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Carwyn's Referendum Opportunity

The referendum on further powers for the National Assembly, to be held next 3 March, presents a challenge and an opportunity for political leadership. In his article on how the referendum should be fought from Labour's point of view, on pages 30, Mark Drakeford, Rhodri Morgan's former political adviser, rightly points out that the campaign will merge seamlessly into the National Assembly elections, being held two months later on 6 May. The party or parties most closely associated with a successful outcome in the referendum campaign stand to benefit in the Assembly election as well.

Labour has had an ambivalent attitude towards devolution ever since the slow process that led to the creation of the Assembly began in earnest in the late 1950s. For more than half a century the party divided into broadly two camps. One has seen Welsh identity as a threat to Labour identity. The other has seen Wales and devolution as an arena within which social democratic values, especially as they affect health and education, can be allowed greater rein than if complete sovereignty still resided at Westminster.

Until the early to mid 2000s the former tendency had the upper hand. But since the first elections to the Assembly in 1999 the latter has been growing in strength. The tipping point came in the wake of the 2007 Assembly election when a special Welsh Labour conference endorsed the *One Wales* coalition agreement with Plaid Cymru. The leadership of Welsh Labour now firmly resides in Cardiff Bay rather than Westminster where it was notable that not a single Welsh MP managed to get elected to Labour's shadow cabinet this Autumn.

The referendum in early March will not be held in the most propitious circumstances. February is not a good month for campaigning. Dark nights and bad weather lead to poor turnouts. By then, too, the coalition government

at Westminster is likely to be extremely unpopular as the impact of the public spending squeeze accelerates, with the attendant misery of cuts in services and job losses in both the public and private sectors. Since the public sector forms more than 60 per cent of Welsh GDP we can expect to be one of the worst affected parts of the UK.

When things are going badly people tend to blame the government. So far as the referendum is concerned a lot will be depend on how far Welsh voters differentiate the Welsh from the UK government. If Cardiff Bay is tarred with the same brush as Westminster the outlook for further powers being endorsed may be bleak. On the other hand, if the Labour-led government in Cardiff can separate itself from the Conservative-led government in London and tell a different story about insulating Wales from the worst effects of the cuts then the outcome should be more hopeful.

In this endeavour a lot rests on the shoulders of First Minister Carwyn Jones. He should be planning now to put the month of February aside and spend it in a battle bus touring the 40 Welsh constituencies. Each day should culminate in a rally and social gathering with entertainment in key centres across Wales. These occasions should be an opportunity to present broad cross-party and wider civil society and cultural support for the Assembly having the tools it needs to carry out its work. At each event Carwyn Jones should be given a platform to present the middle ground, common sense case that his own convictions and personality underline. It would be a great opportunity for him to transform himself into the national figure he deserves to be. It would also be a great opportunity for his party to demonstrate that it is comfortable with devolution and united in making it work for Wales. Carwyn and Labour should seize the chance with both hands.

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Cover photograph: from the book *Senedd* written by Trevor Fishlock, photographed by Andrew Molyneux, published by Graffeg (see page 33).

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Coming Up

Opportunities for a Confederal University in South West Wales

Friday 3 December 2010, 10.00am – 3.30pm
Halliwell Centre, University of Wales Trinity St David, Carmarthen

Keynote speakers: Leighton Andrews AM, Education Minister, Welsh Government; Sir Deian Hopkin, former Vice Chancellor, London South Bank University; Dr Medwin Hughes, Vice-Chancellor and Dr Meri Huws, Pro Vice Chancellor Innovation, Skills and Community, University of Wales Trinity Saint David.

£65 (£52 IWA members)

Coffee Shop Debate:

What Wales can learn from Ethiopia

with Hywel Meredydd Davies, Director, Tearfund Wales
Tuesday 11 January 2011, 6.30pm – 7.30pm,
Chapter Arts Centre, Cardiff

North Wales Branch Annual Dinner

with First Minister Carwyn Jones

Thursday 13 January 2011, St George's Hotel,
Llandudno, Reception 7.30pm Dinner 8.00pm

£37.50 (£30 IWA members) Table for 10: £300

Launch of IWA Inspire Wales Awards 2011

Tuesday 25 January 2011, 11.00am, City Hall, Cardiff
Official launch of the 2011 competition (*Entry free*)

School Innovation in the Middle Years

Conference to launch the IWA's study on school attainment at Key Stage 3

Tuesday 1 March 2011, 10.00am – 4.00pm
WJEC, Llandaff, Cardiff

Keynote speakers: Steve Upton, IWA Research Officer and Professor David Egan, UWIC, plus case studies from six secondary schools across Wales

£65 (£52 IWA members)

IWA National Economy Conference

in association with PricewaterhouseCoopers

Interface between the public and private sectors

Friday 11 March 2010, 10.00am – 5.00pm
Parc Hotel, Cardiff

Keynote speakers: Gerald Holtham, Chair, Welsh Government's Commission on Funding and Finance for Wales and Professor Kevin Morgan, Cardiff University

£90 (£72 IWA members)

Just Published

• Engaging Wales' disengaged youth

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—Essay

When anger breaks into metaphorical music

Jane Aaron on how words can come alive at times of stress in a community

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Essay:

When anger breaks into metaphorical music

IWA News

Outlook: Comprehensive Spending Review

Euryl ap Gwilym

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Some of the most notable writings ever composed in English in Wales were conceived under apparently very inauspicious circumstances. Here is Dylan Thomas's sister's account of how he spent his days during the period in which he wrote *And death shall have no dominion*, *The force that through the green fuse drives the flower* and about forty more of the pieces preserved in his *Collected Poems*. It's January 1933, Dylan is nineteen, out of work, and living at home in Swansea with his parents and irate sister who writes in her diary:

"Dylan has just risen (11.30) ... He stays in bed most mornings & then gets up and writes. In the evening he visits Danny. *Unless* he gets any sum of money – then he goes and drinks. What will become of him Heaven knows... I must stop; ink is wanted by raving brother... Mother has just been in & given me a bloody row over the ink question. 'Dylan has got to work & now no ink, etc. 'Not fair for the child,' etc."

What are the conditions of composition here? Firstly there's plenty of free time – time to muse long in bed in the mornings over lines and images which have surfaced overnight, and all the time in the world to write them down after getting up. The poet evidently feels no distracting guilt about the fact that he's jobless – why should he, given that half of the south Wales labour force was jobless in 1933?

Secondly he has at least one receptive and well-informed friend with whom he can fully share his work and discuss it – in this case, Danny, that is Daniel Jones, later himself to gain fame as a composer. Thirdly, his material needs (including the ink) are being supplied by a staunch patron who believes devoutly in the value of his 'work' – in this case, Mother.

In fact these are ideal conditions for creativity. What the Welsh Academi, the Arts Council of Wales and other bodies which wish to support the present generation of writers need to do is to fulfil the roles taken by Danny and Mother in this extract, and supply the creative stimulus of receptive involvement with the work along with the material needs – the ink – of likely achievers. The free time and guiltless freedom from other responsibilities and commitments we are currently expecting the present Coalition Government to supply through its policy of severe job cuts.

This may seem a ludicrously simplified account of the relation between creativity and economic crisis. But there are numerous literary examples like it, examples relating both to writers' lives and the lives of their fictional characters. In his 1982 novel *Rumours of Fulfilment*, for example, Robert Watson gives us a straightforward account of the transition from worker to artist in the case of one lucky inhabitant of a fictional industrial village above Swansea during the early years of the Thatcher regime. Born in 1947 in the then Gwent mining town of Newbridge, Watson himself went through periods of sporadic employment before taking a degree and ending up as a college lecturer and novelist. In his novel we're introduced to Dafydd who 'was potentially gifted, but had no desire to develop his gifts by moving away' from his natal village. Although the local tinplate works has already closed down by the time Dafydd leaves school, there are still some opportunities for employment in the area, and he feels bound to take up the workers' role his society expects of him:

"These days you've got to think of earning a living, haven't you? Can't live on dreams. You've got to be realistic these days, with inflation and house prices going up." So it's the local works for him. He would start full-time at Amalgamated Chemicals.

But it's the 1980s, and Amalgamated Chemicals closes down abruptly. Dafydd was given ten days notice and then found himself without any prospect of work in the area. It was like the closure of the tinplate works all over again. Released from the nine-to-five job and from the social expectation that he should work, Dafydd promptly returns to his first love – art. He tells his



Dylan Thomas at nineteen.
Photo: Jeff Towns/Dylans Bookstore, with thanks to the Dylan Thomas Centre, Swansea.

sister-in-law: "I've been doing a spot of painting... *real* painting, art." When he first mentioned painting his sister-in-law had assumed he meant house-painting, but now she realises that

"Far from diminishing Dafydd, unemployment seemed to have enabled him to grow again... He should have been desperately miserable, kicking his heels, wasting time down the Club with the other abandoned men, growing old and weak. Instead [...] he not only survived, he developed."

Dafydd is rooted in a working-class community which does not expect to nourish artists. But the closure of the only works left in the area turns the situation on its head, and he can flourish at home as an artist without having to feel irresponsible.

In terms of Welsh writers' lives, as opposed to those of their fictional creations, many examples of this type of transition could be provided, particularly dating from that long period of economic depression in the late 1920s and 1930s. To take one example, there seems to have been no parental expectation that Rhys Davies would do anything other than spend his days helping to man his family's grocery shop in Blaenclydach just above Tonypany. After leaving school at fourteen, he was trained for no other occupation. But during the industrial blight which hit the mining villages after the First World War, the Blaenclydach shop was not flourishing, there were other sibling mouths to feed, and in 1920 Rhys Davies was released from the family business to make what he could of himself. He subsequently wrote of his career as a shop assistant in *Print of a Hare's Foot* (1969):

"I always think of this period as a burial, with myself lying somnolent in a coffin, but visually aware of the life going on around me, and content to wait until the time came for me to rise and be myself."

In many of the nineteen novels and thirteen short story collections he published after his emergence from this coffin, the idea of work as a living death - particularly the type of work on offer to most of the young men of his locality - is a dominant theme. In *The Withered Root*, for example, the Rhys Davies novel which has just been republished

in the Library of Wales series, he describes his young collier protagonist, Reuben Daniels, as having a poet's imagination which but increases the bitterness of his employment:



Rhys Davies

"He saw the days march down upon him with monotonous certainty, an endless succession of tramps in the dawn to the pit, the descent in the cage with the thought of annihilation always insistent in his mind, the grovelling and the picking by the pale gleam of his lamp, the weary tramp back and up into the grey world, to evenings that would become desolate and barren too, and forever, forever a silent torture in his vanquished soul."

Another frustrated collier poet, Jude (his name no doubt a reference to Thomas Hardy's novel on working-class frustrations, *Jude the Obscure*) features in Idris Davies's 1938 poetry sequence *Gwalia Deserta*:

He is digging in the dark,
 Jude who would the poet be,
 And dreaming of the distant isles
 And the summer on the sea.

Not for always shall he grope
 In the galleries of grime –
 'Tis sure he shall be shouldered,
 And need nor pick nor rhyme.

But the year in which *Gwalia Deserta* is set is 1926, and Jude is likely soon to be released from the mine, not in fact by death (that is, being 'shouldered'), but by the Miners' Strike and subsequent unemployment, just as Idris Davies himself was. Idris Davies started work as a collier in his local Rhymney pit at eleven, was unemployed in 1926 and never returned to work in the mines, but by 1929 had become a schoolteacher and burgeoning poet. In his second poetry sequence on the strike months, *The Angry Summer*, the dreaming miner is out on the mountainside, in the sun, and reading poetry, still rather dreamily:

'What are you doing, young man, alone
 In the grass on the mountain side?'
 I'm reading a bit of Shakespeare

Who writes of love and pride.

'O why do you waste your time, young man,
 Alone on the mountain side?'
 I want to go down to the valley some day
 To sing of love and pride.

However, in a subsequent 1945 poem *Come Down* he is hailed by a summons to give up dreaming. His stricken community needs his contribution again, not as a manual worker now, but as a creative artist who will give expression to their politicised sense of outrage at what the manipulations of the capitalist system has made of their lives:

Come down, young mountain dreamer,
 to the crowded public square
 Where anger breaks into music and thrills
 through the common air,
 And leave to fade behind you the fantasies
 you fed
 From the sentimental sluices of a culture
 dying and dead.

Come down from the mindless mountain and
 let your day dreams die
 On the aimless wind that wanders across the
 friendless sky,
 And come with your senses quickened and
 give of the best you can
 To speed the day that knows anew the dignity
 of man.

An economic crisis and resultant employment here incites creativity in a way that differs from the earlier examples. The crisis has politicised a community and given it an ideological awareness of its oppression. Its members are now alive to the manner in which their human potential has been denied and distorted, not only by the numbing aspects of their employment but also by wage cuts, job shortages, lock-outs and the sudden closure of their workplaces in the ailing coal industry. Aroused to anger, the community is calling upon its artists to give permanent expression to that anger, so that others may empathise with them.

A scene from Gwyn Thomas's novel about the



Idris Davies (top)
Gwyn Thomas

‘Watching this is like listening to great music, only greater, much greater... I’ll never forget this moment... Fifty thousand of the oppressed banding together against a common injury... I feel... I feel like an eagle...’

Depression years in south Wales, *Sorrow for thy Sons* (written 1936-7) effectively fictionalises this moment of anger breaking into metaphorical music. By the mid 1930s, Hugh Evans, the central protagonist of the novel, is unemployed (like Gwyn Thomas himself at the time of its composition), facing increased cuts in his meagre income through the newly-introduced Means Test, and becoming embittered at the thought that his life is being wasted, like the many lives around him in the Gwent and Glamorgan mining villages. He has lost hope in the possibility of his community’s effective resistance and tells his brother Alf:

“Ten years of unemployment for half the population and worsened conditions of labour for the other half, have proved that intelligence, energy and vision, are destructible, even if matter isn’t.’ Alf replies, ‘This Means Test insults them. That might make a difference.’ And indeed it does. The shock of this further assault brings the population out onto the roads in one of the huge anti-Means Test protests of the period, ‘thousands of men, women and children... marching eight deep.’”

Hugh is intensely exhilarated as he witnesses the march, and tells his brother:

“Watching this is like listening to great music, only greater, much greater... I’ll never forget this moment... Fifty thousand of the oppressed banding together against a common injury... I feel... I feel like an eagle...”

Awakened by insult the crowd manifests anew ‘the dignity of man’ in their protest against the degradations of the Means Test and the writer

feels himself summoned to give permanent expression in art to the ‘music’ of their anger.

Another ex-miner who was quite literally summoned to express in art the struggles of his community was Lewis Jones. In 1909, like Idris Davies, Lewis Jones had become an eleven-year old collier. After 1926 he, too, never worked down the pits again, but became an organiser for the National Unemployed Workers’ Movement. In the mid 1930s his creative energies were directed down an alternative path by the then President of the South Wales Miners Federation, Arthur Horner, who, as Lewis Jones explains in the foreword to his first novel *Cwmardy*, suggested to him:

“...that the full meaning of life in the Welsh mining areas could be expressed for the general reader more truthfully and vividly if treated imaginatively, than by any amount of statistical and historical research. What I have set out to do, therefore, is to ‘novelise’ (if I may use the term) a phase of working-class history... The work is really collective, in the sense that my fellow workers had to fight the battles I try to picture... It was written during odd moments stolen from mass meetings, committees, demonstrations, marches, and other activities.”

It is the sense of collective experience created by the conditions under which his community laboured, and the impossibility of sustaining any worthwhile existence under those conditions, that Lewis Jones wishes to stress in his fiction. The strength of his work lies in his ability to convey that mass experience. The ‘mass’ in most English novels is represented as a threat, but in *Cwmardy* and

in its sequel *We Live* it is a living force which embodies all that is best in the aspirations of its individual members. In this instance the economic crisis is not serving as an incentive to art because unemployment has freed the writer's time - Lewis Jones has very few leisure hours. However, the newly politicised consciousness of the people he's now working for demands from him this permanent literary record of their communal experience and ideological awakening.

A sense of outrage at an insult to one's human capacities can prove a potent wake-up call to creative potential, particularly when it is experienced politically as well as personally, as an insult to a whole group of which one is a member. During the second half of the 1970s and the 1980s, the long-term consciousness-raising effects of the second wave of the Women's Liberation Movement began to energise a new wave of women poets in Wales. The processes by which they were incited to creativity are relevant in this context, not because unemployment as such provided the incitement, but because it was similarly the result of an awakening to an ideological awareness that one's potential had been denied. For example, Christine Evans apparently began writing very much in response to such an insult, though it would not appear to have been an intentional one. As she puts it, in her 2006 book *Island Poet*:

"I met the poet R. S. Thomas, our vicar in Aberdaron... we talked about poetry. He told me that I'd never be able to write because I wouldn't have the time and that young women tended to write about the same sort of things, not very original. He may have said this deliberately, but it challenged me - so the first poem I published was

addressed to him, though without actually naming him.

The poem to which she refers is called *Bonanza*, published in her 1983 collection *Looking Inland*, and it reads:

'Words,' he told me, trying to be helpful,
'Respond through craft and concentrated effort.
A recluse alone can have the time
For the ceaseless innovation
And the hours of contemplation.'

So that was the end of that.

Then, in between
Washing some nappies, preparing a lesson, kneading the bread
And lambing a speckled-face ewe,
I stumbled over a poem; and now they spring up
Haphazard as mushrooms after August rain.
Glistening, and jostling to be picked.

She, like Lewis Jones during the Depression years, would not appear to have had the time in which to write, but writing was provoked out of her by insult operating as a challenge. That is a very likely and potent response to widespread unemployment. And, of course, by today unemployment as an insult affects women as much as men, given the changed nature of the labour force since the early 1980s.

During the 1980s, a number of writers were similarly challenged to creativity in part by the insult of unemployment, either their own or that of their communities. We might instance Chris Meredith and his 1988 novel *Shifts*, for example, or the early plays of Ed Thomas, like *House of America*, also published in 1988. But I'll close with some pop lyrics from the 1980s, in part as an acknowledgement of the fact that the new wave of creativity we hope

will emerge in response to today's hard times is also very likely to express itself in newly popular genres. Perhaps this will become the moment when blogging, for example, is recognised as an art form.

At any rate, according to their own testimony, it was their experience of the 1984-5 Miners Strike, and of local pit closures, which first politicised the Manic Street Preachers and inspired their compositions. Twelve pits were closed in their home town, Blackwood, in 1984, leaving it suddenly a mining town without mines. "We got into music when the Miners' Strike was happening, and that had a massive bearing on us," Nicky Wire is quoted in Simon White's 1999 book about the group, *Everything*. The lyrics they composed during those years speak ironically of the likely destiny of their generation, such as these from the 1985 album *Black Holes for the Young*:

Lots of sun for you, young boy,
Lots of sun for you today.
Subsidise the opera, forget coal...
You've got some black holes for the young.

The black hole of the pits may have closed, but another black hole - unemployment - is yawning wide in front of those who had expected continued employment in Wales's heavy industries. And yet since 1985 the Manics themselves have lived much in the sun in another more positive sense, their creativity has won them world-wide fame.

In one of his later lyrics, the song 1985 from the 2004 album *Lifeblood*, Nicky Wire connects the awakening of this creativity with the Miners' Strike crisis. The strike is presented as the last stand of the Welsh industrial communities, which group defensively together in the face of their potential destruction:



Manic Street Preachers, pictured here for their latest album *Postcards from a Young Man* released earlier this year, derived much of their musical creativity from the 1984-5 miner's strike.

Circle the wagons,
we're under attack,
we've realised there's
no going back'.

They're fighting against a government whose authority they refuse to recognise – it's a 'Civil War'. But the 'Civil War' fails, and they're left mourning the 'walking dead' of their community, whom the lyrics associate with the 'walking dead' of other Welsh communities now facing redundancy such as the chapel culture:

See all the tears for the walking dead...
redundant as a sad Welsh chapel,
in 1985, in 1985...

But though 1985 is a time fraught with destructive crisis, it proves curiously potent:

In 1985, my words they came alive.

What energised their words in that particular time and place when one might have expected nothing but desolation? In part it was the shake-up that widespread unemployment gave to their whole sense of who they were and what they could become. It was their guilt-free release from traditional work identities and from social expectations related to those work identities. At the same time the energy also comes from their sense of outrage at a situation which has made

so many redundant, and thrown on the scrap-heap. Their anger is thus not only personal but political. It voices the experience of a generation and a community. Their sense of speaking for their community gives their words power and authenticity. They are '4 Real', as were the other poets, novelists and dramatists whose words also 'came alive' during the economic crises of 20th Century Wales.

Jane Aaron is Professor of English at the University of Glamorgan. This article is taken from her presentation to the IWA's conference *Creativity in Hard Times*, held in the Millennium Centre, Cardiff Bay in October.

News

Growing Welsh Civil society

The IWA is generating a debate about how a Carnegie UK Trust report *Making Good Society* relates to the emergence of a Welsh civil society during a decade of devolution. The project has involved four seminars held at the Pierhead Building in Cardiff Bay during October and November, each engaging with a specific dimension of the Carnegie report and each organised in partnership with another Welsh organisation as follows:

- Growing a more civil economy –with the Wales Co-operative Centre.
- Transition to a low carbon economy – with Cynnal Cymru – Sustain Wales.
- Democratising media ownership and content – with NUJ Wales.
- Growing participatory and deliberative democracy – with Cymru Yfory- Tomorrow’s Wales.

The proceedings of the seminars will form the basis of a report to be published by the IWA, with the support of the Carnegie Trust, in the New Year. Wales is a testing ground for the messages contained in the Trust’s report. Prior to devolution it could be argued that there was a civil society in Wales but not a Welsh civil society. The coming of the National Assembly was about the creation of a new democracy in Wales and a new civil society to make

the democracy work. As former First Minister Rhodri Morgan has put it:

“As well as horizontal devolution – spreading power and responsibility more widely – we have to have vertical devolution as well. I have sometimes tried to sum up this dimension by describing our devolution settlement as a shift from crachach to gwerin, from government by a self-replicating élite to a new engagement with a far wider and more representative group of people, women and men, people from north and south Wales, Welsh speakers and not, black people as well as white, and so on.”

A little over a decade into the Welsh devolution experiment, this project will assess how far this aspiration has been achieved.

Engaging Wales’ disengaged youth

A new report on the problem of young people who are ‘not in education, employment or training’, just published by the IWA, echoes recommendations put forward by the National Assembly’s Enterprise and Learning Committee in October. These called for the Welsh Government to appoint a Minister with responsibility for the problem nationally and to identify a lead agency to co-ordinate work at the local level.

The report *Engaging Wales’ disengaged youth* is based on the proceedings of a conference organised by the IWA’s Gwent Branch in Pontypool in October 2009. The proportion of young people in Wales aged between 16 and 18 not engaged in

education, employment or training (NEET) has remained at a consistent level of around 12,000, between 10 and 12 per cent, for the past decade. There are young people in this category up to their mid-twenties, but 16 to 18-year-olds are especially vulnerable because they lie between the period of compulsory education and eligibility for welfare interventions.

The report contains chapters by Howard Williamson, Professor of European Youth Policy at the University of Glamorgan, Richard Newton, Director of Rathbone Cymru, Mark Provis, Chief Education Officer with Torfaen County Borough Council, and Frank Callus, Strategic Manager for Education, Training and Skills Development with the Heads

of the Valleys Programme. In addition Teresa Foster Evans who runs Cyfle, a Wrexham County Council pupil referral unit which takes care of disaffected female students, and Charlotte Blackwell a former student at the unit, explain how it operates.

One issue underlined in the report is what is called the revolving door syndrome, in which young people get moved from one programme to another without experiencing any real benefit. As the IWA’s Research Officer, Stevie Upton, who edited the report, asks in her Introduction:

“What are we preparing these young people for? Certainly some of them will have an inflated sense of what opportunities might



be available to them, and so an important part of encouraging young people’s voice will be to engage in a dialogue about realistic options. But if we are to be successful in reducing the number of young people who are NEET there will, of course, have to be options.”

- *Engaging Wales’ disengaged youth* is available from the IWA at £5.

Awards continue to inspire

Following on from the success of the inaugural IWA Inspire Wales Awards in June, which attracted an audience of more than 300 to Cardiff's City Hall, the event will be repeated in 2011.

With the backing of the Western Mail, the IWA established the scheme to recognise excellence, to encourage the active involvement of citizens in Welsh civil society, and to underline the importance of innovation in the Welsh economy. We are currently looking for sponsors for the 2011 competition prior to the launch of the 2011 awards in January.

The awards cover the fields of enhancing democratic

engagement, education, arts, science, business, sport and the promotion of the Welsh language. Sponsors so far lined up for 2011 include Leadership and Management Wales, Wales and West Utilities, Cardiff County Council and Western Power Distribution. If you are interested in getting involved with the awards on either a corporate or individual level contact Emma Brennan on 029 2066 0820 or email emmabrennan@iwa.org.uk.

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2011

More women voices needed

The IWA's Women Branch has launched a Database of 130 experts for use by journalists seeking specialists who are willing to be interviewed. It has been created following a study which showed that women are under-represented in both print and broadcast media in Wales. News stories on sport, business and politics in particular were found to be dominated by male experts. Yet even where a more balanced use of men and women is achieved, the female experts tended to be in less senior positions than the men.

At the IWA Women's *Making a Mark in the Media* Conference in March, journalists identified women's failure to put themselves forward for interview, compounded by tight deadlines that militate

against journalists seeking new contacts, as exacerbating the imbalance. The Expert Database addresses both of these issues, by presenting the fields of expertise of over 130 women together with comprehensive contact and availability details for weekdays, evenings and weekends.

Already it covers a diverse knowledge base, from entrepreneurship to asbestos legislation, and from beauty therapy to the Severn tolls. The Database will continue to be developed and updated as an important source of expert contacts. Journalists wishing to receive a copy of the database, or women wishing to have their details added, should contact Kirsty Davies, the IWA's Deputy Director, at kirstydavies@iwa.org.uk



clickonwales.org to be archived by British Library

As a result of an agreement with the National Library, the IWA's online news magazine Clickonwales.org is to be preserved for future generations by the UK Web Archive Consortium. This is a partnership between the British Library, the National Library of Wales, the Wellcome Library, and the Joint Information Systems Committee of the Higher and Further Education Councils.

The Consortium selects sites that publish research, demonstrate innovative use of the internet, or reflect the diversity of lives, interests and activities throughout the UK. While it is open to everyone, the UK Web Archive is designed to be of particular use to teachers, journalists, academics and policy makers.

The National Library is hoping to create a Special Collection for Wales within the archive. If this is achieved, Clickonwales.org will be located there, as well as in its present location under Government, Law and Politics, and Devolved Government, helping to extend our reach and visibility beyond Wales and the UK.

Clickonwales.org would vanish from the web if we

stopped maintaining the site and, more importantly, if we stopped paying for it to be hosted. While Google archives 'cached' versions of websites, they cannot be relied upon as an accurate archive or backup.

The sites which are most at risk, and which the Archive aims to rescue from the void, are so-called 'grey literature', which are not usually archived by Google. These include Government-run sites that carry briefings, reports, policy statements and other 'ephemeral but significant forms of information', which sometimes only exist online. When governments change, pages put up by the previous government are usually deleted, and the information lost. Google do not archive this type of page. Both the Welsh Government and the National Assembly Commission have given permission for their sites to be archived.

Since its launch in April ClickonWales, which is updated daily with a widening range of contributors, has steadily increased its audience. It is currently receiving more than 2,000 visits each week, with the number rising steadily.

Comprehensive Spending Review Analysis

Cuts should produce changes in Welsh Government priorities

Eurfyl ap Gwilym



The strategy underlying the £81 billion cuts over next four years, announced in the UK Government's Comprehensive Spending Review in October, is to hope that it will lead to a rapid revival in economic growth powered by a revitalised private sector and a diminished public sector.

The burden of fiscal consolidation is to be borne by spending cuts rather than by increases in taxation. For example, there were additional cuts to the welfare budget which increased to £18 billion compared with the £11 billion indicated in the June budget. Because of our relatively high dependence on welfare spending this will hit Wales disproportionately hard – rising to an extra £963 million a year taken out of the Welsh economy by the end of the period.

The Government has forecast that 490,000 jobs will be lost in the public sector, and hopes the private sector will take up the slack. Most critics of this strategy accept the need for fiscal consolidation but say spending should be cut more slowly in order to avoid the risk of a double dip recession or, as is more likely, sustained slow economic growth over the coming years. That would lead to continuing high levels of unemployment with the attendant drop in tax take and increase in welfare spending. Such an outcome could undermine the planned reduction in the fiscal deficit. Cutting spending over

more than four years is unprecedented. Historically sharp reductions have only lasted twelve to eighteen months.

The Review set out departmental spending plans for the next four years and in the coming weeks each department is due to publish a more detailed business plan. The Welsh Government's overall budget for each of the next four years is set out in **Table 1**. How this will impact on each of the departments – health, education, economic development and so on – will be made clear by the detailed Welsh budget for 2011-12 published in late November.

In practice the these figures are broadly in line with spending implied in Labour's 2009 and 2010 UK budgets. Labour planned to cut the Welsh Government's budget by £500 million a year for each of the coming three years (they did not forecast a fourth year). The plans as announced this October call for a deeper cut in the first year of £860 million in real terms, offset by a smaller reduction of £325 million in the second year. By 2014-15 the Welsh budget will have been cut by £1.8 billion which reflects a continuation of Labour's plans over the first three years of successive

cuts of some £500 million a year.

According to the Welsh Government's own estimate the cut in real terms over the four years is 12 per cent.

The sharp reduction in capital investment of 41 per cent is slightly lower than Labour's planned 45 per cent reduction in real terms announced in their 2009 UK budget. Thus Labour's attack on the Conservative-Lib Dem coalition's plans so far as the Welsh budget is concerned ring a little hollow. In terms of 'fairness' it would be naïve to expect Wales to get a fair deal given that the changes to funding of the Welsh Government are determined by the Barnett formula which is a simple and crude arithmetic exercise. The Welsh Liberal Democrats are in the difficult position of defending the cuts for Wales as 'fair' whilst condemning the Barnett formula as 'unfair'.

While attention in Wales is concentrated on the Welsh Government's budget, nearly 40 per cent of identifiable public expenditure is made through direct payments to people in Wales by the UK Government. Most of this spending is on welfare payments. These include state pensions, invalidity benefit, support for the

Table 1:
Welsh Government's budget 2010-15 -
£million real terms after correcting for inflation

	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
Revenue	13,445	13,015	12,795	12,602	12,311
Capital	1,674	1,244	1,139	994	1,007
Total	15,119	14,259	13,934	13,597	13,318

Source: Welsh Government

Table 2:
UK Government spending in Wales - £ million

Public order and safety	627
Economic affairs, including transport	613
Recreation, culture and religion	146
Other	132
Total	1,518

unemployed, housing allowances and tax credits. Given the planned cuts of £18 billion in the UK welfare budget, significantly higher than planned in the June 2010 budget, this will mean a cut of almost £1 billion a year in the case of Wales, when fully implemented.

While the removal of child tax credits for higher rate taxpayers will, by definition, hit the better off (about £90 million in Wales), the other welfare cuts of £873 million will be borne by many of the most vulnerable in our society. The impact of these cuts will of course be felt more widely because those on the lowest incomes cannot save but spend most of the money locally on food, clothing and other essential items.

Approximately £1.5 billion a year is spent by the UK Government in Wales in other areas such as public order and economic affairs, shown in **Table 2**.

It is not clear how much of this spending will be cut. However, in England police and culture budgets in England are suffering higher than average cuts and this will be reflected in the monies spent in Wales.

It was noteworthy in the Chancellor's statement and in the Spending Review documentation that little was said regarding Wales. A number of specific commitments were made for Scotland, including an additional £250 million through the Green Investment Bank for infrastructure investment. In the case of Wales the Severn Barrage and St Athan defence establishment projects were both dropped in the run-up to the Spending Review. A couple of small, local rail improvements were announced but the Review was silent on the proposed electrification of the London to Swansea line. Meanwhile, there were commitments to a high speed link from London to Birmingham, Crossrail in London and major improvements to the London underground. Major commitments were to spending on science projects in London, Oxford and Cambridge but none in Wales.

A major Welsh concern has to be the 41 per cent cut capital spending.

Wales has already lagged behind the rest of the UK in this area over the last decade. Will the Welsh Government cut capital spending this much or will it boost capital investment at the expense of current spending? Whilst being politically difficult this would be the right thing to do if Wales is to renew and modernise its infrastructure. Another possibility is for the Welsh Government to raise money in the private capital markets for investment in infrastructure such as roads and broadband.

Another concern has to be the impact of the Spending Review on employment. Wales's share of the 490,000 jobs the UK Government forecasts will be lost in the public sector could be between 25,000 and 35,000. Is there scope for Welsh government at national and local levels to work with the trades unions to reduce the impact of the cuts on employment by trading off pay levels against staffing levels? Wales responded well to the immediate aftermath of the banking crisis with its ProAct and ReAct programmes. Can it do the same now?

If the strategy of the Spending Review works, job losses in the public sector will be off-set by growth in the private sector. But even if this works at a UK level will it work in Wales? Will the skills of former public sector workers match the needs of the private sector? Will the new jobs be created in Wales which has a relatively weak private sector or will they continue to be concentrated in south east England?

Over the past decade most of the growth in private sector employment has been in financial services and construction whilst manufacturing has continued to decline. Wales has traditionally been strong in manufacturing but weak in financial services. These are some of the issues that the Welsh Government has to face as it decides its spending priorities.

Eurfyl ap Gwilym is Plaid Cymru's economic adviser and sits on the boards of a number of listed companies.

Cuts will force mergers of functions if not boundaries

Steve Thomas



When the Chancellor George Osborne sat down after delivering his Comprehensive Spending Review it was greeted with a mix of incredulity in parts of the UK and with a resigned sigh of some relief in others. On the surface the headlines were nowhere near the carnage for the devolved nations that was inflicted on English local government which suffered cuts of 33 per cent in real terms. As I toured the Welsh media after the event one journalist crystallized this with the question "Not too bad then?"

The headline figures seem to confirm this. True, the Welsh budget takes a bigger hit than the other devolved nations. However, according to Treasury figures the Welsh Government will see a 7.5 per cent real terms reduction in revenue and another 41% reduction in capital funds. Ironically it seems that everyone's favourite financial accounting 'hate figure', the Barnett formula, which received a 'knock-out blow' with Gerry Holtham's review, had somehow got back on its feet and come out fighting. The protection of the NHS in England and more limited protection of schools were largely the services which delivered this outcome for Wales.

Any document marked with the words Treasury emblazoned on the front requires time to analyse and digest. All UK Budget statements are complex documents full of more dark arts than the collected works of J. K.

Rowling. Approach with care should be the warning. Objectively it is the case that the outcome is at the better end of Welsh Government assumptions in revenue terms. Yet the 3 per cent revenue and 10 per cent capital annual cuts formula put forward by Finance Minister Jane Hutt were precisely that, planning assumptions. They also served to challenge the public sector and begin the process of galvanising new thinking about different ways of delivering services under the auspices of the Government's Efficiency and Innovation Board. In local government these assumptions also allowed councillors and officers to start to think the unthinkable and begin what will be very difficult ongoing negotiations with the trade unions.

Undoubtedly we are in for a torrid time in local government as is the wider public sector in Wales. Others can argue about the smoke and mirrors of Treasury accounting, but the fact remains that taken together the Welsh Government's budget will see a revenue and capital reduction next year alone of nearly £582 million. Similarly, while this accounts for over half of public expenditure in Wales (£15 billion) there are other huge budgets within the welfare system, in non-devolved departments like Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and in Home Office Services which take the totality of public expenditure to some £28 billion. Indeed across the four forces the Welsh police are working on a real terms cut of some 20 per cent. This is equivalent to £80 million, a figure which not far short of Dyfed Powys Police entire revenue budget of £93 million. It is hardly a great shock therefore that the idea of Elected Police Commissioners has been greeted in Wales with the same enthusiasm as heavy rain at the Ryder Cup.

Welsh local government will be tasked with delivering huge cuts to housing and council tax benefit in communities which are some of the poorest in the UK. This is at a time when

services like social care are straining under the weight of growing numbers of looked after children, particularly post Baby Peter, and a potential adult social care bill which has already headed off the graph towards the stratosphere.

Is it surprising that there are huge fears of a visibly creaking social care system shunting huge costs to a protected NHS? In education the gap between spending per pupil in England and Wales could potentially grow larger than the current £527 per annum, while the level of repairs required to depilated Welsh schools is estimated at £2.2 billion by the Wales Audit Office at a time when capital spending is decimated. I could also highlight other massive service pressures such as municipal waste costs but a Prozac would be required.

Then there is the assumption that the private sector will arrive just in time like the proverbial Seventh cavalry coming over the Beacons to save us. The public sector in Wales spends over £4.3 billion a year on goods and services with the private and voluntary sectors. Discussions are underway on how new service models might be developed with these sectors to maintain provision. That said, jobs that would have been largely private sector based in terms of large capital projects like the Severn Barrage and the St Athan Training Academy will not materialise. The groan of Welsh town planners, architects and construction workers looking to these projects as the salvation for their jobs was audible.

The relative structural weakness of the Welsh private sector is at the heart of this. Despite the spend per head on economic development being higher in Wales than in any other part of the UK (equivalent to £80 for every Welsh person), our gross value added per head has fallen further behind the UK average, from 80 per cent in 2002 to 74 per cent in 2008.

It is imperative for the Government to tackle the huge structural deficit. It is also time to fully come to terms with the fact that we will wait decades to see

a repeat of what has been a golden age of public expenditure over the past ten years. Welsh local government awaits with a real measure of trepidation the Assembly draft budget and the local government provisional settlement in late November.

Welsh Ministers have worryingly indicated a desire to protect acute health care at a time when everyone agrees that there should be a resource shift to primary and social care (those NHS consultants don't ever give up). Skills and schools are also in the frame for protection plus the controversial universal services. Yet when Assembly politicians tramp the roads next April what the Welsh public will tell them is that the services they care most about are within one hundred yards of their front doors. They include refuse collection, street lighting, the dreaded potholes in local roads, that pesky dog mess, and those leisure services which provide much more than a game of squash. Protecting these services will be impossible if the cuts are too deep.

The scale of challenges ahead for the Welsh local authorities is enormous and the pace of change will be relentless. Some will undoubtedly merge. Others will shift service provision to regional or even national levels. The use of other providers in the third sector or business will be a key factor. If the truth be told the long sought after reorganisation is occurring, but in functions and not structures.

Finally what happens if the UK Government's hugely ambitious assumptions about private sector job creation and cost benefit savings simply don't materialise? John Kenneth Galbraith once colourfully stated that "the only function of economic forecasting is to make astrology look respectable". While no one can know whether the Chancellors strategy will work, what we do know is that it will hurt in Wales.

Steve Thomas is Chief Executive of the Welsh Local Government Association.

More Welsh-based procurement provides a way forward

Phil Cooper



One wry commentator on the Comprehensive Review remarked that the Chancellor was inspired by Jean-Baptiste Colbert, Louis XIV's treasury minister, who said that the art of taxation was "to pluck the maximum amount of feathers from the goose with the least amount of hissing". The private sector was quietly supportive but the hissing from the public sector has been loud and continuous given the 500,000 jobs to be cut over the next four years. Wales will be hit particularly hard, with an expected 50,000 job losses given our economy is so dominated by the public sector.

However, since the amount of duplication and inefficiencies in parts of the public sector are so high these losses could take place without any decline of services as many will come from natural wastage or efficiency drives. Our leaders will have an opportunity to break away from conventional approaches and think about how public services can be delivered by fewer people for less money. It also gives the private sector an opportunity to introduce innovative solutions which focus on outcomes rather than process.

A plan for tackling the deficit was announced but it is not clear how the Chancellor can create the right conditions to put the UK back on a path to growth. The gamble he has taken depends on whether he can bring down the deficit without killing off growth. For without economic growth deeper cuts

or higher taxes will become inevitable and consumer confidence could stall.

The only way to solve the problem of rising unemployment is to induce the economy to grow again. Yet the greater reliance on the public sector in Wales, together with the fragility of our business climate, heightens the responsibility to get our public policy right. The recovery is all about jobs. Creating more jobs means faster economic growth and greater income for the Government with less outlay through the benefits system.

The crucial questions revolve around whether the Coalition government can create the right conditions for growth and whether the Welsh Government's economic renewal programme is appropriate to drive the private sector growth needed to compensate for the cuts.

Drivers for generating private sector employment are: start ups, the expansion of existing firms and encouraging companies to move into Wales. However, the creation of jobs is hampered by a profusion of regulations and legislation which have multiplied in recent years, especially for SMEs which dominate the Welsh economy. Current employment law is a minefield which places a disproportionate burden on SMEs and is a barrier to their employment growth potential.

The specific focus in the Welsh Government's Economic Recovery Plan on only supporting growth firms in six sectors penalizes excellent firms in other sectors of the economy which have proven job creation capabilities. Recent studies by NESTA and McKinsey show that few growth firms came from Government-supported sectors. Warren Buffet confirms this as his portfolio invests in growth firms in traditional sectors which are overlooked by Governments. In abandoning its support for growth firms outside the chosen sectors, the Welsh Government could be risking the employment-creating prospects of many firms, particularly those in the poorest areas of Wales.

Growth firms need to access skills and have a healthy appetite for cash. Both are in short supply. Innovation is critical for the future development and competitiveness of growth firms. But our innovation policy has focused more on landmark buildings to house innovating firms than helping them with their research and development costs. Productivity also requires investment. Yet the repayable grant system to support research and capital investment simply does not work on pre-revenue innovative projects. The closure of the Welsh Government's international division is also a worrying sign when growth firms need to look outside the UK market for expansion, a fact which our new polices seem to overlook.

However, there is hope. Procurement is an excellent way to create jobs although the £4.5 billion spent by the public sector in Wales could get smaller as a result of the Comprehensive Spending Review. Around half of this spend is procured outside Wales. It should be a Welsh Government mantra that for every 1 per cent retained in our country, approximately 2,000 jobs are created. Despite this there are many barriers facing the SME sector. Many companies feel the public sector is biased towards larger firms, often based outside Wales, which have a superior brand image and professional tendering teams. As a result they are perceived to offer lower exposure to risk.

Welsh firms must be more proactive and invest more time and effort in the tendering process and not ignore the potential for collaboration with the larger firms to obtain sub-contract work.

SMEs are being made fully aware of the public sector procurement processes in order to overcome real or perceived barriers. For example, the Supplier Development Service provides guidance to SMEs on all aspects of engaging with the public sector and in particular the Pre-Qualification Questionnaire process through which potential providers are

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short-listed. The public sector must support and engage with this supplier education agenda to maximise the economic impact.

Wales also has EU structural funding to help reshape its economy and create the new jobs but the Wales European Funding Office should engage more with the private sector rather than focus on the Welsh Government's pet projects which have failed to provide a return.

The Spending Review poses many challenges to our fragile economy. At the same time it provides an opportunity for the public and private sectors to work closer together to capture the enormous goodwill of those who want Wales to succeed in developing a more robust economy with a stronger indigenous base. The private sector will rise to the challenge if given the opportunity.

Phil Cooper is the Chief executive of Venture Wales that provides business support for SMEs.

We should look to private sources for capital spending

Mike German



Wales, like the rest of the UK and much of Europe, has had to face up to the challenge of deficit reduction. The pain for Wales will be less than for the UK as a whole in terms of its revenue spending. But there are difficult decisions to be made in how capital expenditure will be dealt with over the coming 3-4 years.

No one in their right mind would keep piling debt and interest charges on to the country's credit card, sacrificing the future prosperity of our country and placing a weight of debt to be repaid by our children. Faced with £120m a day of interest – money going to no good public use – the government was right to act swiftly.

By way of comparison, the UK ratio of debt to wealth, is similar to that of Spain, a country which is struggling to escape recession. Even with the tough times ahead for our deficit reduction programme, Spain is intending to bring its deficit below the 3 per cent ratio a year earlier than the UK.

It is to the credit of the UK government that Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland have received a lesser burden to bear than England as a whole. In particular, the protection of health and education budgets in England has meant some respite for the Welsh Government. The almost audible

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sighs of relief from officials in Cardiff Bay meant that their original budget reduction plans could be rethought.

No-one is denying all this is difficult, and no-one in the Liberal Democrats relishes the prospect of the tough times ahead. But we have to share the pain in order to maintain our competitive edge in the world. This means keeping interest rates low so that companies can invest, and our exports grow. Nothing would be worse than reducing spending over a longer time frame than our principal markets, thereby placing a growing interest rate burden on the very companies which alone can help us fight our way back to prosperity.

Labour left the Coalition government with the largest peacetime deficit in our history, a terrible economic legacy. The consequences of not acting now are very serious – higher interest rates, business failures, and rising unemployment. That's why the Coalition government has acted as it did to bring the country back to prosperity. It is making the tough choices now, and not being deluded by some kind of future nirvana but without the means to achieve it. That's what the opposition parties offer.

So where are the tough decisions for Wales. Clearly there are some difficult choices to make in respect of capital expenditure. Our schools and hospitals will need refreshing, development and new equipment. The absolute reliance by the Welsh government on using their own resources and never engaging with private finance must surely come to an end. New financial mechanisms are available and an ideological approach will mean fewer new buildings, and less of the vital new treatments which are available to a modern health service. Delays in new renal dialysis centres and GP practices not being allowed to locate in private sector premises are just two examples of current Welsh Government practices which must end.

The benefits of the additional funding from Europe are maintained,

and the Government must ensure that they get maximum value from the two thirds of Wales which qualifies for the additional expenditure.

Labour left the Coalition government with the largest peacetime deficit in our history, a terrible economic legacy.

The real engine for growth in Wales will be by establishing a business environment which encourages new business and helps existing business to expand and develop. Export growth is one area where more can and should be done by the Welsh Government. Recent activity has not provided the return we should expect from public investment. Now is the time for a complete re-appraisal of how links are built with new markets. Joint ventures are a particularly appropriate way of reducing business risk yet maximising the development opportunities. This is particularly relevant for bringing new ideas and processes to new markets, and can work within Wales as well as in other countries.

Welsh Ministers now have the consequential from the £60 million renewable energy growth fund to invest as they see fit. This is a real opportunity to grab part of the new business development potential and invest in the infrastructure to meet our immediate needs in offshore wind energy and newer forms of renewable development. The big Severn barrage project was opposed by Liberal Democrats not just because it was too costly in economic and environmental terms, but also because it would have been 2030 before it provided any energy! We need to invest now to enable companies to meet our 2020 international obligations.

An often missed feature of the Coalition's plans is an emphasis on part-time study and also expansion in the Further Education sector. Many people have found the acquisition of

new skills very difficult because of the funding regime, where payment of up-front costs are the rule. Wales needs to be at the forefront of new ideas and

industrial processes. Recent evidence shows that manufacturing is already making the difference. Our skills base is crucial to providing Welsh business with the engine needed to make growth possible. Both of these areas lie within the responsibility of Welsh Government Ministers. I look forward to seeing the ambitions set for England being matched or exceeded by the actions of government in Wales.

The new Universal Benefit reforms will have a profound impact on poverty, with very positive projections for the impact these will have in the medium term in Wales. This is an important matter, as many political commentators have focused solely on the impact of savings to the welfare bill rather than the overall impact of policy on poverty. The expectation is that by the next general election more families in Wales will have been lifted out of poverty than was achieved during the whole period from 1997 – 2010.

Taken as whole, with measures on expenditure and spending looked at together, the plans for the future impact more on those who are able to afford it. The poorest will take a smaller hit than the rich. After a successful referendum next March, the Coalition will turn its attention to the way in which Wales is funded. Expect a real step forward in the way in which Wales can have an effective fiscal influence over its destiny.

Mike German is a Liberal Democrat peer in the House of Lords and former Economic Development Minister in the National Assembly.

1

Cambrian Mountains

Articles

Blotting out the mid Wales landscape

A beacon for our time

The Cambrian Mountains brand



Above: Today's view of Nant-y- Moch on the slopes of Pumlumon near Pontnewydd, east of Aberystwyth.

Below: Artists impression of the same view with the proposed turbines superimposed.

Blotting out the mid Wales landscape

Ann West says the Cambrian Mountains should become an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

If the National Park that was proposed for the Cambrian Mountains had been designated in 1979 it would have brought a special planning authority, centrally supported funding, and a high tourism profile. However, designation was unpopular amongst farmers and other land owners who worried about planning interference. Local authorities, too, were opposed because they felt a National Park might encroach on their functions.

A compromise today would be to make the Cambrian Mountains an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). This would integrate the needs of the land users, mainly farmers and foresters, with the landscape, biodiversity, culture and the economy. It would reflect the interests of local people and help meet the objectives of the local authorities and the Welsh Government. It would provide a framework for long term co-operation with minimal disruption to existing local authority structures.

It is now accepted that the Cambrian Mountains cover an area which includes the uplands of Pumlumon, Elenydd and Mynydd Mallaen, largely the moorland over 300 metres shown on the accompany map. However, the Cambrian Mountains have an identity problem. Without designation as an AONB they have no clear, recognisable boundaries, no signs announcing you are entering or leaving them. The people who live in and around them, let alone visitors and tourists, have no clear idea where they are.

The primary purpose of an AONB designation is to conserve and enhance natural beauty as defined by the 1949 National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. This



1/Cambrian Mountains

stresses that account should be taken of rural industries and the economic and social needs of local communities, and promoting sustainable forms of social and economic development that in themselves conserve and enhance the environment.

The natural beauty of the plateaux and gorges of the Cambrian Mountains is equal to and often greater than many of our national parks. Although distributed among the three counties of Powys, Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire, geographically they are one area. The rivers Severn, Wye, Elan, Irfon, Tywi, Cothi, Teifi, Ystwyth, Rheidol and Twymyn all have their sources here.

From the high ground endless vistas can be seen across the plateaux, sprinkled with small lakes and streams. Here one can experience the sense of wilderness and utter solitude that is becoming so rare in the United Kingdom. The living landscape and its beauty are maintained by the local communities, the landowners, farmers, and estate managers who look after them. They contribute to the essence that brings visitors and their bank balances to the ring of villages and towns surrounding the Cambrian uplands.

Walkers stay in the hotels, bed and breakfast houses, and Youth Hostels, eating in the ever improving restaurants, stopping in campsites where farmers have decided to diversify into tourism. Pony trekkers ride across Wales staying on farms. Together they generate millions of pounds for the economy of mid-Wales. But everything depends upon the tranquillity and peace of the incomparable landscape.

The mountains provide rare examples of largely intact prehistoric cairns, megaliths, stone rows and circles dating from the Bronze Age, unchanged since their creation. Peat bogs are an important archive documenting human activity but they are a diminishing resource with many hectares having been lost recently during the construction of Cefn Croes windpower station to the east of Aberystwyth, near Devil's Bridge.

Where off-roading is unchecked, where motor bikes and 4 x 4s romp through bogs and drive on to areas without tracks, immense damage is done to fragile surfaces which are then seen as no longer worthy of protection. Monitoring and policing these activities are slowly improving but there are not enough rangers to contain the large numbers of bikers arriving from the Midlands.

Regardless of your views on wind power, erecting 64 wind turbines 475 feet high at Nant-y-Moch, the latest area to be targeted, near Ponterwyd east of Aberystwyth, cannot be justified. Wide hard roads would also be needed to access each of the turbines. If this proposal is accepted the precious isolation and wilderness will be lost. The



Nant-y-Moch reservoir viewed from Mynydd Hyddgen, where Owain Glyndŵr claimed his iconic victory in 1401.

view from Pumlumon will be even more cluttered with industrial giants and the jewel in the crown of the Elenydd gone for ever. The fevered imagination of H.G. Wells in his dystopian 1899 novel *When the Sleeper Wakes* would come to pass in 21st Century upland Wales:

“And all over the countryside he knew, on every crest and hill where once the hedges had interlaced, and cottages, churches, inns, and farmhouses had nestled amongst their trees, wind wheels similar to those he saw and bearing like

vast advertisements, gaunt and distinctive symbols of the new age, cast their whirling shadows... To the east and south the great circular shapes of complaining wind-wheels blotted out the heavens.”

The establishment of an AONB would be an important step towards achieving our vision of self-reliant communities making critical decisions about their own futures, and maintaining themselves through their own sustainable economic activities, rooted in the beauty of their landscape.

Members of the National Assembly who decide our future seem a long way away when you are walking the hills surrounding the field of the Battle of Hyddgen in 1401, site of Owain

Glyndŵr's first iconic victory, or resting by the lakes and streams. We are exposed to consultants working in offices with little or no feel for the magic of Nant y Moch. We need protection from hungry developers or the motor industry who care nothing for the quiet skies where kites and skylarks are the only sounds heard. Could an AONB achieve this? We hope so.

Ann West is Chair of the Cambrian Mountains Society.

The foreground of this aerial view of the western edge of the Cambrian Mountains reveals the outline of the church and cloister of Strata Florida, now known to be a small part of the monastery which was once spread over 100 acres or more. Photo: Toby Driver.



A beacon for our times

David Austin describes a heritage project to restore Strata Florida's place at the cultural heart of the Cambrian Mountains

Although little survives for the visitor to see, the Strata Florida Cistercian Abbey at the north end of the Teifi Valley in the Cambrian Mountains, is perhaps the most famous and iconic of all the medieval monuments of Wales.

Strata Florida (Ystrad Fflur) was founded as a daughter house of Whitland in 1164 on land first granted by an Anglo-Norman knight, Robert FitzStephen. The very next year, the great Welsh prince, the Lord Rhys of Deheubarth, removed Robert from his lands and became the patron of the monks and their foundation. Then, in 1184, at the height of his powers, the Lord Rhys made a massively extended grant of land, much of it in the Cambrian Mountains, to the Abbey and the monks re-located to another site just two miles to the north of the original foundation. The re-founded monastery very quickly became a centre for an ideology of Welshness built around history, art, literature and the language. It also became the burial place of the Deheubarth royal family, native princes of a large part of south-west Wales.

What the Cistercian monks created at Strata Florida has many resonances with today's concerns for the environment and for the economic and social well-being of our rural communities. Under

my direction the University of Wales Trinity St David has developed a major research and heritage project aimed at understanding what we can learn from the long traditions of sustainability and culture initiated by the monastery. It is still early days in our research at Strata Florida, but already there is a powerful story to tell of an institution which over 350 years shaped so much of the future of the Cambrian Mountains and their surrounding valleys. We are still living their inheritance.

The Cistercians were an enclosed order which gained great prominence from the 11th to 13th Centuries right across Europe. There were two main elements to their activities. The *monachi* or choir monks were the contemplative members, ordained as priests, scholars, administrators, thinkers and men of spiritual contemplation. Then there were monks who were workers in the fields, the men who converted the land they had been granted, often in remote terrains, into productive and fertile estates. As well as supporting the abbeys themselves, these also nurtured their regional societies and dependants. Gerald of Wales who had no great love of Cistercians grudgingly conceded, "Give them a wilderness or a forest and in a few years you will find a dignified abbey in the midst of

shining plenty”.

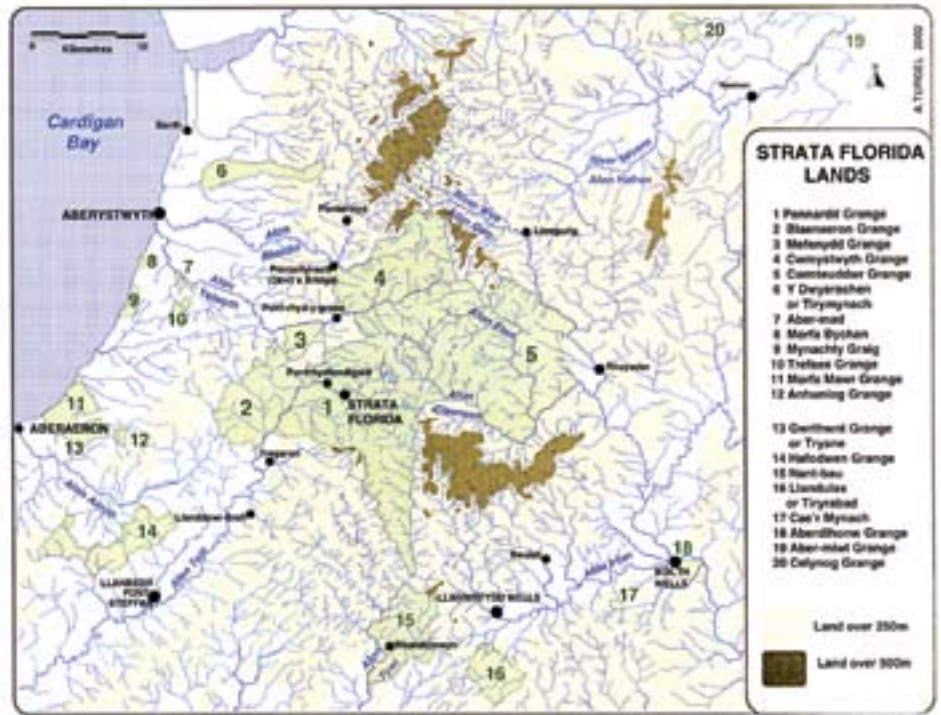
The abbey church and part of its cloister were excavated in the 19th Century. We now know that this outline plan, preserved by Cadw, sat at the heart of a large precinct. We still have to determine its full extent but it may be as large as 120 acres of enclosed space. If it is this size, then it is certainly the largest abbey precinct in Wales and among the largest in Britain and western Europe.

Within its walls were a number of massive masonry buildings, one of which, the Great Gatehouse between the inner and outer precincts, we are excavating. Other major structures include a guesthouse, Abbot’s house, refectory and infirmary much as we might expect of a monastery. But there is also a massive iron forge and clear signs of extensive metal working not 200 metres from the church itself.

The truth is that the Cistercians made no distinction between a spiritual and a physical life as we might today, as their famous dictum ‘ora et labor’ (prayer and work) made clear. Prayer was work and work was prayer. The labours of the soul were contained within the labours of the body and both were a gift to God and the only sure hope of grace. In the process not only did they build great places of prayer and learning, but also sanctuaries of well-being and security, of healing and hospitality, not just for themselves, but all who came to their door.

The Cistercians at Strata Florida not only employed the native skills and craft traditions of those who had dwelt for millennia among the Cambrian Mountains, but also introduced new techniques and technologies drawn from a wider European experience. They were consummate hydraulic engineers, diverting a river into an artificial channel to drain a valley for the new buildings, power at least two mills and a forge, provide clean water for all the occupants and a sewage system unsurpassed until the 20th Century in rural Wales.

For nearly two square miles around



Map showing the estates or granges of Strata Florida in the Cambrian Mountains and central Wales. Drawn by Adrian Turgel.

them, they created an inner core of specialist farms each concentrating on a single agrarian production - dairying, ox and horse breeding, pig rearing, provision of hay and fodder, and wheat growing. They planted an 80-acre managed mixed woodland to provide all their needs, from major structural timbers to fuel for the ovens. This wood is still there today with traces still of pollarded oaks and coppiced hazel.

On the flanks of the Cambrian Mountains immediately behind the precinct they built three, maybe four, specialist sheep-handling centres, each with a massive shed to shear, breed and count their huge flocks. It was the Cistercians, in fact, who introduced the monoculture of sheep and almost certainly new breeds to the Welsh uplands. This was the great foundation stone of their wealth as they controlled not only production but trade to international markets.

Another source of their wealth was undoubtedly the enormously rich deposits of metal ores in the Cambrian Mountains to which they brought new technologies of mining, smelting and forging. Thus it was the Cistercians who transformed a landscape of woods,

bogs and subsistence farming into a sustainable and fertile landscape which still today carries many archaeological traces of its distinguished past.

After the abbey was closed in 1539 as part of Henry VIII’s protestant Dissolution, gentry families, most descended from native prince lines, came to own its enormous estates. The refectory of the Abbey was transformed into a *plas* or mansion and in the 18th Century it became a tenant farmhouse.

Working in partnership with a range of organisations, in particular the Cambrian Mountains Initiative, the Strata Florida Trust is creating an access point to the western Cambrian Mountains out of the farm buildings. The aim is to re-establish this iconic place of spirit and knowledge in a modern guise for the benefit of local communities and the nation as a whole. Strata Florida’s ancient practices of sustainable endeavour through a close relationship with the natural environment remain a beacon for our times.

.....
Professor David Austin is Chair of Archaeology at University of Wales Trinity St David.



Cambrian Mountains brand

Peter Davies outlines an initiative to develop one of Wales' most cherished but neglected heartlands

The Cambrian Mountains rural heartland of Wales is an area of exceptional unspoilt landscape that supports valued habitats, species and ways of farming that have roots stretching back to the Middle Ages. Yet while lying at the heart of the nation and dominating maps of Wales, the Cambrian Mountains enjoy little recognition either as a tourism destination or as a distinct landscape. This is despite attempts dating back to 1965 to recognise them as a National Park.

The IWA's *Cherished Heartlands* report produced with the Brecknockshire Agricultural Society in 2005 highlighted the critical nature of the economic challenges facing this rural heartland, with implications for our cultural and environmental heritage. The report provided the stimulus for collaboration between the local authorities of Ceredigion, Powys and Carmarthenshire, the Countryside Council for Wales and The Prince's Charities to establish the Cambrian Mountains Initiative. The Prince of Wales who is President of the Initiative, has been a vital champion for the project which forms the flagship of his Trust's rural action programme in Wales.

The challenge has been to do something which is firmly rooted in the values of the area and uses

this as a platform to deliver economic, social and environmental goals. The Cambrian Mountains Initiative recognises that the future depends on strengthening the economy through increasing income from local produce, ecosystem services and tourism, each underpinned by a strong common brand and the enterprise of local communities.

The Cambrian Mountains brand encompasses the characteristics of the area it represents. The brand itself is based on the watercolour of Cwm Berwyn in the heart of the Cambrian Mountains that was painted by the Prince of Wales, with sales of the limited edition lithograph providing valuable income for the project. The brand is dedicated to sustaining a unique living environment through providing customers with a guarantee of quality, taste and welcome. All the products and services using the brand are based on the strengths and qualities of the Cambrian Mountains and are committed to supporting the aims of Cambrian Mountain Initiative.

The starting point for the initiative has been to work with the farming community where the central challenge is that upland farming in Wales is a marginal activity financially. Farming is dominated by sheep and a key objective for the initiative was to develop a premium Cambrian Mountain lamb range, that ensures the best, sweetest upland lamb produced to the highest welfare and environmental standards.

Cambrian Mountain Lamb has been sold under the Cooperative's Truly Irresistible range for the past three years, delivering a premium to farmers and also a return to communities, with 10p from each pack sold contributing to the Cambrian Mountains Initiative sustainable development fund for community projects. It was a finalist in the 2010 Taste of Wales awards.

Cambrian Mountain lamb forms the basis for a growing food produce range that brings together local food producers to create a high quality selection of Cambrian mountains products including beer, chocolates, cheeses, chutneys and jams.

The farming community has also worked with

Cwm Berwyn, a watercolour painted by Prince Charles, provides the brand image for the Cambrian Mountains.





Original members of the Cambrian Mountains Lamb Co-operative.

the initiative to be the first area in the UK where farmers have collaborated to discover the carbon footprints of their farms. The project, focusing on 20 beef and lamb production farms, was undertaken to discover how reductions in greenhouse gas emissions could be achieved. Bangor University analysed information provided by each farm and calculated a comprehensive carbon footprint based on each individual farming system. Factors measured include emissions from agricultural management, land and fuel use.

Contrary to previous press statements made by importers of lamb, the results have highlighted that Cambrian Mountain lamb and beef has lower carbon footprints than its competitors, when applying the local data related to natural processes in the uplands. The information gained through this process is being used to further reduce the carbon footprint of Cambrian Mountain farms and to reinforce the benefits of purchasing the lamb in the minds of consumers. As James Raw, chairman of the Cambrian Mountains Lamb Producer Group, said:

“The outcome of this work puts red meat produced in the Cambrian Mountains as being some of the greenest in the UK. Members of

the group are particularly pleased to see how their own individual farms contributed to the carbon sequestration effect and I was very pleased with the results of my own carbon footprint.”

Compared with other parts of Wales the Cambrian Mountains have had simply no tourism profile despite the undoubted qualities of the area. It is almost certainly the most tranquil area in southern Britain, devoid of light pollution and the noise of traffic, with only a few roads intruding into the mountains. It is immensely important for wildlife, especially the remaining habitats and associated species of blanket bog, upland heath, native western woodland and the freshwater habitats of the numerous upland lakes. The cultural associations of the Cambrian Mountains reflect all periods from pre-history to the present day, with 259 Scheduled Monuments receiving national protection and five Landscapes of Outstanding or Special Historic Interest

Working with the Tourism Partnership for Mid Wales the initiative has begun to develop an approach to sustainable tourism based on the special qualities of the area, linked to the quality food range and high quality accommodation. One of the first steps has been to establish a

network of tourism ambassadors. These offer the highest quality product or service and subscribe to the best principles of sustainability in the management of their business, whether in their use of locally sourced produce or the reducing of the impact of their activity on the environment. The ambassadors operate under the Cambrian Mountain brand. They will be the first to introduce the Criad Cambrian scheme which aims to encourage visitors to donate a small amount of money to help fund sustainable development work in the region.

So far the main focus for the initiative has been to work with farmers and tourism providers. However, support from the Countryside Council for Wales is now enabling a programme of meetings and workshops to develop a shared sense of place amongst the necklace of settlements that surround the Cambrian Mountains. Our aim is to promote innovation in the development of the local economy and provide a stimulus for investment in the ‘necklace’ of settlements that nestle around the uplands.

Peter Davies is Chairman of the Cambrian Mountains Initiative www.cambrianmountains.co.uk He is a Trustee of the IWA.

2

Politics

Articles

Five fallacies of devolution

Terrific twins of Welsh constitutional thought

Vote Yes vote Labour

Plaid Cymru's accommodation to gradualism

An ill-considered outcome of early morning horse-trading

Senedd, with the merchant seamen's war memorial in the foreground.



Five fallacies of devolution

Gerald Holtham calls for a sensible debate on tax varying powers for the National Assembly

There are strong arguments for the Welsh National Assembly to get taxation powers. But the discussion about such powers is so tangled up in a thicket of misunderstanding that there is a real danger that they will never be acquired. We need to slash away the clinging misconceptions and prickly misrepresentations surrounding the issues in order to get a sensible debate. Here are five widely-held beliefs:

1. Legislative powers are more important than taxation powers and should, at any rate, come first.
2. Devolution of taxation powers would be a step towards more autonomy for the National Assembly and therefore a further move towards separatism.
3. Devolution of taxation powers would mean higher taxes in Wales.
4. Any discussion of tax powers would jeopardise a Yes vote in the forthcoming referendum on legislative powers.
5. The UK government would never willingly give Wales taxation powers.

All five may seem plausible to the Welsh ear, but all are wrong. They are the five fallacies of devolution. Let's deal with them in turn.

1. Legislation is seldom more effective than tax incentives or penalties in influencing behaviour and, particularly, in fostering economic development. A number of economists have pointed out that a reduction in taxes on business would probably have been more effective in Wales than the numerous schemes to promote business development via the expenditure of public money. Moreover, legislation that cannot be supported by financial measures is likely to be less effective.

The notion that legislative powers must precede fiscal or tax powers is a peculiar one that goes against UK and international experience. The world is full of bodies, including all UK local authorities, that have the ability to levy a tax or taxes but

have no powers of primary legislation. On the other hand, there are very few legislating bodies in the world that cannot levy taxes. There is a good reason for that. It is a principle of public finance that bodies spending public money should, as far as possible, have the responsibility for raising it. If they do not, responsibility is split between bodies or governments, one raising the money and another spending it. Accountability to the electorate is muddled. Moreover, at the margin public expenditure is likely to be less carefully considered if it has no tax consequences. Rationally, taxation should come with spending and before legislation.

The peculiar ordering in Wales stems from one historical event, namely the Scottish referendum of 1997 when the Scots were asked two questions: should their Parliament have legislative powers and should it have taxation powers. The Scots answered yes to both but with a bigger majority for legislation. That fixed in the minds of Welsh politicians the idea that taxation powers would be least popular. Given that Welsh devolution has been an incremental process with a referendum at each stage, tax powers went to the back of the queue. That is politically understandable but does not make for grown-up discussion of policy or good governance.

2. Taxation powers have nothing necessarily to do with extending devolution. Suppose the UK government opposed all talk of legislative powers for Wales and cancelled the referendum. Suppose,

too, it recentralised a lot of currently devolved areas and shrank the National Assembly budget from £15 billion to £5 billion. On any reckoning that would be a diminution of devolution. Yet you could (and should) still ask the question: how should that £5 billion be financed? And the answer is still: not by a block grant. For careful public spending, economy and accountability, the Assembly should still have the responsibility of raising at least some of that money itself, just as a local council does when setting council tax or even a parish council when setting a precept. Whatever level of devolution you favour, whether you are in Cymru Yfory or in True Wales, while it exists at all you should want to see the Assembly responsible for raising some of its own revenue.

3. Wales is poorer than most other parts of the UK and its politicians tend to be more to the political Left than those from other parts of the UK. That has led many, especially among business people, to suppose that devolved taxes would mean higher taxes. That political leaning certainly exists but it could be trumped by a stronger force. Tax devolution means the possibility of tax competition and that has the tendency to push taxes down – as international experience has shown.

The Holtham Commission found that raising the basic rate of income tax by one penny in Wales would raise about £150 million for the Welsh Government. But cutting the higher rates of income tax by a penny



Senedd debating chamber

could quite possibly raise just as much or more! Why? Because the Welsh economy is so closely integrated with the English one and 90 per cent of the Welsh population lives within 50 miles or an hour's travel of the English border. Moreover, there are about 13 million people in the same position on the other side of the border. A proportionately small relocation for tax purposes could swell or drain Welsh coffers. Ultimately tax policy is a matter for elected politicians and will be driven by many considerations including ideas of fairness. But the most promising strategy for Wales from the viewpoint of economic development and perhaps even revenue-raising looks to be a tax-cutting one.

4. Statements in the UK coalition agreement, recently repeated by Nick Clegg, have linked a yes vote in the referendum with the possibility of a new fiscal settlement for Wales. As far as one can tell these statements are born of pure ignorance rather than anything more calculating and show how low Wales ranks in the concerns of UK politicians; they cannot find time to get briefed properly and to understand the actual position. However, opponents of legislative devolution will naturally use any scare story they can to make their case. They are almost sure to hold out the spectre of future tax powers and the threat of higher taxes as a consequence of a yes vote in the coming referendum – even though tax powers are not on the table. It is unlikely that the 'yes' camp can neutralise this attack by ignoring it. There are only two possible responses. One is to fold and say, 'If you vote yes for legislative powers we promise never to seek taxation powers'. The other is to use the argument under 2 above and say, 'Tax and legislation have nothing to do with each other; there is a strong argument for tax powers whether we have legislative powers or not. So we are going to have another referendum on taxation powers – *however you vote in this one.*' The electorate would know in advance it could vote 'yes, yes', 'no, no', or 'no, yes'. If it had taken leave of its senses it could even vote 'yes, no'!

5. The UK government has already committed itself – as did its predecessor – to legislating to give more fiscal powers to Scotland, following the Calman report which recommended that. London will give the Scots more power over income tax, in effect sharing the income tax base in Scotland

between the Scottish and UK Parliaments. There is little doubt that the UK Treasury and HM Revenue and Customs were horrified at this development and the complications it will entail. But they have accepted it is a political commitment and they are getting on with understanding how to make it work. While that is hard enough the marginal cost in time or effort of extending the changes to Wales is very low. One Treasury official, off the record, has said, "Calman is a pain but adding in Wales costs nothing and if we are ever going to have to do it, we might as well get it over with and do it all at once."

There is no reason to think the governing politicians would think differently if the political demand from Wales was there. They could well be prepared to add enabling clauses, extending Calman-type powers over income tax to Wales, to be activated when requested by the Assembly following another referendum. But the political demand has to be there. The limitation, as usual, is not English intransigence, but Wales' own division and ambivalence.

Currently Welsh politicians are more focused on trying to get the UK government to reform the Barnett formula in the reasonable expectation that would give Wales more money. Meanwhile, the UK government has no appetite to tackle that issue for fear of encouraging Scottish separatism, since any plausible reform would cost the Scots a lot of money.

However, there is an argument that fiscal devolution would only work if the block grant were seen to be on a fair and robust basis. Otherwise the devolved government will always be frightened to use taxation powers to deviate from English rates in case it calls the grant into question. And even devolving half of income tax to Wales or Scotland will only pay 15-20 per cent of the devolved budget. The block grant will account for the vast bulk of the rest. The battle to reform the block grant is another story. Meanwhile that 20 per cent of own-revenue would make a big difference to the accountability and responsibility of Welsh politicians.

Gerald Holtham chaired the Commission on the Funding and Finance of the National Assembly. He is a Trustee of the IWA.



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Terrific twins of Welsh constitutional thought

David Melding reflects on the impact of the Holtham and Richard Commissions

It was a great compliment to Wales when Professor James Mitchell wrote in the *Glasgow Herald* following the publication of the Holtham Report:

“The original Encyclopaedia Britannica used to carry the legendary line *For Wales, see under England*. That certainly could not be said since devolution. *For Wales, see under Scotland*... might be more accurate for now, though maybe it will be *For Scotland, see Wales in time*”.

In light of the publication of the Holtham Report, it is right to go back to the Richard Commission and reflect on the level of constructive thought that has grappled with, and sought to improve, the deeply flawed devolution settlement that followed the 1997 referendum.

While the Richard Commission's Report received a generally cool response from the political parties in Wales (only the Liberal Democrats endorsed its main recommendations) it soon became the “benchmark for what devolution for Wales should look like” to quote Dr. Barry Morgan, the Archbishop of Wales. The central recommendation that Wales should adopt the Scottish model and become a proper Parliament by 2011 or sooner has defined the debate ever since. This is an alpha outcome as most official reports end up as dust traps, not well thumbed guide books. Each political party has been drawn back to the Richard Report over the years.

The Welsh Conservative Party changed the most in response to Richard. Initially, the Party said, “We oppose any suggestion that the Assembly should be given law making and tax raising powers”. By 2005 this position had completely changed to a broad endorsement of legislative powers subject to a referendum.

Labour damned Richard with faint praise. Some members went further,

especially in the Parliamentary Party where Huw Irranca-Davies was typical in saying that the time was not right for further devolution. Yet further devolution soon came along, albeit in the guise of a constitutional Frankenstein called the Legislative Competence Order. Where Richard was clear that Wales needed a settlement with legislative and executive powers closely matched, Labour's 2006 Government of Wales Act contained more convolutions than an elaborate love spoon.



Gerald Holtham (left) and Lord Richard

As we approach the March 2011 referendum, the Richard Report is back in the news as the benchmark, just as Barry Morgan anticipated. And no wonder, given its elegance and coherence. One can argue that it is the most authoritative constitutional report ever commissioned by a government in the UK. Compared to the prolix disaster that was the Kilbrandon Report on devolution, published in 1973, it is succinct and practical.

Gerry Holtham matched Richard's exacting standards. Alan Trench, one of the UK's most perceptive experts on devolution, wrote that Holtham has “done much of the heavy lifting” on the financial aspects and potential of devolution. He added this is “work that the UK government appears never to have done at all”. Like Richard, Holtham has produced a report considerably above the standards routinely set by Westminster.

Again what marks out the Holtham Report is its boldness and clarity. In dealing with the Barnett conundrum it produced some clear and practical answers to the current and unfair funding anomalies

facing Wales. But it goes much further and argues for tax varying powers (presumably downwards) to spark profound economic regeneration in Wales.

But Holtham has not taken this position recklessly. He is also critical of the Calman Report on fiscal devolution to Scotland. Here he is a firm Unionist. Although his recommendations would give considerable tax varying powers to Wales (and implicitly Scotland and Northern Ireland), he warns against the consequences of the slippery process loosely termed “fiscal devolution”. Calman, Holtham clearly fears, might loosen up the UK, not unite it with a settlement that is fair and flexible. It is instructive that Canada comes closest to the model followed by Calman, and Australia to Holtham's approach.

Both the Richard and Holtham reports reflect the underlying strength of the Welsh body politic. Those who question the maturity of Welsh civic life should look to these reports for an indication of Wales' real political potential. And there are indications of robust health elsewhere. This is the third time that I have supervised the manifesto process for the Welsh Conservative Party. We have already received nearly 100 written responses from NGO's and other organisations, and held 44 follow up meetings. I have been impressed by the focus that most consultees have brought to the process. Submissions are clearer, more realistic and yet also more exacting than ever before. Expectations are higher and there is a fuller understanding of how civic society can most effectively influence the political process.

While some might still doubt the value of an Assembly with law-making powers, it is increasingly difficult to justify such a position on the basis that we Welsh are somehow constitutionally inept and not up to the challenge of forming and passing our own laws. The Richard and Holtham Reports could have only been produced by a confident political nation.

David Melding is Conservative AM for South Wales Central.

Vote Yes vote Labour

Mark Drakeford argues for a new level of sophistication in the design of the Yes campaign for the referendum next March

To make the most obvious point first: obtaining a Yes vote in the referendum on 3 March and the interests of the Labour Party in Wales are identical. The referendum is the culmination of Labour's great devolutionary heave. Others may not always like it, but the plain political fact is that devolution has been Labour's project from first to last.

The Lib Dems are (or were) federalists, which is not the same thing. The Conservatives were (and are) instinctive Unionists.

Meanwhile, Plaid Cymru's relationship with the 'independence' issue gets curiously and curiously. There have been phases when it has been convenient for Plaid to deny ambitions of independence. The only genuinely distinctive political purpose of Plaid Cymru is to achieve the break-up of the United Kingdom into its constituent nations. If they did not have such a fundamental aim there would be no purpose to their existence. This is despite the fact that they do not always actually 'sell' their Unique Selling Proposition.

Only Labour stands directly on the devolution ground, determined that Wales should take control of, and measure up to, the responsibility for our own domestic agenda, while retaining the advantages which go with remaining a part of a wider political entity.

Therefore a Yes vote on 3 March will represent a fulfilment of the purpose which Labour pursued,

and made possible, during our years in office at Westminster, after 1997. And, to make the electoral arithmetic point clear as well, a Yes vote cannot be won without the support of large numbers of Welsh voters whose instinctive affiliation lies with Labour.

At this stage, I'd like to enter a cautionary note. The opinion polls continue to show a clear majority in favour of a Yes vote. The Jones-Parry Convention concluded that a Yes vote could be won. The old reactionary coalition of Welsh Conservatives and Welsh business will not repeat their mistake of 1997 in turning out voters on the No side. And yet, I believe that any 'shoo-in' tendency in relation to the referendum to be profoundly mistaken.

History teaches us, as does a close reading of the Jones-Parry research, that the Yes vote is crumbly, and capable of being detached by a No campaign which concentrates on the fear-factors which are never far below the surface in the Welsh political lexicon. Fears of north against south, east against west, Welsh speakers against non-Welsh speakers and so on.

The date of the referendum, fixed out of political necessity, nevertheless represents a considerable gamble in itself. Let us all hope that Thursday 3 March turns out to be an early spring day, warm, sunny and inviting a walk to the polling station. But it is at least as likely, if not more so, to be a late winter day, cold, wet, dark, and off-putting to all but the most determined elector. Of course,

this is entirely beyond the control of any political campaign, but in a close-run thing, it could turn out to be decisive.

All this means, in my view, that a new level of sophistication has to be applied to the design of the Yes campaign effort. It means that a distinction will have to be drawn between the 'air war' on the one hand, and the 'ground war', on the other. Let me explain the distinction in a bit more detail.

By 'air war' I mean the national campaign which necessarily must be broadly based, a pan-political party effort in which anyone who wishes to make a contribution will be welcome, a model already very well exhibited in *Cymru Yfori: Tomorrow's Wales*. At the national level, the message has to be twin-track. A Yes vote will simplify and streamline the current complicated process by which legislative authority is transferred to the Assembly. A Yes vote will save money by making the system more efficient and cost-effective.

At the same time, the national argument must go beyond an appeal to administrative efficacy. It must also draw out the democratic dividend which a Yes vote will bring. To deploy a much over-used word, it will make the system more transparent. It will be simpler to understand and thus easier to influence. But, most of all, it will ensure that the democratic authority to determine policy over the domestic agenda of Wales rests where it belongs – with the National Assembly.

The 'ground war', however, needs to be organised very differently.

To be blunt, the chances of motivating Labour voters diminishes each time the advocacy of a Yes vote is associated with the Conservatives or Plaid Cymu. The Tory brand was never detoxified in Wales and whatever diminution in its toxicity which might have occurred has been sharply reversed since the 6 May. 'Vote YES for Wales' will do very well as a message at a national level. 'Vote Yes Because Your Local Big Wig Tory Tells You To Do So' will work very badly, if such a taint were to be perceptible to Labour voters. Equally, prominent vocal leadership by Plaid Cymru in south east Wales will surely play to



the fears of those voters who possess an underlying susceptibility to the claim that devolution means the thin edge of the wedge to separation.

On the ground, then, in those parts of Wales where the bulk of the population is to be found and where, in the end, a Yes vote will be secured or lost, the fight must be led by Labour. On the ground, Labour's campaign needs to echo those national themes set out earlier, but must do so in ways which makes most sense to Labour voters. With the referendum date fixed for 3 March, Labour's aim must be to mount a single, seamless campaign, running through the referendum and straight onto the Assembly election, a few short weeks later.

The reason for Labour supporters to vote Yes in March, is to give the Labour Assembly Government we hope to see elected in May, the tools it will need to do the job it faces over the next four year term. 'Vote Yes-Vote Labour' is my ground-war slogan, and best designed to maximise the contribution which Labour can make to getting the referendum won.

Members of the All-Wales Convention, with chairman Sir Emyr Jones-Parry at the centre, concluded that the referendum could be won.

Mark Drakeford was special advisor to former First Minister Rhodri Morgan from 1999 to December 2009 and is Labour's Assembly candidate in Cardiff West.

Plaid Cymru's accommodation to gradualism

John Dixon asks how long his party can combine a pragmatist present with an idealistic future

I can't remember exactly when it happened, but at some point in the late 1970s or early 1980s, Plaid Cymru formally adopted as policy the idea that, after achieving self-government, it would continue to exist as a party and seek to form the government of an independent Wales.

Of course, it wasn't an idea that came from nowhere. The decision was more a case of formalising something which many had long taken for granted. Yet it did signify a turning point in our approach to policy. From that point on we formally recognised that we weren't just calling on other people to do things. We were proposing to take power and implement policy ourselves.

Some painted it as a lurch to the left, given the nature of some of the policies adopted. However, I think it was more about an acceptance that a party seeking to form a government had to have a programme which was more ideologically and intellectually coherent than simply a series of demands for action by others.

What that decision replaced was the, generally unstated, assumption that, once Wales had achieved self-government, Plaid Cymru would simply disappear - job done. But that formal replacement of one assumption by another was never quite as simple as that. One reason was the party retained members who were adherents to the former position and who never fully signed up to the policy implications of the latter. In practice, that means that, were Plaid Cymru to achieve its

Gwynfor Evans: 'told every conference that independence was only 15 years away'.



constitutional objectives, there would be a number of members who would no longer consider either their membership or the party to be relevant. The number may be larger than some assume.

There was another underlying assumption as well, which has also been displaced with time. This was about the nature of the path to self-government. In my early years in the party, Gwynfor Evans used to tell every conference that independence was only 15 years away. It was always 15 years, even 15 years after the first time that I heard him say it. Since then we have come to terms with the idea that the path will be rather more gradual – and considerably more long term – than that.

The advent of devolution, and the upsurge in support for Plaid which the existence of a National Assembly facilitated, created a new and different dynamic. In the context of a gradualist approach with a democratically elected legislature in being, taking power is now something which has happened whilst we are continuing to strive to achieve the objectives, rather than after the event as it were.

In addition to that, whilst devolution decidedly does not lead in any automatic sense to independence, the half-baked settlement implemented to keep the Labour Party (almost) united has itself become 'a process rather than an event', with further change inevitable. Only the timetable is in doubt. There is now no serious body of opinion in favour of turning the clock back. How rapidly things have changed.

I am far from convinced that we've really thought through the implications of all of this. It seems to me that the direction in which the party is increasingly being led is one which emphasises what can be done within the existing settlement at any point in time, and leaves the issue of further constitutional progress to the 'forces of history'.

That's an entirely valid perspective to adopt, and it can certainly be seen as the logical outcome of the changes which I talked about at the beginning, and in which I had a hand at the time. However, it leaves unanswered the question of what happens to those who were never entirely convinced.

On top of that, it also places pressures on those of us who were entirely supportive of the changes, but who are concerned at the degree of compromise to that policy platform which is being introduced for a variety of reasons. Some of these relate to the limitations of the settlement, some relate to being in a coalition with another party, some relate to the constraints

The advent of devolution, and the upsurge in support for Plaid which the existence of a National Assembly facilitated, created a new and different dynamic.

of timescales, and others relate to the ideological outlook of some of the party's leading members.

Once we reach the point at which the debate concentrates almost entirely on what sort of Wales we want to see, the context changes completely. In short, Welsh politics will then be more about the different ideological viewpoints within Wales than about the constitutional position of the country.

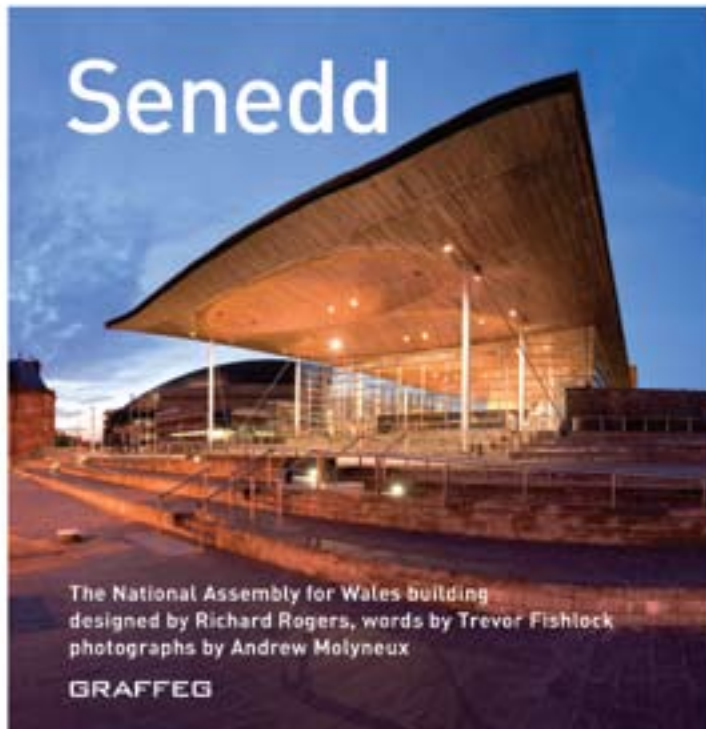
In my view, at the right time that would be an entirely helpful and necessary development.

However, when we reach that point there will inevitably be those within

Plaid Cymru conclude that the party which did so much to get us to that point is not offering a sufficiently radical programme. Equally, there will be others who conclude that the programme on offer is simply too radical. In turn, that could easily lead to the realignment of Welsh politics which some within Plaid have been talking about for years - although it's almost certainly not exactly the realignment that they had in mind.

The big question, though, is how we decide when we've got to that point. More specifically, are we there yet?

John Dixon is a former Chair of Plaid Cymru.



Senedd

A new book about the Richard Rogers designed building for the National Assembly for Wales.

Words Trevor Fishlock, photographs Andrew Molyneux. Design Peter Gill & Associates.

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Publication

192 pages, size 250 x 250mm

English paperback £18.99
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Clawr meddal Cymraeg £18.99
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An ill-considered outcome of early morning horse-trading

John Cox finds that AV for Westminster elections would have devastating consequences in Wales

Next May's referendum on a new voting system for Westminster elections will package three proposals into a single yes or no decision: fewer MPs, more equal electorates, and AV, the Alternative Vote described in the panel on the facing page. Although elements of this package have some merit, taken as a whole it will diminish democracy and have devastating consequences in Wales.

Whatever its merits, AV is not proportional – as was shown in the Australian election in August 2010, when both the leading parties won far more seats in the House of Representatives than justified by their share of the vote (see panel).

On the same day, the elections to the Australian Senate, which used a version of STV, did give the three leading parties a reasonably fair share of seats. If the UK government wanted to introduce a fairer voting system, it would have proposed STV, not AV.

Moreover, unlike STV, AV fails to reduce voter alienation and actually increases the power of party elites and the hegemony of the leading parties. Despite these well attested defects of AV, a few supporters of STV (notably the Electoral Reform Society) propose to campaign for a Yes vote in the referendum, apparently in the hope that AV will be a first step towards genuine reform.

To the contrary, however, AV will entrench the present two party dominance and will put a stop on further change. Certainly this is what has happened in Australia. The

politicians elected by AV to the House of Representatives since 1919 naturally prefer it to the more proportional STV system used for the Senate elections.

All forecasts agree that AV will exclude minority parties with less than 20 per cent of the popular vote, and prevent newcomers gaining a foothold at Westminster. So the in-built unfairness of the current system would remain.

The precise outcomes of each constituency election under AV is hard to predict as each is, ultimately, determined by second, third and even lower preference votes. Although a right-wing voter may cast right-wing preference votes and a left-wing voter left-wing preference, many voters are as much influenced by style as by substance. In practice, attitudes of mind also influence voter preferences:

- **Those whose first choice is Conservative or LibDem might well give their preference vote to the other. In this situation Labour could be reduced to a rump at Westminster even it won the most first preference votes. This would be bad for democracy.**
- **Those opposed to an incumbent may give their preference votes to 'anyone but...' to keep a leading candidate out. This attitude favours the 'least-disliked' candidates over the 'most-liked' - and is equally bad for democracy.**

Although pundits often assume that preference votes follow a similar pattern to first choices, there is no hard evidence to support this assumption. Consequently, it is very difficult to predict outcomes.

The package is to include unspecified but systematic changes to constituency boundaries to ensure that all MPs are elected by similar numbers of voters. While there is much to be said for parity, there are better and simpler ways of achieving this end.

In Wales the current 40 constituencies will be reduced to 30 with only Cardiff South and Penarth likely to survive unaltered. Everywhere else, the historic community and administrative boundaries will have to be redrawn. Whereas the Electoral Commission normally may take a decade to consult, put forward changes and consult again before finalising its proposals, the new boundaries will have to be ready in time for the next Westminster election expected in 2015.

If voter to MP parity is really vital, we could use the five existing Welsh electoral regions as 5-7 member STV constituencies. The merit of multi-member constituencies with STV is that it ensures all major parties in Wales will be represented in proportion to their votes. In contrast, using AV for new 75,000+ constituencies, it is possible that neither Plaid Cymru nor the LibDems will win a single seat.

It could be argued that these regions would be rather large. The option that I prefer would be to group the current parliamentary constituencies into ten 3-member STV constituencies. This very simple change would deliver the desired voter to MP parity without the hassle of hasty boundary changes.

Whilst there is merit in equalising voter to MP ratios and reducing the number of MPs, it could be achieved without destroying historic community boundaries. Sadly, STV is not an option for the referendum. Whether we vote Yes or No we still will have the unfairness of a winner-takes-all system. We are not to be allowed to voice an opinion in favour of a genuinely fair proportional system. The proposed legislation ‘freezes’ all existing constituency boundaries for

the elections to the National Assembly. Unless the timetables are altered this means that the May 2015 elections could descend into farce. May 2015 is when the Westminster and the National Assembly elections next coincide. It could mean that Welsh voters will have the challenge of grappling with three distinct voting systems and constituencies on the same day.

In this scenario, Welsh voters will have

The Alternative Vote system

Rather than simply marking one solitary ‘X’ on the ballot paper, the voter ranks the candidates on offer by preference. Voters thus puts a ‘1’ by their first-preference candidate, and can continue, if they wish, to put a ‘2’ by their second-preference, and so on. In some AV elections, such as most Australian elections, electors are required to rank all candidates.

If a candidate receives a majority of first-preference votes (more people put them as number one than all the rest combined), then they are elected.

If no candidate gains a majority on first preferences, then the second-preference votes of the candidate who finished last on the first count are redistributed. This process is repeated until someone gets over 50 per cent.

Australian August 2010 election results

Parties	House of Representatives (elected by AV)		Senate (elected by STV)	
	% vote	% seats	% vote	% seats
Liberal/National parties	44.2	48.7	43.4	45
Australian Labor	37.9	48	38.3	37.5
Australian Greens	11.5	0.7	11.4	15
Others	6.4	2.7	6.9	2.5

Whereas the Electoral Commission normally may take a decade to consult, put forward changes and consult again before finalising its proposals, the new boundaries will have to be ready in time for the next Westminster election expected in 2015.

to choose 30 MPs by AV from new hastily created constituencies. Meanwhile, on the same day, they will have to vote for 40 AMs by first-past-the-post from the old constituencies, and simultaneously 20 regional AMs from party lists in the obsolete regions created over a decade ago for Euro elections.

But spare a thought for Scotland. Their local elections employ STV so they could be using four different election systems on the same day.

Mention of Scotland reminds me that Wales has relatively fewer AMs in our National Assembly than Scotland has MSPs. Parity would have given us 15 more than the 60 currently elected. If, as the government claims, Wales needs to have 10 fewer MPs to achieve parity with the rest of Britain, at the very least they might let us have 10 additional AMs – 20 extra were recommended by the Richard Commission.

AV will ensure that every MP has to win at least half the votes. In May 2010 only 12 Welsh MPs polled 50 per cent of the votes, while 14 obtained less than 40 per cent. At first glance it may seem that this will enhance MP's legitimacy. However, even a cursory glance at Australia's post-election traumas shows that election by AV is not the same as winning the support of half the voters. The most common gripe is that many who were elected secured very few first choice votes but were promoted by the preference votes of minor parties, some with racist or other dubious policies.

Suppose, in the UK context, an AV winner depended on the preference votes of those whose first choice was, say, the BNP. Would the winner be comfortable about this? Would the loser, if he or she might otherwise have been the winner, accept the legitimacy of such a result?

Far from bestowing legitimacy on those elected, AV creates even more post-election angst than does first-past-the-post. This is an inevitable consequence of the elimination of other political parties, even those with 20-30 per cent of the first choice votes, to bestow a false legitimacy to the eventual 'winner'.

As became evident after the election of Ed Milliband as leader of the Labour Party by AV – and which occurs after every Australian election – the transparency of AV leads to endless post-election recriminations if the leading candidate in the first round is defeated by the transference of votes from the least popular candidates.

Currently five political parties represent Wales in Westminster and Europe. All should be represented in proportion to their voting support. The use of AV in significantly larger constituencies will reduce the limited plurality that currently exists (even with first-past-the-post) and could re-establish a two-party hegemony.

The proposition in the AV referendum is an ill-considered outcome of early morning horse-trading to establish the UK coalition government. It is not the product of an in depth discussion and debate, merely an excuse for Liberal Democrats to support a minority Conservative government. As we are not to be allowed the option of voting for a fairer voting system, the best way to keep genuine electoral reform alive will be to bury the AV distraction with a resounding No vote .

John Cox is an engineer, a former Torfaen independent councillor, and Vice President of CND. He submitted persuasive evidence to the Richard Commission that advocated STV elections for the National Assembly.

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The emerging need for a Welsh jurisdiction

Articles

The emerging need for a Welsh jurisdiction

Reforming Welsh law

John Williams argues that as the body of distinctive Welsh law grows so too will tensions within the unitary system

Although often regarded as the poor relation compared with Scotland, the powers devolved to Wales include important areas including health, social welfare and agriculture. Law made for Wales is not new - the Welsh Church Act 1914, the Welsh Language Acts of 1967 and 1993, and the Commissioner for Older People (Wales) Act 2006 are examples of Westminster legislating on matters directly affecting Wales.

The creation of the Welsh Office in 1964 allowed Wales to adapt Westminster law for use in Wales. The 1967 Welsh Language Act, which included repeal of the Wales and Berwick Act 1746, recognised that Wales does not automatically follow England's legislative lead. The 1746 Act had decreed that laws applying to England applied to Wales unless otherwise stated. The Government of Wales Acts of 1998 and 2006 allowed democratic scrutiny of law made within Wales. The current arrangements are not elegant or easily understood, but they create 'Welsh law'.

So, there is a body of Welsh law, some of it made in Wales and some in Westminster. In the event of a 'Yes' vote in the referendum on primary legislative powers next March, Welsh law will increase. Even a 'No' vote would leave in place current arrangements and the potential for developing Welsh law. What are the implications of these developments for the administration of justice within Wales?

A jurisdiction requires a population, though it does not have to be a large population. Northern Ireland (1.8 million) and the Isle of Man (80,543) are both jurisdictions. With a population of nearly three million, Wales comfortably meets this requirement. A distinctive or separate jurisdiction requires three common characteristics: (i) a defined territory; (ii) a distinct body of law; and (iii) a structure of courts and legal institutions.

Since the Local Government Act 1972, Wales has a defined territory. Wales has a distinct body of law. In his 2010 Lord Callaghan lecture Sir Roderick Evans identified their judicial structures as an important feature of the Scottish and Northern Irish jurisdictions. However, Wales remains part of the unitary jurisdiction of England and Wales.

There is potential for Wales to become a jurisdiction, although in the absence of complete separation it cannot become completely divorced from England. The decision is ultimately a political matter. In part, the debate is driven by the need to decide whether a separate Welsh jurisdiction is a precondition of greater legislative powers for the Assembly (for example, the reserved powers model in Scotland), or whether it is a product of enhanced powers. One of the reasons given in the 1973 Royal Commission on the Constitutions for not recommending for Wales the same powers as Scotland was that Scotland was a jurisdiction and Wales was not.

In its paper *Developing a Welsh Legal Jurisdiction* published in February, Plaid Cymru suggests that “focus should be given to establishing the minimum amount of distinctive Welsh jurisdiction compatible with transferring powers on the Scottish model”. As part of what it refers to as the ‘minimum model’, the Government of Wales Act 2006 should be amended to include the administration of justice as a field devolved to the National Assembly. This would include an independent prosecution service for Wales, further devolving the court administration to Wales, a Welsh Judicial Appointments Commission, and a Welsh legal aid system.

The All Wales Convention emphasised that the legal structures in Wales should keep pace with political devolution. It concluded that:

“... a separate Welsh jurisdiction is not a precondition for the development of increased legislative competence for the National Assembly for Wales, even if the National Assembly for Wales has the substantial powers of the Scottish model.”

Sir Roderick Evans stated that the ultimate decision on a Welsh jurisdiction, or an amended Wales and England jurisdiction, “may be heavily influenced by how responsive the present jurisdiction proves to be to the legitimate expectations of Wales”. How responsive has it been?

The unitary model of administration of justice has evolved since devolution. In 2007 the Wales and

Chester Circuit was disbanded and Wales became a separate circuit. Her Majesty’s Courts Service (HMCS), which is responsible for managing the administration of the courts across England and Wales, is now organised into English regions, the Royal Courts of Justice, and Wales. This is a significant development as court administration in Wales now reflects legal and political boundaries.

Her Majesty’s Courts Service in Wales has an independent identity, albeit remaining part of the unitary system. An important component of its work is promoting the use of Welsh in judicial proceedings. In its 2007 Annual Report, the service stated as one of its objectives ensuring that its provision in Wales is available through the medium of Welsh or English, according to personal choice. The eventual introduction of a bilingual LIBRA system (enabling the production of documents in the magistrates’ courts in the language of choice) is an example of such a development.

When he was Lord Chief Justice between 1996 and 2000 Lord Bingham broke tradition by adding ‘Wales’ to his title. There is now a Lord Chief Justice of England and Wales. Other developments have taken place within the courts recognising the changing status of Wales within the unitary system. Both divisions of the Court of Appeal (Criminal and Civil) sit in Cardiff, although it is still administered from London. The Administrative Court also sits in Cardiff and most proceedings can be issued at the District Registry in Cardiff. Importantly, these include challenging the National Assembly.

These initiatives have strengthened the legal identity of Wales, although they are part of a wider programme of decentralisation throughout England and Wales. Other courts in Wales (Crown Court, County Court and magistrates courts) are administered through Her Majesty’s Courts Service in Wales and have their own judges.

The organisation of administrative tribunals in Wales is complicated. It involves Welsh tribunals administered by the sponsoring department in the Welsh Government, cross-border tribunals administered by the UK Tribunals Service or by sponsoring UK government departments. For

the Welsh tribunals, the Welsh Committee of the Administrative Justice and Tribunals Council noted that they are insufficiently independent from the department whose decision they consider. It recommended the transfer of policy and administrative responsibility for Welsh tribunals to a focal point for administrative justice in the Department of the First Minister and Cabinet. This is an interesting development in the administration of administrative justice in Wales.

At the 2009 Legal Wales Conference Sir Malcolm Pill said,

“As central government recognises the legitimacy of the Assembly and devolved administration, it is important, in my view, that the unitary system gives equivalent recognition in the judicial structure suitable for Wales.”

The unitary model enables Wales and England to benefit from a strong unified legal profession and judiciary. This is important and builds on many years of experience. Since devolution, the administration of courts and tribunals in Wales has responded to the emergence of Legal Wales. It has been a cautious approach and linked in part to the pace of development within the law making capacity in Wales and the size of the body of Welsh law.

As law-making capacity increases, and as the body of Welsh law grows, the unitary model needs to adapt further. Thus far, it has proved to be sufficiently flexible to accommodate developments. However, as devolution progresses, the challenges will increase and tensions may arise. The following are some of the questions that will need to be addressed:

- How should appointment procedures for the judiciary reflect the needs of a more dualistic body of law?
- What are the implications of more Welsh Law and greater devolution of the administration of justice for the Welsh Law Schools?
- Should there be a Wales only law degree and professional qualification?
- What does the legal profession in Wales need to do to respond to the demands of Legal Wales?
- What are the implications for cross border practitioners?

The law schools and the profession must build up the capacity within the profession to meet the needs of Legal Wales, but also to accommodate the ongoing relationship with England. In its submission to the Richard Commission, the Standing Committee on Legal Wales concluded:

“... further research needs to be undertaken on what is an appropriate balance between the need to establish a distinctly Welsh dimension to the administration of justice, and the need to retain the mutual benefits of the links with England.”

Devolving the administration of justice must match the pace of devolution and the growth of the corpus of Welsh law. It cannot lead the way, but it is essential that it does not fall behind. The unitary model works and will do so for the foreseeable future. Cross border law will remain, particularly in criminal law, contract and tort.

However, as the body of distinct Welsh law grows in devolved areas, so too will the tensions within the unitary system. Primary law making powers will lead to a more identifiable body of Welsh law and strengthen the argument for further devolving the administration of justice and the courts in Wales. The parameters of a Welsh jurisdiction working alongside rather than completely absorbed within the English jurisdiction will become apparent.

At some stage in the future, (maybe in the distant future) a clearly defined Welsh jurisdiction may be necessary. Meanwhile, the process of devolving the administration of justice should continue within the unitary model at a pace reflecting greater legislative powers and the growth in Welsh law.

John Williams is Professor of Law in Aberystwyth University’s Department of Law and Criminology and is a member its Centre for Welsh Legal Affairs.

Reforming Welsh law

Richard Percival reviews the Law Commission's engagement with Wales since devolution

Articles in recent issues of *Agenda* have called for Wales to be given its own Law Commission. Professor John Williams of Aberystwyth University made the case in the Spring 2009 issue, as did Joseph Carter, of the MS Society Cymru, in his article about the need to reform paying for social care in the most recent Summer 2010 issue. An account of the experience of the existing England and Wales Commission's engagement with Welsh law reform should put these calls into a clearer perspective.

Much of the work of the Commission is not in devolved areas, such as criminal, commercial or family law, although it will often have indirect effects on devolved areas. However, the Commission's Public Law Team has undertaken two large scale projects in devolved areas.

The first was a major review of housing tenure law, which lasted from 2001 to 2006. At the start of this process, we didn't properly appreciate the significance of devolution under the 1998 Act. We were brought up sharp by some fairly pithy comments by the Minister then in charge of housing, Edwina Hart. After that, I think most Welsh housing stakeholders would agree that we made real (and I think successful) efforts to fully reflect both the differences in approach to housing policy in Wales and the possibilities of devolution.

The end result was that when we made our recommendations, in the summer of 2006, our draft Bill provided that the single most important rule in our proposed new system – the rule that gave council and housing associations tenants the same high security tenancy – should be in primary legislation but subject to a power for the National Assembly to amend it in future (with no corresponding power for Ministers in relation to England). As it happened, we published at the same time that the Bill for the Government of Wales Act 2006 was going through Parliament. Our Bill had to reflect the law as it was, but this timing allowed us to make recommendations on how our system should be implemented under the new Act. We proposed that there should be a single Westminster Act, but

that it should add "housing tenure" to the matters under the legislative competence of the National Assembly. Further, we said that, if Whitehall was not interested in implementing the proposals, then the Welsh Government should seek a legislative consent order (LCO) to do so on a Wales-only basis.

In our 2007-2008 annual report we contrasted the "imaginative and positive policy reaction" from Welsh Ministers and officials with the position in England. In truth, much of the reform felt more conducive to what was, by then, the direction of policy in Wales than it was in England. In the end, the proposals have been accepted by Welsh Ministers but rejected in England. An LCO has now been passed which would allow the Assembly to legislate to implement the bulk of our recommendations. So we remain hopeful that tenants and landlords in Wales, if not England, will eventually benefit from these broadly-supported reforms.

Our second major project is the current one dealing with adult social care. Although at the outset, the Welsh Government decided not to make it a joint project (that is, one jointly sponsored by the Department of Health and the Welsh Government), we have striven to ensure that that makes no difference in practice. We have had a full and stimulating consultation process in Wales. Indeed, the biggest event we had anywhere was a conference in Cardiff put on for us by the Older People's Commissioner and Age Cymru. About 15 per cent of all of our consultation events have been in Wales.

One of the questions in this project is whether there should be a single (Westminster) statute, or two. Joseph Carter takes us to task on this in the last edition of *Agenda*, but in doing so confuses different issues. Under *the current system* (Part 3 of the 2006 Act), there are two questions. The first is: should you use a Westminster statute or an LCO? If there is any real prospect of a Bill, then anyone familiar with the Byzantine procedures necessary for an LCO would plump for a Westminster Bill. Once you have decided that question, the next –

one Bill (with different parts) or two? – becomes an essentially technical one. But I should emphasise that this is the case under the current law. If Part 4 of the 2006 Act is brought in as result of a yes vote in the referendum next March, the considerations would be different. In that case separate legislation in the National Assembly and the UK Parliament would become a much more likely outcome.

A new concordat is currently under discussion between the Welsh Government and the Commission. This should help where we need some Welsh Government input on Welsh issues in law reform projects which deal with non-devolved law, an area that has sometimes caused problems in the past.

Calls for a separate Welsh Law Commission can be put in the context of an argument for a Welsh jurisdiction. A separate jurisdiction is at one end of the spectrum in terms of legal difference

between the two countries. But, in fact, there are already significant differences between the effective law in Wales and that in England. These are going to increase. As the differences become accentuated Welsh institutions may well want to think about whether there should be a separate Law Commission for Wales, regardless of whether or not there is a separate jurisdiction. The existing Law Commission may or may not decide to take a view on the issue when it comes up. But what matters to us now is that when that decision comes to be made, one of the arguments for a Welsh Commission shouldn't be that the existing Law Commission has failed law reform in Wales.

Richard Percival is Team Manager with the Public Law Team at the Law Commission for England and Wales.

Forthcoming Conferences

Opportunities for a Confederal University in South West Wales

Friday 3 December 10am-3.30pm
Halliwell Centre, University of Wales
Trinity St David, Carmarthen

The emergence of the new University of Wales Trinity Saint David and its developing links with Swansea Metropolitan University, Pembrokeshire College, Coleg Sir Gâr, Colege Ceredigion and other colleges and schools throughout south west Wales, provide many opportunities for knowledge-led economic development. The creation of Wales's first 'dual sector' university within a confederal framework will allow seamless student movement within tertiary education and foster integrated research programmes across the region. It will bring together more than 170,000 students making it the fourth largest higher education institution in Wales.

Keynote speakers: Leighton Andrews AM, Education Minister, Welsh Government; Sir Deian Hopkin, former Vice Chancellor, London South Bank University; Dr Medwin Hughes, Vice-Chancellor and Dr Meri Huws, Pro Vice Chancellor Innovation, Skills and Community, University of Wales Trinity Saint David.

£65 (£60 IWA members)

School Innovation in the Middle Years

Tuesday 1 March 2011, 10am – 4pm
WJEC, Llandaff, Cardiff

This conference sees the launch of an 18-month IWA study into innovation and excellence in teaching children in their 11 to 14 middle years in Welsh secondary schools. This is a critical period in children's education, marking the transitions from primary into secondary school and then into learning pathways from 14 to 19. However, a key policy challenge facing Wales is the low educational performance of a large proportion of our young people aged 11 to 14 compared with relatively higher levels of attainment elsewhere in the UK.

Keynote speakers: Stevie Upton, IWA Research Officer and Professor David Egan, UWIC, plus case studies from six secondary schools across Wales.

£65 (£52 IWA members)

IWA National Economy Conference

Interface between the public and private sectors

Conference in association with
PricewaterhouseCoopers
Friday 11 March 2011, 10am-5pm
Parc Hotel, Cardiff

This conference focuses on the business economy of Wales as it takes the strain of economic development in the wake of the Comprehensive Spending Review and how we can enhance the opportunities occurring at the interface of the private and public sectors. While the private sector relies on the public realm mediated, for example, by local government and NHS Wales, the public relies on the private sector in outsourcing many of its functions. Two key interfaces are explored in this conference: (i) the Welsh Government's new Economic Renewal Strategy and its emphasis on six key business sectors for growing the economy; and (ii) the role of public sector procurement policies in driving forward the business economy.

Keynote speakers: Gerald Holtham, Chair of the Welsh Government's Commission on Funding and Finance for Wales and Professor Kevin Morgan, Cardiff University

£90 (£72 IWA members)

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Education

Articles

Going it alone
by default

University
challenge

Opening their
mouths to prove
they're Welsh

Going it alone by default

Philip Dixon says the Welsh Government education department's 'made in Wales' solutions need to be a good deal better than they have been

It has become something of a truism that the real test for devolution would be when governments of differing colours occupy the corridors of power in Cardiff Bay and Westminster. Indeed, despite warm words about 'mutual respect', the coalitions in the Bay and Westminster have already been at loggerheads over funding, the timing of the referendum on further powers, and the date of the Assembly election. Such public spats are easy to observe but other more oblique challenges should not be ignored.

For a start the Government in the Bay will find it increasingly difficult to play 'over my shoulder' in policy development. Hitherto, looking across the border to England has been a useful backdrop for deliberation and discussion. Some developments, such as the skills agenda, have been adopted and 'Welshified'. Others, such as the abolition of SATs and school League Tables, have given ample opportunity for a display of Welsh socialist credentials. Whatever the decision it's been relatively simple to decide whether to tweak or reject the English agenda. However, the radical departure of the Westminster coalition in areas such as Academies and Free Schools, to name but two, makes such an 'over the shoulder' attitude increasingly problematic.

The school curriculum in both countries could also start to look radically different. Despite the rhetoric of freedom and localism many of the Westminster coalition's plans for education actually enhance the power of the Secretary of State. In one of his first public statements after being made Secretary of State, Michael Gove gave clear indications of what he'd like to see in the school curriculum. The narrative and content of history teaching seemed to be a particular obsession.

Such traditionalism plays well with the reactionaries of the *Daily Mail* but is scorned by educational experts. What will Wales do when confronted by a curriculum over the border that is hot on Kings and Queens and rivers? We can't just substitute the Taff for the Thames and a list of Llewellyns for Henrys. If Wales, rightly, continues to develop a skills-based curriculum suited for the 21st Century then the English model will not be adaptable. As time goes on changes to the curriculum will also impact on the qualifications regime. Gove's dislike of modular A levels cannot

be allowed to undermine our more enlightened approach in Wales.

Even the teaching profession could start to look and feel very different. Gove's announcement of the abolition of the General Teaching Council in England has raised questions about the Council here in Wales. Many commentators think that Gove has acted in haste and will now have to repent at leisure as the chickens of regulation and registration come home to roost. Leighton Andrews obviously checked any propensity he may have had for following suit and it seems that the General Teaching Council for Wales is here to stay. But it cannot be pickled in aspic. Questions about its role and remit will need careful consideration. The Welsh Government will not be able to look over its shoulder to decide what to do because there will be nothing there to see. The Teaching Council in England will simply no longer exist.

In one area the 'over the shoulder' view may become a great deal clearer, perhaps painfully so. The biggest challenge will be to show that our 3Cs deliver better than the English 3 Cs. That is to say our collaboration, cooperation and consensus should deliver a more effective schooling system than their competition, contestation and coercion.

That judgment might seem a little more nuanced if it weren't for the spectre of the PISA results which will shortly lay bare the Welsh and English models in an internationally respected League Table. This is the Programme for International Assessment co-ordinated by the OECD that focuses on 15-year-olds' capabilities in reading, mathematics, and science literacy. The dip in Welsh A level results this summer may have been something of a warning, as was the gap between the nations over A* grades at GCSEs. The Welsh Government has to show that the comprehensive system's communal, collaborative approach can deliver more effectively. Warm rhetoric has to be translated into hard results. There can be no return to league tables and SATs, but levers of accountability, and more effective policies and practices will need to be developed.

And there in lies one of the root problems, the capacity of the Department for Children, Education and Lifelong Learning (DCELLS), which has 690 staff and a budget of £2 billion. This is a question both of

structure and personnel. No one could claim that all the right people are in all the right jobs. There are serious lacunae in knowledge and skills. We are still not attracting and retaining enough of the best brains in the business. The departure of the second Director of DCELLS in less than two years is a cause for concern. Overall a more strategic approach to policy is necessary.

DCELLS has not really settled down since the 'bonfire of the quangos' and the upheaval of its merger in 2006 with four other education bodies, including the training organisation ELWa and the curriculum authority ACCAC .

But it can be done, and the department can point to some successes. The Baccalaureate and the Foundation Phase represent new and innovative policies. Both have achieved international recognition. But the path of both has not been plain sailing. In particular, the Foundation Phase almost ran aground on the rocks of funding and only a change of Minister saved the day. Both took considerable expertise, time and money to develop and those are now in short supply.

The task of the new Director of DCELLS, Emyr Roberts, formerly Head of Public Services and Local Government and now fourth education chief in five years, will not be easy. It was revealing that his appointment was announced in early October a few days ahead of the advertised closing date for applications for the job. The speediness of the appointment must surely reflect the regard that colleagues have, and also their assessment of his ability to work alongside Education Minister Leighton Andrews.

The department's energies need to be much more focused, the lessons from PISA learnt, and a broad consensus on reform developed. If the present set up is not delivering, and the emerging English set up is not politically acceptable, then 'made in Wales' solutions need to be a good deal better than they have been. The real test for devolution won't be in the open tussles with Westminster, but in showing that it can deliver the educational goods.

Philip Dixon is Director of ATL Cymru, the Association of Teachers and Lecturers.

University challenge

Deian Hopkin says the student fees increase in England gives Wales an opportunity to create a more distinctive higher education system

One of the notable features of the present round of expenditure cuts, arguably the greatest in the past century, is a fundamental shift in the role of the State in so many different fields, from housing to health. Nowhere is this more marked than in higher education.

Since 1945, and especially since the Robbins Report of 1962, the State has played a key role in the development and support of higher education provision, financing a huge expansion in student numbers, creating a raft of new universities and funding a range of programmes aimed at increasing participation and improving retention. As a result the proportion of young people attending university has grown from around 4 per cent in the 1950s to the current 40 per cent plus.

However, the government has retained a significant measure of control through limiting undergraduate fees and tightly managing student numbers. Research has also been directly supported by central government through a dual support system of guaranteed allocations based on quality assessment and a system of competitive grants. Even so, the proportion of funding directly provided by the government has declined over the years as universities have grown their contract business, developed a range of services such as hospitality and conferences, and expanded their overseas student numbers where there are no controls on either fees or numbers. Nonetheless, home undergraduates still represent the main business for most universities. The recent Browne Review on university fees and funding, established by the former government to find a way of sustaining higher education, must now be seen side-by-side with this year's Comprehensive Spending

Review for 2012-15. Both of these relate primarily to England although there are clear implications for Wales and the other devolved administrations. The key feature of both is the principle of money following the student. The Department for Business, Education and Skills wants to cut the higher education budget by 40 per cent. Browne becomes a means of replacing it by higher student fees. More specifically, it is proposed to end direct funding altogether for most non-science courses and this makes the fee level even more significant.

For students the implications are clear, certainly for anyone studying in England, and this includes the large number of Welsh students who cross the border. The Government intends to allow universities to increase tuition fees to at least £6,000 and up to £9,500, subject to certain conditions. However, since universities will lose around £4,000 of direct funding for their non-science courses, doubling fees to £7,000 will simply maintain steady-state. Some universities, notably Oxbridge, will increase fees even higher and this, in turn, will create a differentiated higher education system, far more than we have seen in the past.

It is true that students will not be required to pay their fees up front, and the income threshold before repayments start will rise to £21,000. However, the application of real interest rates to the student loan, another Browne recommendation, would make the whole package very much more expensive than now. Indeed, English tuition fees would not only be the highest in the world for public higher education but over twice as expensive as, say, in the United States. Moreover, since the average starting salary for graduates is already nearly

£21,000, the majority will be paying off their loans as soon as they start work.

What about the well-publicised 'graduate premium', one of the key planks for defending tuition fees in the first place? The Government argument that graduates earn an extra £100,000 over a lifetime compared with non-graduates will not be quite so enticing when tuition fees and the ensuing loan have more than doubled. Students will surely look even more closely at the earnings prospects of different degree subjects, and this may not help the arts or humanities.

For most universities the world has suddenly become a lot tougher. The withdrawal of direct teaching grants will create a huge financial gap. One Vice Chancellor estimates that his teaching grant will be reduced by over 80 per cent. University managers will have to look very carefully at the range of provision and construct a portfolio which will attract the right level of fees rather than one which offers a wide range of choice. Moreover, budget cuts across Whitehall will reduce the contract income universities earn from government departments. Other potential clients, such as charities and trusts, are also under increasing pressure. The escape routes which were developed after the last severe cuts in the 1980s have become fewer.

There is a further sting in the tail. Browne recommends lifting the current restriction on student numbers, and this opens the door for much greater competition between universities. For many this is the greatest threat of all since the current controls gave some guarantee of stability. After all, student choice is often determined by perceptions rather than evidence. Many universities struggle to overcome a residual prejudice against non-traditional institutions. All too often the phrase 'top' or 'good' university implies that there are a number of 'bottom' or 'bad' universities, not exactly a recipe for raising fees.

Of course, it may be argued that

Students at the new University of Wales Trinity St David



universities need not increase their fees, and compete instead on price. However, this would be the final nail in the coffin of a national system of pay and conditions. Cheaper fees may not be the best way to ensure a high quality of staff or resources and the break-up of the relatively cohesive UK higher education system would be that much closer.

The Browne Review does offer one glimmer of hope for some institutions. Extending financial support to part-time students, for too long the Cinderella of the sector, is to be welcomed. Many post-92 universities have been particularly successful developing part-time provision and this may be, for some, a get-out-of-jail card.

Meanwhile the private sector is hovering around the sector. Until now, public fee levels of £3,000 made their own offer uncompetitive, which is why most private sector providers opted for postgraduate courses. At £7,000 and more, the economics become very different and one can expect a flurry of activity as new players enter the undergraduate market, not to mention the overseas universities whose fees are so much lower and who are already beginning to advertise their wares in the UK. The landscape is about

to change for ever.

How will Wales react? While the current discussion has focused on the English situation, the implications for Wales are very clear. Reductions in research spending will impact on Welsh institutions, but where teaching is concerned the Welsh Government does not necessarily have to follow the English route by cutting direct support for courses. As a result Welsh universities might not have to increase fees to the same extent as their English counterparts.

Of course, the Welsh Government has limited room for manoeuvre given its own budget cuts and, in any case, many Welsh students studying in England are given extra support from the Welsh budget. Education Minister Leighton Andrews has warned that as things stand, English fee increases will be a heavy burden, perhaps as much as £50 million, on the Assembly. So whatever happens, the present mechanism for Welsh students will have to be reviewed. Meanwhile, lower Welsh fees might well encourage large number of English students to seek a refuge from high fees and how would that be managed without displacing Welsh students? Nonetheless, there are some opportunities here for

Wales, through a combination of modest fee rises but continued direct support, to create a distinctive higher education system rather than go with the flow. The chances are, however, that Wales will simply follow England, in order to avoid all the complications of distinctiveness.

Does all of this mean the end of the Robbins era? Is this the end of expansion, at a time when other countries are continuing to invest in their higher education system? How will competition between institutions affect the geography of provision? After all, mergers do not, in themselves, ensure an equitable distribution of provision. Will this be the moment, indeed, when devolution really begins to impact on higher education policy and the higher skills agenda? Decisions in Scotland, in particular, will be very interesting in these respects.

What is clear is that, fully implemented, the Browne Report together with the Comprehensive Spending Review represents the biggest change in several generations in the prospects both for higher education institutions and for students and their families. No one really knows whether a more market-led system will maintain or improve the quality and range of provision, as its advocates argue, or whether the steady progress towards widening participation will shudder to a halt. The fear is that we will return to a narrow and less egalitarian system of higher education with even more uncertain prospects for those who do not enter it. The challenge for Wales is, somehow, to construct a better alternative.

Professor Sir Deian Hopkin retired as Vice-Chancellor of London South Bank University in 2009, after 44 years in higher education including 24 years at Aberystwyth where he was Head of the History Department. He will be giving a keynote address at the IWA's *Opportunities for a Confederal University in South West Wales* conference in Carmarthen on 3 December.

Opening their mouths to prove they're Welsh

Rhian Siân Hodges and Delyth Morris discover why parents are choosing Welsh-medium education for their children in the Rhymney Valley

A majority of English speaking parents in the Rhymney Valley choose Welsh medium education for their children because of their sense of belonging to Wales. This finding, from a research project carried out over the past year, contravenes a similar study carried out in the 1970s. This found the main reason why parents chose Welsh medium education at that time was economic.

This suggests that Welsh identity is strengthening in the Valleys, which bodes well for the future of the language. **Figure 1** gives the main reasons why the parents in our study chose Welsh-medium education, while **Figure 2** traces the growth of Welsh-medium schools in the Rhymney Valley since 1955.

Caerphilly has a greater number of Welsh-medium schools than any other local education authority in Wales. According to the 2001 census 13,916 (8.5 per cent) of the people of the county can speak, read and write in Welsh, with a further 8,526 (5.9 per cent) having a lesser grasp of the language. This makes Caerphilly one of the counties with the highest number of Welsh speakers in south east Wales. Since the 1991 Census there was an increase of 20.8 per cent of Welsh-speakers aged

5-15 years, which demonstrates the impact of Welsh medium schools.

Half the participants in our study pointed to cultural reasons linked to their national identity as the reason for their choice. "We are proud to be Welsh and have our own language," was how one respondent put it. Many parents said their children were "turning into little Americans" due to an Americanization of Welsh society. The significance of traditional elements of Welsh culture, such as the National Eisteddfod, were seen as bulwarks against such trends. Welsh-medium education was also seen as encouraging equality between the Welsh and English languages.

Fifty in-depth interviews were conducted with parents from Welsh-medium nursery, primary and secondary schools in locations spanning the entire Rhymney Valley. The parents were mainly non-Welsh-speaking, although some were from mixed language or Welsh language households. The interviewees were selected randomly from 400 who had completed a questionnaire distributed by the schools.

Some parents said did they not want their children to have "a second language

smattering of Welsh in an English-medium school". They wanted their children to speak Welsh as a first language, which they regarded as the essence of being Welsh. As one parent said, "My children don't have to wear a tall black hat to prove they are Welsh. All they have to do is to open their mouths."

Many interviewees spoke of a 'lost generation' and were eager that their children should not miss out on learning Welsh as had happened to themselves. Some of the parents felt their identity was "incomplete" or "inadequate" because the language had not been passed on to them.

Over a third of the respondents thought Welsh-medium education simply provided a "better quality education" compared to English-medium schools. Parents believed that the greater range of extra-curricular activities, pastoral care and discipline of Welsh-medium schools were all selling points as well.

A smaller group of parents, 8 per cent of the sample, chose Welsh-medium education for economic reasons. They hoped their children would have "better occupations and extended opportunities". These parents were aware that fluency in the language was often an advantage in the workplace, especially within the public sector, and chose Welsh-medium education for their children accordingly. A significant number were conscious of the Welsh Government's vision of creating a bilingual Wales and simply thought their children would have better opportunities to "do well" for themselves in a bilingual country if they could speak Welsh.

Figure 1:
Reasons for choice of Welsh-medium education

Reason	Percentage	Number
Cultural	50	25
Educational	34	17
Economic	8	4
Personal	8	4

Some of the parents chose Welsh-medium education for other reasons, such as the individual needs of the child. A few stated their friends' children attended Welsh-medium schools and they had simply followed their choices. Some parents referred to the influence of Welsh-speaking extended families and partners in encouraging them to choose Welsh-medium education for their children.

A small number of parents chose Welsh-medium education because they believed it similar in ethos to private education. As one put it, "It is like having a public school education within the national system - the structure, discipline and teachers' expectations within Welsh-medium schools are all similar."

What comes across from all these views is that Welsh-medium education is a respected and a successful means of Welsh language production in the Rhymney Valley and, by implication, across the whole of the south Wales Valleys.

From the point of view of the future development of the language it is encouraging that the majority of parents chose Welsh medium education for broadly cultural rather than economic reasons. It suggests that parents have a heightened awareness of the implications of their educational choices on the future of the Welsh language itself.

At the same time schools by themselves cannot sustain the Welsh language, Further Welsh Government measures are needed. Only when the language has a higher profile in all the places and spaces where there is potential for it to be used will its future be more secure.

Rhian Siân Hodges is a Sociology and Social Policy Welsh-medium lecturer, and **Delyth Morris** a Senior Lecturer in Sociology and Social Policy at Bangor University.



Then Education Minister Jane Hutt cuts the ribbon at the official opening of the latest £3 million Welsh-medium primary school in the Rhymney Valley, at Penalltau in September 2009. Holding the ribbon on the left is Labour's Caerphilly AM Jeff Cuthbert, and on the right Plaid Cymru's Phil Bevan, the council's cabinet member for Education. The school will eventually have 240 pupils

Figure 2: Development of Welsh-medium schools in the Rhymney Valley

School	Opening Date	Number of children	Number at Jan 1997	Number at Jan 2008
Ysgol y Lawnt	1955	15	148	150
Ysgol Ifor Bach	1961	11	291	166
Ysgol Gilfach Fargod	1963	62	170	158
Ysgol Gymraeg Caerffili	1970	97	324	276
Ysgol Gyfun Cwm Rhymni (Secondary)	1981	156	884	1195
Ysgol Gymraeg Trelyn	1991	112	164	188
Ysgol Gymraeg Cwm Gwyddon	1992	112	146	157
Ysgol Gymraeg Bro Allta	1993	150	210	284
Ysgol y Castell	1995	120	134	281
Ysgol Bro Sannan	2004	18	-	103
Ysgol Gymraeg Cwm Derwen	Sept 2008	34	-	-
Ysgol Gymraeg Penalltau	Sept 2009	20	-	-

5

Social Policy

Articles

Gift economy rolls out across Wales

Overcoming the complexities of the global marketplace

Schooling outside the mainstream

Carnival time at Blaengarw, with the costumes produced as part of the village's timebanking initiative.



Gift economy rolls out across Wales

Ben Dineen explains how a timebanking initiative is transforming some of Wales's most deprived communities

In Blaengarw, seamstresses and craft groups gather at the working men's hall, creating costumes for the village carnival. This tradition has only been revived recently and is widely seen as a symbol of a revitalised village. It is an outstanding example of a 'timebanking' initiative that is spreading across Wales and helping revive some of our most deprived communities.

More than twenty street ambassadors in Blaengarw also act as intermediaries between their 'patch', the local authority and other statutory and third sector agencies. By quickly reporting crime, littering, illegal tipping and dog fouling they enable public sector agencies to target resources more effectively to bring about solutions. Anti-social behaviour rates have dropped year-on-year in Blaengarw while, at the same time, the numbers of individuals actively contributing their time to their community has risen from 25 to over 700, out of a total population of 2000.

In Cardiff, long term residents of a United Welsh Housing hostel for vulnerable adults help to run a fruit and veg co-op. Residents also mentor new arrivals by providing support, orientation

and help in integrating themselves into hostel life. Such participation helps residents advance towards some of the independent living targets that are agreed as a key aspect of their residency. It takes the pressure off frontline staff, and creates a culture of joint responsibility within the hostel. Residents are no longer defined by their needs but by what they can do to contribute. This helps to break an assumption and culture of dependency that often defines modern public services.

The single factor that unifies these projects is the use of agency time credits. The driving force behind this renewal is Spice, a young, vibrant social enterprise, whose interest is in developing credit systems that engage and empower the many rather than the few. Spice designs and develops agency time credits as a means of tackling social exclusion and building active, engaged communities.

Agency time credits have evolved from the original timebanking model devised by American civil rights lawyer Edgar Cahn in the 1980s, in which time banks brokered exchanges of services between individual

members in order to strengthen networks within communities. Agency time credits build on Cahn's pioneering model by underpinning a time bank with a small amount of public money and credibility.

Agency time credits provide a new way for public services, third sector organisations and private businesses to value and grow civic action. They work on a simple hour-for-an-hour formula in which an individual gains an hour credit – a tangible, paper currency – by giving an hour of time to an activity that benefits local people, institutions or the environment. This credit can then be used to access an hour of other events, training or activities. In Cardiff, for example, the model relies on a broad and diverse network of 'time out' partners, who are willing to underwrite and underpin individual participation.

Time bank rewards can often be provided at little or no additional cost to the public, through intelligent use of existing spare capacity. This allows companies and agencies to give back to the communities in which they work easily. Cardiff time bank members can use the credits they have gained to, among other things, attend a Cardiff Blues rugby match, swim or work out in any of Cardiff's leisure centres, watch a performance at Chapter Arts Centre, The Gate or St. Davids Hall, or use the climbing wall at Boulders.

New ways of extending and challenging the methodology are emerging in Wales through the design and development of a number of innovative projects. Cardiff-based Time Schools aims to engage pupils, parents and the wider community both in the running and growth of the school, and in the bending of school resources and capacity for community benefit. Meanwhile, Time for Action, a project run in partnership with the Welsh Government's Climate Change team focuses on the use of time credits to encourage behaviour change resulting in personal and collective carbon reduction. Time for Action is also developing a Wales-wide agency-to-agency network that will facilitate the exchange of skills, knowledge and competencies between groups,



organisations and businesses with a shared commitment to sustainable development.

In the current climate of austerity and budgetary tightening there is no doubt that time credits are an idea whose time has come. The model has the potential to transform the way in which public services work with communities, while at the same time engaging those with no history of participation as agents of change.

Agency time credits have a multiplier effect that adds value to increasingly pressured budgets. By creating a two-way street that allows beneficiaries to input meaningfully into the services they receive, and by using these reinvigorated connections to intervene upstream before problems accumulate downstream they allow for effective, targeted interventions, while at the same time mobilising and including the many in that process.

It is the two-way conversation that agency time credits engender that has led Geoff Mulgan, Director of the Young Foundation, to conclude, "Time credits are where self-interest and shared interest overlap, and they're one of the best and most practical expressions of the Big Society."

The potential for the use of agency time credits as a catalyst for social change, and their unique application forged in the crucible of the Welsh Valleys has led Public Service Management Wales to describe them as "a modern language for active citizenship" and "money for the civil society". This not just another incentive scheme, it is a radical new language.

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Ben Dineen has managed community and sustainable development projects in the UK and abroad. He is currently seconded to the Welsh Government's Climate Change team tasked with using timebanking as an agent of change in the transition to a low carbon future ben@justaddspice.org.



Chairs produced by Hengoed furniture manufacturer Organgebox are 98 per cent recyclable.

Overcoming the complexities of the global marketplace

Eva Trier looks at some examples of firms which are challenging conventional ways of doing business

Who needs brand new carpets? Cleanstream Carpets, a Porth-based Community Interest Company, is harnessing the potential of 'waste' as a valuable local resource. Refashioned carpet tiles offer value for money, save carbon and reduce landfill. At the same time the company supports the local economy by providing recruitment and training.

Cleanstream is at the leading edge of creating a new business model. By combining local resilience, innovation and recycling it is doing good business. It is young and still has to prove itself in commercial terms. However, without such bold attempts at redefining the role of business in

creating sustainable prosperity, current corporate structures which are unsustainable in the long run will remain unchallenged.

Creation of shareholder value still reigns supreme in the way our economy is structured. Deep down, however, most of us know that growing a business, inventing new gadgets and winning market share cannot be the only goals of economic activity. Shareholder value does not necessarily equate to real value. There is a need to step back and reconsider the role of business in contributing to sustainable prosperity and well-being.

Many businesses are removed from any common



Left: Members of Porth's Cleanstream community interest company demonstrate their refashioned carpet tiles. Above: Riversimple's carbon friendly hydrogen-powered vehicle.

sense notion of what their purpose might be in these terms. Many have a tenuous link to place. We need some social innovation in the way we operate our businesses to make them more sustainable. Cleanstream provides an example of how the competitive environment of the global economy can be confronted by tapping into local resources.

So does Orangebox, a Hengoed-based office furniture manufacturer which deploys sustainable production techniques to supply its global market. Orangebox has designed and manufactures a chair that is 98 per cent recyclable. The firm's refurbishing and recycling processes ensure that they retain the value of the materials they use. Working with its supply chain partners Orangebox publishes detailed information about its consumption of resources on its website.

Cleanstream and Orangebox are exemplars of what can be understood as *for-purpose businesses*. As well as making things they are concerned with social

justice and community engagement, and recognise the environmental limits of production, especially on the security of our energy and food supplies.

Riversimple, a London-based car company, is developing a carbon friendly vehicle which uses hydrogen fuel cells to power electric motors in the wheels. It plans to operate through small scale decentralised local manufacturing operations which will also serve as local service centres – a form of 'micro-factory retailing'. The business model involves leasing the technology to whoever wishes to set up a small-scale manufacturing operation. Part of the condition will be shared responsibility among investors, employees, suppliers, and the local community.

Rather than waiting for big business or government to offer solutions, it is up to us in all our various roles as investors, consumers and producers to support the development of such *for purpose businesses* and experiment with different approaches.

As investors we should care for how the returns on investment are generated. As producers we should take responsibility for the ecosystem seriously. And as consumers we need to understand the social and environmental implications of how the things we consume are made.

We need to experiment with running more sustainable businesses that draw on strong personal relationships. We can create facts on the ground by taking the initiative in the way Cleanstream, Orangebox and Riversimple have done, in the process sharing responsibility for decisions about the way we produce and consume. Such initiatives are crucial in helping us break away from the paralysis we can feel when facing the complexities of the global marketplace.

Eva Trier is a senior consultant with CM International UK and is a Director of several social enterprises working at the interface between economic development and sustainability.

Schooling outside the mainstream

Rhys David reports on an alternative to the classroom for excluded children that is proving a success in Caerphilly

It is nine o'clock and the workshops are springing into life on a small industrial estate on the edge of Caerphilly as staff turn up to the small engineering companies, trade depots, and offices that make up the site. But in one of the units it is also the start of the school day. For the small number of mainly 15-16 year olds who arrive by car and taxi it will be English and Maths but also web design, video making or possibly event management in a real commercial setting. There may also be visits outside to film a conference or set up a stage show.

This is Young Wales, a new and successful approach to working with children who have been excluded from mainstream education. Every year in Britain some 7,000 children (overwhelmingly boys) are excluded and for the vast majority that means the end of effective education. Though Wales has a good record in this respect, with exclusions at five per ten thousand school pupils – just under half the UK average – it still represents hundreds of lives potentially being wasted. And in some parts of Wales, including the south Wales valleys, the figures are higher.

The cost to these individuals of making their way through life probably without any qualifications is enormous, almost certainly a life without work or at best in very low paid jobs. The cost to society is also huge. Until they reach

school-leaving age the local education authority must try to arrange 25 hours a week educational provision in one form or another, either through one-to-one home tuition or in some form of placement. After that responsibility has been discharged, other agencies will pick up the cost of probably a lifetime of benefits for those that fail to cope with life in a society where skills are at a premium.



Bill Fitzgerald, inspiration behind Young Wales.

Young Wales has been operating for just under six years and has evolved from an earlier organisation, Music Wales, started by Bill Fitzgerald, after a long career in leisure, music and entertainment in south Wales and

beyond. His jobs have included a long spell with the Rank Organisation, commercial manager with Oakwood, the leisure park in Pembrokeshire and owner of his own pubs and restaurants. He also enjoyed a period of success in the UK pop charts in the late 1990s when he managed his daughter's band *Dragonheart*.

Music Wales worked with young people to put on shows and make music videos. Six years ago it was transformed into Young Wales, a social enterprise offering a wider range of services to young people. With this approach struggling after a year or so to make enough money to survive after earlier funding from the Coalfields Regeneration Trust, the Welsh Council for Voluntary Action and the Wales Co-operative Centre had come to an end, a decision was taken to focus more on training. Bill himself retrained to be able to offer work-based qualifications, provided by the awards firm ASDAN. "Their courses offered unconventional ways of accrediting activities better suited to the type of youngster Young Wales was seeking to help, allowing a range of personal qualities, abilities and achievements to be recorded," Bill explains.

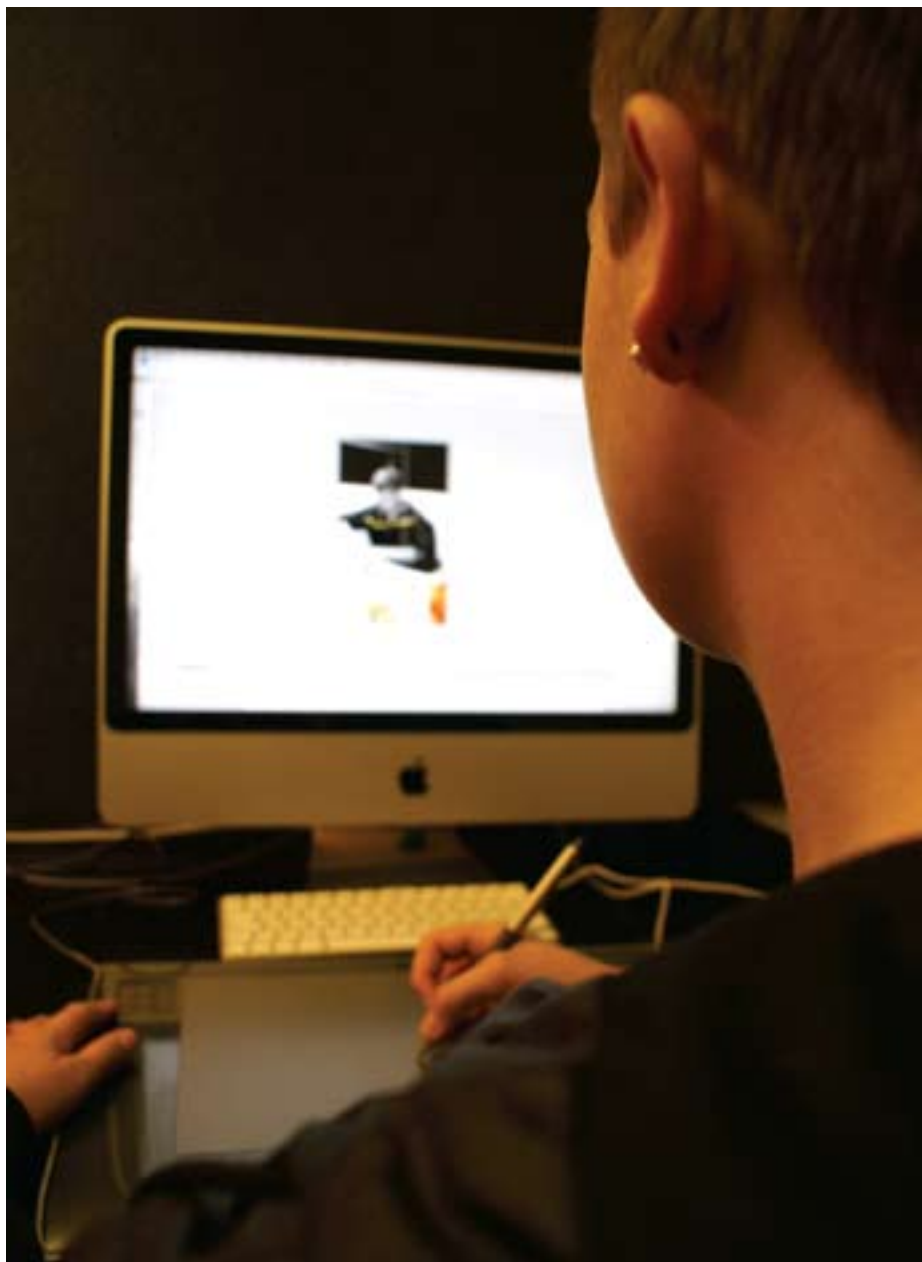
Among the first recruits were two youths referred by the Youth Offending Service in Caerphilly who were introduced to pop video making. The local education authority subsequently

negotiated contracts for Bill and his small team, which includes two trained teachers, to take up to 12 young people excluded from school. In most cases they were the victims of bullying who had just stopped turning up, rather than the seriously disruptive whose own behaviour had made them unwelcome.

Some of the children have been picked on because of physical characteristics, or had moved from place to place and were cast as outsiders. Others have been carers at home who had stopped attending school or attended only when they could. Many of the children had become virtual captives not just at home but in their bedrooms where they would hide from society and their families, communicating with their only friend – the computer – all hours of the day and night. Some who have been persuaded to attend Young Wales have been virtually mute on arrival, shying away from all contact with the outside.

As Sian Sheppard, one of the teachers on site, explained, “We were finding that there was support for children exhibiting difficult behaviours but much less for young people outside the mainstream through no fault of their own. We needed to get them out of the home environment into a small, family style set-up such as this that looks nothing like a school where we could be more free with our curriculum. It helps too that it is quite a male environment, which some of the boys in particular need.”

The children are referred to Young Wales through Caerphilly education department’s exclusion service panel. They are interviewed at home with their parents and then encouraged to come and see the site and be shown around by other students. They first join for a day’s trial and then a week’s trial after which a decision will be made by Bill and his team as to whether they are suited to one of the courses offered. Most start



Instruction in the creative industries is the real attraction at Young Wales.

by thinking they will go through the motions and leave straightaway but end up asking to stay for half a day, a day and then a few more days.

The curriculum is built around each individual who are given a mix of statutory lessons - English and Maths – and the real attraction, instruction in

the creative industries. However, the emphasis is on flexibility, avoiding the necessarily prescriptive approach schools have to apply to timetables, attendance, lessons and qualifications. Other courses are now offered, including ASDAN’s more advanced Certificate of Personal Effectiveness award, and the Examination

Board OCR's qualification which offers a route into a variety of job roles within the media industry.

Bill Fitzgerald says that while other complementary education providers offer building, environmental and other skills, Young Wales is unique in offering creative industries as an option. "This suits many of the young people we see who are technically clever but find school is just not right for them," he says.

The really unique element in Young Wales is its commercial underpinning.

Though it does not work for everyone, and some still fail to turn up when they should, the transformation achieved in many of the young people is remarkable. Two of Bill's current intake are now embracing web design and video editing and acting as event support assistants, helping out with lighting, sound and other technical jobs. They were both quiet and withdrawn 15-year-olds when they joined. But last summer they volunteered to spend seven weeks working on another regular Young Wales scheme, its Action Camp. This takes hundreds of Valleys young people, some of whom have never previously seen the sea, for short fun stays at a caravan site in Tenby. Both now have ambitions to attend college and find work in the creative sector, and have hopes of good GCSEs in English and Maths.

The really unique element in Young Wales is its commercial underpinning. The jobs done by the students are real world projects won in competition with other suppliers and from a range of customers mainly in the third sector across south Wales. "We provide end-to-end solutions for our clients in fields such as video production, web design, print design, photography, event management and equipment hire," explains Bill. These clients include some of the main south Wales housing associations - RCT Homes, United Welsh, and Wales & West. Young Wales has become their first point of call if they need a corporate video or if there is a requirement to deal with a problem such as drugs where it is thought a film involving the local community might help.

When they move on the young people will have been able to acquire an all-important qualification and as a result have something to show potential employers. These qualifications will have been matched to their abilities and will range from

records of assignments they have worked on to GCSEs in Maths or English. Just as importantly, however, they will be able to demonstrate an awareness of and ability to work in the outside world, a life experience skill many of their school contemporaries may not have acquired.

All last year's intake have now gone on to college or a job, though not in every case in IT or the creative industries. Some have gone into construction, others into hair and beauty, or health and social care. The skills they have learnt in Young Wales and in particular the emotional as well as intellectual steps they have been able to take will serve them just as well in other careers, and they also have a competence in key IT skills.

Until now Young Wales has only taken on children in their early teens, from years 9 and 10. This year for the first time a 16-year-old is staying on – effectively past the statutory school age and therefore no longer eligible for local education authority support. The move is intended to reduce Young Wales's dependence on one local authority, tapping into Welsh Government finance for those attending colleges. Another development could be the recruitment of young graduates, making it possible for Young Wales to take on more difficult creative industry assignments and to stay fully abreast of the more significant technical developments in the field, something the pressures of running the organisation has made it difficult for the existing small team to manage.

A more significant move could be the franchising of the approach to other parts of Wales. Work is now being done to draw up a package whereby different providers could be offered different levels of support depending on the services they could offer. Thus, those with a full capability could be given a large degree of autonomy, contributing a fee that would cover central services such as marketing. Those only developing their capability would draw more heavily on the centre for curriculum and other support.

Rhys David is a journalist and a Trustee of the IWA.

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Future of S4C

Forced marriage between S4C and BBC should open a wider debate

Geraint Talfan Davies accuses Culture Minister Jeremy Hunt of acting like a Tudor Monarch in dispatching S4C's autonomy

There was no shortage of astonishment in Welsh broadcasting circles at the fate of S4C in the comprehensive spending review. Not only did the rumoured cut of 6 per cent a year for four years prove to be a marginal underestimate – S4C will lose 26 per cent of its budget over the period – the very existence of the organisation is now hanging by a thread as a result of a forced marriage with the BBC. The BBC will pay the first dowry in 2013 before full consummation in 2015.

But before the ensuing debate descends into mayhem it is worth trying to keep the issue of political process separate from the substance of what is proposed, even if the deficiencies of the process may in the end point us towards even more radical change.

The process is surely indefensible. Parts of a series of Broadcasting Acts from 1980 onwards, together with parts of the Communications Act 2003 have, in effect, been repealed without a single minute of Parliamentary debate, without any consultation with the S4C Authority itself – an erstwhile autonomous statutory organisation that is obliged now to admit the BBC into a full partnership in running its channel – or with Welsh Ministers. Rushed ministerial meetings during a boozy golf tournament hardly count as consultation.

The Culture Minister, Jeremy Hunt, has acted like a Tudor monarch, whetting his appetite for swift executions with the dispatch of the UK Film Council, before attending to the trouble beyond March in like fashion. The Tudors, for good reason, probably understood Wales better. The S4C Authority intends to challenge the decision through judicial review. It could prove an interesting case, but it will not deter the Government from pushing on. It has more than enough time to regularise its decisions in Parliament, and to finesse points of detail. There is no Gwynfor Evans waiting in the wings. Times have changed.

In its report to the Department of Culture, Media, and Sport (DCMS) S4C argued that its funding should be considered on the same timescale as the BBC licence fee, due for the usual leisurely review over the next 18 months. Both broadcasters should be treated equally, it said. The DCMS telescoped the licence fee review into

three days, thus meeting S4C's wishes, at least in this regard. Moral: be careful what you wish for.

But what of the substance? There are big issues for the BBC. Having been strong-armed into funding S4C, the BBC World Service, the roll out of broadband and a contribution to local television, it can hardly claim any more that the principle of not top-slicing the licence fee is intact. The freezing of the licence fee also means that it will have to save another £140m a year on top of the savings programmes that are already in place and hurting services in Wales badly. We must beware that Wales does not suffer even more pain on top of the 44 per cent reduction in spend on English language services (BBC+ITV) that we have seen in the last five years.

Bigger questions face S4C, and here we come to the substance. First, and most crucially, how does it deal with a cut of 26 per cent over the next four years? It is difficult to see how the service can survive in its current form. The financial pressure will surely force some new thinking on the nature of the linear channel and the balance between linear and online investment. It needs to recover its creativity and some of its audience.

But what of the institution? When the first leaks appeared a days before the announcement, the DCMS was, apparently emphasising that S4C would retain 'operational independence'. At the same time, it was being slowly revealed, not only that the channel would be predominantly funded by the BBC, but that in future it would be run by a Joint Board composed of representatives of the BBC and the S4C Authority. The service would be licensed by the BBC Trust. What price S4C's independence? In search of power it is always a good rule to follow the money.

Journalists were pointed towards BBC



Culture Minister Jeremy Hunt understands Wales less well than the Tudors.

Alba, the Scottish digital television channel that has broadcast Gaelic programmes daily since 2008. BBC Alba is jointly managed by the BBC and the Gaelic Media Service, but there are crucial differences. In Scotland the bulk of the funding for BBC Alba comes not from the BBC but from the Gaelic Media Service that is funded by the Scottish Parliament. It broadcasts for a limited number of hours a day with the BBC Radio nan Gaidheal service providing a sound sustaining service in its downtime. But BBC Alba, unlike S4C, is a BBC branded channel. The Gaelic Media Service, on the other hand, is not a brand.

There is clearly some financial logic in the BBC and S4C seeking all the synergies that they can, and if there are substantial gains to be made they could accrue to both Welsh language and English television services in Wales. Indeed, the recent S4C-BBC agreement to explore further collaboration was careful to say that any benefits should accrue to each side equally. But what of the other stipulation that any proposals "should not undermine media plurality, distinctiveness, or the editorial independence of either broadcaster." It is not yet clear whether editorial independence will survive, but media plurality is hardly enhanced, unless the commissioning independence

of S4C is retained.

It may be too early to chase detail, but whatever else Jeremy Hunt has done, he has, whether inadvertently or not, opened up an opportunity for urgent debate in Wales. We should seize it, and extend it. Many of the issues canvassed in S4C's report to the DCMS remain relevant. But the Hunt proposals have also raised questions about the structure of the BBC. It cannot be right that the quantum and balance of spend on both Welsh language and English language services should be decided within the BBC's closed and centralised management structures. There is a proper place for public policy in those decisions, and a place for devolved government. We could emerge with an S4C Authority with a wider multi-media brief, as some of us have urged.

We have less than 12 months to find the right answers for the whole of Welsh broadcasting. Parliament's Welsh Affairs Committee could make a start by enlarging its proposed inquiry into S4C to encompass the wider brief.

Geraint Talfan Davies is Chair of the IWA and a former Controller of BBC Wales.

We need a new Welsh story once more

Peter Edwards warns against boxing ourselves into a self-regarding introverted place

I want to dig deeper into a question that is crucial to us all as we embark upon the journey which devolution has allowed us to begin. Now that we have taken those first baby steps, we need to question what our place is in the world. We need to answer Anne Robinson's question, "What are the Welsh for?" Are we willing to accept that our role is provincial, with a slightly different accent both literally and metaphorically from the majority, or do we have something to give to the world? Do we have something to say? Has our experience as Welsh people developed a national and international story which will mean something to other people around the world, or is this as good as it gets?

When Gwynfor Evans threatened to starve himself to death after the Conservative government went back on its word to allow the establishment of a Welsh language fourth channel, he believed it was the only means of communication which could save the language and give it a place in the modern world.

If Gwynfor was here now, post devolution, how would he react to an internet/twitter/face book world where the Welsh language is confronting the emergence of Globish speak? Might he ask "Where do we fit in?", and query, "What is our story?" Can we only be concerned with what is happening in our metaphorical village, without reference to the rest of the world? If we continue to define ourselves as only having our being within the confines of Wales, then we are lost. This wasn't good enough for me back in the sixties when I was a part of the defining generation. And it certainly isn't good

enough for the generation growing up now.

The question we need to ask is what is the position of the Welsh language in our society. This will help define 'our story', who we are and our role in the world. If we cling to 'What we have we hold', an antiquarian approach to purity of expression and exclusion of all those who don't come up to these standards, the language will not develop and change. It will simply be limited to an ever diminishing number of people picking over that cultural carcase.

Unfortunately, we have let ourselves down. We have failed to be vigilant and self critical. We have failed to demand the highest standards. More than anything we have failed to have the confidence of our own imagination. We have failed to imagine the highest aspirations for our re-emerging nation. That was our responsibility as artists and we settled for an old fashioned model of a little provincial television station. In a small, poor country like Wales where there is so much dependence on the state, it is very difficult to maintain plurality of voice, vision and creativity and very difficult to make sure that there is open debate. In the future open debate and challenge must be a central governing principle of artistic and journalistic endeavour.

With some £100 million annually to spend (before the forthcoming cuts), S4C has been the most important Welsh language institution. As a Welsh language monopoly, the transparent operation of S4C and constant debate and vigilance concerning its role should have been the daily bread of our

being. In recent years S4C has narrowed the voice of plurality by its editorial policy, by encouraging the consolidation of companies, and by the emphasis those companies place upon business rather than creative excellence, variety and challenge.

Now as the wolves gather we have an opportunity to take a leap forward. As Stephen Carter points out in his *Digital Britain* report, the model of the old public service broadcaster is terminally damaged. Technology and this century's cultural and social change have overtaken Gwynfor's vision. We must take advantage of the crisis and radically restructure the delivery and the content whilst putting in place a structure that guarantees competition. The public service, publicly funded corporation is inevitably self-serving and protective of its own continued existence above all. But this is not necessarily what best serves the people.



Duffy (right) stars in Marc Evans's *Patagonia*, an example of a modern film that gives purpose and meaning.

S4C's *Document to the Department of Culture, Media and Sport*, made public in mid-October, is an interesting starting point but is essentially based upon only one primary option. It proposes to prepare for the new Communications Act by establishing a strategic review that will consider "all options". Hopefully, this will not include the continuation of funding and power in just one place.

I am fully supportive of public funding for elements of content creation of high quality and the widest delivery on all forms of communication. However, by doing it through a monopolistic hierarchical structure we would be setting up the same dangers from which we are now trying to extricate ourselves. We need to imagine the possibilities of the future in

which S4C is only a part of the picture, perhaps looking after the 'legacy' technology of broadcast television whilst allowing more dynamic and youthful companies and agencies to compete for finance, airtime and the audience via on-line, dvd, cinema and all manner of digital communication.

In its 'Document' the channel says a comprehensive review is needed to define its service anew, "to reshape the organisation, its supply chain and partnerships". That's all well and good but the changes that are needed should not necessarily be channelled through a set up which has failed to deliver plurality of vision, opinion and culture in the past.

What is clear is that the present political process is deeply unsatisfactory. The idea that all of these issues can be sorted out in a month is ludicrous and forcing S4C into a race against time whilst its competition in the BBC have years to prepare. The new UK government has certainly kick-started a debate, but these issues are difficult, complex and subtle and if we don't get them right then the future of the original language of Britain is once again threatened.

The argument for wise and timely consideration is well made in S4C's submission and the announcement that the Committee for Welsh Affairs will also hold an investigation of S4C and hopefully all the options for the future, is to be welcomed.

On a regular basis, I have had conversations with writers and artists who felt that S4C offered no opportunities for them to produce challenging, argumentative and disruptive work. We have been producing a dull culture. For the next generation to take ownership of the Welsh language it needs to be experienced as exciting, argumentative, playful, disruptive and relevant.

All is not lost. Many of us have stories to tell and an understanding that by communicating with the rest of the world we add to our understanding of our place in it. Marc Evans' 2010 film *Patagonia* is an example of a modern film which gives us purpose and meaning. Art is about metaphor and Marc's film tells a metaphorical story of endings and renewal. It makes our history relevant to ourselves



and communicates our experience to others. Our history is particular but in its particularity it discovers a universality. Financed by S4C and the Film Agency, this film is currently the exception which proves the rule. It is the only film which S4C has co-funded for years and there is not another on its books at the moment.

This situation is symptomatic of how our culture sees itself. We are boxed in, in both languages, to a self-regarding introverted culture. We have two monopolies—one in each language, both publicly funded – which naturally feel they have a responsibility to guide the culture. However, we must be vigilant and ensure that these monoliths do not deny creativity and freedom, particularly as the S4C document suggests bringing the BBC and S4C together on one site.

Can we not artistically and culturally express an opinion on anything anywhere in the world?

In the English language BBC Wales has a proud record of innovative programming with *Coal House*, *Snowdonia 1890*, and *Third Star* (co-funded by Film Agency and BBC Wales). But culturally we are limited to stories in and about Wales. This is surely a provincial view of ourselves. Can we not artistically and culturally express an opinion on anything anywhere in the world? I believe that our experience as Welsh people is unique and we must have the opportunity to express our opinions and views about anything wherever they happen to be located.

If we don't demand this then we accept

that we are boxed in to a provincial world-view which limits our humanity. Could we ever imagine that the BBC centrally would say to English producers and artists that they can only tell stories about England? Of course, they will say that we have every right to speak through the BBC centrally, but then that would be the world seen through the curvature of their distorting mirror.

The urgency for reform is now paramount. Without it we will further undermine our cultural confidence and consequently create a dull culture for ourselves. As Ian Hargreaves pointed out in his review of the creative industries for the Welsh Government earlier this year, *The Heart of Digital Wales*, we have £300 million available annually in broadcasting and the arts. We have an opportunity to change direction from insularity to an expansive, outward looking and confident culture which takes on the world in both languages. But to do this we will need our broadcasters to engage in partnerships with artists, producers and other agencies. We will then need our politicians and people to debate the purpose of the Welsh and English languages in our society and the role that both S4C and the BBC play.

Ultimately, we must bring broadcasting within the remit of the National Assembly as the present situation infantilises us all. Without this we will stunt the growth of individual voices in both a national and world-wide context. Without reform we are endangering the future of not only the film and broadcasting media, but the Welsh language itself and our growth as a nation.

Peter Edwards is a film and television producer and director, and Chair of Film Agency Wales.

More has meant less in S4C's expansion

Roger Williams says the channel should reinvent itself as mainstream service after the 7pm watershed

In the 28 years since S4C was launched the landscape in which the channel finds itself has been transformed. S4C was born at a time when there were only three other television channels. In 1982 video recorders were starting to appear in people's homes and the internet was an abstract concept. Today digital television has given rise to hundreds of channels catering to a wide range of tastes, while the advent of broadband and 3G technology enables viewers to download programming on demand. There are now not only many more channels to watch but more ways to watch them.

Like all broadcasters S4C needed to respond to the inevitable changes. The explosion of digital platforms meant viewers in Wales could for the first time receive Channel 4's service in its entirety. So S4C redefined itself as an exclusively Welsh language service existing in an increasingly crowded television market.

The channel attempted to create a service that stands shoulder to shoulder with other ex-terrestrial stations by broadcasting from the early morning through until late at night. It went on to develop branded children's services (*Cyw* and *Stwnsh*), a website to enable access to programming online (*Clic*) and a high definition platform (*Clirlun*).

However, these initiatives have been achieved against falling advertising revenue and with no extra money from the Department of Culture Media and Sport. To many it seems that while S4C ploughed its energy into developing a wide range of services comparable to other channels, it forgot

to ensure it was still making creative and relevant programmes.

The decision not to have individual commissioning editors developing and commissioning programming was undoubtedly an error of judgement on the part of the S4C Authority. Without specialists in different genres the failure rate of new shows was always going to be higher. After all, how could somebody with no track record in drama be confident that a new drama series would hit the mark?

It's sad to admit that a hunger for great programming has been absent for some time at S4C's headquarters in Llanishen. It seems as though decisions on programmes have largely been influenced by the need to fill an extensive post-digital schedule and the tighter budgets this larger schedule demands.

S4C has lost its way since it was led by Owen Edwards in the golden era of the 1980s.



The time has undoubtedly come for S4C to reinvent itself. And reinvention in the current climate can only be a good thing. S4C should demand the time and space to decide how best it can serve the needs of its audience. It should focus its resources on making vital programming that reflects Wales culturally, socially and politically. Since 1982 ITV has abandoned its role as a regional broadcaster and BBC Wales makes fewer programmes that represent Wales and its people in the authentic way that used to be the case.

S4C should therefore seize the day and unashamedly occupy this territory as the only broadcaster that can seriously and properly make programmes that reflect Wales and Welsh life. It should produce work that asks important questions about our nation and be a shop window for our distinct culture. It should focus on creating well-made and relevant television that entertains and stimulates. Quality should be the calling card of the channel.

If S4C has to cut programmes in order to do this then so be it. By losing the programming that arguably replicates content made in English it could free up resources and plough them into television programmes that get people talking because of the work's distinctiveness. For example, the lifestyle shows could be lost, the dramas that mimic generic formats, and some of the sport. Of course, this would run against the grain of the common argument that S4C - as the only Welsh language television service - should cater for everyone and offer every time of programme under the sun.

I would agree that Welsh speakers deserve a substantial and extensive television service. However, I don't think the current model at current funding levels is sustainable. S4C chose to make itself ITV-light in the post-analogue era. Yet with the limited resources that are currently under attack in the public spending review it might be wiser for the channel to become CBeebies during the morning, CBBC in the afternoon, and only a mainstream broadcasting service after 7pm - like BBC3 and BBC4.

It should also without doubt focus attention on the online service it offers as on-demand services such as See Saw and Project Canvas take to the stage. It's highly likely that the way we watch television will change again in the next few years and S4C needs to make sure it has a presence.

It was S4C's choice to radically expand its service for the post-analogue age. When the channel started broadcasting in 1982 it made 22 hours of original programming a week with an extra 10 hours of programming made by the BBC. The expansion that took place was bold, but without additional funding standards were always going to slip. There would be more repeats to fill the empty hours and audiences would slump as they experimented with the new channels that had arrived.

A streamlined and rejuvenated S4C would also enable it to reach the audiences it knows aren't currently watching. I know from experience that my teenage nephews and nieces - fluent Welsh speakers from Carmarthenshire - don't tune into the channel from choice. These are people born into a digital age and they are the future audience. It seems obvious to me that S4C needs to work hard to create a product that will be must-see television for this raft of young people. They will only watch programmes that reflect their lives as young bilingual adults and are as good as the English language programmes they currently watch.

Change is always uncomfortable, especially when talked about in the context of an important Welsh language institution like S4C. Nevertheless, I am confident that if it asks searching questions about the television service it should be providing, S4C can become a creative pioneer with a real relevance to people's lives.

Roger Williams is a screenwriter, the lead writer on S4C's drama series *Caerdydd*, and is deputy chair of the Writers' Guild of Great Britain.

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Mae dwy o amgueddfeydd cenedlaethol Cymru'n cael eu trawsnewid.

Yn **Amgueddfa Genedlaethol Caerdydd** mae orielau newydd yn cael eu datblygu i ddangos celf fodern a chyfoes – cam arall tuag at greu **Amgueddfa Gelf Genedlaethol** i Gymru, fydd yn agor yn 2011.

Yn **Sain Ffagan: Amgueddfa Werin Cymru** mae gwaith wedi dechrau'n barod ar *Creu Hanes*, strategaeth ddeng mlynedd i ailddatblygu'r safle yn amgueddfa sy'n adrodd hanes pobl Cymru o'r cynamser hyd heddiw.

Sain Ffagan oedd yr amgueddfa awyr agored gyntaf yng ngwledydd Prydain pan agorodd ym 1948. Er hynny, tyfodd yn gartref i hanes Cymru ac yn rhan o hunaniaeth Cymreig. Yn ystod y ddegawd nesaf bydd mwyafrif y casgliadau archaeoleg yn symud i Sain Ffagan er mwyn adrodd hanes gwreiddiau Cymru a dangos pam mae'n wlad mor amrywiol heddiw.

Mae Sain Ffagan yn un o'r atyniadau mae'n rhaid ymweld â nhw yng Nghymru. Mae'r datblygiadau cyffrous yma yn atgyfnerthu safle'r Amgueddfa fel rhan hanfodol o dwristiaeth treftadaeth Cymru sydd o fudd i Gymru gyfan.



Making History at Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum Wales

Two of Wales's national museums are being transformed.

At **National Museum Cardiff** new galleries are being developed to show modern and contemporary art – another step towards the creation of a **National Museum of Art** for Wales, opening in summer 2011.

At **St Fagans: National History Museum** work has already started on *Creu Hanes/Making History*, the ten-year strategy to redevelop the site into a museum that tells the story of the people of Wales from the earliest times to today.

When St Fagans opened in 1948 it was the UK's first open-air museum. Since then it has become the home of Welsh history and part of the fabric of Welsh identity. During the next decade much of the national archaeology collections will move to St Fagans, to tell the whole story of the origins of Wales and show why it is such a diverse country today.

St Fagans is one of Wales's 'must-see' attractions. These exciting developments reinforce its position as an essential part of Welsh heritage tourism that benefits the whole of Wales.



www.amgueddfacymru.ac.uk
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Maybe the next cultural revolution will not be televised

Mari Beynon Owen argues that loyalty to a brand that overrides the remote is no longer valid for any broadcaster

The establishment of S4C gave credence to a momentous combination of political, economic and cultural aspirations. It signified a new credibility for Welsh language culture. The *Popeth yn Gymraeg* (Everything in Welsh) campaign seemed to have been won for the time being. An energetic generation of independent producers and creative talents emerged. New business start-up companies developed outside the main media centres. Politically, Wales had proved it could do things differently and with great assertion.

It now seems such a simple solution, only functioned well in the public service broadcasting, four-channel world for which it was created. This media environment has since been totally transformed. If we were setting out today to create and define a new cultural and media agenda, would we go about establishing a television channel? I suggest we wouldn't.

In recent ruminations over the channel's future, there has emerged a revisionist view that S4C needs to re-connect with its core audience and regain its lost viewers. An appeal has been made to Welsh speakers to show their true loyalty and return to the channel. However, it is not disregard for the Welsh language which has lost S4C its viewers. One could argue that the concept of a core audience whose loyalty to the 'brand' overrides the remote is no longer valid for any broadcaster. Laptops, mobile phones, i-apps now deliver to us a multiplicity of information, entertainment and realities.

The active user demands interactive pleasure from several different sources.

If we were creating a new media and cultural agenda today what would be required? The new media service would in all probability provide a platform on which several different content providers could be positioned, supplying content blocks which would be programmed by genre. These would include lifestyle, drama, arts, sports, but also social networks, online communities, access, support and streaming services, as well as national and local news channels. This is what I mean by multi-vision.

Many of these potential content block providers are already active within their online communities. An interesting model in the visual arts is Culture Colony/Wladfa Newydd, www.culturecolony.com which has been developed specifically within the arts community to stimulate a creative network whilst also providing an important research and archive resource. This is currently only available online, so to paraphrase Gil Scott-Heron, "the arts revolution will not be televised".

The current television channel model represents a centralist, monopolist approach. It seems outmoded, ignoring the plurality of contemporary media culture. More importantly, the new generation of creative developers who are committed to the promotion of a vibrant Welsh language culture are developing new and perhaps more relevant platforms for their creativity and media identity in Wales.

In the cut-throat business environment of television programme sales, where I began my career, the indicators for technological innovation were to be found in the pornography industry. To survive, it had to be always one step ahead in terms of legislation and media consumption trends. It's an interesting lesson. Not, of course, that I would suggest the future of the Welsh media industry lies in providing new opportunities for providers of pornography!

There is a sense of entrenchment at S4C as the corporate protector of its political legacy. The historic fight for its existence was a simpler one with an easily identifiable goal. All broadcasting services in Wales are again under threat. Indeed, and as happened thirty years ago, new solutions, new ways of working together need to be found. Developing the new platforms that will enable a multiple media environment in Wales to flourish will be a massive challenge.

As I write, significant financial, political and corporate changes are being effected in the media landscape. With these high stakes in mind, the survival game may play out rather differently. Nonetheless the need for dynamic re-invention still remains.

Mari Beynon Owen is a Consultant in the Visual Arts and former International Sales Executive and later Commissioning Editor for Youth Programmes with S4C.

When the time is right

As *Planet* marks its two hundredth number Ned Thomas looks back at the magazine's earliest days

August 1970, when the first number of *Planet* appeared 200 issues ago, seems a very long way off, not only in decades but in terms of the very different Wales we then inhabited. No devolution, of course, but many powers vested in one man, the Secretary of State for Wales. Most things that went wrong could be blamed on him and on London. There was no Welsh on the road signs, the *Western Mail* would not publish letters by Dafydd Iwan (then Chairman of the Welsh Language Society), and very little was translated from Welsh.

Until 1968, public sponsorship of the arts had been channelled through the Welsh Committee of the Arts Council of Great Britain. In 1969 the newly-devolved Welsh Arts Council was keen to make its mark and had appointed its first Literature Officer, Meic Stephens, a man with a strong interest in magazines, having previously founded

and edited *Poetry Wales*. Without devolution of the arts, it is unlikely that *Planet* would have come into existence. It would be megalomania to say that without *Planet* political devolution would not have come about, but the magazine certainly played its part in the process, testimony to the way cultural change often precedes political change.

As happened in other fields, early developments in the Welsh language stimulated and legitimised parallel developments in English. The Welsh-language monthly *Barn* was already being supported with public money. Following this example, *Planet* was able to portray itself from the start as a cultural magazine, interpreting that word generously in the Raymond Williams fashion.

I had returned to Wales in the Spring of 1969 after a varied early career as a London journalist and academic at universities abroad. I wrote to a dozen Welsh literary and cultural figures asking them to lend their names in support of a new English-language magazine, and to send me a cheque for £25 as an earnest of that support. They agreed and we then made an application to the Welsh Arts Council which was successful. The title *Planet* was an attempt to assert a universalism grounded in Wales. I wanted initially to avoid another magazine with 'Welsh' in the title - the subtitle 'the Welsh Internationalist' came much later on, as a response to the constant attacks on us as 'narrow nationalists' by provincial Labourites.

For nearly ten years, Sara Erskine (my wife at that time) and I published and edited the first series of the magazine from Llwynpiod near Tregaron in Cardiganshire. All new editors start with a number of new ideas and contacts. Sara brought a family background and an interest in Scotland which, as a result, figured prominently in the early *Planet*. I had been influenced as a student by Richard Hoggart and the early Raymond Williams, so that I came back to Wales with ideas that were left-wing, but critical of the Labour Party - a New Left background which saw self-management, and therefore devolution, as a necessary exit route from a pattern of cultural dependency. We were both interested in language and languages.

Editors exert some influence, but it is the times



which decide what comes in the post, and what gives a magazine its character. In retrospect, perhaps we were the right people at the right time, since language protest drove much of the news agenda in the 1970s, and not only in Wales. When John Barnie took over the re-launched magazine in 1990, and Helle Michelsen more recently, *Planet* was fortunate to have found editors who pioneered green issues before they became mainstream. Once more, they were the right people at the right time.

The year leading up to the launch of *Planet* was turbulent. It was the time of the Investiture of Prince Charles, a year of language demonstrations and protest songs, of pipeline explosions and the Free Wales Army Trial (which I witnessed from the Press Gallery). Police helicopters flew over the march to Llywelyn's memorial at Cilmeri, and on the morning of the Investiture two members of *Mudiad Amddiffyn Cymru* blew themselves up near Abergele while laying explosives on the line over which the Royal Train was to pass. Before the end of the year John Barnard Jenkins, the leader of the movement, had been arrested. *Planet* published his letters from prison.

I was determined to see *Planet* on sale more widely than was usual for little magazines. Some six weeks before the launch in August 1970 I had finally got an appointment with the head office of W.H.Smith. The date fixed turned out to be the day after the General Election of May 1970 when Edward Heath won an unexpected Conservative victory. W.H.Smith's head office was one huge party. "You're not one of these chaps blowing up pipelines are you?" asked the Distribution Manager jovially, filling up my glass. I must have said the right thing, since *Planet* duly appeared on the shelves of Smiths branches in Wales.

The change of Government in London meant that George Thomas was replaced at the Welsh Office, and *Planet 1* carried a cartoon of the outgoing Secretary of State and my own

editorial deploring the servility and lack of ambition of the George Thomas era. The Daily Mirror attacked us rather half-heartedly and Meic Stephens wrote to me expressing concern at the poor standard of our cartoonist. Fortunately a *Guardian* columnist had got hold of a copy of *Planet* and wrote an enthusiastic piece actually praising the same cartoonist. I had only

Today's magazine has a much more complex political and cultural scene to reflect and analyze, but within an impoverished and unresponsive wider media landscape.

to enclose the cutting with my reply.

What strikes me now is how much resonance (compared to today) the early *Planet* had in the London press, and therefore indirectly in Wales. In those days almost all the serious dailies had full-time staff reporters in Wales who were looking for stories. *Planet* was a useful source for them, particularly since it translated from the Welsh and made accessible what was going on in that language. Today's magazine has a much more complex political and cultural scene to reflect and analyse, but within an impoverished and unresponsive wider media landscape. Times have changed, but they are now changing again, as is the editor. Jasmine Donahaye is taking over with my best wishes and the encouraging thought that a bad time is perhaps a good time to be a new editor of a magazine that deals in ideas.

In the 1970s the editors received a small honorarium only and lived by other means. Today's improved funding for magazines allows the employment of staff (though very inadequately paid), and this, together with money for design and marketing has led to a greater professionalism, which is to be welcomed. However, this inevitably brings a feeling of added responsibility for maintaining those jobs, as I found when we re-launched *Planet* in 1985 with one full-time and one part-time employee. Our situation back in the 1970s had one

great advantage: we had very little to lose if our grant was withdrawn.

Planet was fortunate in finding friends and supporters in unexpected places, for instance Tom Ellis among the generally hostile group of Welsh Labour MPs, and Sir Anthony Meyer among the Welsh Conservatives. At one stage, following a special number dealing with the courts

and the police, the Chief Constable of Dyfed Powys wrote to the Welsh Arts Council requesting that *Planet's* grant be discontinued. Sir William Crawshay, an old-style Tory, was Chairman of the Arts Council at the time, and somehow or other I got to see his reply. The Council, he said, was concerned with the general quality of the magazine. If the Chief Constable felt that some part of the content was libellous, he had his remedy in the courts.

I am not sure that any subsidised magazine can today count on the same robust support from grant-giving institutions themselves dependent on the Welsh Government. Devolution, we say, brings power closer to home, but where the arm's length principle applies this means that the arm is that much shorter. In my recent experience the Welsh Language Board and the Welsh Books Council have found it difficult to resist ministerial pressure, while the Arts Council of Wales had to fight for its own survival as a body independent from the Welsh Government. These, let us hope, are the growing pains of a young Welsh democracy.

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Ned Thomas is the founder of the Mercator Institute in Aberystwyth. His memoirs *Bydoedd (Worlds)* have just been published by Y Lolfa.

7

Culture

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Fishlock's File

A writer who brings out the flavour of Wales

Trevor Fishlock celebrates the career of Elaine Morgan

Every Friday Elaine Morgan opens the *Western Mail* and notes her latest column in the news section. "It's nice to turn the page," she says, "and see that I'm still in the land of the living." She started this weekly stint when she was 83. "I always dreamed of being a journalist and even if it's late in the day I'm pleased to have made it." The column caps a distinguished career of more than 50 years as a pioneer television scriptwriter, playwright and controversial science author. Given her literary achievement and the fact that she turns 90 during November we can certainly think of her, in the modern fashion, as a national treasure.

Lord Northcliffe said that every good reporter should be able to take a trip on a bus and return with a readable piece of observation. Elaine Morgan hatches her ideas during her daily morning walks and on Tuesdays she polishes them into a thoughtful entertainment. She has ten inches of space to fill as she likes, a pocket-sized column of 480 words, a job that's not as easy as she makes it look. Her neatly-shorn sentences are deceptively simple, engaging and conversational. Their distinctive liveliness belies the rather ponderous title the newspaper gives her column: *The Pensioner*.

"When I started I was afraid I might run out of material, but I've no fear now that there will nothing to write about; so I enjoy it all the more, and it keeps my fingers from itching."

She has lived almost all her life in south Wales. Born in Hopkinstown in the Rhondda, daughter of a colliery pumpsman, she grew up in the bitter years of the depression. She won a scholarship to read English at Oxford and her father died at the end of her first term there. Neighbours told her mother that Elaine would have to leave the university. Her mother was notably determined. "Over my dead body," she retorted.

Elaine was a teacher during the war, lecturing for the Workers' Educational Association in Norfolk. In 1945 she married Morien Morgan, who had fought in Spain against the Franco dictatorship. They had three sons. For a while they lived cheaply in a remote Radnorshire farmhouse that lacked running water and electricity – "An early Good Life thing," Elaine says wryly.

She started writing to eke out the family's meagre income. "I wasn't very successful. I spent three years at Oxford learning literary criticism and I found it difficult to learn to write creatively." Then she won a third prize in an Observer essay competition. "It was a beginning because it meant letters from agents. Do you want to make money?" they asked. "Do you have anything else in the drawer?"

In the mid-1950s the writing trail led to the BBC in Wales and the black and white infancy of television drama. "I was there at the beginning, the best time. I sold three plays

before I had a television set. I used to watch at someone else's house. Plays went out live and if an actor forgot his lines the whole country saw it. It was a time when quality and reception were poor. There was no pre-filming in drama and there was only one set, two at the most, and much less camera work. We wrote full dialogue because nothing else was happening. It is amazing how much less you need to write in a television drama today."



Elaine Morgan – "amazing how much less you need to write in a television drama today".

She had an edge, she says, because many authors were writing for West End theatre audiences whereas television was spreading to a much broader audience that few were writing for at that time. "We were doing kitchen sink drama long before Osborne and Wesker." Audience researchers in London were astonished to discover that ordinary people enjoyed watching drama about people like themselves, seeing their own backgrounds mirrored.

There was another reason, she says, why she and writers like her were able to prosper. "When drama started in London producers lacked the studio space to keep up with demand. They asked other sources, like Wales, Manchester and Scotland, to produce plays and feed them into the network once a month so that London could cope. London depended on this. And it gave opportunities to writers and directors to project a non-London view. It was a golden time and produced a lot of good writers. I wrote for the market and about what I knew. I just wanted to convey the flavour of Wales, of people whose lives were just as dramatic and full of moral problems as any other lives."

She wrote nine episodes of Dr Finlay's Casebook

between 1963-70, six of Maigret and drama documentaries about Marie Curie, Gwen John, Anne Frank and Lloyd George. Her adaptation of *Testament of Youth* in 1979 won her the Royal Television Society Writer of the Year award.

"Television changed quickly and in many ways. Some of those who wrote for the stage, like Emyln Williams, could not make the switch to television. He was asked to adapt *How Green Was My Valley* but the script could not be used and I was brought in at short notice to do it. But in time my stuff, too, looked old-fashioned, too wordy and out of touch with the mores of a new generation. Television became less adventurous. In the end I chucked it in. But I'd had a long run."

She says she was always an arguer. In the 1970s she published *The Descent of Woman*, her feminist view of evolution to counter what she saw as the male-oriented opinion. "I wrote from indignation. I made my point and in the end it stuck." The feminist eruption was a bigger deal in America than in Britain and she had two book tours there with appearances on numerous chat shows – "not 15 minutes but 15 weeks of fame".

In her writing about Wales, she says, she described a people characterised by a kind of independence and self-esteem. "We were, as Kingsley Amis said, classless. We didn't react for or against the nobs because we never saw them."

She is disappointed in what she feels is a growing divide between burgeoning Cardiff and the Valleys hinterland. "I can see what is wrong with capitalism but I cannot see what you put in its place. It is part of the difficulty we are all in, a groundswell of anger, a politics not of envy but of outrage."

Since 1966 she has lived in Mountain Ash in a large Victorian hillside house with a prospect of the town and the Cynon valley and, as you might imagine, a comforting abundance of books. "There's a lot of good here, enough of the community spirit in which I grew up. So I'm relaxed. I'm not a despondent sort of person anyway. I'm in touch with people all over the world online, conducting arguments and debates. I don't know today what will be in my next column. But I'll know next Tuesday, when I start writing it."

Retaining our public memory

Dai Smith explores the culturally fragmented and materially insecure collective biography of south Wales

One hundred years ago this month, on the nights of 7 and 8 November to be precise, an irresistible force some considered alien burst through the puffed-up chest of Edwardian Wales and announced the presence of conflict, class and community. These three were the conjoined Trinity which would mark out the Culture and Society of the past century in Wales, from Tonypany in 1910 through the great strikes of the 1920s and on down to 1984 and the aftermath of fragmentation it left us to inhabit.

I believe we still flinch from this uncomfortable historical reality, much as many contemporaries did in the aftermath of the riots in mid-Rhondda in 1910 when the social fabric was torn apart and new definitions of community and the issue of self-empowerment were openly contested. And what we flinch from is the burden of a history that demonstrates that the genesis of community is collective purpose not corporate altruism. The former is always about the generation of fresh energies, while the latter is about keeping the social thermostat steady.

In 1910 Wales was a society set to blow a gasket. The intolerable economic demands of the grossly inegalitarian Behemoth that was Coal Capitalism, explicitly allied to the smug self-serving social consensus that was Liberal and Nonconformist Cymru, were confronted directly and unexpectedly. The immediate pressure point would be the beginning of a struggle for the Minimum Wage. But the riots which wrecked the commercial life of Tonypany and brought in Churchill's troops and police to reinforce local law-and-order were more than the by-product of the year-long strike. They were the deeper and longer heraldic note of a new Wales being born.

Now some of this happens to be personal. My maternal grandfather, Dafydd Humphrey Owen, had moved to Williamstown from Blaenau Ffestiniog to work as a collier in the Ely pit of the Naval colliery where the lock-out started. It began as a dispute over payment for working 'Abnormal Places'. By the first

week of November it had escalated into the complete stoppage of all the pits in the vast Cambrian Combine, with twelve thousand men out on the streets of Mid-Rhondda. Dai Owen was 22 at the time. Before he died in 1965 I had heard his account many times. But only when the Academi's magnificent *Encyclopaedia of Wales* appeared in 2008 did I spot his face, one amongst many, in a photograph taken that very week of a mass meeting of the strikers who would shortly become those infamous rioters.

In 1980 I had wrote an article for the Oxford Journal *Past and Present* which dissected the motivation of the wreckers in a fresh light. But now, seeing his face I began a new enquiry. It occurred to me that thirty years on I, too, was firmly in the frame. After all, I had lived out two thirds of the past century myself. I began to remember, not just personally but as a witness to collective memories, Tonypany after 1945. I had written across a professional lifetime a great deal about the making and breaking of south Wales as a distinctive society. I now set out to consider how it had fired my own endeavours and how meaning had been expressed in the words of historians and novelists and in the images of painters and photographers. Their efforts intersected with a popular culture of sport and performance to create the consciousness which is the underlying theme of the book which started to bubble up a year ago. The chapters formed around individuals - the Dowlais historians, Glanmor and Gwyn Alf Williams, the socialist novelists, Gwyn Thomas and Raymond Wiliams, the boxers from American Wales, Freddie Welsh and Tommy Farr. Yet as they did so, I had to register the shock of recognition which I felt from each tap on the shoulder. All these lives, places and events, touched on mine to the extent that my career as writer and historian had all along been channelled, knowingly and otherwise, by it all, and by my being born in Tonypany in 1945.

Nor was I alone in this. The echo in those words is back to Nye Bevan. But it could be said, as he meant it to be, of anyone who has testified to the collective biography of south Wales. It had often been at the root of conversations I had had with the man whom *The Oxford Companion to the Literatures of Wales* rightly identifies as "the supreme chronicler" of the post 1945 south Wales Valleys, my good friend Alun Richards. He had half-suggested to me shortly before he died in 2004 that the letters he had exchanged since



Mass meeting of striking miners in Tonypanydy in November 1910. The author's grandfather, Dai Owen, is circled.

the 1960s with fellow no-bullshit writer Ron Berry, who had died in 1997, might have some unbuttoned, and memorable, insights into the world they both strove to depict without sentiment or romance. I had my own letters from both of them since the 1970s. The central coping stone of the book, trimmed and edited but still dangerously freighted with sharp-toothed truths, is this correspondence, letters from Dai Country.

By the time the final draft was completed, each chapter, each epiphanic event or person, had become prefaced by a personal confession as to how and why I was in this particular frame. Sometimes these mini-narratives, factual as they are, have taken on a fictive form. My intent has been, in a hybrid mix of cultural history and memoir, to assert the vital need for memory to work like a life-giving yeast in our amnesiac society. I argue that beyond eulogy and elegy, though I confess here and now to both sins. The alternative history I present indicates contemporary values which retain their validity for us. Indeed, without such public memory we could mis-place the very DNA that has made us, more even than language or landscape, the distinctive (just about)

society we remain today.

And there's the rub. Decidedly there, and an irritant, because we are so culturally fragmented and materially insecure. There, because the actually experienced history weighs so heavily on our being that some would wish it away. A moment's reflection will show that that trick cannot be done. Of course, the meaningfulness of a lived history can be circumvented or packed out of sight and mind. It can be avoided, except when celebrated as a succession of factoids and artefacts on television or, worse, screwed into an anthropological bubble-existence for 'real' people to play-act the past. It can be hidden within an academicism that prefers to play footsie with itself than to connect to a past it limply annotates. It can be lost when politicians seek the illusory unity of PR slogans like *Team Wales*, *Brand Wales*, or God help us, *Wales plc* to cheer lead the crowd whose backs are turned on such intellectual vacuity. A mature and sophisticated society, as ours is at its best, needs to be encouraged in its pluralism. We need debate and dissent in honest disagreement not a re-run of that Edwardian hegemony which smashed up on the unforeseen rocks of social

and economic divisiveness. We need to hear more, up front and in detail, about what exactly are the common purposes of a society like ours, one still riven by inequality of aspiration, opportunity and outcome. We do not need yet more managerial wallpaper to cover over the cracks and fissures whose origins and repair we must examine instead. In all this, the past is our only known reality. It is not a guide to the future but it is a given that it alone has brought us to the our present and disorientated state. How did we get here is an essential question for the time-traveller who wishes to move on.

This is why, pace Peter Stead in his eloquent essay in the summer number of *Agenda*, we cannot truly envisage 2010 in Wales as any kind of Year Zero. You might just stretch the point to imagine 1910 as such a year. At that time, and, for the most part, Wales was a dynamic and immigrant country, thrustful and socially fluid, its communities not yet formed into what became the rapidly familiar, and whose loss he laments. In 2010, and indeed with the malign disasters of the a-historical 1980s in mind, we should not imagine that any kind of zero-sum approach would do



Tonypandy's Ely Street, as seen in this postcard from 1910.

anything other than cut even more of our people adrift. Peter Stead is right to warn us of unwarranted nostalgia for what was once palpable and what has now, structurally anyway, vanished. Alas, however, he has no recourse to fall back on to counter his well-meaning despair at our often ruinous condition, other than to urge, in the spirit of voluntarism, that somehow we should “re-activate our communities” and relinquish the “bosom of the nanny state”.

It would be better, and more pertinent, to say that we should, like our forbears in their best civic tradition and even in the hideous maw of the Great Depression, “activate our State” (and all its branches) to “invigorate communities” (to be different and effective because democratically self-empowered). The Wales which so often held its aspirations in common, and created a variegated culture for their expression, knew full well that it was only the State which they sought to control and utilise through their Unions and political parties which could possibly hold the collective ring in order to allow for individual liberation. We must have more and more, not fewer and fewer, but stronger and better agencies in place to allow for the creation of conduits -- cultural, physical,

artistic, educational, architectural, spatial --down which fresh citizen energies can flow. This remains to my mind the most powerful case we can put to help the National Assembly win hearts and minds. It must lead with visionary zeal and clear priorities. But it cannot do this if we do not subscribe to the fulfilment of its potential.

For, if we can readily agree that major touchstones of Welsh identity disappeared or shrivelled in the course of the 20th Century, and that it is to our new civic and governmental pan-Wales institutions that we must needs turn to develop a changing sense of a national community, then it follows, too, that to do this purposefully we have constantly to recall the Brechtian dictum which tells of how you cannot dissolve a people and elect another if you do not like or approve of the only real one you've got. We are all of us in the frame together. The frame, both materially and culturally constructed, is our history. Constitutionals might wish they could whisk it away and knock up another one with a more pleasing symmetrical fit, and some social planners might prefer a sharper set of images than the blur-in-motion we stubbornly present. Preference, however, is not an option.


The catalyst for more engagement in political and civil and community life will be a culture rooted in historical consciousness and readily valued since it is of ourselves we will become aware.

Perhaps then Wales' Next Step, in the best tradition called forth by the events of 1910, will be as our foremost thinker, Raymond Williams, urged fifty years ago, “To limit a society to its systems of decision and maintenance is in fact ridiculous... the alternative society... must be in wider terms if it is to generate the full energies necessary for its creation... The integration of work and life, and the inclusion of the activities we call cultural in the ordinary social organisation, are the basic terms of an alternative form of society.”

What my book shows is that, here and there and against all the odds, we once glimpsed such possibilities and sometimes made them happen in our alternative history. Without that memory in our society today, we may consume as customers and live as the favoured clients of others, and we may even sip the narcotic nectar of globalisation, but we will not participate or create as citizens in our daily lives, and we will not survive in all of the particularity that has signalled Wales to the world.

I can, at age 65, think of no more important an underpinning of civic purposefulness to pass onto my grandchildren than a commitment to public memory. It is to them -- Jack, Evan and Isabelle -- that I have dedicated my latest book, in the hope that they too, will one day consent to be framed by all that has gone before them.

Dai Smith is Raymond Williams Research Chair in Cultural History of Wales at Swansea University and Chair of Arts Council Wales. His *In the Frame 1910-2010: Memory in Society* is published this month by Parthian Books.



Why we need to defend music in the land of song

Helena Braithwaite explains how access to music is becoming a lottery in today's Wales

Only Boys Aloud, performing at the Millennium Centre.

Creativity in music is more than the composition of new material. It also means the interpretation and expression of music through active participation, as opposed to passive listening, pleasurable as that might be.

In the past the Welsh education system has placed an emphasis on providing children and young people with opportunities to interact with music. Wales has been a pioneering nation in the field of performance which has flourished here in good times and bad, both in schools and in the community. However, there is a question mark over whether today's Wales will continue this tradition.

Free instrumental tuition was provided in Welsh schools from 1924. As well as community choirs and brass bands many areas of Wales boasted youth and adult orchestras. These school and amateur groups helped to bring communities together and provided companionship, entertainment, education and hope in very difficult times. Progress continued

through the dark days of the 1930s and 1940s. In 1946 there were enough players of a high standard to form the National Youth Orchestra of Wales, the first National Youth Orchestra in the world.

From the 1950s to the 1980s school and extra curricula music grew and developed apace. Schools provided free instrumental tuition and counties developed free out of school music centres, hosting Junior and Youth orchestras, Choirs, and Brass bands. By the 1980s some counties could also boast Wind bands, Jazz ensembles and even World Music ensembles.

Adequate funding was provided to support these activities by the County Education Authorities. Indeed, at this time the proportion of pupils learning to play an instrument in Wales was more than double the UK average, while musical standards were as good if not better than the rest of Britain. As well as the National Youth Orchestra other national ensembles were formed including the National

Youth Choir, Brass Band and later the National Wind Band and Jazz orchestra. The Youth orchestra was organised and supported financially by the WJEC, while the other National ensembles were organised by Tŷ Cerdd, the Music Centre for Wales.

In the 1980s the National Curriculum for music was introduced and children up to 14 now had a statutory entitlement to study composition, performance and appraisal or creative and informed listening. New teaching and learning strategies were implemented. Abstract concepts were grasped through practical activities, while the content of music lessons broadened to include, jazz, folk, pop, and music from other cultures, as well as classical music. Electric keyboards were introduced into the classrooms so that all children could perform their compositions. Young people got together to form pop bands and began to be recognised outside Wales.

Whether you approve of competition or not, innumerable numbers of children and young people, including very many of our greatest singers, have had their first experience of performing on a large stage in the Urdd and National Eisteddfod, and on smaller stages in village eisteddfoddau and festivals.

In the 1980s, too, arts organisations began to reach outside the concert hall into schools. Welsh National Opera was the first opera company in Britain to be involved in education work. The initial project involved the two Ely Comprehensive schools and also the community in Ely. The pupils composed the music with the help of a composer and then performed the piece with players and singers from WNO in the Ely Festival.

In the 1990s other companies, arts venues, and orchestras appointed education officers. Today schools and communities throughout Wales benefit from this outreach work, which includes composition, performance and listening. The increasing number of Arts Festivals also contributed

to this work. Other organisations such as Cardiff-based Community Music Wales encouraged disaffected youngsters to become involved in music making outside school.

In 2000 Emyr and Mair Afan of Avanti TV Production Company bought a factory in Porth in the Rhondda and turned it into the Pop Factory. Here youngsters could hone their skills in pop music and develop their future careers. Many of the top Welsh Pop bands started here and as Emyr Afan says "It's all about empowerment – the talent is here, we've proven that. We just need to keep believing in ourselves."

The 'Land of Song' has always been proud of its singing heritage, and the chapel and the Eisteddfod were part of that heritage. However, this has been gradually eroded by the decrease of chapel attendances and the difficulties faced by many Singing Festivals or Gymanfa Ganu and their associated Singing Schools or Ysgolion Gan.

The number of mass Assemblies where the whole school sang together has also decreased. However, it is comforting to know that organisations such as the Urdd still encourage singing. Whether you approve of competition or not, innumerable numbers of children and young people, including very many of our greatest singers, have had their first experience of performing on a large stage in the Urdd and National Eisteddfod, and on smaller stages in village eisteddfoddau and festivals. It is also encouraging that many new excellent youth and young adult choirs have been formed in the last few years.

In the late 1980s and into the early 1990s a combination of factors placed severe strains on this rich mix of music provision for young people. The reorganisation of local government meant that the eight Welsh counties were reorganised into 22 unitary authorities. These smaller counties found it difficult to sustain the previous level of music provision. At the same time local financial management of schools was introduced. The central budgets for music were delegated to schools. Most schools and LEAs did not ring fence the original music budgets, as they were now allowed to use that money for what they judged to be more important priorities.



By the end of the 1990s the whole edifice of extra curricula music in Wales seemed to be threatened. In 1999 we found an ally in the then Secretary of State for Wales, Alun Michael. Through his initiative the Music Development Fund was established with funding from the Welsh Government and the Arts Council. £8 million was distributed to the Local Authority Music Services over four years. Crucially the fund was ring fenced for music from 1999 to 2003.

This relatively modest funding had a significant impact. Music tuition was offered to over 30,000 children who had never had the opportunity before and 12,500 musical instruments were purchased. Work was found for 250 musicians as peripatetic teachers. More than 200 new ensembles including three new National ensembles were formed.

Although the fund was extended to 2004, it was then cut by 40 per cent and in 2005 the money was transferred to the local authorities. Once again the ring fencing for music was withdrawn. Many authorities used the money for what they saw as more pressing priorities. More and more LEAs started to charge for extra curricula music lessons and activities. Music provision became and still remains an economic and geographical lottery. Access to musical tuition in Wales now depends on where you live and whether you can or cannot pay

for lessons, while instruments are deteriorating and there is no money to replace them.

There are also worries about primary school music. Although there is still excellent music in many primary schools the time allocated for music on Teacher Training Courses has been gradually cut. In the last four years there has been no requirement from the government for specialism in music on these courses. Many primary teachers today lack the confidence to teach music and it is becoming difficult to see where the next generation of primary music co-ordinators or leaders will come from

From 2005 to 2009 music educators and musicians tried to persuade the Welsh Government to redress the decline in financial support for music with no success. However, there has been some progress in the last year. The Welsh Government has recently announced a National Strategy for Singing. A pilot programme called *CânSing* has started which will provide training for teachers in singing and also materials for singing. What will happen after the pilot is completed and whether there will be funds for continuing support is of course a worry,

If we are to develop a robust system of music provision in Wales we need to be clear about what is happening in schools and in extra curricula music

Cardiff County and Vale of Glamorgan Youth Orchestra* performing at Stanwell School, Penarth, in January 2010.

provision across the whole of Wales. Finally there has been a National Music Review which was submitted to the Welsh Government at the beginning of June this year. It offers the potential for a National Music Strategy which we hope will give all the children in Wales an equal opportunity to make music. We await the Government's response.

When we faced the last crisis in music provision in the late 1980s and early 1990s we had emerged from a period of well funded expansion. Unfortunately this time we start at a low level. There is no sign that funding to replace the Music Development Fund will emerge. Funding is also a serious concern for other arts organisations which work with young people and communities. For instance, although Tŷ Cerdd now supports over 400 community generated music organisations with 22,000 performers, it seems in danger of having its funding cut. There is no doubt that we must continue to draw policy makers' attention to the advantages of music, not only the joy of making music, but also the development of transferable life skills. These are beneficial for the

health and well being of the individual but also prepare young people for the world of work.

Research supports the fact that music is the only outside stimulus which inherently synchronises both hemispheres of the brain naturally. While the linear sequential aspects of music, such as beats rhythm, lyrics, and notation are being processed by the left hemisphere, the right hemisphere is processing the holistic aspects, such as harmony, intonation, phrasing, creativity and imagination.

Music is a private and public art. Self discipline is needed to practise in private. First the mathematical and logical systems of pitch and rhythm must be mastered and, as music is complicated, multi layered and transient, memory too must be developed. Performance involves attentive and detailed listening and this develops concentration span.

In her book *Endangered Minds* Jane Healy writes

“The present generation is more impulsive, easily distracted and spontaneous. Rapid switches in

Whitchurch High School's Orchestra pictured in 2004 outside London's Royal Festival Hall where they were winners of the Outstanding Performance Award at the National Festival of Music for Youth.



stimuli from the electronic media lead them to expect constant stimulation. The brain's software has been rewired by mass media bombardment. Music can help pupils to focus, concentrate, anchor and retain essential information for other subjects."

Instrumental playing needs highly developed mental and physical coordination, including hand eye coordination often under stress in public performances. Performance of any kind of music also involves all members of the ensemble following instructions exactly, on the page and from the conductor and this demands self discipline. However, in the ensemble the individual must perform as part of the team. No other art form or group activity needs quite the same corporate discipline, and yet (each member) by bringing their imagination to bear on the instructions recreates something new and unique.

Pupils in ensembles or choirs perform in public and therefore must be accountable, putting the rehearsals and performances first and in so doing, gaining self confidence and satisfaction from completing the task. We have seen recently the positive effect that music can have on youngsters in the development of *Only Boys Aloud* led by Tim Rhys Evans.

In Venezuela a music system called El Sistema allowed disaffected children from disadvantaged backgrounds to learn instruments from a very young age. Some 200 orchestras were formed including the amazing Simon Boliver Youth Orchestra, the apex of the system, which was such a sensation in the London Proms. Interestingly the system was called a *social* project as the effect on the children's behaviour and health was amazing. England and Scotland have set up similar systems funded very generously. So far nothing similar has been set up in Wales.

If performance is often a group activity, composition is usually an individual and private activity. However, children start composing in school in groups creating patterns and structures using sounds as the raw material. They discuss freely, often hotly, but finally compromises are reached. Nothing is right or wrong in composition and thus pupils have to solve their own musical problems. They take risks and finally analyse each others efforts, developing the skills of debate and informed criticism. Gradually they move to composing individually.



Tim Rhys Evans, responsible for *Only Boys Aloud*.

In the last few years the development of electronics and computer technology has given a new dimension to classroom composition. Keyboard labs, recording studios, multi tracking recording machines and computer software have allowed pupils, whether they play instruments or not, to develop their musical imagination. A recent report showed that music was one of, if not the main user of IT in the curriculum. This generation of pupils is very confident in their handling of new technologies, but they use them creatively.

We need to trumpet these transferable skills when we fight for funding. Music is not always valued in all schools and if there are redundancies in the future, music teachers and especially peripatetic teachers will be in the firing line. The provision of music extra curricula lessons and the opportunities to sing and play with others must not

depend on where you live or whether you can pay. We should strive to make sure that music is available to all pupils who wish to participate. Instruments are essential tools for making music and therefore there must be funding to buy new and replace old instruments. Professional arts organisations and venues should be encouraged to continue their excellent outreach work. We should seek out and encourage entrepreneurs such as Emyr Afan of the Pop Factory and inspirational motivators such as Tim Rhys Evans who work outside the school system.

The Music Development Fund showed what a relatively small amount of funding can do to help young people realise their creative musical potential. Both England and Scotland have made a great deal of progress in the last ten years supported by very generous funding from their governments. They are therefore in a far better position to survive any cuts in funding.

In the past, we have been leaders in this field in Wales. It would be tragic if in the future we did not give the same opportunities to our young people as they have in other parts of Britain, or indeed as we have given past generations. There is no doubt that music develops creativity, imagination, spontaneity and adaptability, as well as teamwork, dependability and self-confidence. Surely these are the qualities that Wales requires of its young people and future work force if our small nation is to flourish in the 21st Century.

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Helena Braithwaite is founder and music director of the South Glamorgan Youth Choir and director of the Cardiff Ardwyn Singers. This article is taken from her presentation to the IWA's conference *Creativity in Hard Times*, held at the Millennium Centre in October.



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Reviews

National identities after globalisation

Tom Nairn



Against the Odds:
The survival of Welsh identity
Harold Carter
IWA, £9.99

And what the dead had no speech for,
when living,
They can tell you, being dead,
the communication
Of the dead is tongued with fire beyond
the language of the living.
Here, the intersection of the timeless
moment
Is England and nowhere. Never
and always.

T.S.Eliot, 'Little Gidding',
Four Quartets, 1944

The Great-British General Election took place, on 6 May, 2010. And On 7 May the voters woke up in Alice's Wonderland: "Down, down, down. Would the fall *never*

come to an end! I wonder how many miles I've fallen by this time?" she said aloud. "I must be getting somewhere near the centre of the earth." She worries about arriving among the 'Antipathies' on the other side, but the White Rabbit keeps reappearing and, in between nervous glances at his watch, reassures her things will soon be sorted out.

Today the White Rabbit is Nick Clegg, Leader of Britain's Liberal Democrats, summoned by 'the Duchess' (the Conservative Party's David Cameron) for grotesquely unlikely talks about common policy over staging the Mad Tea Party. Dealing with Britain's gigantic deficit without turning the Pound Sterling into funny-money, being simultaneously for and against the European Union, and so on. Though uncomfortably like an accord between Albert Schweitzer and Genghis Khan, the deal does appear inevitable for the moment. The Conservative Party won most votes, and the Lib Dems have advanced sufficiently to claim a place at the power-table — or at least, for as long as Labourism continues to sink in the choppy wake of the departing Gordon Brown. Most recent reports indicate water-level rising near deck-level, and threatening the Bridge. However, what choice have the living but to seek an exit from zombiedom, however difficult?

In most countries, another election would be the answer. But this is Wonderland. A second contest might push everything still closer to the centre of the earth. Isn't the ancestor of democracy succumbing to Alzheimer's, and capable of results even worse than 7 May? Hence, the urgent task ('national interest' etc) boils down to getting rid of a millenary tradition in a few days, time to at least consider disposing of the Mother of Parliaments and 'first-past-the-post'. Reared to worship such timeless icons, today's Royal Subjects find themselves placed under brisk orders to bin the lot, and re-equip themselves in record time for boring modernity.

Two-partyism seems to have joined the Dodo and the 'caucus race' in Dodgson's famous portrait of Englishness. As Iain Macwhirter concluded his 'State of the Nation' survey in Scotland's *Sunday Herald* (9 May):

"This election was a kind of punishment for the UK political leadership, for the expenses scandal and the banking crisis. The people wanted a change — well, now they have it. The political system is broken, but we don't yet know if anyone has the tools to fix it."

That's the job of the incoming coalition government, and we're still finding out day by day just what the tools are, and how likely or unlikely will be the restoration of the historic United Kingdom.

So far one thing has to be taken for granted, the absence of an *English* polity capable of asserting itself democratically, on behalf of its eighty-five per cent UK majority. No non-democratic or dictatorial alternative is yet presenting itself. Yet it should be more clearly recognised that what's happening is an odd sort of dictatorial solution, a power-system imposed by absence. Scottish, Welsh, Northern Irish and other peripheral opinion (for example, the Isle of Man) are bound to react, but with no real option except one or other version of actual nationalism. In that sense, the latter turns out to be founded less on swelling separatist tides than on the hopeless breakdown of the centre, Old-Westminster Britishness.

Straightforward political reform, like proportional representation and federalism, has been put off too long. And today no time is left. That is, no time for anything but panic and hasty makeshifts, as manifested in this notion of a gambling-table deal between Deep-South Toryism and 'civic' Liberal Democracy, meant to stave off catastrophe. This is break-up, nor are ye out of it. New Labour,

1997-2010, was the last chance saloon, and towards the end of it six-gun Brown couldn't even draw his shooter. Today we find him retired, but still leaning on the old bar without so much as a decent wise-crack to amuse the remaining soaks and newshounds. Out on Main Street, the contest is on for a British equivalent to Australian Labor's Kevin Rudd, or his successor Julia Gillard.

Couldn't Labourism vote in another less Party-bound leader, and set up a different bar-room deal with Lib-Dems and the Scottish and Welsh Nationalists on all-round constitutional change — in effect, move towards some kind of confederal replacement for the United Kingdom? Possibly, but how many years could that take? The Britannic *ancien regime* is founded on the unthinkability of such stuff. So it will have to emerge in fits and starts, spasms like the one we are in — over the wreckage of Gordon Brown's Britishness and David Cameron's smart PR to keep old Union on its feet.

Open Democracy and like-minded organs have been arguing in that general direction for decades already, preaching to the largely unconverted. Now suddenly everybody has experienced a five-minute conversion, forced on them by the simple failure and incapacity of the traditional regime. The question has turned from whether or not to be 'radical', into just which version of radicalism will best fit the new times. Against the grain of Britishness and most of the secular odds it imposed, a stalled evolutionism has ended by setting the stage for political revolution.

This is the context into which IWA's book *Against the Odds* appears. Harold Carter looks back on the history of Welsh national identity, over the long period from the 1536 Act of Union down to the present. The former ordained that "the said country or dominion of Wales shall stand and continue for ever from henceforth incorporated united and annexed to and with the King's realm of England" (p.50); but the present situation is one where the 'shattered cultural core' of Wales is being reintegrated through a "sense of coherence which would give so much more strength

to the people's future".

Carter's emphasis is on the story of the language, but his solution is "a truly bilingual Wales... a country where people can choose to live their lives through the medium of either or both Welsh or English and where the presence of the language is a source of pride" (p.145). This is because the "institutional basis of identity seems to be exhibiting increased tenacity" following devolution and the creation of the Welsh Assembly (p.143).

A sense of coherence has been forced on the periphery by its downfall at the centre. The English needed 'Britain' and had become too used to it — the appropriate 'bigger than', extending identity bequeathed by the odd history so well recounted in Liah Greenfeld's *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (1993) and Ernest Gellner's *Nations and Nationalism* (1983,

global process. As we can see now, the Welsh dilemma (especially) emphasises a *sui generis* nature to which neither European Union nor globality provide a ready answer.

England can't be forced backwards to the 16th Century, to undo 'incorporation'. However, it can (and now very probably will) be forced back to the early-modern moment of its Treaty of Union with the Scots. Queen Anne's 1707 was a profoundly different kind of deal from that of Henry VIIIth. It was an ambiguous arrangement between states, rather than a conquest and core-shattering repression. The 'end of the UK' will then be a matter-of-fact reconstitution, posing unfamiliar but quite resolvable questions of external relations, both within the European Union and at United Nations (and Security Council) levels.

The question has turned from whether or not to be 'radical', into just which version of radicalism will best fit the new times. Against the grain of Britishness and most of the secular odds it imposed, a stalled evolutionism has ended by setting the stage for political revolution.

Kindle edition, Amazon Whispernet, 1010). The English figure there as the prime movers of nation-state modernity: it was threat and promise from the archipelago that forced France towards its Revolution, and then the rest of Europe into a staged adoption of nationalism.

But of course, the motor of that change could never itself become just another example. It moved on into overreach: the ceaseless extension of colonialism and empire, bringing, as Carter puts it: "vital myths and memories of the English people predominantly related to its imperial past" (p.23), rather than to a national past in the usual 19th and 20th Century sense. Hence, he goes on, "the problem of being 'English' and of being at the same time politically correct and 'liberal' ". The first could never become either typical or even last in the

At the time of writing this, the Flemish part of the Belgian multi-national state is moving towards an analogous reconstitution, one whose basis was laid down in 1713, just six years after the parliamentary merger of 1707 Union. These are 're-modernizations', and their slogan should be something like the old French one, *reculer pour mieux sauter* — returns to a perfectly accessible period, in order to adapt to newer circumstances.

Carter recognises the possibilities here: "It is an over-simplification to argue that Scotland retained its institutions but lost its language while Wales lost its institutions but retained its language." However, the simplification meant there was no centre of power in Wales, so that "one thing, and one only, affirmed and sustained Welsh identity and that was the

language” (p.55). Today, a power element has been returned by devolution and the Assembly. *Against The Odds* argues that the false antagonism between ethno-linguistic identification and ‘mere politics’ is now in course of resolution.

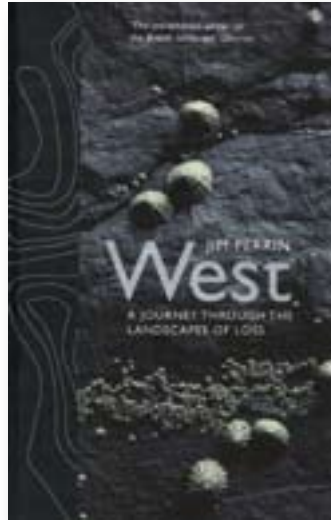
Earlier on the book declares that “globalisation has undermined what once could be called ‘ethnic’ ”(p.26), rendering a culture-alone growth more difficult. I doubt both the assertion and (still more) its supposed implications. There is an alternative position: ‘globalisation’ is having the effect of *reinforcing* ethno-linguistic identities, *and* making these turn to ‘culture-plus’ answers. After all, the most basic trait of globalisation is surely its finality. The ‘industrialisation’ of the globe has been a once-off (if still unconcluded) process — and so is its terminus, the elements of uniformity entailed by actual globality and the sense of one *homo sapiens* ‘tribe’, or nation. This is it: the Welsh (like thousands of others) have to be, or not be, for all time foreseeable. The alternatives are a global mode forged via the house of many colours, not blighting or dimming the inheritance. Transcendence through what we have and are or else, loss beyond words, the possible erosion of too much ‘human nature’.

The nationalisms of 20th Century modernity have not constituted this world in order to fade away. Of course they have to change, and develop farther. The emergent new horizon of globalisation discloses new vistas. The value of *Against The Odds* is its acknowledgement of this, and of how late-comers in nation-formation (or re-formation) like the Welsh, the Flemings and Walloons, the Scots, the Northern Irish, the West Papuans, the Catalans (and so many others) may enjoy novel opportunities. It is an age of efflorescence rather than of mere resurrection, a *globalisation* of human geography and, in the longer run, of human nature itself.

Tom Nairn is Research Professor in the Department of Politics at Durham University.

Catastrophe turned into a work of art

Jan Morris



West: A Journey Through the Landscapes of Loss
Jim Perrin
Atlantic Books, £18.99

The author of this book is, by common consent, one of the most remarkable, gifted and enigmatic people in Wales. In his youth a celebrated rock-climber, Jim Perrin (born 1947) is the master of a lyrical English prose style, a much admired practitioner of the Thoreau-esque school of nature writing, and the leading mountaineering author of our time. After a life full of riddle, fuelled by constant travel, fertile invention, diligence, drugs, sex, climbing, wide reading, and nature-worship, in his late middle age catastrophe fell upon him. Within a few months a son committed suicide, a wife died, and he himself was diagnosed with terminal cancer.

These are the tragic events that give him the sub-title of his book, *A Journey Through the Landscapes of Loss*. In form it is partly memoir, partly travel book, the ‘West’ of the title referring to the western coasts of Britain where the sun goes down. Given the imaginative genius of its author, though, and the somewhat elusive substance of his recollections, it is best

considered purely as a work of art, even a work of semi-fiction.

Countless authors have shaped works around the impact of grief, and it is all too easy for any of us to imagine the loss of a beloved wife, the death of a son (by suicide, in his twenties), or that dread moment of diagnosis. What makes *West* unique is the range of its reactions to the inevitable – the metaphors Perrin employs to express his emotions, the idioms he uses to interpret them, and at the end the reluctant serenity with which he contemplates them. He calls his book a happy one because its very sadness is a measure of the joy that went before, an insight introduced to him, Perrin tells us, by the Gaelic-language poet Aonghas MacNeacail.

And, indeed, the power of the book lies not in its melancholy, but in its ecstasies. Perrin’s belief in the regenerative power of nature is fortunate, because there is nothing in the natural world that he does not notice, absorb and take delight in, and the natural world seems always to oblige. Wherever he goes, swifts fly by, badgers snuffle, foxes or weasels or inquisitive sheep-dogs watch his passing, seals sing and blackbirds awake the brilliant morn. It is as though all the resources of creation are combined to encourage him.

If he is sometimes repetitive in his enthusiasms, perhaps just a *little* too generous in his memories of those singing seals, it is only because of his marvellous conviction about the wholeness of all life, to which death itself is only incidental. This inspires the exuberance of his writing, which shows itself too in lavish quotations, a plethora of place names, and a virtuoso vocabulary (what is a *gubbel*, how do you *dreich*, is it good or bad to be proprioceptive?). Irresistibly he sweeps us across moorland or beach, up heathery mountains where the brown hares watch, with such dream-like enjoyment that we might almost burst into song ourselves, were it not that we might disturb the owls, the polecats or the seals.

So he is right – at a fundamental level, it is a happy book!

But it is an obsessed book, too – obsessed not simply with Perrin’s sorrows,

but I suspect with his own self too. His tangled spirit finds itself in its almost hallucinatory identification with nature and, particularly, in the challenges of rock-climbing. "Do you know how it smells?", he asks of the Old Man of Hoy, as he prepares to climb that iconic stack. "It reeks of sex. That salt, piquant musk when you slipped detumescent from inside your love lingers on its every ledge."

So his love of the rocks is not mystic or spiritual, as it has been for many of the more cerebral climbers, but is something more elemental and introspective. For my mind the best writing in this book is not to be found in its celestial passages of fancy, but in its exact nerve-tangling accounts of rock-climbing. Perrin knows a lot about the effects of LSD – he considers it "one of the most valuable and educative influences of my life" – and he believes the flow of adrenalin that rock-climbing produces is akin to the powers of acid. "The colours suddenly coruscate", as he wrote long ago, "shadows gape, weak rays of the sun flare violently, explode... The black dog, Melancholy, stalks my heel and the sun goes out with a plop".

Yet just as LSD could act as consolation too, so a day on the rocks seems to leave Perrin the calmer for its perils. He knows well enough how real those perils are – dozens of his friends have died in the practice of their passion. But as the Gaelic poet taught him, there can be joy within sorrow. Or, as the comedian said when asked why he kept hitting himself, "it's so nice when you leave off".

But there is no room for music-hall humour in this book. It is too thick with psychological theory and learned references. Here we consult a medieval Finnish epic, here the work of Lama Angarika Govinda is cited as a source. Sebald and Homer, Thomas Hood and Krishnamurta all get their footnotes. Freud is big, of course, and poor old C. S. Lewis, who once wrote about the "loathsome sticky-sweet pleasure of self-pity", is foreseeably given his come-uppance.

Yet to me there feels to all this erudition an element of persiflage. It is not the real

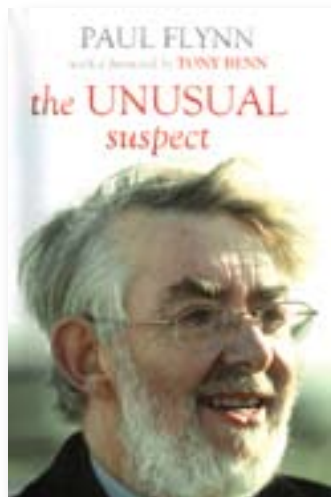
Perrin who speaks to us thus. Who is the real Perrin? What is the truth about this fascinating, confused and confusing writer? I prefer to think that it is expressed best in this book not in his heady flights of evocation, or his relentless self-analysis, but in a few simple words with which he describes a group of friends sitting on a grass verge in Derbyshire: "the lovely girl on the brink of womanhood, the beautiful woman approaching death, the quiet horse stooping to the long grass between them..."

That "quiet horse stooping" does it. In sadness as in joy, in sickness or in health, you can't do better than that.

.....
Jan Morris is an author, historian and travel writer.

A dragon at war

John Osmond



.....
The Unusual Suspect
Paul Flynn
Biteback, £19.99

.....
Paul Flynn's life and political career have been carried on amidst so much turmoil and at such a frenetic pace the main impression is of a perpetual battlefield. The (still) Labour MP for Newport West, now

in his mid 70s, remains constantly at war, whether it be with Tony Blair, the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, his party, the Parliamentary whips, the Tories, betrayals of his nation, the monarchy, nuclear power, the refusal to legalise drugs, foxhunting, bull bars on 4X4 vehicles, the Common Agricultural Policy, the manifold stupidities of bureaucracy, banal political ambition, or, and most poignantly of all, the trials of his personal life, including his longstanding arthritis affliction, the brave struggle of his wife Sam against cancer, and the inexplicable suicide of his daughter Rachel aged just fifteen.

As his memoirs reveal, to all these struggles and torments Flynn brings the same combination of irreverence, candour, humour, sheer bloody-mindedness and raw guts. Certainly, Flynn has an uncertain eye for political advancement which, undoubtedly, is why it has never happened to him in any conventional sense. Naturally, too, he is never one to pull a punch.

He first came to widespread attention in January 1995 when he fell out with one of the earliest expressions of the New Labour project. This was Tony Blair's decision to send his son to London's Oratory school, a grammar school in all but name. As Flynn told him at a meeting of the Parliamentary Labour Party:

"You have betrayed the ideals of our party and undermined the struggle that our party is having in the country. We cannot preach against privilege and then insist on it for our own families."

"Tony Blair looked shocked", Flynn records. "That was the end of the friendly relations that I had enjoyed with him since 1987 when we were both junior shadow ministers". Henceforth, "The role of conscience of the party had been bestowed on me. It was to be mine for a long time."

Flynn's acerbic judgements are not confined to the Labour leadership. Lembit Opik is dubbed "a clown and a turkey whose speciality is valuing mindless

political populism over intelligence". Tory Nigel Evans is "a tabloid newspaper made flesh". Nicholas Soames is "a serious politician struggling to emerge from his globular mountainous shape". Labour MPs Richard Caborn and Ian McCartney, who were given donations from the nuclear industry, received "cash for comrades". Peter Hain is compared with Shapeshifter, a *Star Trek* character "who liquefies at the end of each day and sleeps in a bucket to emerge in any chosen shape the following morning". Former Defence Secretary John Hutton trained himself to be a Blair clone: "He dressed like Blair and abided by the commandments of Blairism. He even started to imitate the way that Blair speaks, starting every other sentence with 'Look!'"

Apart from Iraq and Afghanistan, Flynn's main ire is reserved for betrayals over devolution. As he puts it, describing his feelings when Blair unilaterally announced in 1996 that there was to be a referendum before the Welsh Assembly could be established:

"For more than a century the hopes of Wales had been sabotaged by English politicians, by our own Welsh quislings seduced by Westminster, or by internal jealousies. Who had betrayed Wales this time? Was it the voices of anti-devolutionist MPs who were close to Blair? Whatever the truth, the lesson was that Blair had contempt for the mass of Welsh and Scottish MPs and our shadow secretary of state, Ron Davies. There had to be some protest. John McAllion, the best of the Scottish frontbench team resigned. Had Ron Davies resigned, whoever replaced him would not have been an improvement. So disturbed was Blair's judgement it could have been the candidate from hell, the anti-devolutionist Kim Howells."

Paul Flynn is that rarest of creatures, if not an endangered species, a Welsh nationalist inside the Labour Party. To understand him you have to explore his roots in the Catholic Irish Grangetown community

of southern Cardiff, described with fond attention in his memoirs. "My mother defined Welshness in three grades," he recalls. "We the Cardiff Irish-Spanish-Italian mongrels were Welsh, because we had all been born in Wales. Those from the Valleys who had sing-song accents which bore the imprint of the cadences of the Welsh language were the 'Real Welsh'. The mysterious Welsh speakers from the far north were the 'Proper Welsh' – deeply Protestant, and not only strangers but probably extra-terrestrial".

He learned Welsh because by "a hairbreadth" he gained a scholarship to St Illtyd's College in Splott. There he came into contact with teacher Glyn Ashton who inspired his interest in the language which became "a lifelong delight". He devotes a chapter to why a nation lives through her language, declaring, "To truly love a language, it's vital to know more than one. The monoglot usually accepts language as little more than a means of communication. Bilingual speakers constantly compare the endless delights in the unique personalities of languages they know." After he gave the *Llywydd y Dydd* (President of the Day) address at the 1988 Eisteddfod in Newport he received a "sulphuric letter" from Carmarthen Labour MP Alan Williams denouncing him because "you have given your blessing to all the illegal activities of Cymdeithas yr Iaith and the Welsh Nationalists".

In many ways Paul Flynn is more a journalist than a politician. What success he has had in his many campaigns has often been down to his talent in coining a phrase, manipulating the press, and grabbing a headline. When a Newport and Gwent councillor in the 1970s he wrote a column for a local paper under the pseudonym *Penderyn*, designed to get up the nose of his colleagues. For several years in the mid-1980s he was Euro MP Llew Smith's press officer and penned a monthly Euro Diary for weekly newspapers that reached 200,000 readers. As he puts it at the opening of *The Unusual Suspect*, "If I had known what fun it was I would have written my first book when I

was twenty-two not sixty-two."

For the last ten years he has sustained one of the most visited political websites, and since 2007 a daily blog – with more than 1,000 posts, 10,000 comments, and 270,000 hits. As he admits, it has become addictive but believes in future the blogosphere will be the main platform for political debate:

"Blogging was like learning to swim or ride a bike at an advanced age. A delicious thrill. I hesitated before starting. Blog pope Iain Dale, speaking ex cathedra, opined that most MPs think that their colleagues who blog are 'clinically insane'. Those MPs will be the average timid career-hungry boring MPs who are terrified of saying anything interesting".

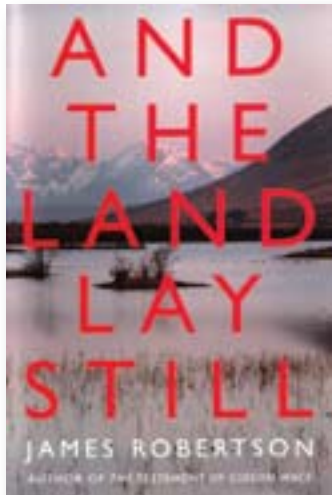
Famously, his account of the stitch-up of the election of Alun Michael as Labour's leader in 1998 ahead of the first National Assembly elections, entitled *Dragons Led by Poodles*, was first published online, with readers invited to help write the final printed version. On the first day 15,000 hits on the site were recorded. Within three days the total passed 33,000.

Why is it that, despite everything, Flynn has remained in the Labour Party? It is difficult not to conclude that it is simply because it provides him with a platform to pursue his various vendettas. Foremost amongst these today is his unrelenting opposition to the Afghan war. He was the lone opposition voice in a 2006 Parliamentary debate on troop deployment there, when Defence Secretary John Reid foolishly claimed that the mission would last three years "without a shot being fired". As Flynn himself said about Afghanistan, writing in the run-up to the 2010 general election, "My solitary campaign convinces me I have a continuing individual role to play in Parliament. It drives me on to a new election a decade after retirement age".

John Osmond is Director of the IWA.

Mirages in a Scottish landscape

Chris Harvie



And the Land lay Still

James Robertson

Hamish Hamilton, £18.99

The title of James Robertson's epic is taken from an Edwin Morgan's *Sonnet from Scotland*. The poet's 2005 benediction for the new Holyrood Parliament wormed its way through the history of the nation in the city, ending grandly:

"We give you this great building. Don't let your thoughts be other than great, when you enter and begin. So now begin. Open the doors and begin!"

Playful, not at all terrible, and gay in every sense, Morgan's genius informs this baggiest of monster novels. It won't displace Robin Jenkins' *Fergus Lamont* (1979) as the 'national tale' of the Compton Mackenzie-Hugh MacDiarmid generation, daft and inspirational, but it's still compulsive. Robertson's book fails to fulfil its initial aims (indeed the author tells us as much) but the reader will never regret starting. The sense of 'Couldn't I be doing something better with my time?' that invades the reader of *Harry Potter* or Scots football fan is replaced with a determination to read – and re-read – then have it out with the author, and through him with the history.

I and Peter Jones (of Rhyl) evidently had a role in it. Our *Road to Home Rule* (2000) was a visual record of Europe's best-behaved national movement, and the last book to be reviewed by Donald Dewar, devolution's author. Robertson's frame is the retrospective of a Scots photographer, Angus Pendreich, and one haunting image: a huge painting 'The Signing of the Deeds of Demission' marking the split in the Scots Kirk in 1843. D. O. Hill and Robert Adamson composed this from calotypes of those involved, 'sun pictures' of individual brilliance pasted together. The result hadn't the tragic unease of Rembrandt's 'Night Watch': more history as porridge.

Morgan, Jenkins, Jones: this Welsh thread will recur. The value of Robertson's writing already figures in Emyr Humphreys' self-appraisal in *Land of the Living*: "Novelists will never lose their taste for unimportant local people. They are the priceless raw material of fiction." Indeed, there could have been four books, with the fricative lure of Humphreys and Anthony Powell. That obsessive genealogist died before David Cameron and Harriet Harman led the Commons, both connected by his own marriage, a Welsh preoccupation echoing Louis Namier's political cousinhoods, researched by one of two Poles – the other being Conrad – whose unquiet Britishness did, for a time, put a vertebrae in the jellyfish.

And the Land lay Still raises fundamental issues about political fiction. Its 'retrospective-present' tone resembles Humphreys' problematic beginning, *National Winner*, born of a brief violent interlude in Welsh nationalism in the 1960s. It is also shadowed in Raymond Williams' *Loyalties*, and the less well-comprehended feminisation of politics, woman moving from symbolic *stasis* to leadership. Humphreys, Williams, Sartre's *Roads to Freedom* are somewhere here, and Walter Allen's English midlands masterpiece *All in a Lifetime*, whose failing narrator William Ewart Simmonds mirrors Robertson's Don Lennie, incorporating the decencies of the autodidact left; a winner of wars, however traumatised by them. Equally afflicted, his friend Jack Gordon loses, takes to the road like Wagner's Wotan, yet leaks *into* the

Scottish landscape.

Against him Robertson sets the MI5 agent Peter Bond, not Ian Fleming's man, more Conrad's Verloc, and as chaotic as the last phase of Angus Calder's life. Covering something really frightening? No Ukianian plan, no conspiracy, just Stendhal-like manoeuvre and expediency within a sclerotic state. Organised enmity encourages organised response. Dementia is unpredictable, its cumulative results implacable and destructive.

The Victorian Irish, in awe of their English conquerors, produced a formidable English-style resistance, from Shaw to De Valera. The romantic battle was won, but Free State economics, first impossibly Gladstonian, became in the 1990s a sort of Keynes-on-speed and collapsed in a racket called the Anglo-Irish Bank. Robertson captures this disorder with his pathological agents, but 'the land's imagination' tends to succumb to the glum bureaucracy Harvie and Jones really recorded despite themselves, a mass of repetitive *rencontres*, history's Groundhog Day.

This dismay could stem from Robertson's honest analysis of a 1940s Scotland detached from its national history by its own obsessive industrial life, maimed by its efforts in the World Wars (first orchestrated by Lloyd George in 1915). Nonetheless, it is still alive, making even after 1999 the future seem a *fata morgana*. Roads to freedom may be there, but obscured by Tom Johnston's dark vision: Parliament as unemployment bureau and emigration office.

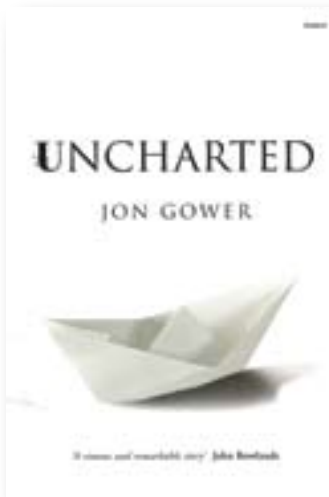
Robertson bookends the hardback edition with two photographs from about 1950. The first is Dundee seen from Law Hill by a very small man on a park bench. The second sweeps across the faces at a football match, variously focussed on camera and game, dignified, interested, alive. What the Scottish future ought to have been, the picture Hill ought to have produced.

Iain Crichton Smith's 'dear friendly ghosts' live in Robertson's book, V. S. Pritchett's 'determined stupor' that unites a nation and writes a classic doesn't. It's as if Lampedusa in *The Leopard*, his great concentration of history – Sicilian and universal, had omitted the final scene at the Palermo ball. Prince Fabrizio is

confronted with his empty marriage, his order's decay, the failure of the Italian future. In Visconti's film he walks out into the dawn, to drop to his knees as the new state shoots the *Garibaldini*. The Scots tragedy is not to be aware of, or ennobled by, tragedy.

Christopher Harvie is Professor of British Studies at the University of Tubingen and a Member of the Scottish Parliament.

Magical story reveals coming force for Thomas



Uncharted
Jon Gower
Gomer, £8.99

There is something very annoying about this book. It confirms that Jon Gower can write fiction. What ever the opposite of literary *schadenfruede* is, this is it. Gower is one of those prodigiously talented polymaths, yet of whom previously it could be said, his c.v. was incomplete, he hadn't written a novel.

I have seen him interview ten writers at a single sitting without using any notes. I asked him how he did it. Just read the books, he replied, rather surprised at the question. He compeers literary events, he

interviews writers in depth, but always there was that glint in the interviewee's eye the knowledge that sets the practioner apart from the commentator – you talk as much as you want but I have produced the work. Now Gower has produced the work and a fine novel it is too. Reworked from the original Welsh-language *Dala'r Llanw*, this is his debut English language novel.

For a man whose mouth is never far from having something to say, it starts appropriately in La Boca, the mouth, of the River Plate. He lavishes attention on the river as a visual feast. The description is vivid and memorable: "mud on the banks can look like freshly cut liver, gigantic butchery". So we begin with water and it is never far away during the rest of the story. The narrative is carried literary and figuratively by the sea. Birds too populate this book, as fitting for a man who has spent a large part of his life studying them, and

Sharp, clever, flippant. But flippancy is not the trademark of this book.

significantly the first to get a mention is the albatross, doomed to carry more than its fair share of myth and imagining on its broad wing span. So we are in South America, and if Mathew Strecher's definition of magic realism is anywhere near the mark, "what happens when a highly detailed, realistic setting is invaded by something too strange to believe", is correct, then this is a significant contribution to that genre.

For it is indeed a magical story, one in which a paper boat sails with its unique cargo from Argentina to the major West Coast port of Oakland, San Francisco. The poverty and violence of South America is swapped for the North American version. The doomed elderly Argentinean couple become the warring young American marrieds, David and Elsbetha, whose relationship is being painfully torn apart by their inability to have children. From there the narrative moves to home where Wales is described almost in Dickensian terms with some stomach churning action taking place in the subterranean sewers of

Cardiff. Always, however, the paper boat brings its redemptive powers.

Sometimes Gower's prose is as smart-arsed and annoying as Martin Amis. In other passages he lets the story unravel with the nightmarish qualities of a William Burroughs. His wit and mischievousness is never far away. I remember on one occasion he halted a public presentation I was making to query my pronunciation of the word pronunciation. Sharp, clever, flippant. But flippancy is not the trademark of this book. His description of the elderly couple, Horacio and Flavia and their dealing with the inevitability of her terminal illness is extraordinarily moving. Their speech borrows from the high passion and steeped sadness of the words of a traditional tango song, and they dance, too, their response to the inevitability of death is to dance with "heads held high like Andalusian royalty."

Gower describes the breakdown of the Oakland couple's marriage due to her inability to have children as if he's posting bulletins from a war zone – not since Lorca has infertility been dissected so cruelly and dare I say it, so poetically.

Not only does he construct a novel which moves effortlessly between Buenos Aires, Oakland and Cardiff but endeavours and, to a great extent succeeds, in creating a new religion to boot. The structure is a satisfying triptych, the violence is beautiful and the beautiful is often violent.

Perhaps we have heard of bronchitic breath sounding like caged budgerigars before. However, this is an exception and generally the prose is fresh and exciting. This is an original work which establishes Gower as a coming force. The questions he's posing now are in the mind of the reader not the mouth of the interviewer and long may it continue.

Ifor Thomas is an architect and poet.

Can we change our DNA?



Peter Stead

We are well and truly cursed to be living through interesting times. Already I've seen references to 'Resistance', 'Protest' and 'the Welfare State' as being part of our national DNA. All doubtlessly true, but perhaps we need to look far more intensely into the mirror which is still the best and most scientific method I know of determining identity. All these qualities are not going to be enough. The times are going to require a little more.

We are in for a rough and humiliating ride. We may yet see our people living in caves, becoming hunters and gatherers again, looking out eagerly for food parcels and finding that not one of their 75 TV channels is in Welsh. There will be strikes and demonstrations. At the very least one hopes that, as with those effective protests against the unemployment benefit cuts in 1935, any protests will reflect a popular and united front rather than any sectional cause. But protest will not be enough.

Protest and indignation are our national default mode: They come to us as naturally as song, insubordination and irony. At their best they can be heartfelt and constructive. At their worst they lapse into tired stereotyping. Now, as we attempt to articulate a new credo, we cannot believe our luck that our current punishment for being feckless bilingual socialists is being handed out by a 'bastard coalition' (I still maintain that in May we should have had a National Government) led by two public schoolboys. Already one of our leading columnists has taken Samantha Cameron to task for wearing a £750 dress to the Party Conference. Naturally, we all poured scorn on Iain Duncan

Smith for his recommending the Merthyr Bus Station as the first port of call for job seekers. A leak subsequently revealed that in a first draft he had recommended that the unemployed in Merthyr should consider taking taxis to find jobs in Cardiff and Bristol.

It is precisely this kind of shop-worn and predictable indignation that earns Wales a bad name. It locks us into a sterile narrative. It helps explain why our Labour MPs did so spectacularly badly in the Shadow Cabinet elections. It is also perhaps why, as recent letters to the Press have pointed out, there is a noticeable lack of Welsh born and bred leaders in prominent positions, not only in politics but in public life generally.

In the days ahead we will need our politicians to fight forensically for increased Welsh funding and to highlight particular injustices as the Welfare State is rolled back. But we will also want to hear about plans and ideas that will ensure that Wales ceases to be the economic backwater it is becoming. The great challenge is to ensure that as a culture Wales offers individuals opportunities of fulfilment. The only political justification for Wales is that it promotes success. There is no satisfaction in being different and second-rate.

As we complain we need all the while to be creating a more dynamic country in which the emphasis is on quality and style. Wales is undoubtedly a freer, more fun-loving, more caring, more democratic, and tolerant society than it has ever been. But quite apart from being poor by European standards, it is also shoddy, poorly dressed and badly spoken. Its towns are dominated by an indulgent and confused youth culture. Many of its schools have lost their way. It is entirely lacking any mass media vehicles for intellectual debate, scientific and technological analysis, or meaningful cultural expression. All the while we are 'entertaining ourselves to death'.

Mr Duncan Smith is probably

unaware of the thousands of Welsh men and women who leave their country to serve in the Armed Forces, to work in the oil industry or just to pursue careers abroad in places requiring their professional and technical skills. We all need to remind ourselves that Wales has that international dimension. Presumably some of those ex-pats have chosen to be something other than, or as well as Welsh. As someone who has chosen to live about 95 per cent of my life in Wales, I must admit that at times I have played the game of wishing that my DNA had been determined in another country.

I was once asked by students at a Gregynog conference what I would have chosen to be if I were not Welsh. They were quite shaken with my answer, "a New Yorker and Jewish". They were less surprised when a close colleague of mine said the same for he could easily have been mistaken for a New York novelist. I am differently blessed. Wherever I have gone in the world people have looked at me and assumed that I was German. Then at an ice-hockey match in Boston I found that every one of the 25,000 crowd looked exactly like me. My DNA then would suggest that I was born to be a Boston Irish cop. There are times after watching a full week of *Wales Today* and reading *Wales on Sunday* when I would willingly have settled for that.

There is, however, no escaping the 75 per cent of my genes that are Welsh. And during this glorious autumn, when the Welsh countryside and hills have looked magnificent, I would not have wanted it any other way. In the past, people were proud to be Welsh because they were associated with and defined by success stories, whether it was language, religion, music, rugby, or the running of railways, the mining of coal and the manufacture of steel. We are at a stage when the transcending of victim status will be the first step towards a new pride and a new maturity.

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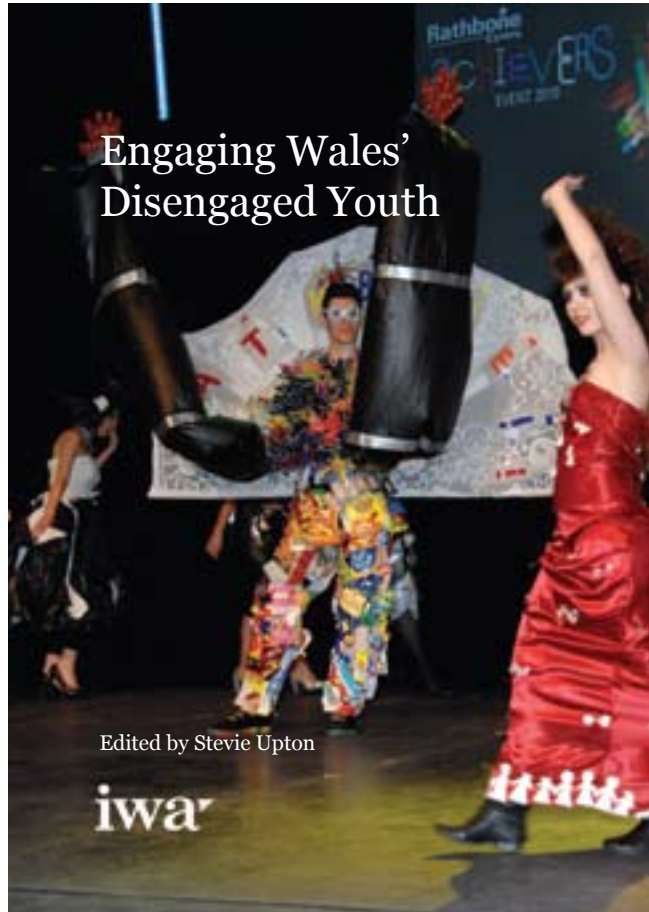


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Engaging Wales' Disengaged Youth

Edited by Stevie Upton

£5.00 ISBN 978 1 904773 54 2

This new report on the problem of young people who are 'not in education, employment or training' is based on the proceedings of a conference organised by the IWA's Gwent Branch in Pontypool in October 2009. It highlights the problem of young people becoming subject to what it calls a 'revolving door syndrome', moving from one support programme to another but benefiting from none. As public sector cuts begin to impact it is vital there should be more co-ordination between the various services addressing the issue. The report says that developing the necessary partnerships will require strong leadership, shared protocols, and the certainty that no financial penalties will arise from collaboration or referral.

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