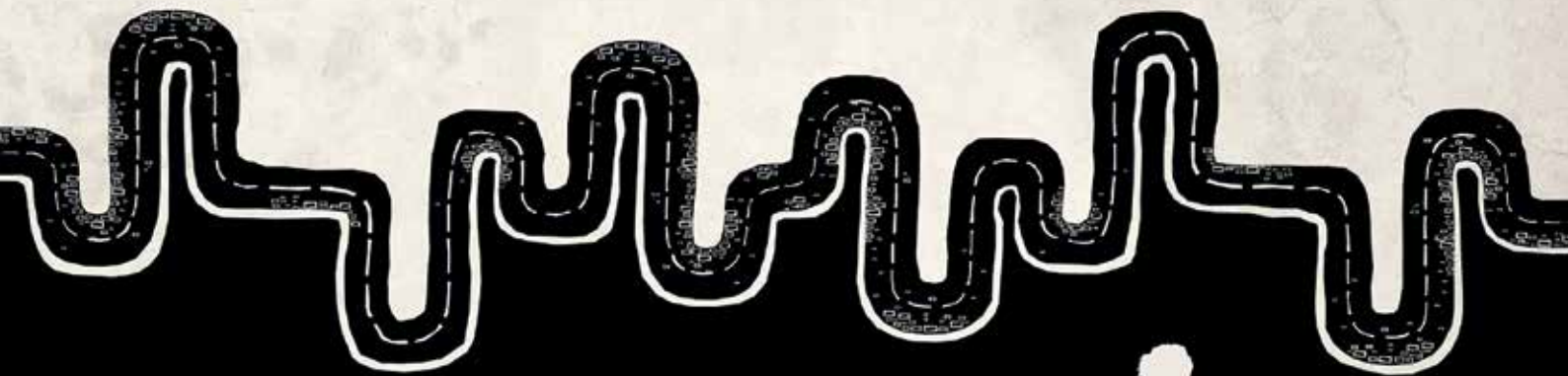
In addition, *In Parenthesis* will have its own website - inparenthesis.org.uk - with a series of episodes that explore the life and work of David Jones, the experiences that inspired the poem and the process of bringing his work to the opera stage. Audiences will also have the opportunity to watch the opera online for a period of six months from 1st July. This will be the first WNO production to feature on The Opera Platform, a website dedicated to live opera supported by the European Commission and a network of 15 opera companies. To enhance broader audience engagement WNO has also commissioned a special digital artwork: 'Field' will be a spectacular site-specific installation that will occupy the forecourt to WMC, and commemorate electronically the Welsh soldiers who fought in this momentous engagement.

David Jones' text is unquestionably great, but perhaps finally it stands on the brink of greatness truly celebrated. It has inspired an opera - one of the most complex manifestations of our shared European culture - and, branching out from that, will stimulate a massive engagement of young people with the literary, historical, community, creative and digital aspects of a story rooted in some of the most terrible events ever witnessed by mankind. This is an act of remembrance with profound creative and informative possibilities crossing the generations.



David Pountney is Artistic Director of Welsh National Opera. *In Parenthesis* has been commissioned with the support of the Nicholas John Trust and 14-18 NOW.

The world premiere of the opera, *In Parenthesis*, will take place at the Wales Millennium Centre, Cardiff on 13 May, with other Cardiff performances on 21 May and 3 June; it will be at the Birmingham Hippodrome on 10 June and at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden on 29 June and 1 July. In April the National Museum in Cardiff will open an exhibition devoted to the Battle of Mametz Wood that will include the largest ever group of David Jones's war drawings.



Convergence: Wales and the digital promised land



Colin Thomas explores an altered media landscape to find Wales catching up with the present

'Convergence? Converging what with what?' When I mentioned the word at an IWA media meeting, one seasoned Welsh hack was more than sceptical. He argued that, although it was a fashionable word, there was considerable vagueness about what it actually meant. Little sign either that it was changing media practice, he asserted, at least not in Wales.

It was Henry Jenkins' book *Convergence Culture – where old and new media collide* that helped to make the term fashionable. Jenkins tends to wordiness but it is possible to extract a quotable definition from his book: 'by convergence, I mean the flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries.'

The scepticism about Wales' response to convergence would have been

justified even less than a decade ago. Indeed, Ian Hargreaves expressed some concern about an apparent reluctance to respond to the digital revolution in his *Heart of Digital Wales* report (2010). In a review of creative industries for what was then the Welsh Assembly Government, Hargreaves warned that 'without a sustained further effort now, there is a serious danger that Wales's relative position in creative industries will weaken in the coming years.'

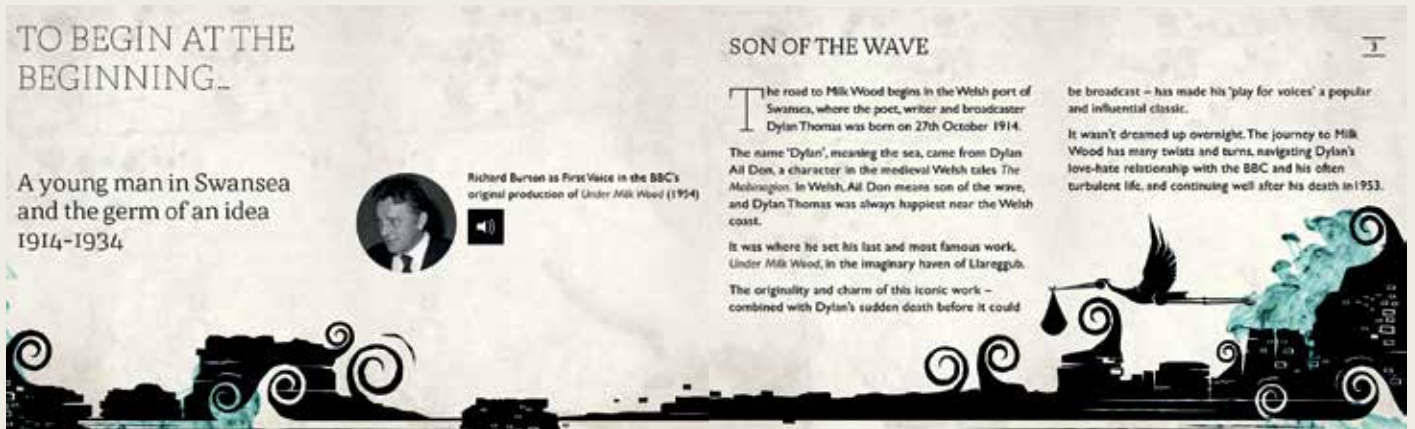
Describing digital media as 'the promised land for creative industries policy', Professor Hargreaves stressed that 'without a stronger performance in this area, the success of the whole creative industries strategy will be in jeopardy.' He went on to argue that, whilst different media will continue to be distinct, 'at the edges these

all morph into each other.' And that is precisely what is beginning to happen.

It is most striking in journalism where the decline in the sale of papers like the *Western Mail* and *Daily Post* has been paralleled by a rapid rise in the number of hits on their websites. *Wales Arts Review* decided not to have a printed version at all, publishing only digitally, whilst *Buzz*, a 'what's on' magazine for the Cardiff area, takes it for granted that it will also have a linked *Buzzmagtv* channel on YouTube.

Welsh book publishers seem to have been slow off the mark, most of them seeing digital publication as simply making a printed text available online. A report made for the Welsh Books Council in 2014 appears to indicate that this may change in the near future. Mairwen Jones in *Publishing Children's Books in Welsh* argues

Welsh book publishers seem to have been slow off the mark, most of them seeing digital publication as simply making a printed text available online.



Images: BBC Wales eBooks

Guiding my grandsons through a *Jack and the Beanstalk* app has helped me to realise how blurred the dividing line between story telling and digital games has become.

that the Council should initiate discussions between Welsh publishers and the main producers of digital material in Wales and organise workshops which include someone who is 'very enthusiastic about the value of apps and their relevance to books.' The slashing of the Welsh Books Council budget may well now make that difficult to achieve.

Guiding my grandsons through a *Jack and the Beanstalk* app has helped me to realise how blurred the dividing line between story telling and digital games has become. To get the giant's gold, Jack's assistants – those using the app – are required to develop literacy and numeracy skills, even to grapple with exercises in logic which sometimes had me stumped. Children who grow up playing digital games will surely expect to see their educators take note of what is happening.

So it is heartening to see the emergence of Hwb, the National Digital Learning Council for Wales for there are surely possibilities for cooperation with Wales' thriving digital games sector – not to mention our history and heritage industry. Inspired by apps like *American*

History 101 and *Timeline World War 2* and guided by Bill Jones, the Professor of Modern Welsh History at Cardiff University, Thud Media and I have produced *The Dragon and the Eagle/Y Ddraig a'r Eryr* on the history of Welsh emigration to America. This enabled a combination of text, video, documents, music and interactive maps to be incorporated into a single product.

If Hwb is to achieve one of its main aims – 'to promote and support the use of digital resources and technologies by learners and teachers' – it will need more such apps, specifically designed for Wales. For a generation that goes first to a digital device for information, the set app may soon displace the set book.

To some that is an alarming prospect. No doubt the monks who crafted the illustrated manuscripts were horrified by the future opened up by Gutenberg's press. But some in Wales have responded to the digital future with excitement and enthusiasm. TELL's multi-platform rendering of the Agatha Christie story *Mr Quin, Atticus* and *On Par's* 360-degree virtual reality work and BBC Cymru/

Wales' superb *Dylan Thomas and the Road to Milk Wood* are all examples of Welsh media cross-pollination: the promised land of convergence. Gruff Rhys' witty and erudite *American Interior* tells the story of explorer John Evans in the form of a film, an album and an app – he's even produced one of those old-fashioned booky things on the subject!

This is the kind of thing that Henry Jenkins was predicting in his phrase 'transmedia storytelling'. He went on to say 'convergence represents a paradigm shift... we are in a critical moment of transition during which the old rules are open to change and companies may be forced to renegotiate their relationship to consumers.' Ffilm Cymru/Wales' Magnifier programme to 'encourage networks and collaborative working across the creative industries' and the decision of BAFTA Cymru and Creative Cardiff to hold a conference on the convergence issue in April indicate that this renegotiation is now going on in Wales too.

Ian Hargreaves' warnings are at last being responded to.

Colin Thomas is a producer, director and writer. *The Dragon and the Eagle/Y Ddraig a'r Eryr* was released by Thud Media in 2014.

Cardiff: a Welsh Barcelona?

Missives from
Modern Wales

Dear Geraint,

I love Cardiff. I lived there for five years, and having been brought up in a city, I love cities in general too. But then I moved to Gwynedd. It was an accident. My children moved to Gwynedd, and I gave up my job to be near them. But rural Wales was tough. I spent two-and-a-half years in Porthmadog, unemployed. It wasn't a bad time. I wrote a couple of books, went for long walks, became a Town Councillor, but I would have preferred to have been in work.

As you know, I got very angry about this last November. Things all came to a head for me when the Westminster Government announced its intention to close the tax office in Porthmadog and transfer the jobs to Cardiff. The tax office provides HMRC's Welsh-language service. Moving it out of Gwynedd - to save money, to better align the service with other Welsh-language services in the capital - is a London decision, but defended by Stephen Crabb, and symptomatic of a very Welsh frame of mind.

In Wales today, all the jobs go to Cardiff. Even the Welsh-speaking ones! Indeed, specifically the Welsh-speaking ones. There's a sort of cultural inevitability about it. In post-devolution Wales we don't have much faith in the nation anymore. In its place, we want a metropolis, nation as hyperreality. People think that Cardiff can be a sort of time-capsule which will survive the death of the Welsh nation in rural Wales.

Young people, the media, the football, the political influence, the social relevance, the centre of gravity: all in Cardiff. Cardiff is a lovely city, but we want to turn it into a Welsh Barcelona: dominant, omnipresent, sucking everything in. We're not building a nation in Wales anymore, we're building a city-state.

*Kind regards,
Simon*

Simon Brooks loves Cardiff. But he is angry about the trajectory the Welsh capital seems to be taking, becoming a city-state that sucks the life - and the economic dynamism - out of the rest of the nation, especially its Welsh-language heartlands. Here, in correspondence with **Geraint Talfan Davies**, the two discuss 'the Cardiff effect', local government reorganisation and the future of the north.

Dear Simon,

No one doubts the scale and depth of the economic problems facing Wales, or that those problems seem more intractable in some parts of Wales than others. But it is simplistic to pretend that the growth of Cardiff is the source of all woes for the rest of Wales. I can fully understand your anger at the relocation of HMRC's Welsh language service from Porthmadog to Cardiff. As you note, this was a London decision - unnecessarily mechanistic in my view - so I cannot see how it is 'symptomatic of a Welsh frame of mind'. Nor does it support your proposition that 'all the jobs go to Cardiff'.

I have always wished that there was a better understanding of Cardiff in the rest of Wales and of the rest of Wales in Cardiff. In many cases - although not in your own - one can put it down to mutual ignorance. But at bottom it is a function of poor communications, a deep concern at the erosion of the Welsh speaking heartland, as well as a symptom of frustration at an inability to counter long term fundamental trends - rural depopulation and urban growth, not to mention the UK government's disregard of manufacturing over the last three decades.

We cannot wish away the worldwide growth of cities - be they large like London or Beijing, or small - very small - like Cardiff. (It is smaller than Sheffield or Bradford or Wakefield.) People have been attracted to cities throughout human history, mostly with very positive effects for mankind - for knowledge, innovation and culture. Arguably, if Wales had developed a significant city a few centuries earlier than it did, then the story of our nation and its language might have been different. We are where we are.

Economic development across Wales is not a zero sum game. In the 40 years between 1971 and 2011 Cardiff, as a percentage of the Welsh population, grew only from 10.7% to 11.2% - hardly evidence of a devouring beast - a share on a par with Copenhagen's share of egalitarian Denmark.

Of course, any Welsh Government needs to share public resources fairly and effectively, but I do think that the best antidote to any incipient centralisation must lie in the knowledge and energies found within the regions of Wales.

Kind regards,
Geraint

Dear Geraint,

Perhaps indeed if Wales had had a proper city, things would be better today. It is a Marxist argument. Give us a city, and we would have had an urban Welsh-speaking culture and a nationalistic bourgeoisie. Cardiff would have been Prague-on-sea!

But it never happened. And because Cardiff emerged as Bristol, not Riga, there was room for other modern identities to develop in Wales. The Valleys of Gwyn Thomas, 'little Moscow' and the Internationale. Rural Wales, revolutionary cockpit of language struggle. These modernities are central to the Welsh nation, and Wales cannot exist without them.

Things have got worse since devolution. The rhetoric of nation-building has silenced critics of Cardiff centralisation as 'unpatriotic'. Rural Wales exists today to export its young people, much as it did in the past to Liverpool and London. The name of the city has changed, but not the nature of the relationship itself.

Okay, I agree, much of this is because of macroeconomics. But the Welsh State is at fault too. The fact that not a single national institution of real significance has its headquarters in north-west Wales is not an economic decision. It is a political one.

Kind regards,

Simon

Dear Simon,

One has to draw a distinction between the trajectory of Wales' largest city and the nature of Welsh government. You seem to conflate the two. We can surely agree that the Welsh state is not without its faults!

I applaud what the Welsh Government has done to encourage city region collaboration, based on Cardiff and Swansea, though I wish that things were moving more quickly in south east Wales. Cardiff's per capita GVA is only 82% of that of Nottingham, and 71% that of Glasgow. Swansea's is 62% of the Nottingham figure and 54% of Glasgow.

On the other hand, I would be very critical of the Welsh Government's failure to reform local government and, most importantly, to empower local government. In seeking balanced development in Wales a major worry is that this period of austerity will denude councils of their strategic capacities. This threat alone makes reorganisation necessary.

We can both agree that nothing like enough effort has been put into the task of creating a coherent vision for north Wales, particularly given economic and political developments in the northwest of England. Our universities – that are helpfully dispersed – surely have a role to play as powerfully catalytic assets.

What I don't buy is the argument that it is only by putting a brake on Cardiff that you can address the strategic development issues of rural Wales and north Wales or, for that matter, 'the Valleys of Gwyn Thomas'. It ought not to be beyond our government to address these issues simultaneously. By the way, the 'modernities' that you refer to are not unchanging.

Kind regards,

Geraint



Dear Geraint,

I think it's time to cut to the chase. This is a cultural problem, not just an economic one. All national movements aspire to States, but new States are centripetal. The centre of the State develops mass and gravity, and sucks things in. Before devolution, cross-Wales bodies used to meet in the Metropole, Llandrindod, now they all meet in Cardiff. The national football team used to visit places like Wrexham, now it only plays in Cardiff. Urdd Gobaith Cymru had its headquarters in Aberystwyth, now it is in Cardiff. Individually, such things are inoffensive: taken together, they represent a movement.

And what economic development we have in the north-west - outdoor activities, a sailing centre, a nuclear power station, perhaps a spaceport - is not of the nation. It is not just the economic atrophy, the minimum wage jobs, the candy floss careers which hurt - but the way we are closed out of the nation because it is the body politic itself, which is Cardiff.

In the 1970s, the sociologist Michael Hechter developed the concept of 'internal colonialism' to describe the exploitative relationship of England with Wales. This still holds true - which is why I'm a little suspicious of the idea of north Wales as a fairground adjunct to some English 'northern powerhouse' - but a neo-colonialism has been placed across it, the relationship of Cardiff with north Wales. We export our raw assets, people, to Cardiff, and get to be at the wrong end of a branch plant economy.

I am a nationalist, so am not really allowed to say these things, because like good old-fashioned unionists of old, we nationalists believe in 'one nation' (and, yes, I still love Cardiff). But an independent Wales will only make things worse, unless we reconfigure the Welsh State. Gwynedd should never be independent: it is not a nation. But it should have an ability to shape its own future.

Why should Wales be a unitary state? Power - real power - should be devolved to the peripheries, just like the SNP have offered devolution in an independent Scotland to Shetland, Orkney and the Western Isles.

But enough of the politics. Tell me how we might best release 'the knowledge and energies found within the regions of Wales.'

*Best wishes,
Simon*

Dear Simon,

One problem of our political culture is that, despite all the talk of our communitarian spirit, it carries so many echoes of the long history of English centralism - a centralism that was intensified over the last century by the executive demands of two world wars - aided by Labour's traditionally strong statist inclinations. This has meant that, to date, in our default institutional settings control trumps empowerment. It's time we broke out of that. I agree it would be undesirable for Wales to become a unitary state.

The re-empowerment of local government is an urgent priority. Without it we could drift into the Irish situation where local authority chief executives are effectively civil servants, centrally appointed and answerable as much to national governments as their own councils.

Unfortunately, reorganisation in Wales has been held up by a sharp division of opinion between those content with the local government system as it is - often justified in nationalist circles with reference to a Swiss cantonal model - and those who hanker after a return to something close to the eight county model that was scrapped in 1990s. Personally, I don't think the Swiss model can be transplanted to Wales.

I would go for eight counties, with the important proviso that it is underpinned by a tier of community councils even more local than the existing authorities. Eight counties would enable the reconstruction of important strategic capacities in local government as well as providing more effective partnership (or counterpoise when necessary) with Welsh Government.

Realistically, this is going to take 4-5 years to achieve. While we wait, the local authorities in north Wales, together with the Welsh Government, need to collaborate quickly to create a clear set of economic priorities and objectives for the north. Current initiatives are under-powered. The universities of Wales should also be incentivised to engage much more deeply with these processes within their regions, as well as nationally.

If we don't want north Wales to be 'a fairground adjunct to some English northern powerhouse', it is up to us to determine what substance to give our own north.

Geraint

Dear Geraint,

It's good to hear you say that Wales shouldn't be a unitary state. Practical ways should be sought to give the regions a voice. There is much to advocate the idea of a Minister for north Wales. And councils in rural Wales should have additional powers in areas which affect them disproportionately – agriculture, tourism, Welsh as a community language. Why should the Glamorgan block decide these things? Far better to trust subsidiarity.

I agree too that local government reorganisation could be an important counterweight to Cardiff centralisation. But there has to be some connection to community. God forbid that we end up with another Betsi Cadwaladr! In the north-west, merging Conwy with Gwynedd and Anglesey is a step too far. Welsh-speakers would be in a minority in every county in Wales, and there would be no democratic basis for the Gwynedd model of language planning in education and administration. Given the central role played by Gwynedd in strategic thinking on the language today, this would have national implications. We need three counties in the north.

We need two or three economic motor regions in rural Wales to offset the city regions. Aberystwyth, the Caernarfon-Bangor strip and Llandudno are obvious candidates. There should be tax breaks. I applaud Ieuan Wyn Jones' Science Park. I wish Aberystwyth University would get its act together, and it might help if we stopped exporting our HE money to England. Whole organisations should be moved out of Cardiff, so that the north can get its intelligentsia back. Literature Wales, the National Eisteddfod, National Museum Wales, the Welsh Language Board, the Arts Council of Wales: why must the headquarters all be in Cardiff? Tourism could be in Llandudno, the National Museums HQ in Llanberis, the language stuff in Caernarfon and some of the culture in Aberystwyth. Welsh organisations should do what the German Länder do, build the regions and keep a shoe cupboard and a couple of lobbyists in the metropolis.

I agree that this is not just a public sector issue. We have few imaginative ideas for private sector growth in Wales. But it might help if the public sector took the lead.

*Yours,
Simon*

 Geraint Talfan Davies is Chair of the WNO. Simon Brooks is a member of Cyngor Tref Porthmadog (Porthmadog Town Council). A well-known author and academic, his latest book, *Pam na fu Cymru* (Why Wales never was), is published by the University of Wales Press



Reviews

[My Histories & A Life in History](#) | [Petticoat Heroes: Gender, Culture and Popular Protest in the Rebecca Riots](#) | [The Tradition: A New History of Welsh Art 1400-1990](#) | [Seeking God's Kingdom: The Nonconformist Social Gospel in Wales 1906-1939](#) & [Rhys Lewis: Minister of Bethel](#) | [Still with the Music: My Autobiography](#) | [The Roots of Rock from Cardiff to Mississippi and Back](#) | [Alun, Gweno and Freda](#) | [Red Dragons: The Story of Welsh Football](#) |

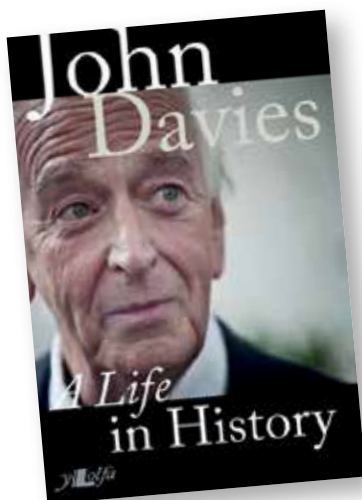
Welsh Lives in Context

Peter Stead



My Histories
Kenneth O. Morgan
University of Wales Press, 2015

A Life in History
John Davies
Y Lolfa, 2015



narrative but also a distinct and coherent set of values. Subsequently, as a new age unfolded with many surprising developments, some depressing, others very welcome, it is not surprising that prominent historians have been eager to pen autobiographies in which they place their own lives into the wider story that they had helped not only to narrate and interpret but also to shape.

Most appropriately it was the late Professor Glanmor Williams who in 2002 led the way with his modestly titled *A Life*. It was Glanmor who, as Head of History at Swansea University, launched a new era in Welsh scholarship when in the late 1950s he decided that his department needed lecturers and researchers who were able to make sense of the great social and political changes Wales had experienced in the twentieth century. His book records that seminal decision and illustrates the forces that led a historian

of the Reformation to be drawn into the complex cultural realities of a new era when scholars had to pay heed to new linguistic, economic and media realities. More recently, Dai Smith, who in 1967 had been tempted to leave New York to join Glanmor's department precisely because, more than most, he fully understood the kind of History that was now being prescribed in Singleton Park, has given us *In The Frame* (2010), a book in which he brilliantly evokes the varied and sophisticated political, intellectual and cultural stimuli that Welsh society offered in the second half of the last century.

That Glanmor's legacy lives on is shown in two more memoirs by veteran historians Kenneth Morgan and John Davies, both of whose first academic jobs had come as part of that scholarly revolution at Swansea. In many ways it had been the appointment of Ken Morgan, together with that of Ieuan Gwynedd Jones, that had announced the new agenda - and now in his *My Histories* Ken gives full emphasis to what was a vital moment for both historical scholarship and the Welsh political scene. Whilst at Swansea he had published his *Wales in British Politics, 1868-1922* (1963) in which he explained how Welsh radicalism had developed into a powerful force at Westminster. His readers had been given a balanced celebration of one political era but in a way the author was inviting us to follow him into subsequent decades when Wales was to forge a new political tradition which offered Westminster a developing set of social imperatives. Morgan returned to Oxford in 1966 and, but for seven years as head of Aberystwyth University, that has remained the base from which he has given us some thirty volumes that essentially trace

That individual historians have played a crucial role in shaping post-industrial Wales was first highlighted by that most perceptive of commentators Patrick Hannan in his 1999 book *The Welsh Illusion*. Trained as a historian but working as a broadcaster, Hannan was very aware that, whilst 'journalism was the first draft of history', in the last quarter of the last century it was historians rather than journalists, or even politicians, who were reading the signs and providing the people of Wales not only with an explanatory

Those of us who were taught by Ken or have attended any of his countless public lectures have always appreciated the clarity of his argument and the highly personal rhythm he builds up as facts are elegantly marshaled into a convincing interpretation delivered in a balanced but trenchant manner in which wit is given full vein.

how reforms and ideals shaped within Welsh society have been expressed in the politics of Westminster and Cardiff.

Those of us who were taught by Ken or have attended any of his countless public lectures have always appreciated the clarity of his argument and the highly personal rhythm he builds up as facts are elegantly marshaled into a convincing interpretation delivered in a balanced but trenchant manner in which wit is given full vein. These qualities of authoritative readability characterise all his books and none more so than this new charming autobiography. The essence of the volume is the seamless manner in which the author blends the public with the private, that is political analysis with a full account of the many friendships and travels that form the basis of modern academic life. There is plenty here for students of the British Labour party and of Devolution; there is a robust defence of the House of Lords in which the author plays a constructive role and there are sharp criticisms of those who have threatened the

quality of Higher Education in Wales. Above all, one appreciates the way in which the author's democratic socialist and pacifist values infuse every section of the book, and the reason for this is amply explained in the initial, beautifully written, chapters recounting his boyhood in North London and coastal Merionethshire. Lord Morgan leaves us in no doubt that the Labour Movement is nothing if not a moral campaign and that many of the values we strive for today were taken for granted in the Britain of 1939-1951 for which he displays considerable nostalgia.

The late and much lamented John Davies, John Bwlchllan, joined the Swansea Department in 1963. At that time Glanmor was fully conscious of the way in which Gwynfor Evans and Saunders Lewis were in the process of inspiring a new generation of Welsh youth to fight battles on the political, language and cultural fronts. John came to Swansea with impeccable Cymdiethas Yr Iaith credentials and there were those who expected to encounter a veritable Robespierre.

We never doubted John's commitment to Wales but more in evidence were his encyclopaedic and global knowledge and his considerable charm in developing fans among male and female colleagues from all corners of the world. What John made manifest, and it remained the hallmark of his career, was that there were no limits on being Welsh. The essence of any nation is that it allows individual fulfillment in every cultural respect; one's Welshness should go hand in hand with regarding the world as your oyster.

John's memoir first appeared in Welsh and is now published in Jon Gower's translation with the title *A Life in History*. It is a delightful read, capturing all the wit and adventure of the author's life and reminding us of that quite remarkable quality (and expression) of delight that characterised John's reaction to making a new friend or discovering a new place. John was Rhondda-born (as he loved reminding the *Llafur* faithful) but he was molded in Bwlchllan in Ceredigion, molded above all by a quite remarkable widowed mother Mary, one of those teachers who gave Wales its backbone and its passion for knowledge. John's father, Daniel, had died when he was eleven, having earlier survived the First World war experience of fighting in Palestine where he had been weakened by malaria. In a similar fashion Ken Morgan's account makes clear his enormous debt to his father, a teacher whose service in that same war had taken him to Egypt, Palestine and Damascus. Evidently great Welshmen can be the offspring of remarkable parents and not the least fascination of biographies is that we can trace the patterns of enlightenment and fulfilment over generations. Both these books are a reminder of the complexity, rich diversity and sheer satisfaction that life in Wales allows. They unerringly point to the Wales to which we must adhere even as we seek new ways of ensuring fulfillment for all.

Peter Stead is a writer, broadcaster and historian

Evidently great Welshmen can be the offspring of remarkable parents and not the least fascination of biographies is that we can trace the patterns of enlightenment and fulfilment over generations. Both these books are a reminder of the complexity, rich diversity and sheer satisfaction that life in Wales allows.

Occupy Wales' Streets

Rachel Trezise



Petticoat Heroes: Gender, Culture and Popular Protest in the Rebecca Riots

Rhian E. Jones

University of Wales Press, 2015

Before I read this book I had only a vague notion about what the Rebecca Riots involved: gangs of men dressed in Welsh Lady stovepipe hats, attacking the toll gates of rural Wales. This knowledge was based on stories my grandmother had told me about the history of her part of the world; a small village in Carmarthenshire. But somehow those stories had got muddled with another story my mother used to tell me about actual Welsh women in traditional costume frightening off La Legion Noire during the Battle of Fishguard fifty years earlier. (French troops mistook the women for British Grenadiers, or so the story went.) 'Petticoat Heroes' would at least cast a light on something I did not comprehend very well. And I knew I was in safe hands with Rhian E. Jones, author of *Clampdown: Pop-cultural Wars on Class and Gender* and *The Velvet Coalmine* blog, where she admirably dissects the Riot Grrrl movement, poverty porn and everything in between. You really can't go wrong with anything named after a Clash song about the catastrophe that is Capitalism. That's always been my philosophy. But what of early nineteenth

century Welsh history with no reference to the Manic Street Preachers?

The book promises to draw on cultural history, gender studies and symbolic anthropology to present fresh and alternative arguments on the meaning of Rebeccaite costume and ritual, the significance of the feminine in protest and popular culture, the use of Rebecca's image in Victorian press and political discourse, and the ways in which the events and image of Rebecca herself were integrated into politics, culture and popular memory in Wales and beyond. And of course, Jones delivers.

It's interesting, as Jones points out, that '... the degree to which the image of Rebecca and her followers as ersatz females has gained currency in historical and popular memory of events obscures the more intriguing possibilities suggested by contemporary accounts.' I had no idea that as well as the wigs and shawls the Rebeccaites had actually worn fake beards and working boots, and carried swords and guns. Historians were quick to note the protestors' use of feminine clothing but overlooked the masculine elements of the costume. This made it easier for the printed press to portray Rebecca, amongst other things, as an unruly woman, 'in which guise [she] and her followers were presented as a violent and subversive threat to established authority' at a time when 'debates on the moral character of women and the proper

Perhaps most significant, in the current political climate of economic austerity, is Jones' epilogue, in which she discusses the Rebecca Riots in the context of the contemporary resurgence of leaderless protest around the world, including the Occupy and Anonymous movements.

nature of women's work permeated political, religious and scientific discourses as well as fields of literary and visual representation.'

It's remarkable too, how widely Rebecca's presence was felt and utilised in the public imagination. Jones notes that evidence given at the 1846 divorce trial of the ninth Earl Ferrers described him as 'habitually dressing up after the fashion of the tollgate breakers.' An artist's impression of the protestors published in the *Illustrated London News* at the height of the riots put the men in traditional tall black hats, despite no mention in court reports of said hats, no doubt to portray the men as Welsh rather than, or as well as, female.

Perhaps most significant, in the current political climate of economic austerity, is Jones' epilogue, in which she discusses the Rebecca Riots in the context of the contemporary resurgence of leaderless protest around the world, including the Occupy and Anonymous movements. It is generally assumed the Rebeccaites were successful in their plan to destroy the tolls imposed on road travel in south West Wales, but tolls were only one among many social grievances generated by the New Poor Law, the theoretical basis for which was the principle that 'population increased faster than resources unless checked'. Under the law, conditions in workhouses were to be made such as to deter any but the truly destitute from applying for relief, (reminiscent perhaps of the current dismantling of the welfare state). Jones says, 'toll gates were singled out as a suitable target for assault since they were highly visible objects, less easily defended and more easily attacked than other symbols of discontent such as workhouses or landed estates.' While it's heartening to know that wherever people feel they've not been served by democracy the likes of Rebecca will be revived, it's utterly miserable to think about just how long the very same campaign has been waged.

Rachel Trezise is an award-winning short story writer, novelist and playwright

In from the margins

Joao Morais



The Tradition: A New History of Welsh Art 1400-1990

Peter Lord
Parthian, 2016

The *Tradition* is an important book not only for those with an interest in art but also for those who would like to better understand the history of this nation. Peter Lord has spent 30 years as a leading figure in the field, due to his television and radio work as well as his position as a research fellow at the CREW Research centre at Swansea University. Since his previous three-volume study on Welsh art, *The Visual Culture of Wales*, went out of print, Wales has been without a guide to this vital aspect of our history. With this book, Lord has done the nation a favour.

Lord does a great job of bringing importance to the historical margins in a place that has often been portrayed as marginal. Starting at the turn of the fifteenth century, for instance, we find that much fine woodwork in Wales had been lost due to the revolt against Henry IV's English rule instigated by Owain Glyndŵr and the following Wars of the Roses later that century.

Much of the early part of the book deals with religious iconography, before moving on to consider the portraiture and landscape paintings of later centuries. It includes many well-known pictures, such as

the Alfred Janes portrait of a young Dylan Thomas, but also more recent discoveries. At St Cadoc's Church in Llancarfan in the Vale of Glamorgan sits a well-preserved painting of St George and the Dragon, painted circa 1455, which lay covered from the 1540s until restoration work began in 2010. Far from being the patron saint of England (at the point of being covered), St George was a well-known figure all over western Europe, famed for his chivalrous nature and devotion to God. Such paintings, once common, show that far from being an unsophisticated periphery of the provincial gwerin, Wales was part of the 'mainstream' trail which followed the influence of Rome.

One of the most important aspects of the book comes in its descriptions and argument showing the development of a Welsh art practice. This was firstly made possible due to the patronage of the gentry, but would later go on to be usurped by the patronage of the emerging middle class. Restrictive laws following the civil war of the seventeenth century on careers in public office and obtaining a university education placed on those who would later describe themselves as Nonconformists, and the

Christmas Evans, who was portrayed always with one eye closed from an injury sustained in an ambush by former friends after a visit to a fair when he was seventeen, was one such. If ever the line 'you should have seen the other guy' was uttered in real life, it was surely by this colourful and charismatic Welsh preacher.

The book details 500 years of art in its 400-odd pages, but a full third of it is dedicated to the art of Wales post 1914. The Celtic Revival, started in the early twentieth century, was followed by the ravages of war that brought forth new ways of thinking which made their way into the Modernist movement. Here the book comes into its own, laying out the wild imagination of David Jones to the rise of the 56 group. It also details the Arts Council's response to the public's feeling of alienation from abstract art, which resulted in a series of public art commissions in the sixties. Noting the indifference of the public, Lord writes that 'the commissioning body were applying the same top-down principles as the high-minded improvers of the nineteenth century; thus ironically showing that they had learned nothing.

Lord ends his study in 1990, owing to

The book details 500 years of art in its 400-odd pages, but a full third of it is dedicated to the art of Wales post 1914. The Celtic Revival, started in the early twentieth century, was followed by the ravages of war that brought forth new ways of thinking which made their way into the Modernist movement.

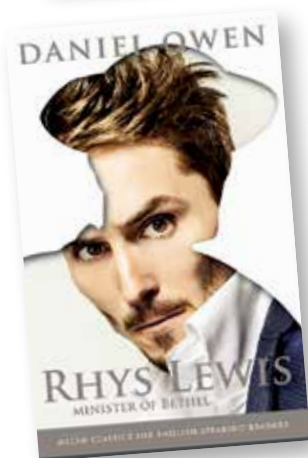
popularity of that strain of Christianity in Wales, meant there was less art produced in this period than others. But a change in attitudes brought faces to the names of many of those figures involved in the sixteen or so religious Revivals in Wales from 1750-1850. Hugh Hughes's miniatures of Methodist Leaders, following the Bala *sasiwn* (secession) of 1811, are particularly noteworthy for the way they resulted in the iconisation of many religious figures.

his direct involvement and own influential presence by then in the Welsh art world. Lord is graciously observant of his own restrictions and biases to acknowledge this. If only he were not so tactful so we could have a few pages more.

Joao Morais is a writer. In 2013, he was winner of the Terry Hetherington Award.

As It Was In Wales

Dylan Moore



Seeking God's Kingdom: The Nonconformist Social Gospel in Wales 1906-1939

Robert Pope

University of Wales Press, 2015

Rhys Lewis: Minister of Bethel

Daniel Owen, trans. Stephen Morris
Brown Cow, 2015

One hundred and ten years after the last great Welsh revival, those at the forefront of public life in Wales could almost be forgiven for their lack of acknowledgement of one of the primary drivers that shaped a Welsh identity. This second edition Robert Pope's book, first published by UWP in 1998, is a reminder if nothing else of the extent to which Christian ideas – perhaps particularly 'the Nonconformist Social Gospel' – have

shaped the wider public sphere. If theological concerns fail to resonate in contemporary, secular Wales, it is the author's hope that this book might challenge people to consider how the church and its theology might once again 'engage in public discourse'.

It is a big ask for a book that is, clearly, an academic study in the somewhat niche area of theological history. However, such is the clarity with which Pope outlines the ideas of the social gospel's major proponents in Wales, and so striking is the intellectual culture surrounding the four key thinkers on whom he chooses to focus, that the volume really does outgrow its immediate arena to provide food for thought to those way beyond the confines of academia and the church. It would certainly do some good for those politicians concerned to stress that Britain is still 'a Christian country' to revisit what Jesus taught in relation to social policy.

This is the heart of the book. The ten years between the revival and the outbreak of the Great War saw the rise of a distinctive theology that had at its heart a view that 'to be of any value at all [Christianity] had to create a better environment and establish justice and righteousness in this life and in the world.' Of course, the period in question coincides with the rise of the labour movement, and Pope expertly traces the divergence of Christianity and socialism at a time when many sought to marry the two. The writer is interested in how the 1904-5 revival's emphasis on 'individual salvation orientated to an eternity spent in paradise' so quickly turned to 'the social question': 'the transformation of the conditions endured by the vast majority of people in this life'.

Pope readily admits that the new intellectual currents – liberal theology and philosophical Idealism – were not necessarily the meat-and-potatoes of chapel sermons across Wales at the time, but nevertheless it is fascinating to learn of the bracing ideas being postulated by David Miall Edwards at Llandrindod or Thomas Rees at Brecon, and instructive to revisit them in the light of our own context. Pope begins by admitting that the details of their [theological-social] system 'might be untenable' but some of their key ideas both prefigure and challenge today's orthodoxies.

David Miall Edwards wrote that: 'The

true nationalist is a world citizen; the windows of his mind face the four corners of the world, and the doors of his sympathies are with all the families of the earth.' He promoted 'a philosophy which expressed the essentials of Welsh national life' and advocated a [Welsh] Parliament in order that we 'take our part with dignity in the work of promoting peace and justice'. He championed the spiritual over the material – 'the social problem' was caused by the materialism of industry, which subjugated moral and spiritual concerns to a back seat, a question that also occupied Rees and informed his withdrawal from politics.

Despite that Pope's conclusion portrays Edwards and Rees, along with their contemporaries John Morgan Jones and Herbert Morgan, as 'men of their time', it is too easy to look back from our vantage point in a secular Wales and dismiss the Nonconformist Social Gospel as a symptom of a time when 'everyone' went to chapel (conservative estimates for the period put church attendance in Wales at around 40%). The movement had deep philosophical roots, interpreting as it does the teachings of Jesus through the filters of Idealism and liberal theology, and in the broad context of a Marxist influenced political sphere. More important still would be to measure its social impact. Pope's preface emphasises the challenge, 'as potent as ever', these thinkers present to the church; I would go further and argue that this clear-eyed, rigorous work of social archaeology presents a challenge to us all.

Stephen Morris' translation of Daniel Owen's novel *Rhys Lewis: Minister of Bethel* is also a reminder of the centrality of Christianity to Welsh life in the not too distant past. Where Pope's academic-historic approach inevitably focuses on public life and ideas, Owen plays the advantages of the novel to explore the minutiae of the private realm. A Dickensian brick of a *bildungsroman* running to over five hundred pages, Morris' rendering of Owen's mid-Victorian Welsh prose positively skips along. It is a meticulous translation, as the many useful and unobtrusive footnotes attest, and the Brown Cow imprint, which republishes 'Welsh Classics for English-Speaking Readers' deserves huge praise for resurrecting this lost gem, which, had it been originally published in English, would now sit comfortably, unread but at least heard of,

The inevitably episodic nature of the work means you can dip in and out and be laughing out loud within minutes, such is the honesty of the narrative voice and the lucid observation of mid-nineteenth century rural life in *y gogledd*.

amid the Thackerays, Trollopes and Gaskells of the literary canon.

Like so many novels of the day, Rhys Lewis was first published in instalments: serialised in *Y Drysorfa*, the monthly magazine of the Calvinistic Methodist church. Consumed in bite-sized chunks over three years, the novel would have been a delightful amusement. That it is tough-going

consumption in one straight-through reading says more about our reading habits, then and now, than it does about Owen's prose or Morris' translation. The inevitably episodic nature of the work means you can dip in and out and be laughing out loud within minutes, such is the honesty of the narrative voice and the lucid observation of mid-nineteenth century rural life in *y gogledd*.


The translator's note describes the project as 'a labour of love' – and it is hard not to see this shine through. Part of *Rhys Lewis'* charm is in its depiction of a world that is gone, though remnants remain. Morris makes reference to the 'liberal theological ideas that had come over from Germany' – the very social gospel outlined by Pope was what did for the social conservatism of Nonconformity in its nineteenth century incarnation. He is also brutally honest in his assessment of twentieth century Nonconformism, which 'mouldered on for another hundred years or so' as a 'corpse' that 'alienated several generations of Welsh people against religion in all its forms.' Perhaps in this vicarious visit to the Nonconformist heyday, and particularly the recounting of a conversion experience that forms the central chunk of *Rhys Lewis*, we might revive the life-affirming power of the Spirit and leave the corpse of dead religion firmly in the past.

Dylan Moore

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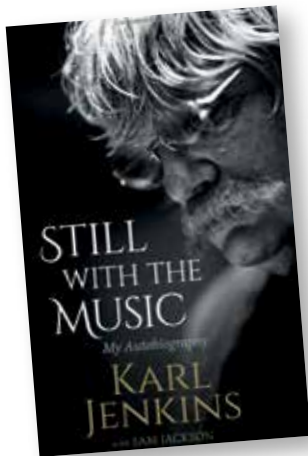
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Reflections and Rejections

Steph Power



Still with the Music: My Autobiography
Karl Jenkins, with Sam Jackson
 Elliott & Thompson, 2015, £20

The picture that emerges of Karl Jenkins from *Still with the Music* is of a composer rightly proud of his achievements and, having reached seventy years of age, pausing with pleasure yet some reluctance, to mull over the various turns of his career. In a laconic, wryly witty narration of his life to date, Jenkins describes being humbled by his recent elevation to knighthood - the first ever for a Welsh composer - and by the many other accolades accrued through decades of popular and commercial success. An only child from an essentially working-class Gower family, Jenkins tragically lost his mother when he was just four years old. Yet his story is not so much one of triumph against the odds, but of simple determination and an instinct for following his creative nose.

The book - like Jenkins' music - is a paean to the power of community. In it, the composer warmly extols his family, friends and professional collaborators through a lifetime spanning 'four consecutive careers... using the same twelve notes': from freelance jazzier to prog-rocker with Soft Machine, then as composer for TV commercials and a metaphorical taking off with the Delta Airlines advert which became his hit *Adiemus* project, which opened the doors to a stardom unrivalled amongst contemporary UK composers. His love of music first sparked

listening to his father's piano playing and to singing at the local chapel; J.S. Bach is an especially enduring love. Oboe lessons eventually led to postgraduate studies at the Royal Academy of Music via the 'Nash', or National Youth Orchestra of Wales, and academic training at the University of Cardiff. Here his most crucial discovery was extra-curricular: modern jazz in the form of Oscar Peterson, Miles Davis and the great Bill Evans, whom he touchingly describes later meeting at Ronnie Scott's.

This is Jenkins' first book and, he vows, his last. The prose is engaging and the few musical terms discussed are unpacked in clear, unpatronising language. He acknowledges the assistance of co-author, Sam Jackson, Managing Editor of Classic FM, and is generous towards other colleagues and supporters, whilst tersely dismissing perceived foes such as the Musicians' Union and BBC Radio 3. Indeed, Jenkins is bitterly resentful of what he sees as a hostile musical establishment; a bitterness which - in a chapter entitled 'Reflections' but which would perhaps more accurately be called 'Rejections' - descends to an unedifying diatribe against unnamed composers more leftfield than himself, and against what he calls 'a certain kind of new piece, where "one man and his dog" comprise the audience.'

Jenkins is known for disliking musical categorisation - and small wonder, given that his early marketing as a 'classical' composer has led to unfavourable scrutiny on those artistic terms; terms which ill fit his particular brand of nonetheless classically-based cross-genre music, and which drives his rejection here of a 'blinkered and self-appointed cognoscenti'. But it would be wrong meekly to buy the suggestion that Jenkins is not himself part of an establishment, albeit not any of the new music classical worlds he so scornfully lumps together. Indeed the notion of establishment implies just the kind of networking power and influence that, as a highly successful mainstream figure, Jenkins has enjoyed for years. Ironically, in terms of musical labels, he himself was foremost in the 1990s spearheading what became a new genre - 'crossover' music - in which elements of classical music, rock and/or jazz are often combined with non-western instruments and vocal styles.

These days, pluralism is happily

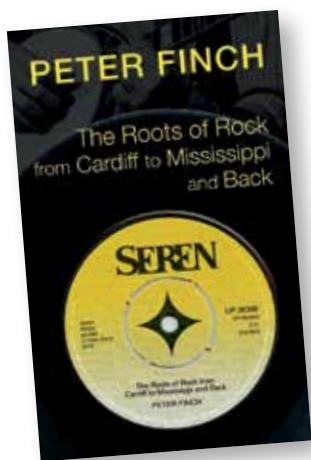
The book - like Jenkins' music - is a paean to the power of community.

the norm across the arts while the idea of crossover has largely settled into a soft-focus marketing cocoon (in the motor industry, 'crossover' is now a fashionable signifier of lumpy, urban-country cars). Much that Jenkins complains about is already history - at least, it is outside the mainstreams of either category - as unhelpful divisions between so-called 'popular' and 'serious' musics are long since old hat. And yet, in sinking to the level of some of his more kneejerk detractors, Jenkins' words have the potential to do harm as well as good; and that in an area which is clearly close to his heart: music education. On the one hand, he argues passionately for the all-but decimated free music education without which he and so many others would never have become musicians. Yet, on the other hand, by deriding anything remotely avant-garde in terms which perpetuate anti-new music stereotypes and prejudice, he also effectively dismisses many young composers who desperately need the support of audiences and industry insiders alike. Let's hope that, in his role as patron of Tŷ Cerdd, Music Centre of Wales, Jenkins is helping to promote all Welsh composers regardless of whether he personally approves of their chosen idiom.

Steph Power is a freelance composer and writer on music for *The Independent*, *Tempo*, *Opera Magazine* and *Wales Arts Review*, of which she is Music Editor. A companion 16-track CD of bestselling excerpts, *Still with the Music - The Album*, is available from Warner Classics

From Bay to Delta

Sarah Hill



The Roots of Rock from Cardiff to Mississippi and Back

Peter Finch
Seren, 2015

Popular music heritage is big business. Pilgrims flock from all around the world to places where they believe magic once happened – Liverpool, London, Los Angeles, Lubbock. Academic popologists have long been exploring the connections between pop heritage, cultural memory, and local identity, working with museums, talking to the public, publishing (of course), and publishing some more, just to work out what ‘place’ means and how to define ‘heritage’.

Peter Finch has spent his life in thrall to American roots music, and this book is in part a love letter to it. The first 72 pages of *The Roots of Rock* trace Finch’s introduction to the world of high fidelity, and provide a vivid snapshot of mid-century Cardiff streets, cafes, record shops, and front rooms, all with their changing soundtracks. Early rock ‘n roll is often written into autobiography, biography, and fiction, but very rarely is Cardiff the setting for the action. In this regard *The Roots of Rock* adds an important dimension to an otherwise familiar story.

Much of the narrative is coloured by Finch’s particular attention to difference:

Some of the material was actually okay. Most of it featured singers with Christian names I hadn’t ever come across. In my

school people were called things like Trevor, Martin, Terrence and Ronald. At Cae’r Castell Secondary Mod there was no one called Bo, Pee Wee, Sunnyland, Peppermint, or even Big Joe. The nearest we had to a blues nom de plume was the sports master and Harlequins rugby player who went under the name Cowboy Davies. [p. 24]

For a young man whose life was so consumed by American music, it is surprising to discover that he only took his first trip to the States in 2003. But had the younger Finch gone on a musical pilgrimage in the 1960s or 1970s this would have been an entirely different story, and not nearly as good. What is effective about Finch’s account is the vibrant memories that he’s carried from his Cardiff youth of the 1950s and 1960s, and the shadows cast on those memories by the business of pop heritage in the 21st century.

It is not news that the Elvis Presley estate continues to capitalise spectacularly on the King’s enduring legacy. Indeed, Finch’s chapter on the Porthcawl Elvis Festival considers nostalgia, kitsch, and mortality in equal measures, with commercialism and class creeping up from behind. Those latter two are at the base of a lot of academic literature about rock ‘n roll in general and pop heritage in particular. Finch touches a bit on authorship and originality in *The Roots of Rock*, but the bigger questions, about who benefits financially from blues tourism, about whose ‘roots’ are actually being unearthed, about musical appropriation and systemic racism, are largely left unposed.

Where Finch’s storytelling strength lies is in his ability to connect the furthest reaches of American culture back to Wales. Occasionally this takes the form of spotting familiar surnames and meeting expats, but also, more effectively, when Finch casts a critical eye not only on American consumption but on Wales’ own sense of cultural history:

Music Halls of Fame, it turns out, exist as a sort of twentieth century rash right across America. Unlike in Wales, land of song, where we have precisely none, the Americans have realised that as music is

part of their world-dominating culture it should be celebrated as such. We have a tradition going back a thousand years and we hide it in the bowels of our museum of folk life and resited buildings, St. Fagans. The Americans invented theirs somewhere in the middle of the nineteenth century and have been celebrating it with bells, whistles and constant dollar investment ever since. [p. 183]

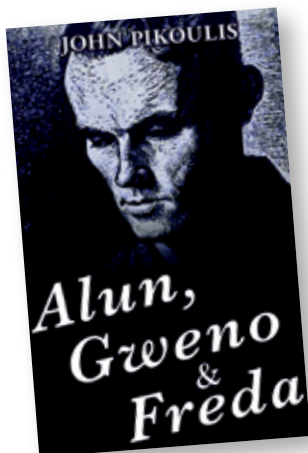
This speaks volumes about the differences between reputation and ostentation, about cultural timidity and self-confidence. As an American living in Wales, I confess that I have found the Welsh tendency toward cultural understatement beguiling and frustrating in equal measure. But given Finch’s descriptions of the alternatives, of tourists gawping at replica shotgun shacks, of endless parking lots and overpriced souvenir shops, I’m not convinced that St Fagans doesn’t offer the more alluring experience.

The Roots of Rock has a great deal to say about history, adolescence, and cultural belonging, and Finch’s timeline offers all the historical context the casual reader might need to access the music. I applaud Finch for including a basic bibliography, but there are some fairly standard, non-academic, titles that I did not see on his list: Greil Marcus’ *Mystery Train* and *Dead Elvis*; Charlie Gillett’s *The Sound of the City*. Wearing my mortarboard and academic robes, I would take issue with Finch’s consistent misplacement of footnote numbers (they should go outside of punctuation) and incomplete discographical references (release dates, please). I would have liked a tighter sense of chronology in the narrative and a more meticulous proofreader (it’s Haight-Ashbury, not ‘Height Ashbery’). But as a trip back through time to Cardiff at a pivotal moment in pop culture history, and forward to that historical moment’s afterlife, this is a vivid and engaging read that breathes new life into some great old music.

Dr Sarah Hill is Senior Lecturer in Popular Music at Cardiff University; her latest book is *San Francisco and the Long 60s* (Bloomsbury)

Candid but tactful

Kristian Evans



Alun, Gweno and Freda
John Pikoulis
Seren, 2015

Writing about Edward Thomas, somebody he regarded as a poetic ancestor, Alun Lewis remarked that war was only a part of Thomas' 'life-experience'; only half of the story. Lewis was, of course, also talking about himself. As with Thomas, the war is often peripheral in Lewis' poems; the setting, but not the subject

matter. The other great soldier poet of World War Two, Keith Douglas, addressed war directly. In seemingly unimprovable poems now firmly entrenched in the culture, such as 'Vergissmeinnicht' and 'How to Kill', Douglas is interested in how combat and courage and death and glory shape us.

Douglas is dismissed on page 16 of John Pikoulis' new biography of Lewis as a 'dandy in uniform'. To Pikoulis, Lewis' complex response to the war makes him the more interesting writer. A firm socialist with pacifist inclinations, born into the depression era valleys of south Wales, Lewis' attitude to soldiering was deeply ambivalent. 'I'm not going to kill,' he wrote, 'be killed, perhaps, instead.' He seems to have ended up applying to officer school out of boredom with life in the barracks. He was posted to India, leaving his wife Gweno Ellis in Wales. While in India he had a passionate but brief love affair with Freda Ackroyd. He died, probably a suicide, in Burma in 1944.

This is a fascinating, many layered book. It is lengthy but non-linear and moves swiftly. Extensive quotations from his letters (Lewis writes wonderful letters) and poems bring us quickly into his presence, and he is instantly likeable – warm, shy, sensitive to class distinctions; an officer forgetting to wear his belt, shovelling coal with his men, thinking about the poems of W.B. Yeats. "He spoke very quickly," a fellow officer later recalled, 'with a

strong Welsh intonation which I found difficult at first to understand'.

There are included here, necessarily, extracts from the letters to Pikoulis from Gweno and Freda, and the author's own reflections and responses to those letters. In a way, this is a book that tells the story of its own composition. Pikoulis is candid, but tactful, and discusses his meetings and occasional disagreements with both women. This is delicate subject matter, after all, and Pikoulis is keen to take care whilst also maintaining fidelity to his subject. He achieves this, but it was clearly not easy.

Lewis was a questing writer, and eventually found a paradoxical freedom in army life. All habitual travellers know how ambiguous the idea of home becomes. 'Everyone will realise sooner or later that nothing is fixed, nothing inevitable,' he wrote in *Lance-Jack*. 'When I go home on leave, I feel vaguely "out of it".'

Alun, Gweno and Freda is a moving portrait of the last years of a man realising he is homeless, and that he will always be homeless. 'The clearing again in the jungle. Go away from my water-hole. I am drinking. Drink with me. Go away. Stay. Go away that you may always stay.'

Kristian Evans is a poet, artist and environmental activist

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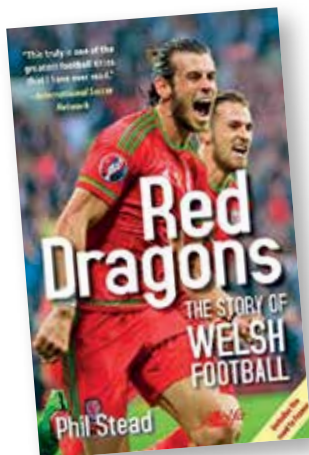


MAKING
WALES
BETTER



Through thick and thin

Tom Anderson



Red Dragons:

The Story of Welsh Football

Phil Stead

Y Lolfa, 2015 (revised edition)

The job of the historian may appear to have grown easier in the age of online information, Wikipedia, search engines, bloggers and amateur archivists. In fact, though, that is hardly the case. To trawl through the incredible range of data and anecdote, to then sift the important nuggets, and finally to decide upon a version of events, is an extraordinary challenge. This, however, is certainly what lifelong Welsh football lover Phil Stead successfully did with the first edition of this title, and the updated version is no different. Of course, the crucial change is that Welsh football is now celebrating success, and this has cast a new light on all the years of hurt which Stead so lovingly documents with what now seems a (justifiably) stoic relish.

Stead is indeed an accomplished writer, historian, football fan and Welsh public persona. He's bilingual, connected, versatile and amiable, and this has allowed him to collate and present what does truly feel like the comprehensive tale of Welsh football. From the origins of a national side as a concept through to the difficult years between the Mark Hughes flashes of success and finally the Chris Coleman side of now, the book is tight on fact and fluid in style.

This is an easy-to-read, accurate and

warmly written account of what is now, probably, Wales' national game. It is the previous status 'enjoyed' by Welsh football - as a fringe sport often existing in the shadow of its egg-shaped spin-off - that has given it such a quirky and celebrated sense of character and identity. While the rest of the world has seen it as the number one game, here football has tended to be seen as an oddity for those who don't get rugby. Stead, however, has always 'got' what the sport means to this country - not least the chance for recognition on a world stage - and he has deftly captured the years of near-misses and abject failures with a real understanding of why football in Wales has, does and always will, matter:

Welsh football began with a north versus south rivalry which has never really disappeared. We're a country divided by tribalism and conflict... Cardiff fighting Swansea, the Exiles fighting the FAW, and minor disputes breaking out between clubs and personalities all over the country. But the death of [Gary Speed] blurred our differences and shone light on our similarities. It turns out that we're not so different after all. We all wept.

All episodes in the history of the game here have been clearly and carefully detailed, although there is certainly the sense that hindsight has helped make the book more accurate the further back we go. Unusual though that may seem (especially given how easy it is to get facts and statistics for the modern game), it appears the author has been more willing to probe the various failings and criticisms of the game's heroes, anti-heroes, organisers and executives once the past has sufficiently solidified that judgement. Controversy has always existed in Welsh football, and there are certain people and policies that get a lot more criticism in the stands and the pre-game bars of Canton than they do here. I'd love to hear more probing opinions on a range of recent, and even current, matters of debate: whether the demise of the Hughes side's solidarity was precipitated by his beginning to court Premier League posts before the 2014 Euros job was properly done; why Ryan Giggs never really seemed too keen to disobey

his manager's requests to put club before country in the way Bale and Ramsey seem far more willing to do; the dilemma of Team GB and its true implications; whether Robbie Savage's time as a pundit has Anglicised his views on UK football; perhaps even an attempt to quantify the long-term legacy of Gary Speed. Stead also seems to overlook the support I for one certainly heard for Raymond Verheijen during the ruminations over who was to take over as manager immediately after Speed's passing.

The above said, Stead's job as a curator rather than arbitrator of these events has likely allowed him to write a book with far greater appeal. It is perhaps too soon for the historian to prepare any sort of verdict on many of these questions (and this is perhaps particularly the case with Speed). Anyone with emotional attachments to the events in question will be immediately aware the story of Welsh football has been delivered here by an excellent writer deployed to cover his passion.

It may be fussy to say there could have also been a little more on the fringe scenes which thrived in the 'dark ages', when empty stadia buoyed only by the tones of the 'Barry Horns' were the norm, but then the whole book is so saturated with the author's own appreciation of the dedication needed to be a Welsh football supporter through thick and thin, that a sense of character is clear enough. Stead is brilliant at capturing the weird blend of North and South Walian affiliations to the national side. He's brilliant at filling in the tiny details of events long gone into the distant and quirky past. Above all though, he's perfectly caught the way that our recent success has finally allowed perspective to be placed on all those years spent loving the pain that losing brought. Updating this book was indeed essential, and it is of course better for the additional sections. Highly recommended if you're even slightly excited about what might happen to our sense of nationhood this June, when referenda and Assembly bickering are eclipsed by three of the biggest 90-minute spells in our modern sporting history. In fact, we'll need another version again soon - and I can't wait to read it, however that month of June pans out.

Tom Anderson is a writer and Chair of the Welsh Academy; his latest novel is *The Actaeon Tide* (Parthian).



Unheard Voices

Dylan Moore

Sometimes, because we see people, we think we hear them; we think we know their stories. The newspapers, broadcast media and internet are ever full of stories about migrants, about Muslims, about people on benefits. Meanwhile, the phrase 'women in the media' will often still mean pictures of rather than articles by. Vested interests want marginalised groups, much like Victorian children, to be seen and not heard. Seen because then they can be demeaned, demonised - and, perhaps most dangerously, *categorised*. It's easier to understand an individual when they carry the label of a group, easier to define a homogenous mass than to look beyond the headlines and meet the person. And without a voice, the individual cannot answer the myriad charges brought against her.

The run-up to May's pivotal General Election in Wales will be punctuated by the kind of bottom-up democracy that is often missing elsewhere. Citizens Cymru Wales will be creating a people's manifesto to put to the party leaders on March 17th. Two days later, at an event celebrating the tenth birthday of the Senedd, National Theatre Wales' Big Democracy Project seeks to identify the 'single biggest issue facing Wales'. Bethesda-based poet Martin Dawes put forward the idea of exploring 'Voter Apathy'. Oasis Asylum and Refugee Centre in Cardiff asked why identity is important. Celf o Gwmpas, who work with disabled artists, asked whether disabled people are an easy target for cuts. Ammanford's Mess Up The Mess theatre company have put forward the question 'Are we just another tick in the wall?' Its series of subsidiaries investigate the 'one size fits all' examination system and its attendant effects on education: schools under pressure to compete rather than educate, students increasingly suffering with stress. Over the next two years, NTW will invite anybody, anywhere in Wales to become a member of a

People's Think Tank.

It is cause for celebration that our national theatre company have (with large thanks to outgoing Artistic Director John McGrath) not only redefined the stuffy, nineteenth century view of theatre - proscenium arch, plush seats, watch between glasses of wine - and returned it to its roots. Ancient Greece invented democracy and theatre, and the two were never mutually exclusive. But the need for this latest project reveals that, just as Athenian democracy excluded women, men under thirty and slaves, leaving the 'citizen' population at around one fifth of the total number of adults, modern Western liberal democracies have an exclusivity problem.

Politics has, to varying degrees of perception or reality, lost its connection with the *polis* (city-state) and certainly the *demos* (the people, or - if you prefer - the mob). We talk today, with rarely disguised disdain, of the 'political class'. Westminster is a dirty word, sullied by the weekly braying from the benches at PMQs, expenses scandals and decades of broken promises. Cardiff Bay has yet to accrue the negative connotations built up over centuries by the 'Mother of Parliaments'; brought into being by half of the half of the electorate who voted in the referendum, the Assembly has established itself as an institution, but there are still those from whom its decision-making feels remote. To some in north, west and mid Wales, Cardiff is as remote as London, culturally if not quite geographically. A visit to the IWA's Click on Wales will quickly tell you that for some the Welsh political class are too in thrall to the Welsh language, while to others they are not in thrall enough.

Flak from both sides can be a sign that those in power are getting it just about right, but the important thing is that a conversation is being had. The IWA, of course, is all about such conversation. This edition of the *Welsh*

agenda has, in part, been an attempt to give a platform to some unheard voices, those beyond the 'usual suspects' who can tend to dominate discourse in a country the size of Wales. Note that all Abdul-Azim Ahmed asks for Muslims in Wales is 'a platform for engagement'. George W.G., like Ahmed, stresses that 'People exist as individuals'. And it is the 'one size fits all' approach to policymaking that has created such misery and provoked such anger in response to the Bedroom Tax. Yet people like Kay Harris (in Seb Cooke's article 'Taxing Bedrooms in Betws') offer cause for hope rather than despair. Disillusioned with voting, Kay is nevertheless more politically active than ever. What some deride as 'anti-politics' is the potential for genuine change.

A forthcoming IWA Debate will ask 'Would compulsory voting give the unheard a voice?' It is a provocative question. Despite the critically low turnouts for elections to the Welsh Assembly thus far, there is little appetite for enforcing the franchise. Maybe the question needs rephrasing. The way that representative democracy works would suggest a better question: Who will speak for the unheard? But plenty of politicians claim to speak for the silent majority. Given the blank canvas of silence, your own preferences, prejudices and party colours are easy to project. So I'd suggest a more difficult question: Who will *listen* to the unheard?

We sometimes want the desired end before the change that would produce that result. The act of voting is a tool of democracy, not an end in itself. If some of the marginalised individuals and groups represented in this magazine were socially enfranchised, allowed to play a full and fulfilled role in society, then maybe more people might see the point of putting an X in a box. If the system doesn't work, change the system - not its victims.

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