



the welsh
agenda

Wales sees too much through Scottish eyes



Peter Stead

Dylan at 100

Richard Wyn Jones and Roger Scully
Do we need another referendum?

John Osmond

Learning from Mondragon

Stuart Cole

A railway co-op for Wales

David Williams

Sliding into poverty

James Stewart

A lost broadcasting service

Peter Finch

Talking to India

Trevor Fishlock

The virtues of left handedness

Osi Rhys Osmond

Two lives in art

Ned Thomas

Interconnected European stories

M. Wynne Thomas

The best sort of crank



Sefydliad Materion Cymreig
Institute of Welsh Affairs

The Institute of Welsh Affairs gratefully acknowledges funding support from the **Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust**, the **Esmée Fairbairn Foundation** and the **Waterloo Foundation**.

The following organisations are corporate members:

Public Sector

- Aberystwyth University
- ACAS Wales
- Bangor University
- BBC Cymru Wales
- British Waterways
- Cardiff & Vale College / Coleg Caerdydd a'r Fro
- Cardiff Council
- Cardiff School of Management
- Cardiff University
- Cardiff University Library
- Centre for Regeneration Excellence Wales (CREW)
- City & County of Swansea
- ColegauCymru
- Countryside Council for Wales
- Grwp Llandrillo Menai
- Harvard College Library
- Higher Education Wales
- Law Commission for England and Wales
- Llyfrgell Genedlaethol Cymru
- Mid & West Wales Fire & Rescue Service
- National Assembly for Wales Library
- National Museum Wales
- National Theatre Wales
- North Wales Fire Service
- Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority
- Powys County Council
- Public Services Ombudsman for Wales
- S4C
- Sefydliad Gwleidyddiaeth Cymru / Institute of Welsh Politics
- Single Body / Living Wales
- SSE
- Swansea Metropolitan University
- Swansea University
- The Electoral Commission
- University of Glamorgan
- Wales Audit Office
- Waste & Resources Action Programme (WRAP) Cymru

Private Sector

- ABACA Limited
- ACCA Cymru Wales
- Beaufort Research Ltd
- BT
- Call of the Wild
- Castell Howell Foods
- CBI Wales
- Core
- Darwin Gray
- D S Smith Recycling
- Devine Personalised Gifts
- Elan Valley Trust
- Eversheds LLP
- Honno
- Iaith Cyf
- Institute of Directors
- Julian Hodge Bank
- KIGG Ltd
- Lan Secure - IT
- LBS Builders Merchants Ltd
- Media Wales Ltd
- Morgan Cole
- Morgan LaRoche
- Native HQ
- OCR Cymru
- Odgers Berndtson
- Parker Plant Hire Ltd
- Parthian
- PricewaterhouseCoopers
- Principality Building Society
- Pullman Rail Ltd
- Rondo Media
- S A Brain & Co
- The CAD Centre (UK) Ltd
- The Co-Operative Cymru/Wales
- Wales and West Utilities

Voluntary Sector

- Aberdare & District Chamber of Trade & Commerce
- Cardiff & Co
- Cartrefi Cymru
- Cartrefi Cymunedol Community Housing Cymru
- Community – the Union for Life
- Cynon Taf Community Housing Group
- Disability Wales
- EVAD Trust
- Federation of Small Businesses Wales
- Friends of the Earth Cymru
- Inst of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales
- Law Society
- Royal College of Nursing Wales
- RSPB Cymru
- The Carbon Trust
- The Learned Society of Wales
- University of Wales, Newport
- Urdd Gobaith Cymru
- Wales Co-operative Centre
- Wales Millennium Centre
- Wales TUC
- Waterloo Foundation
- WCVA
- Wildlife Trusts Wales
- WWF Cymru

For information on IWA events and publications please visit our website at www.iwa.org.uk or call 029 2066 0820.

Editor: John Osmond

Associate Editors:

Geraint Talfan Davies, Rhys David

Literary Editor: Peter Finch

Administration:

Helen Sims-Coomber

Design:

marc@theundercard.co.uk

To advertise, tel: 029 2066 0820

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

Institute of Welsh Affairs

4 Cathedral Road
Cardiff CF11 9LJ

Tel: 029 2066 0820

Email: wales@iwa.org.uk

www.iwa.org.uk

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

Branches

North Wales Secretariat

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

Gwent Secretariat

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

West Wales Secretariat

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

Swansea Bay Secretariat

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

Cardiff and Valleys Secretariat

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

IWA Women

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

Wales in London

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

1980s individualist zeitgeist falls from grace

This is a summer of paradoxes rather more serious than unseasonal rain. We have had a celebration of Britishness via the Diamond Jubilee at a time when one part of the union is contemplating secession. Meanwhile, we are having a projection of British talent and accomplishment via the Olympic Games at a time when our reputation for honest dealing has been trashed by successive scandals involving the media and the banks.

Unless alleviated by a contrasting *coup de theatre*, Danny Boyle's recreation of 'a green and pleasant land' for the opening ceremony of the Olympics will seem like an embodiment of British complacency. It will be the other side of the fatalistic stoicism that Ed Miliband sees as a characteristic English virtue. There is a real danger that these extravaganzas will mask the deep level of public anger that has been simmering since the onset of the recession.

On the phone hacking scandal, the Leveson inquiry has at least provided an outlet - a more genteel version of the stocks - in which Prime Ministers and media moguls have been locked for a few uncomfortable hours. So far it has performed a cathartic function. However, it is symptomatic of the problem that resistance to a more robust system of self-regulation is already growing in the Press and among some politicians. No one wants a system that will curb a free press, and robust self-regulation is not incompatible with that. Yet we have to have a system that forces all media to think much harder about ethical issues and behaviour as well as the law. After all, some journalists have ended up in jail and some of their bosses are facing criminal charges.

We have yet to see whether an inquiry into the banking scandal will perform the same cathartic service as Leveson. The omens are not good. Select committees lack the forensic capabilities of a public inquiry. The initial examination of Bob Diamond the day after he had announced his resignation from Barclays was long but limp. And yet, the multi-faceted deficiencies of our banking system, that may include criminal fraud, are an even more important issue than the state of our press.

The emergence of the Libor issue has been described as a defining moment. But haven't we seen these before? Wasn't 2008 enough?

This is a society and system that seems to have a knack of absorbing 'defining moments'. The issues go well beyond Libor: the mis-selling of financial products of questionable value or none, proprietary trading (that is, large scale betting with other people's money), the corrosive mix of retail and investment banking, the extreme consolidation and centralisation of the banking system, astronomical salaries that erode social solidarity as well as short-changing shareholders, a banking system in which the generation of a productive home economy is of very secondary interest. The charge sheet is long and the effects profound.

A part of this unbalanced kingdom such as Wales, with a huge deficit in its underlying finances - the political effects of which are described by Gerald Holtham in this issue - needs no lessons on some of the consequences. These are issues on which the public are far ahead of our politicians: the need for a moral compass in business, the inadequacy of shareholder value as a sole driver of businesses, the need to separate retail banking from investment banking, the need for smaller banks that can be closer to customers, whether they be individuals or regional economies. This is not an anti-business agenda. Rather, it is agenda for a healthier and more productive capitalism.

In the case of both the press and banking a key issue is the interaction with our politics. The evidence for over-weening influence on government is far more persuasive in the case of the financial community than in the case of the press - although some will argue that this is to defy one of the laws of nature. The equation between money and power is not about to disappear. But it is all the more reason why structures and regulation need to be an effective countervailing force. Whatever changes are made to the law, regulation or structures of banking or the press, ethics and behaviour will remain at the heart of things. In recent decades they have been sorely neglected. The truth is that the long-term effects of the individualist zeitgeist of the 1980s have come to roost, at an incalculable cost to individual citizens, businesses and society as a whole, as well as to the regard in which democracy itself is held.

Agenda 47 Summer 2012

Mel Gibson in the film *Braveheart* (1995) playing William Wallace, a commoner, who unites the 13th Century Scots in their battle to overthrow English rule.



- 4. Essay**
He was happy all the time
Peter Stead on why the world of Wales's most famous poet continues to fascinate not only us but much of the rest of the planet as well

8. News

- 10. Outlook**
Future of rural Wales
–Paul Milbourne
–Nerys Owens and Jonathan Radcliffe
–Lawrence Kitchen
–Peter Midmore
–Terry Marsden

1

Changing Union

COVER STORY

- 18. Following Scotland has run its course**
Gerald Holtham argues that building the economy must now precede more political autonomy for Wales

- 21. Will Britain turn into England?**
Robin McAlpine says that whatever the result of the Scottish independence referendum Yes or No culture wars will continue north of the border



- 24. How to damage public confidence in devolution**
Richard Wyn Jones and Roger Scully reject the arguments for a referendum on devolving taxes to the National Assembly

2

Economy

- 28. Nurturing our entrepreneurs**
Walter May makes the case for a new organisation to lead new thinking on an all-Wales strategy for indigenous business growth

- 30. Valleys can cut it in engineering**
Rhys David reports on the GE aircraft maintenance plant at Nantgarw, one of Wales' most successful enterprises

CO-OP SPECIAL



- 33. Learning from Mondragon**
John Osmond joined a delegation from Wales to the Basque Country in April to discover why one of the world's largest co-operative groups has been so successful

- 36. Could a co-op run our trains?**
Stuart Cole examines the options facing the Welsh Government when it considers the future ownership and control of our railway network

- 38. Feedback vital for effective Welsh public procurement**
Dermot Cahill and Ceri Evans investigate the experience of Welsh companies when tendering for public sector contracts

3

Education

- 40. We need to end second rate vocational culture**
Jim Bennett argues that competition between schools and colleges is impeding the reputation and delivery of work-related technical subjects

- 43. More theory than understanding in teaching reading**
Geraldine Barry says 'not invented here' is the attitude of many Welsh schools when confronted with new literacy ideas

- 46. Wales is sitting on a bilingual gold mine**
Lisa Jones describes her efforts to teach the language to parents whose children are attending Welsh-medium schools

4

Social Policy

- 48. Building on the Ombudsman's casebook**
Peter Tyndall explains why we should extend the landscape of redress in Wales

- 50. Sliding silently into poverty**
David Williams discovers that we are at risk of losing a generation of young people in Wales

- 54. Why we need a strategy for young carers**
Vanessa Webb examines the problems of the more than 11,000 Welsh children who look after family members

5

Environment

- 56. Our central organising principle**
Elin Royles believes the Welsh Government's forthcoming Sustainable Development Bill has ground breaking potential

6

Communications

- 60. A lost model for Welsh public service broadcasting**
James Stewart looks back at what might have been in the provision of an equivalent to a Welsh Press Association service
- 62. The inaugural Welsh vook**
Colin Thomas describes the production he has in hand for our first ebook, a combination of text and video, on Wales and America
- 66. Talking to India**
Peter Finch delves into the opaque world of accessing the next generation of broadband

7

Heritage

- 68. Farming and food in Abergavenny**
Andris Taurins says planners are playing fast and loose with the heritage of one of our oldest market towns

8

Culture

- 70. Fishlock's File**
The virtues of left-handedness
Trevor Fishlock muses on the sinister meanings of small things
- 72. Two lives in art**
Osi Rhys Osmond is captured by a study of John and Myfanwy Piper who reshaped perceptions of Englishness in the mid 20th Century
- 76. We have a real country now**
Richard Davies reflects on 20 years of bleakness counterpointed by hope in Welsh publishing

80. Reviews

A warning against dominant narratives in recent Welsh history
Geraint Talfan Davies

'The best sort of crank'
M. Wynn Thomas

Our shared web of interconnected European lives
Ned Thomas

Wide-eyed love of a Welsh pilgrim for Armenia
Mike Joseph

- 88. Last Word:**
Wandering around a national conversation
Peter Stead

Newsflash

Coming Up

Darlith yr Eisteddfod Lecture / Bro Morgannwg/ Vale of Glamorgan
7 Awst/August 2011, 11 to 12 y.b. / noon – Pabell y Cymdeithasau Yr Arthro/ Professor Thomas Watkin
O Ddadleuon Dichellgar at Ddatganoli: Hanes Ymgrychion am Awdurdodaeth Gymreig. From Devious Debates to Devolution: the History of Campaigns for a Welsh Jurisdiction
Darperir cyfeithu ar y prydd / Simultaneous translation provided

Trafodaeth IWA Debate un yr Eisteddfod
Bro Morgannwg/ Vale of Glamorgan
Sefydliad Materion Cymreig 1987-2012 - Cymru: Ystyried ein dyfodol
Institute of Welsh Affairs 1987-2012 - Wales: Thinking our Future

A glimpse into the world of glass manufacturing
Swansea Bay Branch event Thursday 12.30pm 6 September 2012
Lunch and tour of AB Glass with Managing Director Alan Brayley, Clifford House, Felinfach, Swansea West Industrial Estate, SA5 4HF **Entry free but places limited**

Glyndwr Day Lecture
Sun 16 September 2012, 7.00pm, Galeri, Caernarfon
Mererid Hopwood – Ein gwrol rhyfelwyr, gwladgarwyr of fri (Our brave warriors and fine patriots)
£8.00 to include wine reception (£6.00 IWA members)
Darperir cyfeithu ar y prydd / Simultaneous translation provided

25/25 Vision: Celebrating the IWA's 25th birthday
Thurs 27 September 2012 6.00pm, Old Library and St David's Hall, Cardiff
Reception and Dinner: Launch of exhibition and volume of essays by 25 leading writers
Speaker: Professor Dai Smith, Chair, Arts Council of Wales
£50+VAT (£40+VAT IWA members). Table of ten £450+VAT (£360+VAT IWA members)

Blue plaques for Swansea
Swansea Branch event. 5.30pm registration to 8pm
National Waterfront Museum
Peter Stead on Swansea's greats **Entry free**

Alternative finance for Welsh micro-businesses
In association with FSB
Tues 23 October 2012, 9.00am – 4.30pm, Novotel, Cardiff
Micro-businesses employing fewer than 9 people account for the vast majority of businesses in Wales – 193,010 in 2011, or 94.5 per cent. Yet these businesses – the main growth engine of the Welsh economy – are experiencing severe problems in obtaining finance from conventional banks.
Keynote speakers: Professor Richard Werner, Director of Centre for Banking, Southampton University; Grahame Fisher, head of Policy, FSB.
£70 (£56 IWA Members)

IWA/ Western Mail Business Awards *In association with PwC*
Friday 9 November 2012
Award ceremony and dinner to honour the best in Welsh business
£78 (£72 IWA member); table of ten £720 (£660 IWA members)

North Wales IWA 25th Anniversary Dinner
Thursday 6 December 7.00pm, St George's Hotel, Llandudno
Guest Speaker: Education Minister Leighton Andrews AM
£39.50 (£32 IWA member); table of ten £375 (IWA member £300)

Just Published

Growing our woodlands in Wales – the 100,000 hectare challenge By John Osmond and Stevie Upton £10

Leading the Dragon – Lessons for Wales from the Basque Mondragon co-operative
Edited by John Osmond £10

Wales Central Organising Principle – Legislating for sustainable development
Edited by Anna Nicholl and John Osmond £10

More information: www.iwa.org.uk

He was happy all the time

Peter Stead on why the world of Wales's most famous poet continues to fascinate not only us but much of the rest of the planet as well

The idea of an international literary prize based in Wales came to me as I strolled on the beach at Viareggio in Tuscany. To liven up its quiet winter season the fashionable resort had instituted a literary prize which invited all the short-listed writers to come to the town to give readings and talks. Walking on the beach it occurred to me that the Viareggio Prize probably owed much to the English poet Shelley. As I visited the towns of Tuscany that summer I had spotted countless blue plaques commemorating the residency of Shelley and Byron. In August 1822 Shelley was drowned off Viareggio and subsequently cremated on the beach: a small monument stands near the spot.

I began to think of my home city and whether a literary prize would enliven its winters. I thought, too, of whether the spirit of Shelley could be reflected in it being a prize for young writers, for Shelley had died at the age of 30. The notion of young writers led me inevitably to the remarkable career of that essentially youthful writer Dylan Thomas whose spirit should also be incorporated into any new prize. As I recalled that Shelley had lived in Wales I remembered the detail that he had hurriedly left the country after locals had fired shots at him. As it happened 133 years later and some sixty miles to the south, shots were fired at Dylan Thomas. One hesitates to generalise but Cardigan Bay would seem to be a dangerous spot for young poets.

It was obvious that an international prize for young writers based in Wales should carry the name of the poet who was by far the country's best known writer. The aim of the Prize would be to discover and encourage young writers. At the same time, the use of Dylan's name would clear up two matters. In spite of three excellent biographies and other critical works, the name of Dylan still tended to invite mention of 'the eighteen

straight whiskies' and an accompanying smirk. The time had come to make crystal clear the extent of his poetic achievement and the enormous inspiration his poems had provided around the world.

Secondly the Prize would allow the city of Swansea to give coherence and added literary depth to its association with its most famous son. Much had been achieved by the Dylan Thomas Festival, the Dylan Thomas Centre, Dylan's Bookshop and the restored Dylan's Home. Yet the Kingsley Amis satire of the small-town 'Brydan' industry was still far too fresh in the mind. The new Prize would allow Swansea to celebrate the extent to which its culture had inspired Dylan whilst indicating a continuing commitment to encouraging young writers. The whole literary world would realise that Swansea and Wales cared about exciting new writing in English.

I had long been fascinated by the sharp contrast between the public recognition given to great writers and the struggle of young writers to be published at all. Literary prizes are an absolutely established part of the publishing industry. Every time I pick up a new novel by my favourite novelist Philip Roth I re-read the list of the almost twenty major literary prizes he has accumulated. I then recall how as a young student I was greatly affected by Jack London's autobiographical novel *Martin Eden*. The young Martin badly wanted to give up working on boats and to become a writer but there were many difficulties. He wanted to be a poet: 'He ached with desire to express, and could but jibber prosaically'. Meanwhile, he settled for sending stories to the press but rejection slip followed rejection slip. He re-read the rejected stories in puzzlement. And then London writes a sentence that brought a tear to my eye: "One day he read in a newspaper that manuscripts should always be typewritten". Ruth, his girlfriend and muse, explains that,

Articles

Essay:

He was happy all the time

News

Outlook:

Future of rural Wales

Paul Milbourne

Nerys Owens and Jonathan Radcliffe

Lawrence Kitchen

Peter Midmore

Terry Marsden

“writing must be a trade, like anything else. You couldn’t hope to be a blacksmith without spending three years at learning the trade – or is it five years”.

Another painful memory from my American reading was the story of John Kennedy Toole, born in New Orleans in 1937, dead in 1969 having killed himself as a consequence of his failure to find a publisher for his novel. *A Confederacy of Dunces* was eventually published (winning a Pulitzer) in 1980 following a sustained campaign by the author’s mother who was convinced of its ‘greatness’. Crucially she had enlisted the support of the novelist Walker Percy who was teaching at Tulane University and who recalled his initial reluctance to deal with a persistent mother handling a “badly smeared, scarcely readable carbon”.

As it happened, the Toole who could not find a publisher not only had Masters in English but had also been a university teacher. My attention was more usually paid to those remarkable American writers who had experienced all the rawness of their country’s job market. The knowledge that Jack London had captained his own sloop at the age of 15 and had been known as ‘the Prince of the Oyster Pirates’ drew one to his writing. Dashiell Hammett had been a messenger boy, stevedore, Pinkerton operative and soldier. All these careers had given an authenticity to American literature whilst the sad stories of Martin Eden and John Kennedy Toole served as direct inspiration for The Dylan Thomas Prize.

With the exception of Dickens and George Gissing British literary lives seemed more mundane. Gissing certainly made me think long and hard about undiscovered young writers. In his spoof autobiography, *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*, the ageing writer recalls his life “in the garret and cellar” and reflects on “the waste of energy, of zeal, of youth” and of “rare vitality condemned to sordid strife”. He reflects, “I suppose not one in a thousand uses half the possibilities of natural joy and delightful effort which lie in those years between seventeen and seven-and-twenty”.



Dylan Thomas photographed in 1941 in the Salisbury pub in St Martin’s Lane, London. Photo: Bill Brandt.

It was precisely the contemplation of those years that led me to consider the career of Dylan Thomas and the utter logic of naming a literary prize for writers under the age of thirty in his honour. Dylan himself had drifted out of his grammar school, never went to college or attended writing classes and passed relatively straightforwardly from writing for the school magazine and the local paper to a literary career. When he was 19 his poems were in national magazines and on the BBC. His first book appeared when he was 20 and that same year he won his first prize. His second book appeared when he was 22.

Dylan’s biographers have been fascinated by the family that lived on Cwmdonkin Drive in Swansea’s Uplands. They all concede that the cherubic, even angelic, child was indulged to an extent that stunted his efforts to mature. His schoolteacher father appreciated that his son would become the acclaimed writer that he had failed to be. His mother, who was destined to outlive him by five years, spoil him something rotten. One does

not need to be an analyst to see that there were no giant steps from her panacea for all ills, “hot milk with broken up bread and a good dollop of salt”, to Dylan’s life-long passion for hot baths accompanied by books, boiled sweets, pickled onions, nuts, and fizzy drinks, then a love of beer and cigarettes and, finally, that combination of injected drugs and whisky that contributed to his death at the age of 39.

His wife Caitlin’s 1997 book *Double Drink Story* remains the most revealing psychological portrait of Dylan. She emphasised that everything that was warm, cosy and lovable about the son (and as Andrew Lycett has made clear most people who knew Dylan appreciated these qualities) came from his mother. Dylan, says Caitlin, was “a professional baby. He would never grow up. He had made up his mind not to. He knew exactly what he was doing”. Describing his appearance when they first met, Caitlin explains that, “I never quite thought of him as a man. It must have been his little-boy lost demeanour that attracted me to Dylan. He became my very own newborn baby. But underneath that

seeming innocence and helplessness lay a hotbed of cunning and scheming”.

Classically then, Dylan was ‘spoilt’. And, of course, there was an attractive side to that spoiling. There was that sense that the world of books and words was both natural and fulfilling. More or less from the start it was assumed that Dylan’s day would consist of a morning reading by the fire, to be followed by an afternoon by the fire reading and writing “to let the words and ideas tumble on to the sheets of paper” or, of course, into those notebooks that were to be the basis of nearly all his published poems.

He was ‘spoilt’ at home but what has always fascinated and delighted me was the extent to which the young Dylan was ‘spoilt’ by the town in which he grew up. The cherubic wordsmith could so easily have become a hopeless eccentric, shunned, mocked and even abused by other children. Instead we see a precocious child who had no difficulty in finding intellectual friends who shared his love of ideas and words as well as his sense that there was a fair degree of absurdity in the world at large. Few poets, said Bill Read, have been so lucky in the places they have lived.

Everyone will be familiar with those memorable quotations in which Dylan evoked his Swansea. The one I cherish most is his claim that, “This sea town was my world – Never was there such a town as ours”. Surely Dylan’s sense of Swansea’s self-sufficiency stemmed from the way in which at every stage of his development there had been friends and supporters who appreciated and encouraged his talent. It was Swansea’s quite unaffected and natural nurturing of Dylan that led me to believe that the time was ripe for the city and Wales as a whole to show that it could extend a helping hand to a new generation of youthful writers.

It was the grammar school (where his father taught) that legitimised his passions as he acted in plays and edited the school magazine. Far more important was his extraordinary friendship with the future polymath and composer Daniel Jones. Together they constructed a remarkable mental landscape fuelled by words and images from Hollywood, detective fiction, classic and contemporary poetry and



Dylan with Caitlin who described him as “a professional baby. He would never grow up. He had made up his mind not to.”

international politics and subsequently distilled into their own poems, essays, word-games and plans for new journals and broadcasts.

From that world the young Dylan went straight into a career as a cub reporter on the ‘local rag’. At the local court and morgue he would turn up in the required Hollywood uniform of trench coat, pork-pie hat and fag in the corner of the mouth. He penned portraits of local authors, most notably of the early 19th Century writer Llewellyn Pritchard, the creator of *Twm Shon Catti*. Pritchard had lost his nose in a duel, replaced it with a wax substitute and then died in a fire after knocking over a candle. Of him the young Dylan wrote:

“No one can deny that the most attractive figures in literature are always those around whom a world of lies and legends have been woven... Pritchard stands out flaming and aloof against the horizon. He failed to be great, but he failed with genius.”

Meanwhile, Dylan had walked through the Uplands to show his unpublished poems to the Marxist grocer Bert Trick and there the encouragement came for him to aim high. Soon Dylan was mixing with local intellectuals at the Little Theatre and at the Kardomah restaurant. Nigel Jenkins’s television programme *The Kardomah Boys* memorably evoked Dylan’s scintillating

coterie in which poet Vernon Watkins and artist Alfred Janes were the key friends. Dylan’s world was, in effect, as complete as it was ever to be.

So much was implied by Caitlin when she virtually implied that Dylan essentially took the spirit of the Kardomah and his favourite Swansea pubs, the Three Lamps and the Mermaid, around with him. Wherever the poet found himself he always set about replicating his beloved ‘Swansea world’. At the same time Caitlin was of the view that for Dylan home was always best. She reported that he “had no urge to travel, though he liked to fantasise about us travelling to exotic, faraway places... No man was less of an adventurer in foreign climes than Dylan... And no man or woman can change their inborn insular mentality. It was precisely that - his inborn insularity – that gave him the compact punch of his poems”.

These are fascinating insights from the cosmopolitan Anglo-Irish, Francophile and ultimately Sicilian Caitlin, but they only tell half the story. In fact, the Dylan who cropped up in Iran, Italy, Ireland and California saw more of the world than we might have thought. More to the point, however, is that the world took an interest in Dylan to such an extent that half a century after his death it would be entirely appropriate to name an international literary prize after him. Dylan might well have felt most at home in the Kardomah and Mermaid but throughout his short

adult life an increasingly cosmopolitan and sophisticated audience were clamouring to hear his words.

Initially Dylan found a more responsive audience internationally than he did in Wales. Both in his lifetime and for several decades after his death he was shunned by the Welsh language and Anglo-Welsh literary establishments, not least for his indiscipline. More recently, individual scholars have placed Dylan more firmly in the context of Celtic, bardic, Welsh language and Christian traditions as far as language, style, imagery and theology are concerned.

Following Andrew Lycett's outstanding 2003 biography of Dylan we can no longer doubt that the poet consciously worked on the notion of himself as a Welsh writer. The scholarly debate on his verse is fascinating, but meanwhile general readers in Wales have never ceased to regard his prose works and *Under Milk Wood* as the apogee of what we used to call the Anglo-Welsh mind set. He knew our follies and foibles better than anyone and we readily quote him to prove that. But what then do we make of his international reception?

In what were only the two decades of his post-Swansea career Dylan achieved a remarkable degree of fame and support. My own feeling is that for both his fellow writers and middlebrow readers generally, Dylan's fame owed much to the fact that he conformed to what was the desired image of the poet. They thought that ideally genuine poetry should be the product of brilliantly wordy, undisciplined, declaiming and doomed youths searching for the meaning of life and death. It was an image Dylan seemed to confirm when reporting, "I hold a beast, an angel, and a madman in me, and my problem is their subjugation and victory, downthrow and upheaval, and my effort is their self-expression".

Dylan had burst onto the metropolitan scene at a time when extreme economic and political crises had forced intellectuals and artists into a realistic confrontation with actuality. Suddenly Dylan induced a sense of guilt and the hope of escape with his suggestion that truth may lie in lyrical imagery rather than mundane versions of reality. The feeling was that he could well

Dylan at 100

In June it was announced that £750,000 had been found to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Dylan Thomas's birth, on 27 October 2014. The money, from the Welsh Government, the Arts Council of Wales, Swansea and Carmarthenshire Councils, will be used for a year of celebrations, to be known as the Dylan Thomas 100 Festival. Events during the year will be organised around four themes, based on the poet's works:

- Between the Covers of Books – education and learning
- To Wales in My Arms – tourism.
- Sailed and Set Dazzling – international
- High Hill and Green Fuse – festival activity

The Dylan Thomas 100 fund will be split into three sections with £300,000 available for three or four signature events of international quality, £225,000 for up to 10 medium scale events, and £25,000 for smaller community events.

be the real thing. Herbert Read thought his work "contains the most absolute Poetry that has been written in our time".

This view of Dylan was clinched for posterity by the nine months he spent on four separate visits to the USA between February 1950 and his death in New York in November 1953. The cynical (and ultimately wronged) Caitlin later commented that Dylan "had an unflinching sense of dramatic timing; had he not died alone on his last visit to America, his great poet's legend would not have been half so dramatic".

Caitlin had no doubt that her husband had opted to play out the part of the great Poet, come what may, to maintain that image of the poet as seer that both the masses and intellectuals seemed to require. In New York he was feverishly completing his play *Under Milk Wood* so that it could be publically read for the first time, but more importantly he was giving his own readings before vast audiences. Singlehandedly he had reinvented the notion of poetry in performance. His appearance, his voice, and his imagery were all of a piece. But more was at stake than first-class entertainment. Whilst in the States most of the country's leading poets came to play court. "If Dylan passed away, poetry would die with him," said John Berryman who was then actually to be with Dylan when he died. "He was one of the great ones, there can be no doubt of that," argued Theodore Roethke, "and he drank his own blood, ate his own marrow, to get at some of that material."

The troubled world of the mid 20th Century needed a poet to entertain, thrill and above all to remind writers of the legitimacy and spiritual worth of their different take on things. Nowhere was this need so clearly expressed as in Saul Bellow's 1973 novel *Humboldt's Gift* where we are told that "The USA was a big operation, very big. The more it, the less we". Poets are needed: "They exist to light up the enormity of the awful tangle". And so it is that "poets are loved, but loved because they just can't make it here". It is the world that lets us down not poets.

In 2014 the people of Swansea and Wales will ask the people of the world to use the occasion of Dylan's centenary to celebrate the written word and both the inspiration and perspiration that goes into its creation. We will all be inspired by the legacy of a man who thrilled huge New York audiences with "his bravado" and "the almost sacred sense of his approach to language" as well as by his greatest gift, the most wonderful evocation of a blissful Welsh childhood. In his magnificent *Return Journey* the Cwmdonkin park-keeper remembered the naughty lad who pelted the Swans and carved words on the benches: "Oh yes, I knew him well. I think he was happy all the time. I've known him by the thousands". He teaches us, still, that language is the greatest transport of delight.

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

IWA marks its 25th anniversary

Professor Dai Smith, Chair of the Arts Council of Wales, will launch *25/25 Vision*, a book of essays by 25 Welsh writers, at a dinner in St David's Hall on 27 September, to mark the IWA's 25th birthday. Earlier IWA Chair Geraint Talfan Davies will unveil an exhibition of photographs of the contributors by John Briggs, at a pre-dinner reception at the Old Library in the neighbouring Hayes.

The project *25/25 Vision: Welsh horizons across 50 years*, is being undertaken in association with Literature Wales. The writers involved cast their mind back over their experience of the past quarter-of-a-century in Wales and reflect on what this inspires them to hope for in the next 25 years. IWA Director John Osmond who is editing the collection together with writer Peter Finch, said, "The aim is that, taken together, the accounts will provide a profound and revealing commentary on a half century in which Wales is emerging from the shadows to occupy a place of greater clarity in the world."

Among the leading Welsh writers contributing to the project are Jane Aaron, a literary critic; Catrin Dafydd,

poet, and musician; Grahame Davies, poet and novelist; Rhian Edwards, poet and performer; Menna Elfyn, poet and playwright; Trevor Fishlock, author, broadcaster and foreign correspondent; Jon Gower, author, broadcaster and performer; Angela Graham, a tutor in documentary film-making; Bethan Gwanas, travel writer, novelist, and broadcaster; Tessa Hadley, novelist and short story writer; Nigel Jenkins, poet, essayist and travel writer; Patrick McGuinness, poet and novelist. Osi Rhys Osmond, writer and painter; Mike Parker, travel writer; Adam Price, former Plaid Cymru MP for Carmarthen East and Dinefwr; Owen Sheers, poet and novelist; Zoë Skoulding poet and Editor of Poetry Wales; Owen Smith, Labour MP for Pontypridd; Ifor Thomas, performance poet and architect; Rachel Trezise, novelist and short story writer; John Williams, journalist and novelist; Charlotte Williams, Professor of Social Work at Keele University; and Daniel G. Williams, a literary critic.

John Osmond said, "We have chosen the authors because of their facility as writers and because we judge that they have something to say about how their own lives relate to the wider collective experience of the nation as a whole. We hope, too, that they will reflect the aspirations of the Institute of Welsh



Professor Dai Smith

Affairs, which, since its inception in 1987, has attempted to be at the forefront of new thinking about future prospects for the country."

Tickets for the reception and dinner on 27 September are available from the IWA at £50+VAT - £40+VAT to IWA members. A table of ten can be purchased at £450+VAT (£360+VAT for members).

Devious devolution debates



Professor Thomas Watkin

From devious debates to devolution: the history of campaigns for a Welsh jurisdiction is the title of this year's IWA National Eisteddfod lecture, being delivered in the Pabell y Cymdeithasau at 11am on Tuesday 4 August, by Thomas Watkin, Honorary Professor Law At Bangor University.

In his lecture Professor Thomas Watkin will examine how the multiple meanings of the word jurisdiction have enabled it to be used – at times

deviously - to frustrate Welsh ambitions. For instance, The absence of a separate Welsh jurisdiction was repeatedly used to deny to Wales its own Secretary of State. Today it is still being used to justify the smaller measure of legislative devolution given to Wales when compared with Scotland.

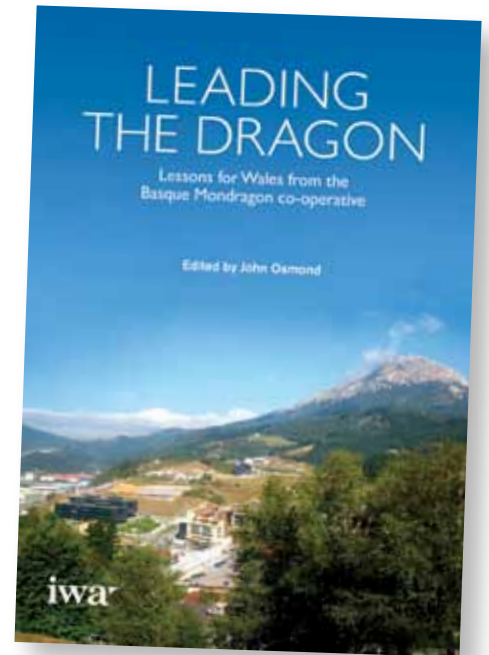
Professor Watkin was born in the village of Cwmparc and was educated at the Rhondda County Grammar School for Boys in Porth, before studying

Law at Pembroke College, Oxford, where he was Oades and Stafford Scholar, 1971-1974. In 2007 he became the first Welsh Legislative Counsel, the legal officer principally responsible for drafting the Welsh Government's legislative programme under the new powers conferred on the National Assembly by the Government of Wales Act 2006.

Co-operatives should be at heart of Welsh economy

In February 1981 a Wales TUC delegation visited Mondragon in the Basque Country and came away inspired to found the Wales Co-operative Centre. This is now 30 years old and over the past three decades has had a substantial impact on the Welsh economy. In April this year, another Welsh group, including Derek Walker, Chief Executive of the Wales Co-operative Centre; Alex Bird Executive Chair of Co-operatives and Mutuals Wales; Mark Drakeford, AM for Cardiff West; John Osmond, Director of the IWA; Liz Moyle an elected Member, and Ashley Drake, Membership Manager with the Co-operative Group Cymru/Wales returned to Mondragon to assess the progress it has made and to see what new directions might be possible.

The Welsh delegation came away convinced that we can learn from the Mondragon Corporation's hard-headed, strategic approach to co-operative development. It has a four-year planning cycle whereby a structured, bottom-up approach is used to involve the member businesses in developing a strategy for the federation. One of the results is to identify sectors where new co-operatives can be established based on the potential for job creation as well as the surpluses that can be made. Current priorities include ICT, new materials, health and food, renewable energy and care services for older people.



Leading the Dragon – Lessons for Wales from the Basque Mondragon Co-operative is available from the IWA at £10 (£7.50 to members). John Osmond reports on the visit, page 33.



Growing the woodlands of Wales

Farmers will need to be persuaded that woodland creation and management is a mainstream part of what they do if the Welsh Government's ambitious target to substantially increase the woodland cover of Wales is to be achieved. This is a major recommendation in a new report from the IWA *Growing our Woodlands in Wales: the 100,000 hectare challenge*.

The Welsh Government wants to increase the woodland cover of Wales from today's 14 per cent to 20 per cent over the next 20 years, mainly to achieve a net increase in carbon capture to combat climate change. This will entail planting an average of 5,000 hectares of woodland a year, a rate that has been achieved only once since the Second World War, in 1960.

If the target is to be achieved much of the planting will have to be carried out by farmers who are likely to be reluctant to increase the tree cover on their land. Many farmers do not see themselves as woodland managers or foresters. Moreover, there are lower returns on using land for growing trees rather than for grazing or as arable land. The report says that woodlands expansion will need to take place in the ffridd areas of rural Wales, the habitats that occur on the slopes between the uplands and the lowlands of the country.

Growing our Woodlands in Wales: the 100,000 hectare challenge is available from the IWA at £10 (£7.50 for members).

Future of rural Wales

Commuting will integrate the country and the city

Paul Milbourn



So far as the Welsh language, culture and landscape are concerned rural Wales is associated with tradition, belonging and stability. In other respects, however, it is subject to dynamic change, especially in terms of economic development and migration.

Although we still await the latest statistics from the 2010 Census, it is clear that the rural population has continued to grow over the last decade. Migration remains a major force shaping rural demographics, with the relocation of large numbers of outside groups to the Welsh countryside being accompanied by net out-movements of younger people from many rural areas. Within both processes England continues to play an important role as the origin and destination of significant numbers of movers.

More recently, rural Wales has witnessed the in-migration of groups from beyond the UK, as large numbers of migrant workers from Central and Eastern European countries have moved to rural towns in search of employment opportunities. The impacts of such population movements include:

- Welsh-speaking communities struggling to cope with the influx of outside groups.
- The rural population ageing at a faster rate than in other parts of Wales.
- A rapid expansion of the larger settlements to house new rural residents.

In recent decades the rural economy has expanded and diversified and its rate of growth has been higher than that in other parts of Wales. This has concentrated on particular employment sectors, initially manufacturing and more recently services, with the agricultural workforce continuing to decline.

The public sector is a significant provider of employment in rural Wales although spending cuts are beginning to reduce its impact. Generally speaking, and as was the case for much of the second half of the 20th Century, many local labour markets in rural Wales are dominated by low-skill and low-paid employment. In turn this prevents many young people gaining access to local housing markets and leads to their moving away from rural towns and villages.

The Welsh Government's transition from a sector-based to system-

A broad range of essential key facilities and services have been cut back across rural Wales during recent years. This has created real problems for rural residents without access to cars and led to the adoption of elaborate coping tactics to deal with the realities of everyday rural life.

based approach has created new connections between food production and consumption, as well as between the food and other rural policy areas. In addition, it is likely that European rural policy in the post-2013 period will broaden rural development and agri-environmental goals, creating new relationships between farming, the economy, society and the environment. The increasing significance of community growing projects in the Valleys and urban areas, together with

the growth of Community Supported Agriculture in rural areas, is also creating new local food systems across Wales.

A broad range of essential key facilities and services have been cut back across rural Wales during recent years. This has created real problems for rural residents without access to cars and led to the adoption of elaborate coping tactics to deal with the realities of everyday rural life. Moreover, the scale of the retraction of key services has meant that rural living in the smaller and remoter settlements is now only possible for those who are able to travel between rural and urban places on a regular basis, calling into question the social sustainability of these places.

It is likely that further cuts in services will follow as the Westminster and Welsh Governments work within more constrained budgets. There is a danger that, with their higher delivery

costs, rural services will be particularly vulnerable to the austerity agenda. A partial solution may lie in the realm of virtual mobility, as the roll-out of high speed Broadband to the smaller and more remote places of rural Wales opens up new possibilities for small businesses, home working and shopping. Nonetheless, the future of service provision in rural Wales remains bleak.

It is likely, too, that rural spaces will become increasingly drawn into debates

about policy responses to climate change, for example on the effects of rising sea levels and increased risks of flooding in riverside and seaside localities, the contribution of forests to carbon storage in the uplands, and the linkages between transport and domestic fuel costs and rural poverty. It is also probable that the visual aesthetics and environmental conditions of rural spaces will be further altered by the expansion of renewable energy production in rural areas.

Whether in terms of solar panels on the roofs of domestic properties or increasing numbers of wind turbines, the climate change agenda will introduce new sets of scalar tensions between national energy requirements and the traditional values attached to Welsh rural landscapes.

It needs to be recognised there is not one rural Wales. When we look across the Welsh countryside it is clear that it is a heterogeneous space. At one level, it is possible to identify an east–west differential in relation to demographic change, economic structure, income levels and language. The remoter western, and particularly north-western parts of rural Wales have the lowest levels of population growth, highest rates of unemployed, greatest low income households, and largest numbers of Welsh speakers.

Looking below this regional level, individual local authority areas are themselves characterised by considerable internal differentiation, particularly in relation to differences between towns and smaller villages. Moreover, we need to remain sensitive to important relationships between rural and non-rural spaces in Wales. In future we can expect greater commuting of people between rural and urban Wales as people travel ever greater distances to find work.

Paul Milbourne is Professor of Human Geography and Director of the Wales Rural Observatory at Cardiff University. He is Editor of *Rural Wales in the Twenty First Century*, published by the Wales University Press in 2011.

Where a car is a necessary possession

Nerys Owens and Jon Radcliffe



Just over 989,300 people live in towns, villages and remote areas across rural Wales, a third of the Welsh population. Moreover, the service sector represents a dominant part of the rural economy, currently employing 77 per cent of the working population. A vibrant service sector is therefore vital for a prosperous local economy and for meeting the needs of the rural population.

Evidence gathered through the Wales Rural Observatory's research programme since 2004 has informed a deeper understanding of the key challenges facing the delivery of services to rural communities across Wales. The triennial Rural Services Survey, carried out in 2004, 2007 and most recently in 2010-11, has looked in detail at the provision of rural services at town and community council level and offers a good source of data on experiences and levels of satisfaction. By comparing the results from the most recent survey with those of the previous surveys, a number of consistent messages emerged.

First, was the issue of declining services. Information provided by town and community clerks indicated that there had been a real decline in levels of provision across a range of key services, most notably post offices, schools, pubs, petrol stations, libraries and public transport. The loss of such services from rural areas affected the fabric of community life in ways that were far more invasive than might be expected. For example, schools, post offices and facilities such as a village hall were frequently described as community 'hubs', and made the difference between living in isolation and being

part of a community.

A number of communities also noted that it was through the provision of such services that communities were sustained, as they represented focal points, not only geographically, but through shared interests and day-to-day interactions. In communities where service provision had remained broadly the same since 2004, there were concerns over reduced opening hours, higher prices and limited choice.

A second and related issue concerned mobility and accessibility. These included discussions about prices, frequency of services, and accessibility for particular groups within rural communities. The findings indicated that as services were lost or withdrawn from rural communities, the main issue faced by residents was their access to distant services. Although 39 per cent of the communities that responded to the survey in 2010-11 had a daily bus service, it was noted that they were either too infrequent or ran at times that did not allow the communities to depend upon it. Ownership of a car was viewed as a necessity of rural life.

Communities emphasised that there was no realistic choice between cars and public transport in rural areas. As public transport decreased the perceived need for it diminished. For rural residents without access to private transport due to age, income, illness or disability, accessing services became increasingly problematic and, in some cases, could lead to real issues of isolation. It was argued that the cost of fuel and the overriding need to own a car made living in rural areas much more expensive than urban areas.

At the same time there was an acceptance of the limitations of service provision in rural areas, including the long distances involved, low population densities and, because of that, the relatively small budgets available to service providers such as county councils. To a certain extent, communities were prepared to accept lower levels of service provision in exchange for a quality of life perceived to be superior to that available in towns and cities.

The positive aspects of quality of life in rural areas that were mentioned included attractive environments, close community networks, low levels of crime, and a slower pace of life. In those areas where access to services was particularly problematic, there appeared to be a strong sense of community to compensate. Neighbours, friends or family form a key part of the 'coping strategies' that were employed by rural residents, with people reliant on others for lifts, or for collecting necessities.

There was also a marked appreciation of the importance of individuals who were prepared to offer services beyond the call of duty, whether that was the local postman or local shop-owner. It is in situations like this that a local shop, post office or GP surgery can make a difference between someone remaining in their local area or being forced to move to an area with better facilities.

An important issue raised time and time again by participants was their inability to access communication technologies. Broadband availability was highlighted as particularly poor in rural Wales. As an increasing number of services became available online, such as those provided by the post office, banks and food shopping from the large supermarkets, the physical isolation of living in a rural area could be further accentuated by lack of access to broadband.

The need to address these challenges confronting the delivery of rural services has never been greater. It will require cross-sectoral coordination at national, regional and local levels, while also taking into account the views of communities on the ground. Only then will our rural communities have, as the Welsh Government's 2011 Programme for Government promises, "an excellent quality of life with access to high quality employment, affordable housing and public services".

Nerys Owens and Jonathan Radcliffe work for the Wales Rural Observatory at Cardiff University.

Businesses seek way out of the recession

Lawrence Kitchen



The latest 2010-11 triennial survey of more than 1,300 businesses in rural Wales, carried out for the Welsh Government by the Wales Rural Observatory, revealed some positive indicators despite the recession. The rate of businesses with internet connections increased from 67 per cent in 2007 to 85 per cent in 2010-11, while 76 per cent had broadband. A few respondents complained that broadband enabled some companies to avoid business rates by operating from 'front-rooms and garages', but many others embraced the flexibility it offered.

And there were signs that rural businesses were becoming more environmentally friendly. In 2007 61 per cent were recycling compared with 81 per cent in 2010-11. However, concerns were expressed about the costs to business of environmental regulation and compliance.

Business owners identified a range of advantages and disadvantages for locating in rural Wales. Advantages tended to focus on the better quality of life, the beautiful scenery and landscape, good community spirit and close networks. At the same time the relative isolation of rural locations was seen as a disadvantage for business, with higher fuel costs, poor services, and inadequate roads and transport. In addition, business owners argued that the Welsh Government tended to focus on Cardiff and that, more broadly, rural businesses, particularly SMEs, lacked institutional support. Taken together, these adverse factors were perceived to exacerbate the effects of the recession.

The recession was the dominating

factor for the survey, as this respondent, paraphrasing US President Bill Clinton's famous remark concerning the economy, declared: "It's the recession, stupid!" Another said, "We were starting to soar prior to it hitting". A third added, "The tough economic downturn is demanding a huge increase in productivity just to stay in business."

Some businesses had been forced to take on different types of work. For instance, one building firm that used to only undertake new building projects had been forced by the housing market

Business owners identified a range of advantages and disadvantages for locating in rural Wales. Advantages tended to focus on the better quality of life, the beautiful scenery and landscape, and good community spirit and close networks.

downturn to undertake renovation work. Other comments revealed problems with money supply, customer demand and payments. As this respondent said:

"The impact of the credit crunch is causing less spending by customers and larger customers cancelling contracts. The banks are being very restrictive with lending."

Another said:

"Customers are not paying so there is a decrease in turnover. We're afraid to attract new customers as the payment risk increases. There's a downturn in the construction industry due to worldwide banking problems."

Perversely, a few businesses identified potential benefits from the recession, saying they had become leaner, more

efficient, and more profitable. Others observed that business rivals had gone into liquidation, leaving the field open for them. More generally, however, the survey's economic performance data reflected the recession's detrimental effects and all compared unfavourably with the 2007 survey findings:

- 34 per cent of business had expanded
- 25 per cent had contracted
- 36 per cent had increased turnover
- 34 per cent had experienced a decrease in demand
- 26 per cent had increased profits while 41 per cent reported decreased profits
- 48 per cent reported difficulties obtaining investment

But some performance data revealed a trend that predated the recession. This was the persistence of a low-skills, low-wage economy, previously identified in the 2004 and 2007 surveys. Evidence from the 2010-11 survey confirmed the continuance of this trend:

- Low educational attainment.
- Perceived shortage of skilled job applicants.
- Lack of business training.
- Disregard for the usefulness of business plans
- A trend towards parochialism in terms of employees, customer and suppliers.
- A preference for the use of local networks, particularly for recruitment.

Arguably, the effects of the recession, especially an increase in people looking for work, will exacerbate these problems. Rural business owners felt they lacked institutional support, investment and training. These are important views which should influence business policy for rural Wales.

Lawrence Kitchen works with the Wales Rural Observatory at Cardiff University.

How the new CAP will impact on Wales

Peter Midmore



Once a decade or so, the EU's Common Agricultural Policy, or CAP for short, undergoes a major reform. Partly, this stems from the fact that European policies operate on a fixed budgetary programming cycle. That means that when the opportunity arises – as it does in 2013 – policymakers across Europe seek to incline the framework of support a little more in their own favour.

The current vogue is to address issues such as global food demand and price spikes, the binding nature of greenhouse gas emission controls, and the effect of austerity policies on a larger and more diverse group of member states than existed in 2003, when the last major reform took place. How, and why reforms take place is important to Wales, because of its large share of agricultural land compared to the UK as a whole, the relatively small size of its farms, and the scattering of large numbers of small-sized communities in the rural Canolbarth.

The 2003 reforms included an especially radical innovation, the 'decoupling' of direct farm support payments. Until then, payments had been made on the basis of the level of output produced. For example, in 2004 within certain limits each breeding ewe qualified for an annual premium of £15.52 in the lowlands, increased to £20.43 in hill and upland areas. Under World Trade rules, this subsidy on production makes the export of food into the EU from other countries more difficult. To make progress in achieving a trade deal (while at the same time considering the lobbying power of farming interests) all previous support

for cattle, sheep and arable crops and a range of other special interest payments has been rolled up into a Single Farm Payment. Controversially, this is paid regardless of how much or how little is actually produced. There were three options for calculation of this payment:

- An equal average payment for each hectare of farmland.
- A payment to individual farmers based on their historic receipts.
- A mixture of the two to provide a smoother eventual transition to the former.

Because of the wide diversity of types of agriculture in Wales, an equal area payment would have redistributed payments from intensive producers struggling with high costs and low margins, such as Pembrokeshire dairy farmers, to extensive hill farmers producing on highly marginal land. Hence Carwyn Jones, Minister for Rural Affairs at the time, opted for a pure historic reference period system, even though it, too, has had a fair share of anomalies to contend with.

Nevertheless, in general terms inequity is the hallmark of the farm support régime. It pays more to larger farmers since, famously, the Queen and the Duke of Westminster receive £500,000 or so annually, whereas very small farmers are entirely excluded from claiming payments.

Within countries there is also wide spatial variation, with more peripheral, marginal livestock farming areas receiving far less than the cereal baronies of East Anglia, Central and Northern France and most of the German plains. The effect on land prices is such that new, young entrants to farming face impossible borrowing requirements to establish a foothold in the industry. More importantly, in political terms payments vary across member states, particularly to the detriment of most of the countries which joined in 2004 and 2006. Because they had no votes at the time of the 2003 reform, these receive considerably less than half of the average

value of Single Farm Payments made in the EU as a whole. Now, acting together, they can form a blocking minority in the decision-making process, ensuring that their interests will be fundamental to any overall compromise. And lastly, although good agricultural practice is a precondition for payment, this effectively means that unless environmental regulations concerning pollution and the like are not broken, farmers receive the cash: there is a social inequality because no other group in society receives payments for doing what they would have done anyway.

The pragmatic response of the European Commission seeks to address all of these issues in a comprehensive package of reforms:

1. An accelerated redistribution of payments between member states, prioritised for those receiving less than 90 per cent of the current average, with the overall objective to equalise direct payments to farmers by 2020.
2. Direct payments based on historic reference criteria, such as those paid in Wales, may no longer be made: equal area payments will become universal.
3. Only 70 per cent of the new payment will be received automatically, with the remaining 30 per cent being conditional on meeting simpler, clearer conditions for social environmental benefit. These include more diverse crop rotations, or keeping livestock on permanent pastures, or adopting an organic farming system.
4. Only active farmers will receive payments, and these will be tapered, from €150,000 up to a maximum total annual payment of €300,000, with some remission to reflect wages paid to employees.
5. Young entrants to agriculture will receive a 25 per cent enhancement of payments, for the first five years after the establishment of their new farm businesses.

So far, none of these proposals diminish the reputation of the EU farm support for Kafkaesque complexity, but there is more! At the same time, the other arm of the CAP, its Rural Development Programme, or RDP, is also being reformed. It has a smaller share of resources, also unevenly distributed by member state. In Wales it is predominantly spent on supporting farmers to improve their environmental performance through the *Tir Gofal* scheme and latterly the recently introduced *Glastir* successor scheme. Only 13 per cent of the overall total RDP in the EU is spent on what could be recognised as measures supporting the development of non-farm rural communities, and the amount is even less in Wales.

The reform proposals continue a broad focus on improved agricultural competitiveness, better environmental performance - especially carbon management and climate change resilience - and promoting socio-economic development in more peripheral rural areas. However, two new relevant elements have emerged, which are greater flexibility in choosing how support is targeted, and more objective criteria for the distribution of the overall budget. At present, it is mired in further historic precedent – in the UK's case, much distorted by the Fontainebleau rebate consequences, making its RDP one of the smallest proportionate spends in the whole of the EU.

Determining how all of these proposals will affect Wales is not an easy task. It is made more difficult since the detail of past reforms actually enacted has always diverged, significantly, from the initial European Commission proposals. In 2013 there is even more scope for variation, with 27 rather than 15 countries seeking agreement. A further complication is that this is the first CAP reform to be subject to co-decision, by the European Council representing member state governments, and the directly elected European Parliament.

The possibility of a complete impasse cannot be ruled out. However, the alternative of simply rolling over the old regime payments on a temporary

basis, with the issues which motivated the reform festering all the time in the background, means that some kind of messy compromise, loosely conforming to the Commission's current suggestions, is more likely.

With that in mind, the effects on Wales could be, at worst, more or less neutral overall. At best they could make a significant contribution to an improved economic performance, since the related food and tourism sectors, combined with their linkages to other sectors, form such a large element of aggregate employment and activity.

On any sensible criteria, a redistribution of the RDP resources across the EU would at least double the spend in Wales. With the so-called 'greening' of the direct payment system, a more refined and less costly programme of agri-environment support might be required, particularly targeting such things as reducing greenhouse gas emissions and more specific biodiversity objectives. Then, a wise distribution of the extra resources would concentrate on providing infrastructure (physical, social, virtual and expertise-based) to support the rural assets where Wales has emerging competitive advantages. These include the recreational potential of our widely appreciated landscapes, and the acknowledged recent and continuing quality improvement of food and gastronomy.

There will be obstacles on the road to transforming Welsh rural prospects. However, where these can be transformed into opportunities, their impact can be less damaging. The first is that while on balance the amount of direct support for farming will stay more or less level, there will be the adverse individual consequences of the redistribution of payments between farms of different types, mentioned earlier. Here, there is a clear case for public intervention through the Rural Development Plan.

To offset the negative consequences for the more intensive part of the agricultural sector, development of stronger branding, processing and

marketing support can enhance the product prices its farmers receive. However, the nature of that support will be crucial. Despite the downturn it should be focused on high-end niche products that contribute to the generally positive cues among consumers and visitors to the countryside of Wales and its image for environmental quality.

Ambitious vision, creative use of the new flexibility and resources, and thoughtful and effective application will all be essential for the future Rural Development Plan. With deep cuts in public spending about to affect rural Wales disproportionately seriously compared with almost anywhere else, and with a significant proportion of jobs dependent on the food, tourism and agriculture complex, the stakes are very high.

Peter Midmore is Professor of Economics at Aberystwyth University.

Farming needs to embrace the green economy

Terry Marsden



Rural areas across Europe are experiencing major changes involving closer ties between the rural and urban economies. Key elements include:

- The re-valuing of local assets.
- A shift from subsidy-driven development to investments that build social capital.
- Exploitation of hitherto unused resources.
- Diversification of farming into niche markets linked to food, tourism and craft activities to create a new 'eco-economy'.

In Wales these objectives are pursued

by the Welsh Government as part of its sustainable development agenda. There are concerns among some commentators about the creation of the new environmental body, the result of merging the work of the Environmental Agency with the Countryside Council for Wales and Forestry Commission for Wales. However, in my view, it is providing an opportunity to reposition Welsh farming as central to delivering a wider range of environmental goods and services, which are inextricably linked to the development of the rural eco-economy.

This is, by the way, far more innovative than the approach adopted by the UK government in England where much of the strategic planning, regional development and environmental agency infrastructure has been dismantled. In Wales there is a chance that we can integrate the new Common Agricultural Policy post 2013 with the objectives of our domestic policy developments, and deliver them through the Welsh Agri-food Strategy: 'Food for Wales, Food from Wales'.

How will farmers in Wales respond to the revised incentive systems that are about to be implemented? Surveys carried out at the Wales Rural Observatory have found that the Welsh farming population can be broadly divided into three types of approximately equal proportions:

1. Those whose approach is 'business as usual' in which they are heavily dependent on subsidies. This group is likely to be highly vulnerable to policy and market changes in the near future.
2. Those in a worse condition who might be called the 'strugglers'. They display higher levels of vulnerability and may exit farming in the near future, especially if they are close to retirement and have no clear succession plans.
3. Those marketing value-added, high end niche foods, diversifying on farm businesses like tourism, equine and renewable energy; or expanding their family income through non-farm sources.

This third group is spearheading the new rural paradigm in Wales. Their numbers are roughly in line with what we have witnessed in extensive comparative surveys across rural Europe. There will be a continuing role for the increasingly scale-dependent intensive and specialised producer. However, in my view, these will be very few and far between as we progress through the coming decade.

Witness what has been going on in the intensive dairy sector in Wales and we see a 'race to the bottom' numerical decline in dairy farms chasing ever more retailer-led price setting. The future must lie in value-added and more networked forms of multi-functionality that can meet urban as well as wider rural development needs.

A central question is how the farming community can adapt in ways that create greater resilience and less vulnerability. In short we must deliver a more holistic green economy in rural Wales. In the process we will need to rely on innovation rather than subsidy dependence.

We must build on existing advice mechanisms such as farming connect, but also develop other farmer and rural community groups as learning organisations. We need to breakdown the barriers between farming and the wider rural community by making it a more attractive, progressive and inclusive activity, especially for the young. This means more 'bottom-up' sustainable place-making which connects with what hopefully will be more joined up European Common Agricultural policies.

There should also be more emphasis on connecting town and country, between urban dwellers keen to enhance their quality of life by greater contact with the countryside, and rural communities as producers of high value, eco-economy goods and services. In the process we can strengthen both rural and urban Wales for future generations.

Terry Marsden is Director of the Sustainable Places Research Institute and co-Director of the Wales Rural Observatory at Cardiff University.

1

Changing Union

Articles

Following Scotland has run its course

Will Britain turn into England?

How to damage public confidence in devolution



DG Undeb Sy'n Newid UK's Changing Union

The first *Forum on the Changing Union*, part of a major project being undertaken by the IWA in association with the Wales Governance Centre at Cardiff University and Cymru Yfory/ Tomorrow's Wales, will be held over two days in September. The theme will be federalism as a basis for a new relationship between the different parts of the United Kingdom.

The Forum, the first of six that will be held over three years, will bring together around 20 'opinion formers' to contribute new thinking on the changing shape of constitutional relationships within the British Isles. The themes of future Forums will be finance, the welfare state and the social union, England, central UK institutions, and the future of the islands. The final Forum will be held in the wake of the Scottish independence referendum, expected to be held in autumn 2014.

Meanwhile the Changing Union project, which is being funded by the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust and the Nuffield Foundation, has established three working groups to collate evidence to present to the Silk Commission on the future of Welsh devolution.

A detailed paper on taxation powers was presented to the Commission in July by the Finance and Funding Work Group, chaired by former Finance Minister, Professor Andrew Davies. It includes the following recommendations:

- All income tax revenue in Wales (excluding that on savings) should be devolved to the Welsh Government so that not less than one third of its income is derived from this source.
- The Welsh Government should have the power to set the income tax rate separately in each of the tax bands. Reduction in the rate in the higher bands should be limited by national concordat to 3p in the pound. Thresholds and allowances should not be devolved.
- Business rates should be devolved to the Welsh Government, so that a clear responsibility in this area is established, increasing the Welsh Government's focus on the economy.
- The Welsh Government should be granted borrowing powers at least commensurate with those granted to the Scottish Government in the Scotland Act 2012. These powers should not in future be confined to loans from the Debt Management Office, but also include a capacity to issue bonds. Borrowing should be applied primarily to capital spending.
- To avoid a 'race to the bottom' any proposals for devolving corporation tax within the UK should be placed within an overall framework that would both limit the quantum of change and be proportionate to economic need, as measured by relative GVA.
- Cash management of the Welsh Government's funds should be devolved in order to encourage their efficient use, and avoid unnecessary repeated friction around year-end adjustments.

- To respond to the devolution of these powers the Welsh Government should take urgent steps to transform its current Finance department into a robust Treasury function.
- The granting of tax-varying powers to the National Assembly / Welsh Government does not involve change to a fundamental constitutional principle. There is, therefore, no in principle need for a referendum.
- Wales is in danger of referendum fatigue. An unnecessary referendum that focuses solely on the question of taxation powers is not likely to galvanise a coherent campaign, risking even lower turnouts than have been seen in previous polls.

- A presumption against a further referendum to be reconsidered only if a public petition for one were to garner more than 500,000 votes, or one fifth of the electorate.

A second Work Group on the Welsh Legal System, chaired by Emyr Lewis, Senior Fellow in Welsh Law at Cardiff University, is examining the case for a distinctive Welsh jurisdiction and a reserved powers model for the Assembly rather than the current conferred powers model. As part of the Group's work programme a study visit is being organised to Northern Ireland to examine the workings of its separate legal jurisdiction.

The third Work Group on the Scrutiny, Accountability, Capacity, and Devolved Powers of the Assembly,

chaired by former Ceredigion AM Cynog Dafis, has commissioned research papers on the following topics: policing, civil service, the political parties, energy powers, transport, broadcasting, Assembly capacity, and the role of civil society.

These two Work Groups will submit evidence to the second part of the Silk Commission's inquiry, on the operation of the Welsh devolution, early next year.

More information on the Changing Union project can be accessed from the website: www.ukchangingunion.org.uk where all reports and papers produced by the project are published.

Once upon a time...

...people dreamt of a natural, deep and good sleep. Then Abaca was born to create the comfiest organic mattresses possible, to make those dreams come true.

Each Abaca mattress is organic[®] and unlike any other on the market, every single one is naturally healthy, free of chemicals and crammed with goodness. Thanks to the natural properties of Welsh wool, they are fire retardant too.

But there's more to mattresses than pure, organic goodness. So please visit us at www.abacaorganic.co.uk or call us on 01269 598491. Tell us what you want and rest assured that we'll go the extra mile to make your dreams come true.

Abaca. **Wild about sleep.**

Abaca
 Ty Croes Business Park
 Ammanford, Wales SA18 3RD
 T 01269 598491
enquiry@abacaorganic.co.uk
www.abacaorganic.co.uk

 Abaca mattresses are certified 100% organic by the Soil Association

Following Scotland has run its course

Gerald Holtham argues that building the economy must now precede more political autonomy for Wales

There is little doubt that political and constitutional developments in Wales over the past couple of decades have been driven by Scotland. Would Wales have been offered devolved democratic government in the 1990s if the Scots had not been pushing hard for it? And would the Welsh public have voted for it if the Scots had not done so first? Both may be doubted.

I have developed a defence when Scottish friends tease me about Wales' follower status and, as they see it, reluctance to stand up for itself. I point out that the only reason that Edward 1st did not conquer Scotland, and left it to his incompetent son to fail to do so, was because he was bankrupted by the conquest of Wales. All those castles in north Wales cost a staggering percentage of medieval GDP and were financed with loans from Lombardy bankers, leaving no money for an adequate army to take on the Scots. So, I assert, if Scotland is helping Wales now (which some would no doubt dispute) it is simply repaying an historic debt.

Be that as it may, many people in Wales are looking for this process to continue. They believe that as Scotland pushes on to greater autonomy, just possibly to 'independence', however defined, that will increase the scope for Wales too. Some think it may even lead to a federal UK.

However, that is far from clear.

Indeed the main impetus from Scotland in influencing the Welsh situation may now be peaking. The odds are that in future Scottish and Welsh developments will become more detached. The Silk Commission, set up to review the Welsh constitution and finances, was the UK government's response to the Calman Commission for Scotland, which gave rise to the Scotland Act. Whatever Silk concludes could result in legislation but probably in the next Parliament. And wherever Scotland goes after 2015, I much doubt that there will be a Silk mark 2.

Whatever the Silk settlement results in could last for a very long time. Ron Davies' remark, which became a cliché, that devolution is a process not an event, may be true but processes are not necessarily enduring. Like clockwork, they can run down.

The key difference between Scotland and Wales is not historical, cultural or psychological, though such differences patently exist. It is economic. The brute facts of pounds and pence are what will limit Welsh devolution now, whatever the Scots do.

To a close approximation, Scotland is in budgetary balance with the rest of the UK. If once you concede that the North Sea oilfields' tax revenue should be allocated according to their geographical location, then that revenue very roughly balances out the fact that public spending

per head in Scotland far exceeds the UK average. Right now Scotland is running a very large deficit but, given oil, it is proportionately not bigger than that of the UK as a whole.

Scotland would no doubt find it rather harder to finance its deficit outside the UK and might well pay higher interest rates, depending on how it managed its monetary affairs. If it appealed to remain in a currency union with the UK whereby the Bank of England continued to act as lender of last resort to Scottish financial institutions, it could probably limit additional borrowing costs. However, it would have to sacrifice some of its 'independence' to do that, certainly over domestic bank regulation and possibly even over its fiscal policy and the extent of its borrowing.

I believe on balance an independent Scotland would be rather worse off than it is at present but it would not face an enormous gulf in its budget greatly exceeding that of the UK as a whole.

Neither Wales nor Northern Ireland can say as much. The Welsh devolved government has an annual budget just under £15 billion. Total government spending in Wales including social security payments is somewhere around £25 billion. Wales' share, on a population basis, of general UK expenditures like defence, foreign embassies and aid and debt servicing costs would add a good £5 billion more. That is total spending



The Silk Commission: standing, from left, Eurfyl ap Gwilym (Plaid), Sue Essex (Labour), Robert Humphreys (Liberal Democrat), and Nick Bourne (Conservative); seated, independent members, from left, Professor Noel Lloyd, Paul Silk (Chair), and Dyfrig John.

of over £30 billion a year. Meanwhile Welsh tax revenues are in the £18-19 billion range. A deficit of some £12 billion is fully 25 per cent of Welsh GDP, proportionately more than double the UK deficit.

The table below, developed from official data by Bob Rowthorn

of Cambridge University shows the estimated budget deficit in per capita terms for the countries of the UK in 2010. While England and Scotland had a deficit of over £2000 for every resident, in Wales and Northern Ireland the deficit per head is over £6000.

For Scotland 'Devomax', involving

fiscal autonomy inside the UK, is a rather silly idea since it gives up the benefit of a shared social security system with its greater robustness and the prospect of continued transfers to Scotland. But for Wales, 'Devomax' would entail a reduction in government spending of over third and a commensurate cut in public services and welfare benefits. There is no sign that the Welsh public would entertain such a proposition.

The various schemes for 'Devomax' in Scotland all depend on Scotland keeping more of some tax revenues in place of some proportion of the block grant. As we have seen, at the limit Scotland could just about forego any grant if it kept all its tax revenues, including oil. On the other hand, even if it kept all its tax revenue, Wales could not come close to financing its expenditure. It depends on a substantial transfer from the rest of the UK and therefore has to consider the collective interest of the UK. It cannot expect to follow beggar-my-neighbour policies like cutting corporation tax and continue to receive a large subsidy.

Per Capita Expenditure and Income by Country: 2009-10 (North Sea Revenue geographic basis)					
	England	Wales	Scotland	NI	UK
Expenditure					
Identifiable	8,514	9,705	9,927	10,549	8,749
Defence*	609	609	609	609	609
Public Sector Interest*	506	506	506	506	506
Other **	949	949	949	949	949
Total Expenditure	10,578	11,769	11,991	12,613	10,813
Revenue					
Non-North Sea***	8,417	5,750	8,059	5,970	8,187
North Sea****	10	10	1140	10	105
Total Revenue	8427	5760	9199	5980	8292
Balance	-2151	-6008	-2791	-6633	-2521

**** Assigned to Scotland on a geographical basis. The residual is assigned within the rest of the UK on a per capita basis.

* Assigned on a per capita basis.

** Includes other non-identifiable expenditures plus expenditure outside the UK and accounting adjustment. Assigned on a per capita basis.

*** Assigned on the basis of gross value-added (GVA) for NI and Wales(reduced by 4.5%); Scotland and UK GERS;

Identifiable expenditure for each country is from PESA2011. UK expenditure on other items is from PESA2011 and is assigned to countries as indicated above.

Moreover, the Welsh appeal for a better grant settlement is based explicitly on an appeal to fairness, which itself presupposes a political union. In a union, taxes are pooled and distributed according to need. On that basis Wales gets less than it needs, as that is normally assessed in England. Once you move to a federal system, there is a tendency for taxes to be considered as belonging to that part of the federation where they were generated. The focus moves from relative need to the size of inter-regional transfers. That shift suits the Scots, who get more than they should on the basis of relative need but are not receiving a very large net transfer. It does not suit Wales, which gets less than it needs but is receiving proportionately a massive transfer payment. Federation holds no financial charms for Wales.

Naturally, I hope that the Silk Commission proposals resemble the recommendations of the Independent

Federation holds no financial charms for Wales.

Commission on Finance and Funding for Wales, which I chaired. We recommended that Wales take a half share of the income tax revenues generated here and the block grant be reduced accordingly. I now believe Wales could take all of its income tax revenues, which amount to just under £5 billion a year. That is no more than a third of Welsh government expenditure

so the block grant would still account for two-thirds.

I cannot see there is much scope to go further, whatever Scotland does. Nationalists, or even simple patriots, who find this position limiting or even rather humiliating have to face up to a stark fact. The immediate requirements for further Welsh progress to self determination are not constitutional or legal, they are economic. We have to rebuild our economy. Only then will we have the capacity, and perhaps the public appetite for greater autonomy

.....
Gerald Holtham chaired the Welsh Government's Independent Commission on Funding and Finance for Wales and is a trustee of the IWA. The Commission's report is available at <http://wales.gov.uk/funding/financereform/report/fundingsettlement>

beaufortresearch

Want to understand
the mood in Wales?

Contact Beaufort - survey research experts
with a unique focus on Wales

Eisiau deall barn ac agwedd
pobl yng Nghymru?

Cysylltwch â Beaufort - arbenigwyr arolygon
ymchwil sy'n rhoi sylw unigryw i Gymru

029 2037 8565
enquiries@beaufortresearch.co.uk
www.beaufortresearch.co.uk



Will Britain turn into England?

Robin McAlpine says that whatever the result of the Scottish Independence referendum Yes or No culture wars will continue north of the border

When things collapse they collapse from the weakest point first. This makes their collapse uneven and chaotic and it is this that makes the debris uncontrollable and potentially damaging to others. If it is a tower block that is to be brought down coordination is the key.

Unfortunately, it is very difficult to coordinate the collapse of a nation-state. Where the concrete and girders that hold up a building can be weakened simultaneously by the application of explosive, the materials that hold up a nation are not instantaneously malleable. Any collapse is therefore almost certain to send debris in unintended directions.

Is the UK collapsing? Through the lens of the British State and with opinion polls predicting a two-to-one vote against Scottish independence, the current answer is an unequivocal No. But the British State doesn't need a

'Unionism lite' and 'independence lite' are both presentational tricks designed to cover over cracks, not address them.

happy UK, a unified UK population or even a UK with a strong shared identity; it just needs its UK assets protected. It will continue to adapt itself in any way necessary to protect those assets and it is doing this by offering 'unionism lite'. This emerging formulation proposes that each of us can hyphenate our identity indefinitely so long as we put 'British' at the end of the list.

Of course in Scotland this is ironic because it is almost exactly what some unionists are accusing the SNP of advocating. Up here misguided attempts by the SNP to 'take the fear out' of independence by suggesting nothing much will change have been derided as 'independence lite', an intentional obfuscation of what independence is as a means of conning the public into voting Yes.

However, 'unionism lite' and 'independence lite' are both presentational tricks designed to cover over cracks, not address them. For the Unionists it simply redraws and expands the lines of Britishness neatly to encompass where people have already shifted. For Nationalists it simply redefines a future Scotland as being as much like the status quo as possible, as if voting for independence isn't really a shift at all.

Both fail, for the single simple reason that they don't engage with the material which holds up a nation – identity, identification and inclination. Identity is



One meaning of 'Independence-lite' is that the Queen will remain Head of State in Scotland, whatever the outcome of the referendum. Illustration: Nadia Lucchesi, from *Scottish Left Review* No. 70



The body language says it all. Despite lukewarm attitudes to the monarchy north of the border, First Minister Alex Salmond gets on famously with the Queen, with whom he shares a passion for horse racing.



an element of how we define ourselves, identification is a sense of who we trust and who we align ourselves with, and inclination is about what we hope for and our aspiration. I am, I am like, I want.

The problem for the UK is that England (and indeed many Scottish unionists) seem unable to get beyond the identity question, believing the crisis of Britishness is a question about 'who am I'. This is the traditional territory of the 'cultural nationalist', but it is a long time since this was a dominant strand in Scottish politics.

What has emerged in the last

year since the SNP gained an overall majority in the Scottish Parliament is much more interesting. Increasingly (outside party politics) we find a process of de-nationalisation of independence. The cry is, 'I'm not a nationalist but...'. This is about the other two elements – identification and inclination.

Inclination is more straightforward to understand. London still thinks Scotland 'hasn't got over the Thatcher thing'. It is wrong. We still haven't got over the Thatcher-Major-Blair-Brown-Cameron thing. Scotland – like much of Britain – does not incline towards neoliberal

market-based politics. I grow weary of commentators who twist this reality in any way possible to make it 'not true', stating categorically that Scotland is not 'any more left wing than England'. But the evidence for this argument is tangential and it seeks patronisingly to dismiss the only solid evidence (voting patterns) as simply habitual.

What appears to be an increasingly problem for the British State is identification. In post-Jubilee Scotland it is not uncommon to hear the argument that because Scotland has no more of a republican movement than England this shows no political difference when it comes to the Monarchy. But this ignores the fact that when polled across Britain, 80 per cent of the English claim to be

The problem for the UK is that England (and indeed many Scottish unionists) seem unable to get beyond the identity question, believing the crisis of Britishness is a question about 'who am I'.

proud of the Monarchy while only 40 per cent of Scots say the same thing. And try as you might (the BBC really, really tried) you would have found very little fervent interest for the Jubilee on the Scots side of the border.

The 'inclination deniers' define national sentiment in terms of formalised participation. But this doesn't address the question of 'who do I trust, who is like me?'. It is here that the UK faces its biggest problem. The south east of England seems to continue to hold firmly to identifiers of the British State and the British Establishment – the Monarchy, the

But Britain isn't desperately good at ideological nationalism. When British nationalism is threatened from within it is Britain that cedes ground, not the part posing the threat. Britain without Scotland is likely either to become lite-er or to turn into England.

armed forces, the City of London – in a way that seems alien to many Scots. This, much more than any love of tartan or hatred of Thatcher, is the real problem for the UK, at least on its northern fault line.

We simply don't feel particularly British on a day-to-day basis and we don't particularly miss it because its primary identifiers do not resonate with us. I'm sure that there was some sentiment in Scotland that felt elated by Cameron's nationalist justification for a banker-driven veto of Europe, but it was damn-near invisible. Few things could have seemed more peripheral to events in Scotland.

In 2014, Scotland may well vote against independence, although there is a very long way to go. However, a No vote will not resolve this problem. The weak point isn't Scottish hostility to Britain, but Scottish ambivalence to identifiers of Britain allied to hostility to parts of the British Establishment. And, as with any relationship, arguing is much less of a problem than when the partners can't really be bothered arguing any more.

The usual response to this is more denial – 'but people all over Britain

dislike bankers'. This simplification looks at identification and inclination in the narrowest possible way. Scots don't like public-school-boy City bankers and nor do many of the English. But many of the English dislike German bankers more, while Scots barely even notice them. This is a category difference in both identity and identification.

Likewise, the North of England may vote to the left of the South (a different inclination) and feel a different identification with the British Establishment, but it shares cultural identifiers that Scotland doesn't. This inhibits drivers towards a differential political framework.

A different set of cultural identifiers, a diverging sense of identification with the British State and a different political inclination have created a critical weakness in the UK at the Scottish border. It seems to me now that the outcome of the referendum depends of whether these factors result in simmering discontent or the confidence of action. But either way a No vote will not resolve the weakness, and collapse is a process and not an outcome.

In fact, the debris will be spread even if collapse isn't completed. If Scotland votes No, it seems inconceivable that it will resign itself to the status quo. Indeed, almost everyone accepts that 'devo-max' would win if it was on the ballot paper. In particular, Labour will be punished if the outcome of a No campaign is another five years of Tory rule with no concession to Scotland. Even Cameron recognises the fact. This momentum is also likely to give the UK a shove gradually towards some form of federal solution as England watches Scotland become more powerful.

If Scotland votes Yes, then it is London that will be hit by the debris. Not only will it feel weakened and vulnerable, it will have no option but to reinvent its national story and reorganise itself. It may look to reel Wales in or just possibly it might forget it is there for a spell. But Britain isn't desperately good at ideological nationalism. When British nationalism is threatened from within it is Britain that cedes ground, not the part posing the threat. Britain without Scotland is likely either to become lite-er or to turn into England.

In my view, both scenarios offer Wales more opportunity than threat – but with a condition. Scotland has staggered to where it is now in random steps over a long period and despite a lack of serious political debate during much of that journey. If Wales collectively fails to react until an outcome is known, then the window for creating opportunities will be brief. The more urgent and the more open the debate, the better the chance.

And so, among the debris, it seems to me the questions are fairly straightforward. Who are you? Who are you like? What do you want?

Robin McAlpine is Director of the Jimmy Reid Foundation.



How to damage public confidence in devolution

Richard Wyn Jones and Roger Scully reject the arguments for a referendum on devolving taxes to the National Assembly

In our recent book *Wales says Yes: Devolution and the 2011 Welsh Referendum* (University of Wales Press, 2012), we demonstrate that the vote last March was a prime example of an unnecessary referendum. Devolutionists of a certain generation – those scarred by the 1979 experience – may have revelled in the result. But a more sober analysis surely leads to the conclusion that the exercise came very close to dragging the whole democratic process into disrepute.

As the issue ostensibly at stake in the referendum was so narrow and technical – a choice between two systems of primary law making – the efforts of campaigners and commentators to explain the choice failed to cut through to most people, who remained disengaged and apathetic. This alone does much to explain why the turnout was so low.

But the weakness of the campaigns

was another major factor. True, the Yes side were stymied by the inadequacies of the legal framework under which referendums in the UK are now conducted. But that does not explain why *Yes for Wales* was so slow to get off the ground. This was a national campaign that did not even have a bank account until four months before voting day.

Yet compared to their opponents, the Yes campaign was positively Obamaesque in competence and efficiency. Has there ever been a political campaign quite as shambolic and inadequate as that of *True Wales*? Despite enjoying sustained attention due to the requirement for media balance – or, perhaps, because of that attention – *True Wales* failed to mobilise more than a handful of supporters for its so-called grassroots campaign. It failed to raise more than £4,500 across the whole of Wales; and failed to maintain unity even

within its own tiny ranks.

As we demonstrate in our book, pretty much the only positive aspect of the entire 2011 referendum experience was that the final result did reflect the broad views of the Welsh electorate on how they wish to be governed. This is cause for cheer, given that referendums are often high-jacked by issues other than those ostensibly on the ballot paper. But the fact that Wales got, in this sense, the ‘right’ result in 2011 had very little to do with how the referendum was conducted. Instead, it had much more to do with the fact that devolution has been discussed for so long that most people in Wales have been able to develop, in very general terms at least, a settled view on the matter.

After such a patently unsatisfactory experience as March 2011, one might have thought that politicians, and the Welsh political class more generally, would

have learned enough to avoid future unnecessary referendums on devolution. Indeed, one might have hoped that we might have developed some clear and well thought out ideas about the circumstances in which referendums are appropriate democratic devices to use, and when they are less appropriate. But it appears that this is not so.

Rather, as the Silk Commission approaches completion of the first part of its mandate – reporting on the financing of devolved government – it seems that a referendum on tax-varying powers is likely. This is, to put it mildly, unfortunate. We can already predict with a very high degree of confidence that any such referendum will witness very low levels of public interest; a lack of vibrant public debate; pitifully lacklustre campaigns; and low voter turnout. It will, in short, almost certainly be a deeply inadequate referendum that will be far more likely to damage public confidence in devolution and the political process than to enhance it. It would also be an unnecessary referendum – as shown by the weakness of the arguments advanced in support of the idea. Three main arguments have emerged: these may be summarised as precedent, principle, and popular expectation.

In September 1997, two questions were put before the Scottish electorate: one on the principle of establishing a Scottish Parliament, the second on whether or not any such Parliament should have powers to vary the basic rate of income tax by 3p in the pound. Some apparently believe that this precedent means that any move to devolve tax-varying powers to Wales could only legitimately take place following a referendum.

Those schooled in British constitutional history will tend to be immediately suspicious of such an argument from precedent. Precedents exist for doing almost anything. All manner of constitutional changes – major and minor – have occurred without recourse to referendums. But the flourishing of the

1997 Scottish precedent is particularly curious, as it wilfully ignores a more recent, and arguably more pertinent, precedent *from the same country*.

The two Yes votes in Scotland's 1997 referendum created a Parliament with the *option* to vary the basic rate of income tax. This taxation power was never used. Indeed, many experts believe that the power was in practice more-or-less unusable. Contrast this with the 2012 Scotland Act, which *compels* the Scottish

granting of tax-varying powers to the National Assembly constitute another such fundamental issue? Would it, as some suggest, change the nature of the relationship between the citizen and the devolved level of government?

Part of the problem with this argument is the manner in which it has been advanced. Thus, transferring income tax powers would, it is suggested, require a referendum but transferring powers over 'minor taxes'

In September 1997, two questions were put before the Scottish electorate: one on the principle of establishing a Scottish Parliament, the second on whether or not any such Parliament should have powers to vary the basic rate of income tax by 3p in the pound. Some apparently believe that this precedent means that any move to devolve tax-varying powers to Wales could only legitimately take place following a referendum.

Parliament to exercise substantial powers over taxation. The latter provides for a far more fundamental shift in responsibility over tax, and it has taken place without a referendum. It is far from clear to us why the 1997 Scottish precedent should be privileged above the 2012 precedent.

In 2010, the House of Lords Select Committee on the Constitution recommended that referendums are most appropriately used for deciding 'fundamental constitutional issues'. And it gave abolition of the monarchy, independence for part of the state, and the abolition of one of the houses of the UK parliament as pertinent examples of such issues. Would the

would not. But if there is a principle at stake about the relationship between citizen and devolved institutions, why it should matter that a tax is 'major' or 'minor'? Should not a referendum be required whatever the perceived status of a tax? In any case, the Welsh Government already has (indirect but substantial) influence over council tax levels. So what principle would really be invoked by any transfer of further tax powers to the Assembly?

A more relevant point of principle is surely the inconsistency now threatened between Scotland and Wales. The 2012 Scotland Act, supported by each of the three main unionist parties there, was

Attitudes towards referendums in Wales

Preamble

“Some people think that it is a good idea to give people the chance to decide important political issues themselves by a vote in a referendum.

Other people think that it is the job of the politicians we elect to decide major political issues.

Holding a referendum takes more time and costs more money. But those in favour of referendums believe that it is important for people to have a direct say.

If decisions had to be made about each of the following issues, please indicate whether you think that those decisions should be made by elected politicians, or by the people in a referendum”

Whether or not...

- The Welsh Government should be given the power to borrow money to spend on capital projects such as building roads and hospitals.
- Shops should be required to charge 5p for carrier bags.
- The Welsh Government should be given the power to change levels of landfill tax and air passenger duty in Wales.
- The Welsh Government should be given the power to raise or lower the basic rate of income tax in Wales by up to 3p in the £.
- Whether or not the Welsh Government should be given complete control over all taxes paid in Wales.
- Whether or not Wales should become an independent country.
- Whether or not the Monarchy should be abolished.

	DECIDE BY REFERENDUM	POLITICANS DECIDE	NET DECIDE BY REFERENDUM
Borrowing powers	37	48	-11
5p carrier bag charge	31	56	-25
Landfill Tax/APD	27	56	-29
Vary basic rate of income tax by 3p	41	44	-3
Complete tax devolution	53	32	+21
Independence for Wales	80	8	+72
Abolish monarchy	70	12	+58

Number of respondents = 1,039

grounded in a fundamental premise outlined by the preceding Calman Commission report, that the devolved Scottish Government and Scottish Parliament can only be truly accountable if made fiscally responsible (that is, forced to wield substantial powers over taxation). If this argument is accepted – as it has been by all three major UK parties – for the elected, law-making devolved institutions in Scotland, it is difficult to see why it should not be for the elected, law-making devolved institutions of Wales. Given this, why should powers over taxation in Wales – and thereby true accountability – be regarded as an ‘optional extra’, subject to the outcome of a referendum. Does anyone seriously

wish to argue that the Welsh Government and National Assembly for Wales should be *less* accountable than their Scottish equivalents?

Would the Welsh electorate expect to be consulted in a referendum before tax powers were transferred to Cardiff? In general, when people are asked if they wish to have a say on something, they tend to reply ‘Yes’ – even if they often fail subsequently to take the opportunity to do so. But is there any specific evidence in this case?

The Silk Commission has conducted research into public attitudes, including – somewhat crudely – attitudes towards referendums. The most detailed research into this issue was undertaken

in April 2012 by YouGov and the Wales Governance Centre at Cardiff University. We explored whether people differentiate between fundamental and relatively trivial issues in terms of whether decisions should be taken via referendums. Respondents were asked to consider a range of subjects, ranging from a 5 pence charge on carrier bags at one end of the spectrum, to independence and abolition of the monarchy at the other, and asked whether the decision should be left to elected politicians or put to a referendum.

Three things stand out from the results in the table above. First, a substantial proportion of the electorate – around a third – seem to favour referendums for pretty much everything. If they had



Former First Minister Rhodri Morgan takes a call in the Senedd while waiting for the March 2011 referendum result. On his left yes for Wales Chair Roger Lewis, and on his right his successor First Minister Carwyn Jones.

their way, Welsh life would be an endless series of visits to the polling booth. But beyond this group – and this is the second key point – we find that most voters do indeed differentiate between fundamental and relatively trivial matters, believing that while the former should be the subject of referendums the latter can be left to the ordinary political process.

Finally, and most germane to our present discussion, when voters are probed about the policy that was the subject of Scotland's second referendum question in 1997 – that is that the devolved level in Wales should have the power to vary the basic rate of income tax by 3 pence – a small plurality believe that the decision can be left to elected politicians. One must, of course, avoid over-interpreting the findings of one

survey. But, at a minimum, our findings do undermine any claim that there is a clear public expectation of a referendum on tax powers.

The arguments from precedent, principle or popular expectation that a referendum must be held on the Silk taxation recommendations do not withstand critical scrutiny. Indeed, all three can quite easily be reframed into better arguments for not holding any such referendum. Having a taxation referendum would mean spending several million pounds to conduct an event whose most likely main accomplishment would be to make the 35.6 percent turnout achieved in March 2011 appear relatively high. And given the lack of years of preceding public debate, we cannot even expect the eccentric minority who

would vote to do so on the basis of a considered view as to whether or not the National Assembly should have powers in the area of taxation.

Surely we're not really going to do this, are we?

Professor Richard Wyn Jones is Director and Roger Scully is Professor of Political Science at the Wales Governance Centre, Cardiff University.

2

Economy

Articles

Nurturing our entrepreneurs

Valleys can cut it in engineering

CO-OP SPECIAL

Learning from Mondragon

Could a co-op run our trains?

Feedback vital for effective Welsh public procurement

Nurturing our entrepreneurs

Walter May makes the case for a new organisation to lead new thinking on an all-Wales strategy for indigenous business growth

At a time when Wales needs to see growth in its entrepreneurial activity we are experiencing low levels of business start-ups and a permanent loss of some of our most talented and experienced entrepreneurs. We tend to focus too much on the specifics of business ideas and traditional ways of gaining financial support. In spite of being told repeatedly that investors back the entrepreneur, not his or her idea, we fail to nurture our best entrepreneurial talent especially when they experience failure. The end result is that either they become reluctant employees or we lose them to other parts of the UK.

To counter these problems we need a new institution - a promotional body or think tank - to help define an all-Wales strategy for indigenous business growth. This could include establishing Centres of Excellence for lean business processes, promoting entrepreneur mentoring, and providing advice on finance with a focus on reducing dependency on borrowing.

Entrepreneurs are practitioners of change. They identify and exploit opportunities and lead the transformation process. More than ever Wales needs their creativity and energy to build indigenous businesses that will provide knowledge-based jobs in the future. Welsh entrepreneurs are a minority group whose view of the world is dramatically different from the rest of us.

While the barriers to entrepreneurial success are high, Wales should be a great place to start a business. So what

are the key challenges facing 'Welsh Entrepreneurs' and how can they be overcome? Most entrepreneurs are looking for three things in developing their business:- They want to:

- Minimise the need to borrow or give up equity.
- Be in a position to negotiate favourable terms.
- Develop a supportive long-term relationship with their investors.

However, most companies fail because of their inability to generate quality revenues. This is often compounded by young businesses being reactive rather than pro-active in their pursuit of customers. In *The Feasibility of Establishing a Knowledge Network for Wales-based Entrepreneurs*, research I undertook with Professor Robert Huggins of Cardiff University, we revealed that they:

- Appear to have low levels of aspiration or confidence.
- Waste their cash and time resources on inappropriate activities and processes.
- Experience severe difficulty accessing finance.
- See little or no value in being mentored.
- Strongly support entrepreneur networks.
- See value in accessing a wide spectrum of knowledge sources.

Unfortunately, those companies that have the least resources waste the most, through lack of knowledge and experience. Meanwhile, investors tend to put entrepreneurs through the proverbial ringer when it comes to agreeing to fund their ideas. The temptation is to impose onerous conditions that can stifle rather than encourage risk taking, often reducing their chances of success. While all entrepreneurial activity is welcome, some possess greater economical potential, so are we

when it comes to finance. There are two basic ways of bringing cash into a business, loan finance and revenue. Young Welsh businesses have been too dependent on the former for too long and many fail because of this. Smart ways exist to fund young businesses and dramatically reduce 'time to revenue'.

However, few understand these 'lean sales' methodologies. Which is not surprising, since it takes a career to acquire this level of knowledge and it cannot be found in any text book.

framework that is nurturing in the good times and can provide proactive crisis management when the going gets tough.

The new organisation I am advocating would provide the following advice or services to budding entrepreneurs. It would have the capacity to help:

- Test and re-test the market for products and services that entrepreneurs are seeking to develop.
- Improve 'soft skills', especially those that relate to networking, building customer relationships and trust
- Expand and improve their knowledge base.
- Increase their 'sense of 'urgency'.
- Instil greater confidence.
- Set targets to drive creative thinking.
- Acquire a mentors with varied experience and knowledge.
- Emphasises the need for businesses to become 'sales led'.
- Adopt 'lean' methods and processes.
- Build relationships with academia to exploit knowledge and expertise.

There is no reason why Wales couldn't be the best place to start a business in the UK. Certainly, we have many of the necessary features as well as an autonomous Welsh Government with expanding powers. Only through empathy for our entrepreneurs will we develop the insights necessary to create the environment for them and Wales to succeed. That process would be well served by creating a national body to act as a voice and focus for our wealth creators.

Walter May is involved in research, lecturing and practitioner-based mentoring on a range of entrepreneurship initiatives in Wales.

Smart ways exist to fund young businesses and dramatically reduce 'time to revenue'.

effectively segmenting entrepreneurial activity? Often due to their funding terms, we precipitate failure of our stars of the future usually at an inflection point or setback in their development.

At a more strategic level, all the high status professions, notably law, banking, and medicine, have their own think tanks and institutions. Yet arguably, the most important of them all, entrepreneurship or wealth creation, has no Welsh voice lobbying to create an environment where enterprise and innovation can flourish.

Imagine a situation where the focus was on the talent and potential of the entrepreneur, and where rather than being stigmatised, failure was seen as a 'right of passage'. Imagine a situation where the private sector was able to offer gainful employment to our best entrepreneurial talent which had experienced failure and needed a period of respite to develop ideas for their next venture. This could be compared with what happened prior to rugby becoming professional, when first class players worked for sympathetic companies within the community that the player represented. Such nurturing companies and their communities could potentially benefit from supporting and developing talent, by sharing in their future success.

Equally we must shift our thinking

Shortening 'time to revenue', reduces the need to borrow. However, when growth finance is required the entrepreneur is in a much stronger position to achieve favourable terms from our reluctant banking or venture capital institutions.

So how are the interests of the entrepreneur best represented to ensure we create and sustain the environment for them to succeed? How can we nurture young talent and bring the smartest, leanest and most effective business practices to them, leveraging the collective knowledge of those that went before? How can we ensure that every leader of a potentially 'game changing' or disruptive technology business understands the 'technology adoption cycle' prior to defining their go-to-market strategy?

This is where we need to create a representative body that can influence the development of a coherent strategy for Welsh entrepreneurs. The key requirement is to find ways to leverage the knowledge and 'best practice' needed to build entrepreneurial success.

A supportive and empathetic financial environment is essential to developing and nurturing entrepreneurs to create successful growth businesses. To counter the inherent optimism of the entrepreneur and lower the risk to the investor, we should create a practitioner-based



A GE90 engine being serviced at the Nantgarw aircraft maintenance plant – the biggest aero-engine in use world-wide, developed exclusively for the Boeing 777.

Valleys can cut it in engineering

Rhys David reports on the GE aircraft maintenance plant at Nantgarw, one of Wales' most successful enterprises

Mention Nantgarw to Weng Jiabao, the Chinese premier, and his eyes will light up. The second most powerful man in the world's most populous nation is one of a stream of dignitaries who have visited the giant GE aero-engine maintenance plant and come away highly impressed. Indeed, on a visit to London several years later he made sure the former Welsh Development Agency chairman, Lord Rowe-Beddoe, received an invitation to one of the occasion's formal dinners. There he sought him out to tell him he would never forget the hospitality he had received, including the opportunity to press some of the buttons on the huge pieces of test

equipment on the site.

GE's 1.2 million square feet plant at Nantgarw, north of Cardiff, is an illustration that the Valleys can cut it with large, competitive engineering operations. Employing more than 1,000 highly skilled people, the plant, was winner of the Company of the Year trophy in the most recent IWA Business Awards. In the words of its Welsh managing director, Adrian Button, it is harder to get into than Oxbridge.

It recruits from a ten-mile radius for its 25 annual apprenticeships, and received more than 900 applications in the latest search. After an initial three years apprentices spend another two training on the job before becoming fully productive, a five-year investment by the company in its staff. There are a further 50 graduate or sandwich course interns who join for a year across a range of management and engineering disciplines and are then taken on if they and the company decide they like each other.

"It's no longer possible to simply put an advertisement in the paper and recruit the people we need," says Button.

With a turnover of more than £1.2 billion a year, GE's Welsh plant is a big cog in the wheel that keeps the world's aircraft flying. At any one time it is looking after 90 power plants. This year it will be sending back to airlines 500 good-as-new engines that can then stay on wing for a period of five to six years and last up to 40 years. Engines are trucked into Nantgarw from many parts of the world and inspected by borescope (a flexible telescope for looking into inaccessible locations) so that engineers can determine what work needs to be done.

Some may need to be completely disassembled into as many as 20,000 pieces, which will then be cleaned, non-destructively tested, and x-rayed, to gauge the serviceability of each part. They are then repaired, or replaced and put back together, firstly as modules.

Some will be sent to other GE centres of excellence as far away as the US or Singapore for specialist repair. Nantgarw itself carries out such work on large engine cases on behalf of the group. After repair every engine is put through further tests that typically last six hours. Then a final test replicates conditions encountered in flying, especially take-off when maximum strain is placed on aircraft engines.

The Nantgarw plant looks after several different engine types but principally the CFM56. This is the world's most popular engine with 20,000 currently in service worldwide on narrow body aircraft. The plant also has other engine work, notably the GE90, the biggest aero-engine in service, developed exclusively for the Boeing 777. "We are lucky here that the engines we have the capability for are leading edge, new technology products," says Button. "All airlines are looking to buy aircraft powered by the most efficient engines." He is a Llantrisant native who joined GE as a quality engineer. Later he went off to run a GE ignition plant in Jacksonville in the US before returning to manage Nantgarw.

Nantgarw competes both internally and externally with around 25 plants that share at least some of its competencies across the globe. Some airlines, such as Air France/KLM and Delta in the US, have their own maintenance operations. GE's Welsh plant derives from a previous British Airways facility set up after World War II. British Airways remains a big customer along with Emirates and several Chinese airlines. The low cost airlines - big narrow body airline operators relying heavily on the CFM56 - also figure prominently in the order book, as they prefer not to undertake their own maintenance. Easyjet, Ryanair, Tui and Thomson among others all send their engines to Nantgarw.

However, such business has to be won, not just in competition with other big maintenance organisations but against other GE plants. The parent GE company has long held a position

among the world's top ten companies, with products ranging across financial services, healthcare, imaging and power generation as well as aero-engines. Today it has aviation division plants at several locations in Britain, in Prague, Singapore, Malaysia, Brazil, and across the US. The CFM56, and the other engines Nantgarw works on, is maintained in a number of these plants and they could either win or be allocated work the Welsh plant currently handles in negotiations the parent has with the airlines.

Nonetheless, Nantgarw has managed to thrive, generating profits for its owner. "We always run the risk of losing to competitors," Button acknowledges. "We are never the lowest on cost. Others will have rates of labour that are much lower. However, we win work based on the quality of what we produce here in

helped to fund 100 posts being created to service the GE90 - has been strong. Close links have also been established with local universities, including, a few miles further north along the A470, Glamorgan, which has its own aeronautical department.

To continue to offer high quality, well-paid jobs the plant must continue to win business to work on the latest GE engines. The Boeing 777's new triple composite engine is a target. "We would like to have the investment to offer that," says Button.

Nurturing good customer relationships is vital for the business. The Nantgarw team has to make sure that airlines from as far afield as China that currently entrust it with their aircraft are willing to continue to do so.

As a good corporate citizen, GE has reciprocated Welsh Government and



The GE team that picked up the Corporate Social Responsibility category first prize in the IWA's Wales Business Awards, at Cardiff City Hall in November 2011.

Wales and on our turnaround times. Our workforce is highly skilled with a technical background second to none." Another advantage, he asserts, is that as a small country Wales has the capacity to move quickly. Support from the Welsh Government - which last year

local support. Its social responsibility programme has won a number of awards, including at another IWA ceremony, the Inspire Wales Awards 2012, for its work with Llamau, a charity helping socially excluded, homeless young people in south Wales. It has

strong relationships with a number of schools in the area and has recently broken through the £1m mark of support for children's hospice, Ty Hafan. It has also made efforts to attract more girls on to its apprenticeship schemes but finds itself up against the choices girls tend to make at 13. If they not able to offer maths and sciences at GCSE they are unlikely to secure places.

As far as possible purchases are made locally, though much of the plant's requirements have to be obtained from international suppliers. Nevertheless, some £20 million a year is spent locally on support and other purchases, and items such as tools are also obtained locally if possible.

Complacency would be dangerous. The aviation business is already growing much faster in developing markets such as China, India, Brazil and the Middle East than in Europe where a greater degree of saturation has been achieved. It is inevitable that aero-engine maintenance will grow just as rapidly



A CFM56 engine being tested at Nantgarw. It is the world's most popular aero-engine, with 20,000 currently in service worldwide.

in those territories. At the same time it means there is a bigger world market for Nantgarw to chase.

Button believes more could be done to improve Welsh competitiveness. GE would like to bring freight into Cardiff Airport but finds it has to use London Heathrow, or Manchester. Nantgarw reports to GE Aviation's headquarters in Cincinnati, so a direct flight from Cardiff to the US would be helpful - a priority other Welsh business people have identified.

The key, however, is to stay at the forefront of GE Aviation's business. "The plant currently has the capability to work on engines that have a potential life of 40 years so we have that market in front of us," Button says. "We have to maintain that position. We are not going to sit back. We must go out and grow."

Rhys David writes on finance and business affairs and is a trustee of the IWA.

"The IWA occupies a unique place in welsh public life. Its analysis of current issues is always professional and extremely helpful."

Lord Richard of Ammanford
Chairman of the Richard Commission

"In a time of transition for wales, politically, the Institute of Welsh Affairs provides a vital forum for all sides to come together over both strategically important and contentious issues."

Baroness Ilora Finlay of Llandaff
Professor of Palliative Medicine,
Cardiff University

"The IWA is a quite extraordinarily valuable body, and I am very proud to be a member of it."

Lord (Kenneth) Morgan
One of Wales's leading historians

Join the IWA and support our work.

The work of the IWA depends on the support and contribution of individual members across Wales and beyond who share our determination to mobilise the nation's human and social resources in order to face the challenges ahead. By bringing together partners in business, academia, and the public and voluntary sectors, the IWA is helping to shape economic, social, educational, environmental and cultural policy across Wales.

I wish to become a member and enclose a cheque for £40.

I wish to become a member and pay by credit/debit card the sum of £

Account Number
____/____/____/____

Expiry date __/__/__

I wish to pay by Direct Debit
(This will help us keep our costs down)

Please send me a Direct Debit application form.

Please send me details about becoming an IWA Fellow.

Name:

Title:

Address:

Post Code:

Tel: Fax:

E-mail:

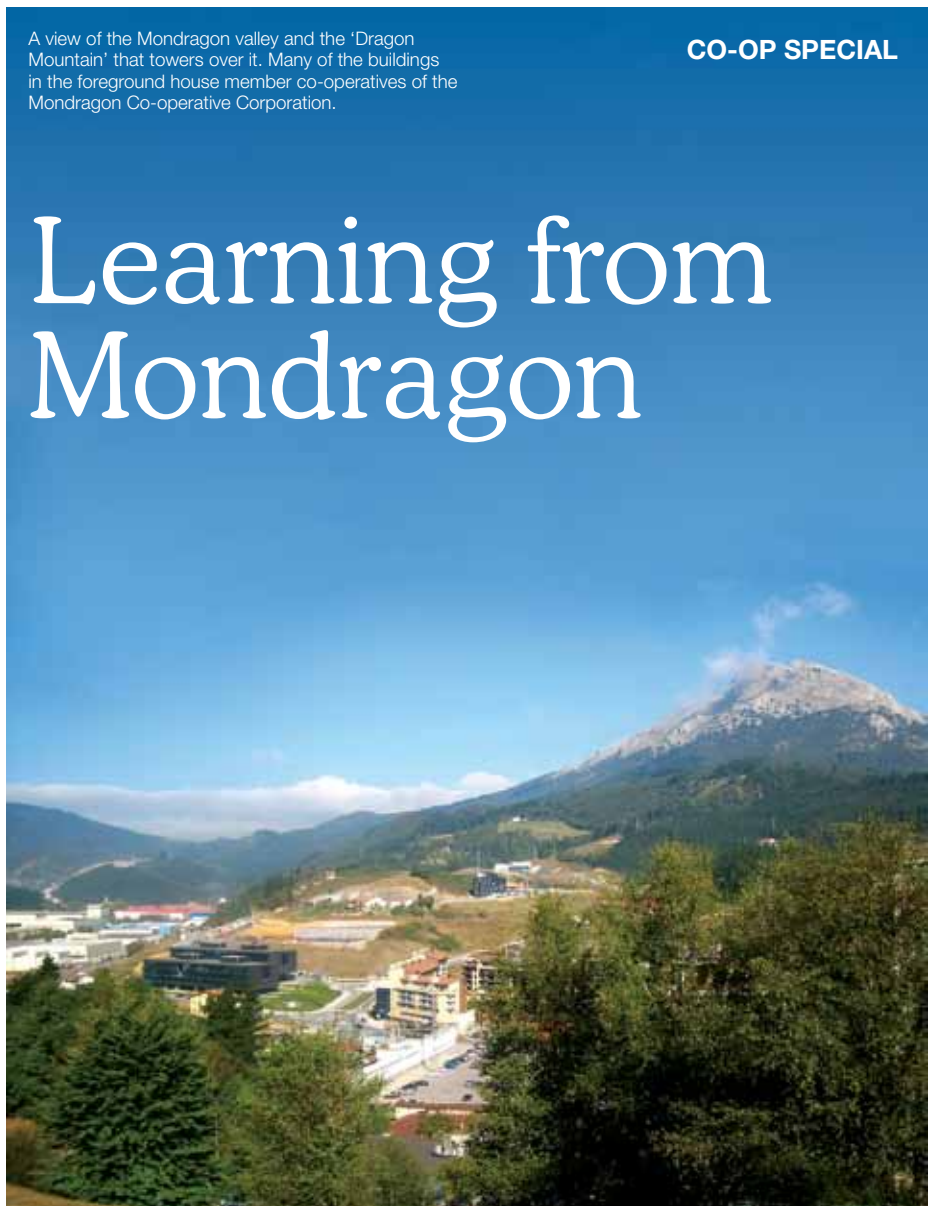
Return to: Freepost
INSTITUTE OF WELSH AFFAIRS
Institute of Welsh Affairs, 4 Cathedral
Road, Cardiff CF11 9LJ

John Osmond joined a delegation from Wales to the Basque Country in April to discover why one of the world's largest co-operative groups has been so successful

The Mondragon Corporation is a federation of worker co-operatives based in the Basque Country in northern Spain. Founded in the town of Mondragon and inspired by a Catholic priest José Ma Arizmendiarieta, its origins were modest. It began with a small technical college in 1943 and later, the first co-op, a small workshop producing paraffin heaters. However, over the next five decades the group expanded to become a major economic player. Today it is the leading business group in the Basque Country. It is in the top ten of Spanish companies in terms of turnover, comprises 120 co-operatives, employs more than 83,000 people, has a turnover of €14 billion, has a bank and numerous research institutes, and a university with some 3,600 students.

In February 1981 a Wales TUC delegation visited Mondragon and came away inspired to found the Wales Co-operative Centre. This is now 30 years old and over the past three decades has had a substantial impact on the Welsh economy. It has assisted in the start-up of new co-operative businesses, promoted credit unions and social enterprises, and run campaigns for digital inclusion and fair trade in some of our most disadvantaged communities. In the 2010-11 financial year the Centre supported more than 200 co-operatives and helped set up 56 new businesses.

In April 2012, another Welsh group, this time including today's Director of the Wales Co-operative Centre, returned to Mondragon to witness the progress it has made and to see what new directions might be possible. These include a potentially transformative



A view of the Mondragon valley and the 'Dragon Mountain' that towers over it. Many of the buildings in the foreground house member co-operatives of the Mondragon Co-operative Corporation.

CO-OP SPECIAL

Learning from Mondragon

proposal for introducing a co-operative approach to the delivery of public services, especially those that currently involve sub-contracting care for the elderly to private sector providers.

Of course, the circumstances of Mondragon and those of the wider Basque Country are highly distinctive and cannot easily be emulated. Nonetheless, there are powerful lessons in the underlying principles that have guided the development and growth of the Mondragon initiative. Perhaps most important are what might be described as the cultural characteristics of the Mondragon co-operatives. Certainly, it was instructive to see at first hand, different ways of working and relating with one another in the workplace being

put into effective practice.

'Humanity at work' is the Mondragon Corporation's guiding slogan. "This means we are the owners of our enterprises, and we are the participants in their management," we were told by Mikel Lezamiz, the Corporation's Communications Director, who was our guide at Mondragon:

"Our humanity comes first. We want to have successful and profitable businesses and see them grow, but they are subordinate to us, not the other way around."

The slogan is followed by the words finance, industry, retail, knowledge which refers to the scope of the

cooperatives. Of the 120 workplaces, 87 are industrial factories, making everything from kitchen appliances to automotive components, computers, and machine tools. Others are a bank Caja Laboral, the University, the large Eroski retail network that extends to the whole of Spain, four agricultural co-operatives, 14 research and development centres, and six social service agencies managing health care, pensions, and other insurance matters.

Most are entirely worker owned. Others are hybrids of worker-owners and other co-op owners, so-called 'second-degree co-operatives'. All have their management selected by co-op governing boards. All have yearly assemblies where the workers set strategies, make or change policies, and elect their governing boards on the basis of one member, one vote.

Mondragon, Spanish for Dragon Mountain (and in Euskara, the Basque language, Arrasate), lies deep in the mountains of the province of Guipúzcoa, in northern Spain. In the wake of the Spanish Civil War Mondragon was an impoverished town about the same size as Blaenau Ffestiniog, Ystradgynlais, or Aberdare. Today, despite the ongoing recession, it is a prosperous area and boasts one of the lowest unemployment rates in Spain. This transformation is wholly due to the impact of the Mondragon Corporation on the town and its surrounding area.

In the wake of Franco's death in 1975, and following a referendum in 1979, an autonomous Basque Government was established which is notable in being responsible for its entire tax base as well as having full legislative powers. This new regime has provided a supportive business environment for the Mondragon Corporation in recent decades, though to a large extent the Corporation has developed independently of Government policy.

There are many reasons for this independence, but undoubtedly the most influential was the political situation that faced the Mondragon co-operative pioneers when they set

out in 1956. Spain was still under a fascist dictatorship. During the Spanish Civil War the Basques, an independent people with their own language and culture, took the side of the Republicans against Franco's coup d'état. When Franco captured the rest of Spain and advanced against the Basque country, the Basques put up a spirited defence. However, they suffered greatly as a result, with Franco throwing the weight of his army against them, destroying their towns and imposing a punitive regime. Many Basques ended up in concentration camps. Some fled to France. Others were summarily executed. The region's highly developed industry, which dated back to the days of the Spanish empire, was destroyed.

Serving in the Republican forces was a young priest, Fr. José María Arizmendiarieta. Born in 1915 into a farming family thirty miles from Mondragon, he joined a Catholic seminary aged 13. He was captured by the fascists, put in a concentration camp, and narrowly escaped execution. After his release in 1941 he was sent as a curate to the small town of Mondragon, some 30 miles inland from Guernica. Two years later he became a religious instructor at a small training school in the town operated by a local steel company. This prompted him to start an independent community-run training school for young apprentices in October 1943.

This school was self-governed and self-financed, and laid the ground work for what would become the Mondragon Co-operative Corporation's schools that would eventually educate more than 45,000 students. In 1954, five students from the school bought a small bankrupt factory that manufactured paraffin cooking stoves. To buy the company, they asked one hundred members of the Mondragon community to contribute to a £60,000 loan. The men used their initials to name this first co-operative Ulgor, and by 1958 it was employing 148 members of the Mondragon community.

In 1959 Arizmendiarieta helped to establish a co-operative bank, the Caja Laboral Popular, which played a key

role in the expansion of Mondragon by facilitating access to capital and also providing business management training. In the 1980s, the 150 co-ops then in existence banded together as the Mondragon Co-operative Corporation which was established in its current legal form in 1991. Today it lays claim to being the world's largest worker co-operative. Its supermarket arm, Eroski, is the largest Spanish-owned retail food chain. The Corporation also runs co-operative schools for the children of the workers, a modern technological university, an independent research and development arm, and more recently has developed residential and domiciliary social care for its workers beyond retirement.

In 1981 the Welsh delegation, funded by a Welsh Development Agency study grant, was led by George Wright, the Wales TUC general secretary, and Les Paul, its vice-chairman. Other trade unionists included Viv Balmont, a Cardiff member of TASS who had recently lost his job; Gwyn Jenkins an AUEW member from Aberystwyth, who was seeking to launch a co-operative, Aberystwyth Engineering, out of the ashes of a recent casualty in the town, Brockhouse Engineering; Jim Ryan, president of West Glamorgan trade councils, and a former Port Talbot steelworker; Joyce Schutt, a TGWU shop steward and member of the Bargoed Blouse Co-operative; and Barry Scragg, chairman of UCATT's Shotton branch and a member of the Wales TUC general council. In addition they were joined by Robin Reeves, then Welsh Correspondent with the Financial Times

The 2012 delegation comprised Derek Walker, chief executive of the Wales Co-operative Centre, Alex Bird Executive Chair of Co-operatives and Mutuals Wales; Mark Drakeford, AM for Cardiff West; Liz Moyle an elected Member; and Ashley Drake, Membership Manager with the Co-operative Group Cymru/Wales; and myself.

An important aspect of the foundation of the Mondragon co-operatives, was the impact of Basque nationalism. Although the main impetus



The 2012 delegation from Wales to Mondragon – from left to right, Derek Walker, Chief Executive of the Wales Co-operative Centre; Mark Drakeford, Labour AM for Cardiff West; Liz Moyle, an elected member of the Co-operative Group in Wales; Mikel Lezamiz, Communications Director with the Mondragon Corporation; Alex Bird, Executive Chair of Co-operatives and Mutuals Wales; John Osmond, Director of the IWA; and Ashley Drake, Wales Membership Manager with the Co-operative Group.

and inspiration for their formation came from the town's parish priest José Ma Arizmendiarieta, the structure of workers' control that evolved also reflected the ideological debates that took place within the trade union arm of the Basque National Party in the 1920s and early 1930s. As Robin Reeves put it in a report he produced in the wake of the 1981 visit:

“The Basque workers rejected both capitalism and communism as alien to and irreconcilable with, Basque culture and social traditions. They sought a form of economic organisation which, while achieving social and political advance for workers, would also maintain the tradition of communal obligation and commitment which had always been a feature of Basque society.

“It could be said, therefore, that the intellectual foundations for the development of the Mondragon co-operative movement were laid before the dark age of Franco's fascism descended on the Basques in 1937; and that the development of the movement provided an outlet for Basque nationalist expression at a time when normal political activity was forbidden.”

On one level this reflection only serves to further underline the particularity of the Basque experience and to emphasise again that it is exceedingly difficult to envisage the Mondragon co-operative model working in other settings. At the same time, however, it is possible to trace a comparable “tradition of communal obligation and commitment” in Welsh life, and

especially in the histories of our mining and slate quarrying communities. Surely, therefore, this holds out some hope that the Mondragon co-operative approach, certainly in terms of the cultural values it espouses, will be attractive to the Welsh temperament.

John Osmond is Director of the IWA. *Learning from the Dragon – Lessons for Wales from the Mondragon Co-operative*, is published by the IWA at £10.

CO-OP SPECIAL

Could a co-op run our trains?

Stuart Cole examines the options facing the Welsh Government when it considers the future ownership and control of our railway network

Six years may seem a long time before the renewal of the Wales and Borders rail franchise takes place, but the key investment and contractual decisions will have to be made long before that, in 2015. So the Welsh Government should already be considering its options.

There are broadly four ways to run Wales' railways. Three of them involve continuing with a franchise arrangement along present lines, with varying degrees of radical adjustment. The most far-reaching option would be to set up the Welsh rail operation as a co-operative owned by the employees or the passengers or a combination of the two. This would have many advantages, and would certainly place Wales on the world stage in railway terms, though it might be difficult for the Welsh Government to persuade the Department of Transport in London to go down this route.

Under present arrangements the new franchise in 2018 will be awarded by the Department for Transport with input from the Welsh Government as co-signatory. The Welsh Government became responsible for the funding and performance of Arriva Trains Wales in

2006 following a budget transfer in the block grant, which amounted to £140 million in 2011-12. However, should the Welsh Government take such a far-reaching departure as creating a co-operative out of the Welsh rail network it will have to negotiate new arrangements with London.

Apart from running the railways as a franchise operation the Welsh Government could own and run the system itself as a not for dividend company, probably operated at arms length by a National Rail Transport Authority. Some have argued that this would amount to nationalisation by the back door. Others have pointed to the current Network Rail position, responsible for the rail track throughout Britain, as offering a precedent for direct government involvement. Network Rail has a close relationship with the Department of Transport while remaining a not for dividend private sector company.

If the Welsh Government wished to continue a franchise arrangement, but not as a co-operative then it has two choices:

1. A conventional franchise from the Welsh Government alone, rather than the present joint arrangement with the Department of Transport. In this scenario the operator would be a listed company, such as Arriva, First, Stagecoach or National Express. There would be no capital investment risk as all the assets - rolling stock, stations and track from Network Rail - would be leased for the life of the franchise. The revenue and operating cost risk would lie with the private company franchisee.
2. A not for dividend company operated as a franchise from the Welsh Government. This would require the appearance in the market of new not for dividend companies bidding for the franchise in order to achieve meet European competition rules, unless it could be shown that a single such company was not obtaining competitive advantage. It has been suggested that Glas Cymru (upon which Network Rail was largely based) could be the model for a Welsh Train Operating Company with a

guaranteed revenue stream and a highly capitalised registered asset base. This model only has the revenue stream guaranteed for the subsidy element and a buoyant and expanding market for the fare-paying element. Under this scenario the revenue and cost risk would again lie with the Company. To succeed it would have to match a public sector ethos with private sector commercial discipline.

Against these options a franchised co-operative company would be owned by the employees (as with the John Lewis Partnership) or the passengers (as with the Co-op) or, more likely some combination of the two - as is the case, for example with the Mondragon Eroski supermarket chain that operates through much of Spain. In this scenario the revenue and cost risk would lie with the employees and passengers. If the company mirrors the present retail companies the extent of the risk would be on the same basis.

There would significant benefits from the franchising system whether it was the current Wales and Borders franchise arrangement (plus the Swansea – Bristol electric trains), a not for dividend company, or a co-operative supplier:

- It allows competition in terms of service provision and funding levels.
- It provides a more secure train market and service not entirely dependent on the commercial market.
- It allows other economic, environmental and social factors to be taken into account.
- It prevents market instability through an operator of the last resort, that is the Welsh Government (see the parallel in South Central and the east Coast Main Line).
- It retains network benefits such as integration of services within the Welsh operation and in relation to Great Britain rail operations.
- It gives value for money.
- It can provide for the transfer

from one operator to another and any phased changes required in connection with rail electrification.

- Subsidy forecasting can be more accurate.
- It allows for integrated bus and rail branding.
- Increase integration of timetable, ticketing, and inter train operating company discounts.

The successful existence of the Co-operative shops and building societies suggests that any business with a large number of customers could be a mutual. This certainly includes a train operating company. Other advantages with the co-operative approach might include:

- A co-operative business could be expected to give a greater sense of collective ethos, which would help the industry through difficult times.
- Staff absences could be expected to be lower than other forms of business structures, as is claimed by the John Lewis Partnership.
- Many of the complaints about rail companies might disappear if the passenger felt a direct ownership. Of course, the last time the railways were in public ownership that didn't happen though that might have been because, in effect, the British Rail model was no different from a conventional private company.
- Persuading travellers that the railway really was being run for their benefit might move remove the 'them and us' perception.

Whatever change in the form of ownership is adopted, a key justification needs to be enhanced benefits for the passengers, the economy, the environment and society in general in Wales. These are some of the questions any new structure will need to address. Will there be:

- Increases in train frequency?
- Increased capacity, hopefully with new electric trains, and especially on

commuter routes to meet expected demand increases?

- Reduced journey times through faster trains?
- More modern, more comfortable trains?
- Higher levels of infrastructure investment at stations and on track and signals?
- Improved services and capacity for the same cost?

What then will be the main drivers towards a new rail management? Reduction in cost has to be one primary reason but not necessarily at the expense of service quality. In all business restructuring the principles are:

- Reduce costs, through detailed examination of each model.
- Increase revenue, through improved marketing.
- Maintain or improve the service quality, through the passenger experience

In the Welsh context, alongside these considerations the Welsh Government needs to explore with the Department for Transport where the responsibility will finally stop in deciding the funding, ownership, control and organisation of the Welsh railway system following the end of the current franchise period in 2018. If the Welsh Government wishes to explore the advantages of far-reaching changes, such as moving towards co-operative ownership, then the balance of control is going to need to slant towards Wales and away from Whitehall. Have we the vision to move in this direction?

.....
Professor Stuart Cole is Emeritus Professor of Transport, Wales Transport Research Centre, University of Glamorgan.

Feedback vital for effective Welsh public procurement

Dermot Cahill and Ceri Evans investigate the experience of Welsh companies when tendering for public sector contracts

A large majority of supplier organisations responding unsuccessfully to public procurement tenders in Wales are not provided with feedback following the outcome, according to our research. This contrasts with bids for larger contracts that have to be advertised across the European Union. In these instances suppliers must by law be automatically provided with feedback.

However, because the majority of Welsh companies are too small to bid for most EU size threshold contracts, this means the contracts that they typically apply for are the ones where they tend not to automatically receive any feedback. Overall, Welsh suppliers are dissatisfied with the level and quality of feedback they receive from the Welsh public sector.

We carried out an in-depth survey at Bangor University involving several days of interviews with 40 Welsh companies in transport, printing and publishing, engineering, environmental, consultancy, business services, education, training, energy and manufacturing. The results showed a negative experience of tendering to the public sector in terms of the feedback element.

In the survey 85 per cent said they were not provided with automatic feedback when they were notified of the results of their tenders. Even more worrying is they said that they usually had to request feedback, and sometimes had to make such requests repeatedly in

order to get a response.

Wider participation in public procurement is vital for the future of the Welsh economy and the growth and sustainability of private and third sector organisations in Wales. It accounts for some £4 billion, approaching a quarter of Welsh public sector spending, and has the potential to provide a substantial boost to indigenous enterprise in Wales.

Feedback for companies that have been unsuccessful in bidding for contracts is important for at least the following reasons:

- It promotes integrity and confidence in the public procurement process, because it gives suppliers confidence that the process has been conducted with integrity, even when the feedback they receive demonstrates that their tender had fatal flaws.
- It helps the supplier to identify what skills deficiencies, or other deficiencies, they possess, and allows them to identify their weaknesses, so that they can do something about it for the next time that they intend to enter a public procurement exercise.
- Suppliers expect comprehensive and meaningful feedback given the effort and time they devote to tendering and because of the opportunity costs incurred.

- The practice of systematically providing good feedback drives improvements in tender processes because it helps public purchasers to identify areas where suppliers need to make their future tenders fit-for-purpose. This has benefits for both purchasers and suppliers.

It is important to state that some organisations received commendations from suppliers concerning the quality and care that they took in order to give effective feedback. The reality is that there can be considerable differences in the quality of feedback provision within each public sector organisation – for example, between centralised procurement units where there has been adequate training, and decentralised departments where individuals are often purchasing on a part-time basis. However, in general, suppliers in Wales appear dissatisfied with public sector purchasers when it comes to feedback.

Moreover, in situations where suppliers did receive some ‘feedback’ all that most were given was merely a statement of their overall score, in comparison with the winner’s score. Only a minority (10 per cent) received an explanation describing the weaknesses in their submissions.

Of the suppliers we interviewed who had received written feedback, 44 per cent found that it was not useful at all, with a further 33 per cent giving

written feedback a rating of only 2 out of a possible 5. Generally, the feedback companies get fails to give them guidance so they can improve their tendering capabilities in future.

This lack of adequate feedback means suppliers are discouraged from applying for contracts again and many will not even consider doing so with the particular public sector organisation with which they have been dealing. In response to our survey:

- 10 per cent wondered whether the tender process was carried out properly and according to procurement rules and regulations.
- 25 per cent stated they were put off ever bidding for public sector contracts again.
- 35 per cent said the lack of feedback meant they were prevented from improving their tendering skills.

It is clear that Welsh public procurers face difficulties in delivering effective feedback, in terms of resources but also their organisational culture. However, this must be tackled if we are to develop strong indigenous businesses with the skills to sell to the public sector.

If Welsh SMEs are to grow employment, and help regenerate the economy, winning more public sector contracts has to be a priority. We are not saying that contracts should always be awarded to local companies – that would be a recipe for short-term gain and long-term disaster. What we need is an improvement in the public procurement feedback system to be embedded in the procurement practice of all public purchasers in Wales.

If public sector tender offers were made clearer and fit for purpose, the effort currently spent on evaluating tender offers could be reduced and the time saved used to give more effective feedback. This would have the added benefits of helping Welsh SMEs to become more tender-ready and better

equipped to win contracts outside Wales.

A number of public sector organisations have made improvements to feedback provision in recent years. However, this seems to have been driven more by a desire to comply with the requirements of the new EU Remedies Directive, rather than a desire to assist the SME sector with effective feedback. Implementing good practice because one is forced to do so by legal obligation, rather than by organisational aspiration, is not a good way to proceed.

We have also observed that suppliers' public procurement experience is much better when they deal with trained procurers. So we need more effective professional training for procurement officials within the public sector. Bangor University is helping meet this need with its new Masters in Procurement Law and Strategy, a programme welcomed by John McClelland who has recently conducted reviews of public sector procurement in both Wales and Scotland.

This acute training need was acknowledged in *Influencing the Modernisation of EU procurement Policy*, a task and finish group report by members of the National Assembly's Enterprise and Business Committee in May. They referred to what has become known as the 'McClelland benchmark', following his review of procurement in Scotland in which he states there should be one skilled professional for every £15 million of spend. According to recent data, Wales has 106 procurement officers with a Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply qualification. Applying the McClelland benchmark would mean that Wales should have 174 professionals. In our view, there should be even more than this – 174 is the absolute minimum.

We have been conducting public procurement research in Wales and Ireland since 2004 and, repeatedly, the question of feedback has arisen as an issue. However, this is the first time that we have quantitative data to support our findings. Public sector bodies now

have an opportunity to recognise there is a problem, and more importantly, do something about it. Meaningful feedback to a supplier involves much more than numerical ranking against the successful tender. To be effective it should openly:

- Explain how the evaluation process was carried out.
- Detail how the scoring method was applied in a transparent way.
- Provide guidance as to what the evaluators were looking for in submissions.
- State how many organisations competed.
- State who won the tender.
- Provide the suppliers' score for each evaluation factor in comparison to the winners' score and average score;

Most importantly, feedback should provide detailed, meaningful and prescriptive explanations why the supplier was not successful according to each evaluation criteria. Suppliers do not want high-level generic comments. They want to know what they need to do to improve, with indicative guidance on their strengths and weaknesses, and suggested corrective actions.

The new sustainable development White Paper being prepared by the Welsh Government for publication this autumn offers an opportunity to legislate on feedback requirements along these lines. Sustainable communities need employment and economic regeneration. Providing effective feedback to Welsh SMEs when they lose a tender would better equip them the next time they seek a public contract, whether in Wales or further afield.

Professor Dermot Cahill is Director and **Ceri Evans** a Senior Supplier and Procurement specialist at Bangor University's Institute for Competition and Procurement Studies. Their *Winning in Tendering* project reported on here is funded by the European Commission's Ireland/Wales INTERREG programme.

3

Education

Articles

We need to end the dullards culture

More theory than understanding in teaching reading

Wales is sitting on a bilingual gold mine

We need to end second rate vocational culture

Jim Bennett argues that competition between schools and colleges is impeding the reputation and delivery of work-related technical subjects

Vocational education has been offered in some schools for many years. It was a major part of the curriculum in secondary modern schools from 1944 until comprehensive schools were introduced, and the national curriculum severely curtailed it. It has crept back over the last 15 years as schools have struggled to keep all pupils motivated up to the age of 16. Some of that has been within the schools, and some in partnership with colleges.

In recent years relaxation of the national curriculum coupled with the strong impetus of league tables and the provision of vocational equivalents to GCSEs have given vocational education a massive boost. Now it has once again been curtailed in England to make way for a narrower but for some, more rigorous offer.

All of this shows a lack of consensus and clarity about the purpose of vocational education and training which impinges on the whole of 14-19 education. Our lack of agreement about fundamental values is clouding the delivery of vocational subjects.

We need that clarity urgently and in Wales we have an opportunity to do something about it. The reviews of vocational qualifications and the qualifications market might be enough in themselves, and at the same time there is renewed interest in tertiary reform to achieve real transformation in 14-19 provision.

This issue is not remotely new. Anyone involved in education and training will be aware of the extent to which our confusion is rooted in our history and culture. The 1888 Royal commission on Education commented on:

“... our failure to match the general intelligence or technical knowledge of the masters and managers of industrial establishments on the continent”.

This was at a time when competition from Germany and the USA was becoming a worry. Today, after a century of steady decline, the UK economy is under siege from global competition in an increasingly technical world. We are recognising once again that we must make things to survive, and to do so we need to make use of all of our collective talent, yet we continue to waste much of it. Reasons for offering vocational options from the age of 14 include the need to:

- Improve motivation.
- Enhance outcomes through alternatives and equivalencies.
- Provide a different, more adult culture.
- Widen access.
- Give an early start on new progression routes post-16.

Improvements over the last decade or so in both schools and colleges have been driven by targets and league tables. Much of this has been positive, but it has also brought unintended and perverse consequences, as targets and intense public scrutiny usually do. Schools cannot be blamed for introducing attractive vocational equivalents under the glare of rising expectations and critical public evaluation. We have recently witnessed the consequences through the Wolf Report in England. Reports in the popular press were all too familiar, with headlines such as:

- Thousands of 'dead end' courses axed from school tables
- GCSE league tables - bright children failing
- Eight in ten teenagers shunning 'tough' GCSEs
- Shocking waste of talent in state schools

As one newspaper reported, "Of over 3000 qualifications, 70 will now count towards 5 A* to C grades. 56 per cent of pupils in state comprehensives gained 5 A* to C GCSEs - the basic measurement of a good education. But the proportion rocketed to more than 80 per cent when results in 'equivalent' qualifications were added".

The message is depressing. Vocational education and training is dead end, second rate and easy. It crowds out more deserving options. Bright young people shouldn't do it. If you do it and succeed, you are cheating by taking the easy option. Whatever the fundamental reasons for these persistent and damaging beliefs are, we must continue to challenge them.

Estyn have been very clear about some of the reasons. In their 2006 report on collaboration between further education colleges and schools they state:

- There is little collaboration between schools and FE due to competition and lack of trust, and a desire to retain students in the sixth form.
- Competition interferes with clear unbiased information and advice to pupils, and many schools don't give it about post-16 options.
- Small sixth forms have limited and narrow choice, with few opportunities to mix general and vocational.

In their 2008 report on 14-19 education Estyn adds:

- Many schools still see vocational provision as only suitable for the least able.
- Many schools don't give clear unbiased information about options available post-16.
- On their own schools can't fund the wide range needed for the 14-19 entitlement.



Vocational students at Coleg Gwent.

- Students in small sixth forms have a limited and narrow choice.

That is a diplomatic way of expressing reality. Any FE manager can cite examples of the impact that competition has on their relationship with schools. Young people are given the message, perhaps subliminally, that failure to be selected for A Levels means being second rate, and by implication the institutions and provision left to them are also second rate.

Ignorance of colleges and vocational opportunities generally is often profound. Rumours abound about a lack of pastoral support in colleges, not following up absences or involving parents. All of this is nonsense. There is often total ignorance about the ability to get into university with vocational qualifications. It is still not possible to compare school and college results because they are measured in very different ways. This misinformation does much to reinforce parental support for school sixth forms and A Levels, and their suspicion of alternatives. As long as money follows students this will continue.

Our dual system of qualifications demands a choice between an 'academic' route through A Levels, or a vocational route, which starkly reinforces old prejudices.

Until the age of 16, everyone pursues GCSEs. Vocational provision is seen as for the least able - a powerful stigma reinforced by the choice at 16. If schools select a student to do A Levels, still promoted as the gold standard, they will typically specialise in three subjects after 17. We narrow down and reduce the status of the vocational at the same time.

In 2004 The Tomlinson Report recommended replacing GCSEs, A Levels and the major general vocational qualifications with a unified diploma at 4 levels, including academic and vocational units. The idea was warmly received by the whole profession, by schools, colleges, universities and the professional bodies; it was an unusual consensus.

The Labour Government rejected the proposals, perhaps due to a reluctance to lose the 'academic rigour' of A Levels, or lose votes in the approaching election. The White Paper which followed focused on making qualifications harder and tying them to basic skills. A new 14-19 Diploma was introduced alongside GCSEs and A Levels. This joined a long line of unsuccessful post-war attempts to do similar things, including CSE, DoVE, CPVE, GNVQ and vocational A levels.

In the meantime partnerships were developed between schools and colleges

to deliver the new qualifications. Schools developed vocational options in affordable subjects such as childcare, travel and tourism, business, and IT. Colleges offered a greater range of subjects such as hairdressing, beauty therapy, child care, motor vehicle maintenance, engineering and construction.

However, mistakes are made at all levels. Colleges sometimes timetable less suitable staff. The different cultures of schools and colleges are not sufficiently recognised. Students are not fully involved in the colleges while the schools are often insufficiently engaged. Links with the core curriculum are seldom well made.

Vocational options are rarely made available to everyone, especially in 11-18 schools. Selection is often limited to Level 1. Schools can dump problem pupils. Selecting a whole group to save teaching costs can result in pupils not knowing why they were selected. Working with the local college until the school is ready to take things in-house is not uncommon. Pick and mix units can lead to young people not being ready to progress post-16 and having to repeat courses. Many vocational equivalents do not provide progression to the next level. When they don't colleges have to manage the disappointment.

Partnerships seldom coordinate

schools, colleges and work-based learning. Awarding bodies have chased business in schools and sometimes failed to secure consistency in quality assurance. For many years colleges have reported that literacy and numeracy skills have not kept pace with successes in GCSEs, and that lower level GCSEs do not prepare for some vocational options – an example being maths and engineering.

So who should these options be for? The tacit reply is usually the alienated, the underperforming or those of lower ability. If the equivalencies stack up, perhaps Level 2. The answer must, of course be for everyone if we are to serve individuals and the economy. But how can that be done? There are three basic criteria for high quality vocation and educational training:

- Industrial standard teachers who know the industry, have contacts and total commitment. These are scarce.
- Industrial standard workshops, studios, salons and equipment. These are expensive.
- Progression routes in place from Level 1 to at least Level 3 and then HE. - These require large numbers.

This is not an argument for doing

everything in colleges. The more adult atmosphere in a college is highly valued by all students. Large numbers of 14-16 year olds can dilute that. As colleges grow space is limited, even for post-16 students. Non-core business crowds out other activities and often needs to be limited. And much of what is done in schools is fine, even if much of it could be better.

Whatever we can do in Wales to turn around this state of affairs we must. If we could end all false distinctions and snobbery, it would be wonderful. We have an opportunity to return to the ideas in Tomlinson and implement them here in Wales, and we should seriously consider that. We could do more to dismantle competition, or at least make unacceptable its more damaging manifestations. We could commit to tertiary education and end competition once and for all.

In the absence of any of that, we can pursue the following for the benefit of all of our young people and the Welsh economy:

- Rethink selection for 14-16 qualifications and make them available for all.
- Improve induction and student involvement in college-based 14-16 options.
- Improve joint local planning and delivery to coordinate the work of schools, colleges and work-based learning.
- Plan progression from all options, and stop any provision without it.
- Share staffing and training when that helps.
- Share facilities when we can.
- Share staff for school-based provision.
- Develop regional centres of excellence for both schools and colleges.

Whatever we do we must provide brave leadership, which starts by recognising problems and facing up to them together. A competitive free for all will not do that.

Jim Bennett is Principal and Chief Executive of Coleg Gwent.

Studying carpentry at Coleg Gwent.



More theory than understanding in teaching reading

Geraldine Barry says ‘not invented here’ is the attitude of many Welsh schools when confronted with new literacy ideas

I am an experienced literacy teacher having trained and worked in London from 1987 and in Wales since 2000 and taught in many schools and further and higher education. However, I left mainstream teaching over three years ago disillusioned by the lack of care given to children in terms of their learning and the lack of understanding of the impact that poor teaching of literacy can have on learners.

My final teaching post in England was at a school that received an award from the Department for Education for improving literacy standards, much of which attributed to my work, recognised as excellent by OFSTED, as a Year 6 teacher. Despite my record of school improvement and success in raising standards I have not managed to secure work in Wales as a primary classroom teacher let alone as a senior manager within a school with opportunities to apply my expertise.

So I now work as a freelance specialist literacy tutor and for a third sector organisation, to improve standards of literacy in learners who have been let down by the school system. I have also come to the conclusion that most of the learners I now work with have not been taught phonics properly. I am also called upon to address literacy problems of learners in schools that have received excellent Estyn inspection grades.

I therefore welcome the Welsh

Government’s National Literacy Programme, which at its heart states that “all learners should be taught well”. However, my experience of teaching in schools in Wales is sobering. One anecdote in particular may give Education Minister Leighton Andrews a flavour of what he is up against. In one school I identified shortcomings in the English/literacy scheme which, for writing composition (viewed by the school as a separate area of literacy) involved filling in pages of a workbook once a week.

So I created a new scheme that gave the children an experience of writing (introducing them to and then practising writing composition through modelling and which included sentence construction whilst at the same time embedding spelling and handwriting skills). Once my pupils were engaged in writing as a process, my books were pulled in by a member of senior management and I was told that because they didn’t ‘look the same’ as the other books in the school, I should stop this immediately as an inspection was imminent. Interestingly, when Estyn identified writing composition as an area of weakness, my re-written scheme of work was produced by senior management as evidence for capacity to improve. The rewritten scheme of work was never seen again after the departure of Estyn.

Further study is an excellent way to develop literacy teaching skills so The Masters in Educational Practice is most welcome. However, my experience of postgraduate education in Wales has demonstrated a focus which is too heavily based on theory and not enough on understanding the structure and mechanics of the English language

and how we can apply this knowledge in a classroom context. Without this knowledge, structured teaching of phonics and other reading skills is not rigorous enough.

Generally, teachers are efficient users of the English language but not necessarily good teachers of phonics. Ask any reader how they learned and they usually look a little uncertain and mention names of reading schemes or talk vaguely about ‘sounding out’. I believe the “excellent teachers who can deliver phonics” Leighton Andrews is seeking will be hard to find. For example, how do you explain to a group of readers how to read the word ‘music’ if this word is not known to them? How would you explain it? What would learners need to know before you could ask them to read the word? That vowels can sometimes be long and sometimes be short? What makes them long? What makes them short? Why is that letter s in the middle not making the (s) sound but rather a (z) and why is that vowel i at the end short? For a seemingly simple word it is all rather complicated. I have come across qualified teachers with post graduate qualifications from Welsh universities who are unsure how to deal with the deficit in phonic skill exhibited by learners of all ages.

The call for improvement in literacy teaching by teachers in post is welcome and I agree that a systematic approach should be used to develop their skills. This is a major shift since I first came to Wales. My ‘training’ consisted of being told that the local education authority (LEA) literacy scheme was “the same as the National Literacy Strategy in England”. It clearly was not and I was asked not to integrate the successful



**Julian
Hodge
Bank**

for deposits

both **big** and small



Contact us on

0800 028 3746

info@jhb.co.uk

www.JulianHodgeBank.com

elements of it into my teaching (see above).

The National Literacy Programme guidance states that many existing teachers “need up skilling” by identifying “outstanding teachers of literacy” who will model best practice and support Professional Learning Communities. However, as an experienced, successful teacher of literacy with proven ability in delivering school improvement I would like to know:

- How will outstanding teachers be identified? How will their excellence be measured? A closer look at the timeline shows that guidance has been sent out to LEAs and plans from consortia of schools should be ready imminently. It will be interesting to see whether the recruitment net for ‘outstanding’ teachers will extend outside existing LEA teachers.
- When will more schools and LEAs recognise excellence in literacy teaching in a form not standard to Wales (that is, not someone who has ‘done their time’ for years in the same school)? Not enough schools welcome applications from prospective teachers who have a wide variety of experiences in a number of schools and within other sectors. A teacher who has moved around, refreshed their career, taken risks in their own learning, and has tried out new approaches is precisely the teacher I want teaching my children. After all, in improving literacy *one size does not fit all*.
- How are schools and LEAs going to identify those teachers who need particular help in ‘upskilling’? My experience as a freelance specialist teacher in Wales suggests that this is going to be difficult. There is a limited awareness in schools of the skills needed to be a good literacy teacher. In my various roles I have heard many comments including: “It’s not my job”, “The primary teachers are getting it wrong”, “Why should we

There are clearly good teachers in Wales and there is capacity within Welsh education to improve the level of literacy in our learners. However, as someone who came to Wales to offer what my colleagues in London spoke about as “my special brand of teaching”, the opportunity to contribute has been denied to me.

have to teach this sort of thing?” “I’m here to teach my subject”; and my two favourites: “I will teach this way because I have taught this way for 20 years”, and “I teach this way because it was the way I was taught and it worked for me”.

Another main activity outlined in the National Literacy Strategy is assessment which is a subject after my own heart. I want to know where my learners are, what strengths they have (so I can build on them and use them to support problem areas) and where the deficits in learning are. It is only then that I can get going with devising and delivering a ‘toolkit’ which they can take back to their mainstream classrooms and gain access to what is being taught. This approach also raises self-esteem and confidence, something which learners with difficulties in literacy lack.

I couldn’t do my job as a literacy teacher without assessment so I was pleased to read about the National Reading Tests. I am however concerned about the additional, non-statutory diagnostic test materials. These sound like a great idea. However, as someone with extensive training in diagnostic testing I know the pitfalls of assessment. If teachers assess, they need proper training to deliver assessments correctly and if they undertake diagnostic assessments, what are they going to do with the results?

The National Literacy Strategy states that the Welsh Government will “provide guidance to advise on appropriate intervention programmes and on their successful implementation.” I wait with interest to find out which programmes are recommended, who

will deliver them and what training will be offered so that the assessment process does not end with testing. It is also important that intervention schemes are delivered with care, attention to detail and imagination. Many of our learners who are failing in literacy need to be taught the same skills many times, in many different ways in order to build up their ‘toolbox’ of skills which they can begin to apply in different contexts, making learning more accessible.

There are clearly good teachers in Wales and there is capacity within Welsh education to improve the level of literacy in our learners. However, as someone who came to Wales to offer what my colleagues in London spoke about as “my special brand of teaching”, the opportunity to contribute has been denied to me. A lack of opportunity and failure to recognise expertise has meant that since arriving in Wales I have had to seek work outside the mainstream education system, keep my skills up to date and pay for my own professional development (in particular specialist post graduate training in literacy, dyslexia and special educational needs, accredited by York University) to ensure that I can meet the needs of my learners.

I look forward to seeing how the implementation of the National Literacy Programme progresses in Wales. For me a measure of its success will be a reduction in the number of referrals I receive from parents whose children fail to achieve the standards of which they are capable.

Geraldine Barry is a qualified specialist literacy teacher with experience in schools, and further and higher education in London and Wales.

Wales is sitting on a bilingual gold mine

Lisa Jones describes her efforts to teach the language to parents whose children are attending Welsh-medium schools

Should there be a linguist in every Welsh-medium primary school to help parents who want to learn Welsh? I've been running classes for parents as a volunteer since 2005 but it was only in September 2010 that I started teaching on site at Ysgol y Bannau in Brecon during the day. I now simply can't imagine teaching Welsh in any other way. The benefits for parents and children of working so closely with both school and playgroup are just too striking.

In every Welsh-medium school some parents do not speak Welsh. Some feel anxious about not being able to support their child as much as they would like. Many want to understand the Christmas play and class assemblies, their children's reading books and the wonderful stories young children write. And some people want to learn the language for themselves. They might be newcomers to Wales. Or perhaps Welsh is their lost linguistic legacy and they long to restore it to their homes. My book *Welsh for Parents* was written for them.

Having moved to Wales and anxiously opted for a Welsh-medium education because my husband wanted to put the language back into the family, I learnt Welsh from scratch and drifted into teaching it part-time. However, as my first child started secondary school in 2005, I could already see that my anxieties about Welsh-medium education were unfounded. This had been the best decision we had made for our children.

I could also see quite clearly just how much their love of books had helped their language acquisition. Their English – the language in which they read for pleasure – was still stronger than their Welsh.

School simply cannot compete with a parent or grandparent reading the same much-loved story over and over again, at a child's individual pace. And no wonder they want that same story over and over again. Books aimed at three-year-olds can be so linguistically rich that even A-level Welsh students reach in frustration for their dictionaries. Yet many parents struggle to get to any regular Welsh class at such a busy time of life. Without support from home, children tend to read English books for pleasure.

So, after three years of teaching one-size-fits-all Welsh classes, I wanted to deliver something much more tailored to parents' needs which could help them to enjoy their children's bilingualism and give them the support at home that they wanted to give.

The classes started in my kitchen, to raise money for school funds. They reflected what was happening in playgroup, school and the community. Current songs and children's books were a key focus. Babies and toddlers were welcome.

The classes evolved a lot over the years as I experimented with all the different teaching methods I'd come across for different languages in many different places. It was a joy to have the creative freedom to try things out and then hand out my own questionnaire to find out what had worked best. By far the biggest improvement followed moving to Ysgol y Bannau. I taught one class a week in the school library and another in the *Bobl Bach y Bannau* building, where sessions for three-year-olds and the playgroup are held.

The first benefit of being on site at the school was using real props. This is such a help to people with visual memories. Nothing beats pointing at the children's artwork: "I like your goldfish / crab / yellow starfish!" Or swapping classrooms with the reception teacher and holding up the children's magic carpet: "Did you go on the magic

carpet today? Did you go to China?" Or teaching, "Did you make soup in school today?" The parents could then immediately ask their child the relevant question for that day.

It is difficult to imagine such levels of job satisfaction anywhere else. The key to giving people the confidence to use Welsh is identifying the vocabulary they need, giving them sufficient practice and eliminating the time gap between practising in class and actually using it.

Watching parents try out their Welsh is just invaluable. A wide variety of vocabulary is often used and a learner's confidence can be easily shattered when they encounter something different from what they've practised:

"Oes plant 'da chi (*Have you got any children?*)?" one mum asked the head during a class in the library as he walked past. Having practised they seemed pretty confident on *I've got one son / two sons*. Un mab / dau fab. But of course he didn't know which words we'd practised. This was real life. "Oes," he replied. "Mae dau fachgen 'da fi. Dau grwt." (*Yes. I've got two boys. Two lads.*) For a moment, my face fell!

Tailor-made units, written after the class and sent out by e-mail, take time to produce. But their flexibility to adapt to a class's pace, new vocabulary or events in the school makes them more relevant and rewarding, as the questionnaires show.

I quizzed the school secretary and staff about how they would respond to requests to buy t-shirts, or phone calls explaining absence. This made for much more realistic role-plays. Gradually parents gained sufficient confidence to switch language.

But the main advantage to being on site was that we became visible. Teachers started giving us draft scripts of *future* assemblies. I turned these into listening exercises and vocabulary sheets to distribute to parents and grandparents before the assembly. Just a quick flick



Parents learning Welsh with their children at Ysgol y Bannau primary school in Brecon.

through the English side of that list and even parents with no Welsh at all, or parents who couldn't go to the assembly, can talk about it with their children – in English or in Welsh. Did the Romans really bleach their clothes in urine? Ugh!

The playgroup leader told me what they were doing in playgroup and which books they were reading. There is nothing more satisfying than teaching parents to read the book the playgroup are reading and then releasing several copies of it into the PTA library. As Emyr Jones, head teacher of Ysgol y Bannau, put it:

“Working closely with parents is a fundamental part of educating children. Welsh classes tailored for parents gives this aspect an added dimension, strengthening our role as a community focused school.”

A tipping point came when a teacher lent us a large pile of reading books. Surely nothing can be more important than helping as many children as possible to gain enthusiastic help at home with their reading in Welsh, so that teaching staff have more time to focus on those who don't? An OECD report *Do students today read for pleasure?* (Pisa in Focus, September 2011) highlights the importance of reading:

“Students who are highly engaged in a wide range of reading activities

are more likely than other students to be effective learners and perform well at school.”

This didn't surprise me since, over the years, I'd watched a run of book-loving Welsh-stream pupils go into top set English and collect prizes for English in a predominantly English-speaking comprehensive. Brain research has shown:

“...increased gray matter volume... in the left inferior parietal cortex of bilinguals relative to monolinguals, with greater effects in early bilinguals than in late bilinguals... Thus, we interpret our findings in terms of structural plasticity in the bilingual brain which is dependent on age of acquisition and the proficiency attained” (Andrea Mechelli et. al., 'Voxel-Based Morphometry of the Human Brain: Methods and Applications' in *Current Medical Imaging Reviews*, June 2005).

No parent should be in the position where they can't afford a course where children's books and school reading books are a key priority. So the classes were free and units were available to parents who couldn't attend regular classes.

Wales is sitting on a gold mine. The very best gift you can give your child is

a word-rich, book-rich start to life with a chance to acquire two languages instead of one.

It is a great pity that these classes are not available in all primary schools. There is no salary available for running tailored Welsh classes and developing language support for all parents and grandparents. But this voluntary work has been by far the most rewarding Welsh teaching I have done. I firmly believe that this is the best way to take the language out of our classrooms and into our communities. When parents have the confidence to speak and read with their children in Welsh, when children hear parents using Welsh on Bonfire Night, at Christmas parties and birthday parties - when Welsh becomes that integral part of our children's childhood memories - then Welsh can be sure of a real future.

Once you have taught with such phenomenal support from both school and playgroup, have taught the language parents need on the day that they need it and then heard them use it there is no going back.

.....
Lisa Jones is the author of *Welsh For Parents*, a 3-CD course and book to give parents and grandparents the confidence to use everyday Welsh with children in the home.

4

Social Policy

Articles

Building on the Ombudsman's casebook

Sliding silently into poverty

Why we need a strategy for young carers

Building on the Ombudsman's casebook

Peter Tyndall explains why we should extend the landscape of redress in Wales

Phone hacking and faulty breast implants have been two big issues dominating headlines in the first half of 2012, but few commentators have remarked on one feature they have in common. While there has been much talk of regulation, a dimension that complainants about both the press and private health care share is that they don't have access to independent redress of the kind that can be delivered by an Ombudsman. There is a need to extend access to redress in these sectors, and more widely.

The Ombudsman concept is more than 200 years old. First introduced in Sweden to coincide with the switch to a constitutional monarchy, the Ombudsman was initially intended to give the citizen protection against a return to authoritarian rule. Over the years the institution has evolved to provide independent consideration of complaints, and offer redress to individuals who have suffered an injustice through maladministration or the failure to receive a service to which they were entitled.

The first such position in the UK was the Parliamentary Ombudsman, created in 1967. The post of Public Services Ombudsman for Wales was introduced in 2006, bringing together separate jurisdictions covering services provided by the Welsh Government and its sponsored bodies, health, local government and housing. This jurisdiction currently includes most public services devolved to Wales. There are exceptions where there is alternative access to redress, for example via a tribunal.

In the UK there has also been considerable development of Ombudsman schemes covering the wholly private sector. Those covering banks, insurance and other parts of the financial world have since been consolidated into the Financial Ombudsman Service. Its existence is founded on statute and providers must participate. A key distinction, which I will return to later, is that funding for the service is provided by the industry,

and not by the state. We have also seen the development of statutory Ombudsman schemes for telecommunications and for energy as these industries moved to the private sector.

The current redress landscape is a complex one. Since the privatisations which commenced in the 1980s, it has been necessary to make a distinction between the public sector and public services. Most public sector delivered services are covered by Ombudsman schemes, either by my office in Wales, or by the Parliamentary Ombudsman in respect of non-devolved areas such as tax, benefits and immigration. Services commissioned from the private sector or from independent organisations by state bodies or local government are also covered.

Where public services have been fully privatised, there is coverage in some sectors including water, telecoms and power. However, in other areas such as transport, there is no coverage. This situation has not arisen due to any policy stance. Rather it is the product of different decisions being taken at different times by different administrations with no overriding direction.

To complicate matters, some public services provided independently with elements of funding from the state are in the jurisdiction of Ombudsmen. These include housing associations which come within the jurisdiction of the Welsh Ombudsman, and the universities contained within the jurisdiction of the Independent Adjudicator of Higher Education. The Welsh Government also proposes to bring independent hospices and private care home residents within my own remit.

As with any area of public policy that has developed incrementally over time, there are inevitable anomalies. There is a strong argument for saying that all public services, whether publicly provided or not, should be

in the remit of an Ombudsman. Where there are existing Ombudsman schemes, this need not be in the remit of my own office. However, the principle of independent redress should be consistently applied. There is also a strong argument for creating access to redress for consumers across the private sector, and proposals to this effect are being actively developed by the European Commission.

National Ombudsman institutions covering public services are in place in 25 of the 27 EU member states. The other two states have Ombudsmen at regional level. In addition, there is a European Ombudsman who deals with complaints about the Commission itself. The European Union has made clear that candidate countries will be required to have an Ombudsman before they can be admitted. This stipulation was made to Turkey, for example. Ombudsmen have played a significant role in defending the rights of citizens in countries in Eastern Europe in the transition to democracy, mirroring the original role of the Ombudsman in Sweden.

The impact of the financial crisis has been that privatisation has been advancing in areas of public services across Europe, mirroring the picture in the UK in the 1980s. This has sparked a debate about continuing access to independent redress which has prompted the Commission to put forward proposals for Alternative Dispute Resolution for consumers. The responses to the transition from public sector to public service have varied. Some states have opted to create new Ombudsman institutions, such as the Energy Ombudsman in Belgium. Others have extended the jurisdiction of existing Ombudsmen to cover the newly privatised services, as is the case in Catalonia. The Ombudsman Association, the organisation which promotes and safeguards the institution across the UK, is strongly supportive of this approach, but cautions against a proliferation of new schemes which would only serve to confuse consumers. It argues that in



Peter Tyndall

most instances, there will be an existing ombudsman scheme able to take on the new areas of work.

In Wales, the legislation establishing my office is the most modern governing any existing UK public sector scheme, and is well regarded in the UK and overseas. However, there is now an argument for looking at the Ombudsman landscape generally in Wales, to establish whether there are areas where there is currently no access to redress, which ought to be addressed.

Access to independent redress for people whose phones are hacked by the press is not a devolved matter. The Ombudsman Association's view is that an independent, statutory Press Ombudsman would offer individuals more reassurance than the current, discredited arrangements ever can. But that is a matter for Lord Leveson and the UK Government.

However, although independent healthcare is a relatively small sector in Wales, it can have a major impact on the lives of its users, whether they are receiving replacement hips or breast augmentation. In the short term, extending the Welsh Ombudsman's jurisdiction to private healthcare would offer considerable reassurance to future patients. But there would need to be changes to legislation to ensure that the sector met the costs of investigation. The taxpayer should not foot the bill. Some element of any charging mechanism would need to reflect the 'polluter

pays' principle so that those bodies which generate the largest numbers of complaints or which consistently fail to resolve complaints locally pay more.

As with most schemes, the presumption would be that the bodies concerned would seek to resolve complaints locally first, and that the Ombudsman would only investigate where they had failed to do so. The office of the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales already has access to the necessary medical expertise to investigate complaints objectively. Through regular case digests – 'The Ombudsman's Casebook' – and through working with regulators and bodies in jurisdiction, one could ensure that lessons from complaints are learned across the relevant sector. Although some complaints are as a result of 'one-off' occurrences, others can be indicative of wider failings and Ombudsmen are uniquely placed to use the evidence from complaints to drive improvement in services.

While the current concerns amply justify extending the jurisdiction of the Public Service Ombudsman for Wales, they do highlight the need for a wider review of redress mechanisms in Wales to develop a comprehensive approach to improvement. In many respects, the Welsh Committee of the Administrative Justice and Tribunals Council would have been best placed to undertake such a task, and its imminent winding up by the UK Government is a matter of considerable regret. It may well be that any future Welsh replacement body could take this on in its stead.

There is a real opportunity for Wales to once again forge ahead in this field. Providing a comprehensive, joined-up approach to redress for the people of Wales would be a matter of considerable interest across the UK and beyond. I hope that we can move forward on this basis in the near future.

Peter Tyndall is Public Services Ombudsman for Wales.

Sliding silently into poverty



David Williams discovers that we are at risk of losing a generation of young people in Wales

David Williams (right) with Children's Commissioner Keith Towler, pictured on the Blaenymaes estate in Swansea.

We have in Wales today a real cause for shame, the stigma attached to poverty and, by extension, the damage it inflicts on the innocent in our society, our children and young people. Those young people can be forgiven for failing to understand the political and statistical arguments which rage around them, but those so engaged will not be forgiven if they fail to achieve their promised targets for eradicating child poverty.

This was my conclusion following a week spent on the road with Keith Towler, the Children's Commissioner for Wales to see for ourselves the extent of the problem of child poverty in Wales. The purpose was to make a documentary for BBC 1 Wales, *Playing with Poverty*, which was transmitted in April.

For me the road trip was a journey of discovery. What we found was an uncomfortable truth. More and more families are sliding silently into the poverty trap. The anecdotal evidence we gathered indicates that things are running out of control rather than getting better. Indeed, the Westminster and Welsh Governments' shared target to eradicate child poverty by the year 2020 has little or no chance of being achieved.

One of the first questions I asked Keith Towler as we set off on our travels was: "What

is child poverty?" He immediately referred me to the definition to which, at the time, everyone paid lip service. A child was classed as being in poverty if the family's weekly income fell below 60 per cent of the median or middle income level. In 2009-10 the poverty level worked out at around £259 a week for a family with two adults and two children.

The Children's Commissioner welcomed the Welsh Government's aspirations, but was extremely doubtful that its target to eradicate child poverty by 2020 will be met. "I think that if they continue to say it they will just cheese people off," he told me.

He's not the only one who has questioned the repeated mantra that child poverty will be eradicated by 2020. The respected Institute for Fiscal Studies says that it remains "inconceivable" that the 2020 target will be met.

Keith Towler questioned whether politicians really understood what working families living in poverty are going through. After visiting one such family which is struggling to bring up two children, one with autism and learning difficulties, he said: "These are the people on the front line of poverty struggling to make the right decisions for their children day by day."

The family we visited live on the Blaenymaes estate in Swansea, a place with an unenviable statistical label of its own. It's the 19th poorest area in Wales. Sprawling and isolated, it is an island of deprivation surrounded by the wealthier and more affluent areas of Wales' second city.

The family's father told us that he was broke two weeks before his next pay packet was due. Why? Because that month he had been forced to spend £200 on private dental work for himself because he couldn't find a dentist to carry out the work free of charge on the national health service. The consequence: "I have literally taken food out of the mouths of my children," he told us.

The additional and unexpected £200 expense for dental treatment tipped the balance between the family having money for shopping for food and having nothing left in the kitty. That is the reality of how poverty affects children in Wales and that example falls neatly into the Welsh Government's area of responsibility. Health is very much a devolved matter. Where are the dentists?

It is worth noting that this was a family where the husband was in work and the mother forced to stay home to look after their autistic son. They couldn't afford child care costs and they do not expect to get out of the poverty trap any time soon. Poverty isn't confined to families on benefits. There are increasing numbers of working families now struggling to feed their children in Wales.

Of course, for those unable to work circumstances can be even more difficult. A single mother living on the Blaenymaes estate and struggling with debt and childcare expenses confided to the Commissioner: "I want my son to grow up to be a decent human being. I feel a failure. I don't feel like a good mother."

Child poverty is not confined to Wales' big urban estates. It is affecting more and more families living in rural

areas as well, but where the worst effects are often masked and more difficult to identify. In Cardigan the Children's Commissioner visited a lunchtime food club run by the children's charity Jigso which says that, increasingly, their clients are now adults struggling to feed themselves.

A few miles up the road Keith Towler saw for himself the consequences for a young Cardiganshire family when the breadwinner loses his job. A young couple who have three children and another on the way, have gone from being relatively affluent to being poor in the space of just a few months.

The family are a typical example of Wales' new poor. Unless job prospects improve they risk staying in the poverty trap for the foreseeable future. The Children's Commissioner said the current economic difficulties were affecting every community in Wales. "This is us," he told me. "These are our communities, these are our people.



March against child poverty in Cardiff.

Every penny counts."

In Anglesey the Commissioner met another mother struggling to pay the bills while bringing up two teenage boys with a rare genetic condition called Fragile X. This is the most common cause of learning disabilities. The difficulties it presents for one Anglesey family takes "your breath away", according to Keith Towler.

The day-to-day uncertainties presented by the boy's condition are

compounded by the constant worry over the money needed to hold the family together. A recent report found that families with disabled children and living in poverty experience social, emotional and financial isolation which causes anxiety, depression and sometimes breakdown.

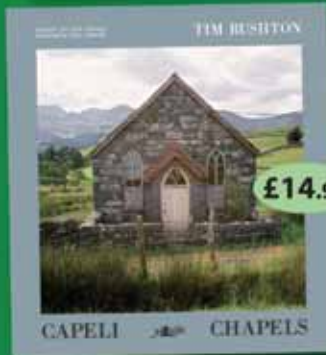
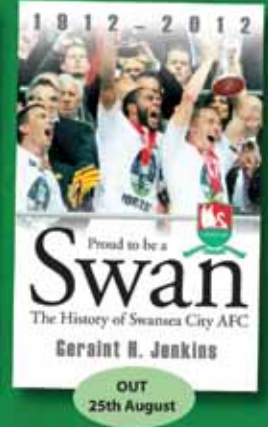
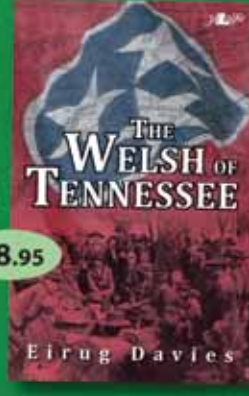
At the lowest point in her time as mother and carer the Anglesey mother, Kerry Page, told us that she considered killing herself and her two children. Now, she says, her biggest worry is that she will die before one of her children. "I need to live one day longer than they do," she told us. It was desperate stuff and yet another snapshot of the human consequences of living in poverty.

Child poverty, of course, transcends political frontiers and although the Welsh Government cannot control tax and benefit income going into households it has made a commitment to the children and young people of Wales in signing up to the United

Nations Convention on the rights of the child. First Minister Carwyn Jones has said, "There is no greater priority for me or the Welsh Government than ensuring that our children have the best possible start in life."

His government has committed itself to achieving that improbable eradication target which now hangs over it like a dark cloud. When I interviewed her for the programme, Gwenda Thomas AM, the Deputy Minister responsible

New Books by Y Lolfa



Y Lolfa
www.ylolfa.com

IWA Legacy

For nearly quarter of a century the Institute of Welsh Affairs has helped raise the level of public debate on issues affecting Wales, by placing quality information in the public domain.

If the IWA and what it represents are important to you, please consider remembering the IWA in your will. Your generosity will allow us to continue promoting the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales for our future generations.

Whether large or small, a gift of this kind can have an important practical impact on our work as well as motivating others. It is also a way of extending your own generosity beyond your lifetime. If, therefore, you decide to remember a charity in your will, please consider us.

Naturally, a decision of this kind is one that you will wish to consider carefully, and even to take professional advice. It is always important for you and your family and for any other recipient that the wording of a will expresses accurately your own wishes.

We would be pleased to help you, should you wish to discuss options with our own staff. But if you have already decided to make a bequest to the IWA in your will, please let us know, so that we can express our thanks to you in your own lifetime.

If you would like to speak to us about any of the above, please contact our Director, John Osmond johnosmond@iwa.org.uk or our Deputy Director, Kirsty Davies kirstydavies@iwa.org.uk.

Institute of Welsh Affairs
4 Cathedral Road, Cardiff CF11 9LJ
Tel: 029 2066 0820

iwa

for children, reiterated the Welsh Government's commitment. However, she had difficulty in distinguishing between what is a commendable aspiration and what is almost certainly an impossible goal.

As I sat down to write this article two newspaper stories jumped out at me making me question the statistics we'd used in the documentary. One story in the *Western Mail* appeared to contradict the thrust of the programme. The headline read: 'The number of Welsh children in poverty at lowest level for 17 years.' It was seemingly at odds with recent statistics which showed the situation worsening, with one in three children or 200,000 young people in Wales living in poverty.

Based on these statistics I had suggested that Wales had the worst record for child poverty in the United Kingdom. Yet here in front of me was a newspaper headline apparently saying something very different, or was it?

At the same time as I was digesting the implications of the apparent sudden drop in the numbers of children in poverty in Wales, other headlines were also grabbing my attention. There, on the BBC news website, was the announcement that the UK's measurement of child poverty was to be redefined.

This was a reference to plans by Ian Duncan Smith, the Westminster Government's Works and Pensions Secretary, to change the way that child poverty is measured in the UK as part of a new approach to addressing the problem. *Goal posts* and *moving them* were words that immediately sprang to my mind, but perhaps I was being too hasty and I needed to look more closely at what was planned.

I learned that in 2010-11 the median income level that I quoted earlier had dropped. This meant that the £259 a week figure had been reduced by £8 a week. At a stroke, any child in a family with an income between the two levels of £259 and £251 a week was technically no longer poor. As a consequence 300,000 children in the UK were 'lifted out of poverty'.



This explains why those headlines I mentioned earlier were suggesting that things were getting better. But, of course, that's nonsense. Most of us are getting poorer which means that those families who have apparently been lifted out of poverty are in fact no better off. They're only statistically better off which is of no help to them at all.

However, these latest statistics are important because they clearly show that the Labour Government, which set itself a target of halving child poverty by 2010, has missed it's goal. That doesn't mean it didn't succeed in reducing the numbers, which it did, and otherwise things would have been worse. However, by it's own measure it has failed statistically.

Works and Pensions Secretary Ian Duncan Smith, has always believed that classifying child poverty according to family income creates a perverse incentive to lift people just over the 60 per cent mark. It explains, in part, his latest plans to consult on ways to widen the criteria for measuring child poverty. Into the mix he wants to include parents employment - code for worklessness - debt and family breakdown.

At the same time he made the announcement he reiterated the Westminster Government's commitment to eradicating child poverty by 2020. The Welsh Government also broadly welcomed the latest 'fall' in the rates of child poverty, but saw no virtue in any attempt to redefine the way it is measured.

At Westminster the consultation plans were immediately greeted with howls of protest from Labour and accusations that

the Coalition Government was running away from the problem. Elsewhere some charities warned that any drop in the numbers of children living in poverty would be short lived as cuts to tax credits and benefits take effect.

While politicians continue to dance on the head of a pin, vying with each other to maximize political capital from soulless statistics, more and more families find themselves struggling to bring up their children with less and less money coming into the household. Politicians don't have all the answers, but they're the ones who have set the targets which suggests they have a cunning plan. But do they?

The Children's Commissioner suggested that politicians should set more realistic targets based on shorter time cycles rather than endlessly chanting their mantra about 2020. However, he doubted whether the politicians were "brave enough to face the totality of the situation." It was a clear summation in the face of political flim flam and, for me, it spelled out a stark message to the political classes in Cardiff Bay and London. Get real or risk losing a whole generation of young people to poverty.

David Williams is an independent television producer and presenter. He was formerly the political editor of BBC Wales. His documentary *Playing with Poverty* was a Presentable TV programme for BBC1 Wales.

Why we need a strategy for young carers

Vanessa Webb examines the problems of the more than 11,000 Welsh children who look after family members

How many children in Wales are young carers? No one knows for sure and researchers have frequently remarked on the lack of accurate demographic information. In a press release in 2008, a Welsh Government spokesperson speculated that there could be 11,000 young carers under 17 in Wales and that the figure might be higher. Compare this with the number identified by Social Services. The latest local authority data submitted to the Assembly gives a total of just over a thousand in all 22 counties. However, when 847 young carers have been reported in Swansea alone this figure means that there is some serious work to do.

Loughborough University's Young Carers Research Group found evidence of children under five taking on major caring responsibilities. Young carers might be looking after a parent, a sibling or a grandparent. We are not talking here about the household chores that a child might normally take on as a member of the family but sometimes being the main person doing the family shopping, the cooking and cleaning.

A child might be supervising their parent's medication or be the one who decides when to call the doctor. Where the person they are caring for has mental health conditions, the child may be the one who supports them, listening to them and reassuring them. In cases where there is a physical illness, children are sometimes the ones who help them in

and out of bed or carry out intimate tasks such as toileting, washing and cleaning up. And they often worry about their relative when they are away from them.

It is obvious that these responsibilities can impact on a child's concentration, attendance and life at school, their health, and on their ability to take part in leisure activities. Not only are they losing their childhood, but the effects can carry through to adult life and impact upon their life chances and employment prospects. This is why it is so important to identify young carers and provide them with support.

One reason for the lack of clarity over the number of young carers is the varying definitions used in arriving at the statistics. Under-16, under-17, under-18 or 1-18 are some of the variations in criteria used. Are researchers referring to children caring for over 10 hours per week, over 20 hours per week, or 50 hours a week? Do they all refer to carrying out the same kind of tasks and assume the same level of responsibility? Are they all sole carers or are one of two or three family members involved? Calculations are also bedevilled by the fact that young carers do not necessarily recognise that that they fall into this socially constructed category. I know it took me several years looking after my elderly mother before I realised that the label applied to me although I worked in a related field.

A more significant reason for the continuing under-estimation of the

numbers is the fact that families and the young carers themselves do not always wish to be identified. In some cases it is because they are afraid the family will be split up by social services. Sometimes it is fear of the reactions of others, that they will be pitied, derided, or bullied, and indeed there is substantial evidence of bullying. Young carers feel different because they are not free to take part in the activities of their peer group. For these reasons we can be sure that the actual number falls far short of those children, young people and young adult carers who need attention and support.

Most young carers are more than willing to take on the work and it is mostly done from love as much as duty. Some have been quoted as saying that it has improved their relationship with the cared for parent. It may also help them mature in a way that is sometimes slower or lacking in children whose lives are free of serious responsibilities. But the Loughborough research, together with studies by others, have gathered detailed evidence of the damage that young carers can experience in their physical and mental health. So it is important to improve the way we identify and assess them, and then provide the support to mitigate excessive obligations. It is not enough to regard them as 'children in need' but as people in their own right.

The crux of the matter is what should we be doing to help meet young carers' needs? Here we have three sources of



Young carers from the Swansea Neath Port Talbot Young Carers project enjoy karting at Skidz, the Swansea indoor karting centre.



Young Carers involved in a dance and art session at the Forge Fach Community Resource Centre, at Clydach, with Port Talbot-based Tan Dance, the community dance organisation run by Swansea and Neath Port Talbot councils.

reinforcing policy recommendations:

- An early *Study of Young Carers in Wales* by researchers at Bangor University advised raising the awareness of professionals and encouraging joint working, appropriate assessment procedures, better access to information, consultation with young carers and their families and the development of Young Carers Projects.
- The 2007 Young Carers Network's own report listed more awareness amongst professionals and identified the following practical steps: ID cards, free bus passes, support at school, and respite care.
- The 2010 report *Full of care*, a survey by the Children's Commissioner for Wales, packed with information and comments from young carers themselves, suggests a feasibility study into ID cards, and echoes the Bangor study in advising co-ordinated working. It recommends that young carers should be taking on fewer inappropriate tasks, and that there should be better access to leisure activities, which is by implication a call

for respite care. It says young carers issues should be embedded in generic Children and Young People Plans, and calls for a pan-Wales Strategy for Young Carers.

Like the Scottish Government, the Welsh Government has made young carers one of their priorities. With its primary legislative powers from the start, the Scottish Government approved an Act entitling carers of all ages to an assessment of their needs independent of the person they were caring for. Both Governments originally decided to mainstream young carer issues across several policy fields. This was arguably an effective way of dealing with it. However, a large-scale research and consultation exercise in Scotland during 2004-5 recommended that a Young Carers Strategy be created. Initially the Scottish Government declined to have one but it is interesting that they changed their mind and in 2010, alongside their renewed Carers Strategy, they published a Young Carers Strategy *Getting it Right for Young Carers*.

In Wales, legislative powers have at last made possible the Carers Measure. In the way we work best in Wales,

the Government has supported the development of the Young Carers Forum, the Young Carers' Project Workers Network, and the Carers' Officers Network. These have been pro-active in commissioning research and backing work by Children in Wales and the third sector. Yet many recommendations of previous studies remain on the drawing board and funding of Young Carers Projects is still quite precarious.

At a time when the Welsh Government is reviewing its Carers Strategy, is it too much to hope that it might look at what has happened in Scotland and recognise the impetus a Young Carers Strategy would give to support the needs of young carers and those who work with them?

Vanessa Webb is a doctoral student at Swansea University's College of Human and Health Sciences and is Chair of Swansea Neath Port Talbot Crossroads Care.

5

Environment

Articles

Our central organising principle

Our central organising principle

Elin Royles says the Welsh Government's forthcoming Sustainable Development Bill has groundbreaking potential

Can a small nation be a global leader or an international exemplar? We rarely associate Welsh Government policy with such terms. Despite its small nation status and the multiple constraints faced during devolution's first three terms, Wales has achieved an international profile on sustainable development.

Successive Labour-led Welsh Governments have engaged internationally through such organisations as the network of regional governments for sustainable development (nrg4SD) and the Climate Group. These opportunities have given Wales international recognition and a platform for its sustainable development credentials. The presence of Environment Minister John Griffiths' at the Rio+20 summit in June is the most recent example. Other initiatives have included the Wales for Africa programme and the Territorial Approaches to Climate Change project with the Umbale region of Uganda.

At the same time securing meaningful and consistent implementation of sustainable development across government and policy areas has been challenging. One response is the Welsh Government's Sustainable Development Bill which will be introduced this autumn. The aim is to embed sustainable development as a 'central organising principle' of government and expand the Welsh

Government's sustainable development duty to embrace the wider public sector.

This IWA's new publication *Wales' Central Organising Principle: Legislating for Sustainable Development* arises from a series of conferences that have responded to this process. The volume's eleven chapters provide wide-ranging academic, civil society and practitioner perspectives from Wales, complemented by comparative approaches.

Highlighting the wider global picture, Gareth Wyn Jones' contribution *Overshooting Limits: seeking a new paradigm* provides a sophisticated, highly readable and comprehensive analysis that critiques the current model of economic growth. Drawing on scientific, political-economic, psychological and sociological analysis, he compellingly illustrates our dependence on unsustainable growth to the extent that we face a 'limits' crisis. Reducing our environmental impact calls for a new paradigm of economic development, reforming political and financial systems and global cooperation.

Action is required at multiple levels of government. For Wales, Wyn Jones outlines short-term, urgent actions and a longer-term comprehensive strategy to develop an economy that is sustainable economically, socially and environmentally. Practical initiatives to make sustainable development a

'central organising principle' include devolving energy, planning and transport powers.

In their chapter Susan Baker and Katarina Eckerberg discuss the nature of governance to promote sustainable development in the EU. Based on extensive academic research, they illustrate that while state and supra-state levels are pivotal to the governance of sustainable development, in some EU states, sub-state governments have been more active than the states themselves. Wales is therefore not alone. Another important reminder for Welsh discussions is that close working between government and civil society is key to effective governing for sustainable development.

Andrea Ross' contribution also offers a broader EU and UK context. Wales' limited progress on sustainable development is reflected by comparisons across the EU. Reflecting on the factors that explain the failures of delivering sustainable development in the UK, Ross argues for a strong institutional and legislative framework similar to the one being advocated for Wales. This entails placing duties on all government bodies. Ross highlights how Welsh Government proposals diverge from what can be viewed as the UK Government's poor leadership on sustainable development as it prioritises short-term challenges.

A number of chapters directly focus on the details of the forthcoming Bill. Indeed, there are strong commonalities in the recommendations for the Bill's content. Former Environment Minister Jane Davidson contextualises the Bill within current global debates. Her previous ministerial status makes her well placed to discuss how international engagement has informed Wales' understanding of sustainable development and the processes leading to the Bill. She argues that government realised that "taking sustainability seriously" required stronger legislation to ensure systemic change. She



Size of Wales and Welsh Government 'One Million trees project' in Mbale, Uganda. The Size of Wales project is bringing together the people of Wales to help protect an area of tropical forest the size of our nation - www.sizeofwales.org.uk

recommends the following features:

- A legal framework for the SD strategy with requirements for public bodies;
- Audit mechanisms for the delivery of the strategy; and
- A Commissioner for Sustainable Futures.

From a legal perspective, Peter Roderick's chapter calls for a comprehensive legislative package. He proposes that the legislation ensures Welsh Ministers make a sustainable development strategy a legal requirement, including recognising the

precautionary principle. In addition, he proposes a statutory system that respects planetary boundaries, a Commissioner for Sustainable Futures (elected by and accountable to the Assembly), and a Welsh Charter for Environmental Rights.

Given their links with WWF Cymru, there are there are similarities between Roderick and Anne Meikle's contribution. Like Wyn Jones, Meikle highlights how current economic growth is unsustainable and makes valuable comments on the limitations of the current sustainable development arrangements. She calls for the Bill to take a global perspective on developing

an environmentally sustainable future, for instance by strengthening the duty to recognise “living within environmental limits” and to respect planetary boundaries. In addition to advocating a strong Commissioner and a Welsh charter, she proposes that the legislation’s impact on decision-making should include budgetary matters and that it should promote long-term thinking across the public sector.

Two chapters inform the discussions around establishing a statutory basis for a Sustainable Development Commissioner. The current, non-statutory Commissioner, Peter Davies, reflects on what he calls an implementation gap between aspirations and outcomes. He draws attention to linkages between Welsh and global discussions, by calling for a Welsh Independent Commissioner alongside a UN Commissioner for Future Generations.

Davies’ emphasis on the need to inform current discussions through examining the arrangements of other Commissioners in Wales and models developed in other countries is particularly important. Consequently, given the value of policy learning from other cases, Sándor Fülöp’s contribution is important. Elected to become Hungary’s first Parliamentary Commissioner for Future Generations in 2008, his chapter refers to international examples of sustainable development

Wales’ Central Organising Principle is a highly interesting and timely volume. It is important in evaluating Welsh sustainable development policy and should contribute to the production of robust legislation.

- especially, of course, in Hungary. He develops a useful summary of key features to be considered in other contexts, thus clearly relevant to discussions in Wales.

The legislation’s key test will be its direct impact on policy making and implementation within the Welsh Government and other public bodies. Tim Peppin, of the Welsh Local



Environment Minister John Griffiths at the Rio+20 summit in June, signing a charter agreed between the Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development (nrg4SD).

Government Association, discusses the Bill’s implications for local authorities. The chapter’s strength is in raising a number of detailed and practical issues that require consideration if the Bill is to make a substantial difference. They include calling for a community-centred and participatory approach and that the bill should be easily understood by the public.

Health policy is a significant challenge, particularly given resource constraints and our economic position. The contribution of Stephen Palmer, Professor of Public Health at Cardiff, suggests how making sustainable development a ‘central organising principle’ could promote joined-up thinking across economic, social and environmental policy. He recommends that the legislation places a particular emphasis on prioritising children. These policy specific discussions of the Bill’s

implications could have been extended in the volume to other challenging areas: economic development and the impact on Welsh transport policy.

Wales’ Central Organising Principle is a highly interesting and timely volume. It is important in evaluating Welsh sustainable development policy and should contribute to the production of robust legislation. It should be required reading

for those well-versed in the crises facing the planet, but more importantly for those who need convincing that action in Wales is essential.

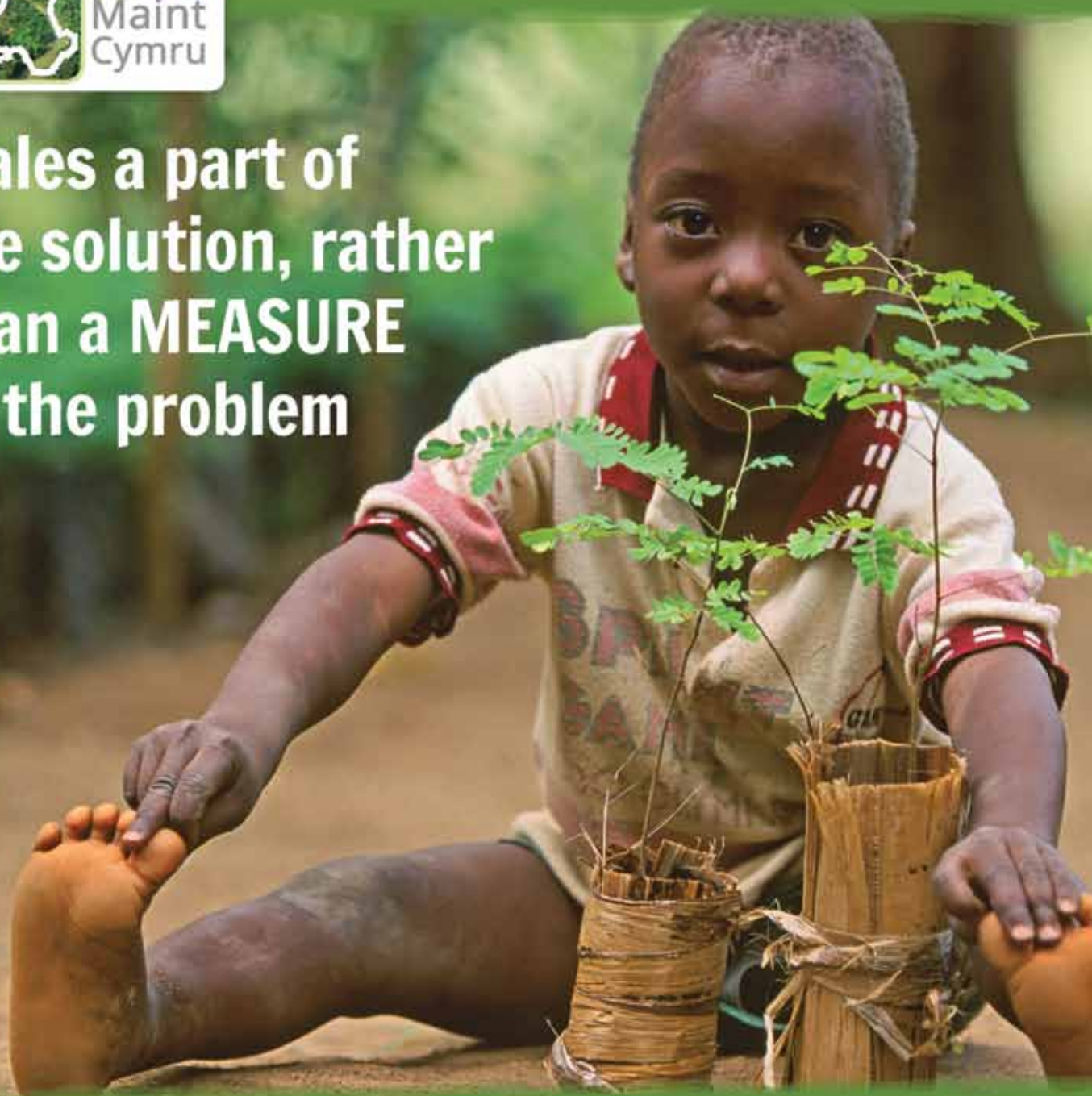
Many contributors make the connection between global and national challenges clear and the need for changing public attitudes. Gareth Wyn Jones, in particular, argues that we need to address a widespread lack of understanding about the issues amongst the general public. Anne Meikle stresses the need for “a paradigm shift in public service delivery and leadership from all politicians to ensure that the public understand and support the changes, even though there will be hard choices ahead”.

The Sustainable Development Bill will be the first piece of primary legislation specifically relating to sustainable development in the UK. Consequently, it has the potential to be a world leader. The volume provides an impetus to build on Jane Davidson’s optimistic view that the values embedded within Welsh society provide a basis for the Bill to “lead others to a more sustainable world”.

Elin Royles is a lecturer at the Institute of Welsh Politics, Aberystwyth University and coordinates the Welsh Politics and Society Masters Programme. *Wales’ Central Organising Principle: Legislating for Sustainable Development*, edited by Anna Nicholl and John Osmond, is published by the IWA at £10.



Wales a part of the solution, rather than a **MEASURE** of the problem



Size of Wales is a unique national scheme to sustain an area of tropical forest the size of Wales as part of our national response to climate change.

If you or your organisation would like to get involved we would love to hear from you.

www.sizeofwales.org.uk

 @sizeofwales

 facebook.com/sizeofwales



This advertising space was kindly donated to Size of Wales by ICAEW Wales

6

Comms

Articles

A lost model
for Welsh
public service
broadcasting

The inaugural
Welsh vook

Talking to India

A lost model for Welsh public service broadcasting

James Stewart looks back at what might have been in the provision of an equivalent to a Welsh Press Association service

It's two years since Culture Secretary Jeremy Hunt scrapped plans for 'independently-funded news consortia' (IFNCs) to provide services in Wales, Scotland and the north-east of England on ITV's channel 3. The process of selecting consortia in the three pilot areas produced some innovative ideas for an alternative supply of public service journalism to compete with the BBC. The plans were widely welcomed in Wales, where there is perceived to be a 'democratic deficit' linked to the poor penetration of Welsh-based media.

Two years on, we've had the announcement of Hunt's promised alternative of local TV, including Cardiff and Swansea in the first round of proposed licenses. Another change is in the attitude of ITV, which appears to have reversed its 2009 threat to pull out of regional news and other programming - as revealed in a speech by Chief Executive Adam Crozier to the Cardiff Business Club in March.

It was that fear that Wales could lose all news and other local programming on Channel 3, which made the idea of an IFNC attractive to many. Though that possibility is off the agenda, it's worth recalling where it came from and what might have been - for the record and possibly for future reference.

Imagine a news service for Wales which went beyond a daily half-hour TV programme, morning and hourly bulletins and a limited web site. The news-gathering operation would be fed by staff in bureaux across Wales and a network of local newspapers and radio stations (the consortium). The service would include a fully-fledged website with opportunities for citizens to contribute and participate. The outputs would include a supply of news, equivalent to a Welsh Press Association service, available to all non-commercial outlets as well as the members of the consortium, including local websites and blogs, community radio and local TV. The blogosphere - such as it is in Wales - could become a central feature of the networked service. One version of this vision can still be viewed on Youtube - WalesLive.tv.

Whether this may still be a model for media in the future, we don't know. Whether designing and supplying it from the top down was the best way is open to question. But there's no doubt that the investment of £6 million of public money per year in a pilot project to see what could be done in Wales was an interesting possibility.

Underlying the case for action was the crisis in the Welsh press and the democratic

Imagine a news service for Wales which went beyond a daily half-hour TV programme, morning and hourly bulletins and a limited web site. The news-gathering operation would be fed by staff in bureaux across Wales and a network of local newspapers and radio stations (the consortium). The service would include a fully-fledged website with opportunities for citizens to contribute and participate.

deficit associated with it – a subject which was most recently covered by ClickonWales.org (12 May 2012). When ITV threatened to add to the crisis by withdrawing from Welsh programming, Ofcom's director for Wales, Rhodri Williams, warned in evidence to the Welsh Affairs Committee in the House of Commons, "These are challenging circumstances the like of which we have not seen in Welsh broadcasting since television first came to Wales" (*English Language Television Broadcasting in Wales*, July 2009).

The idea for independently-funded news consortia can be traced as far back as Ofcom's review of Public Service Broadcasting in 2003-4. In it the idea of a 'Public Service Publisher' was floated. By the time of the second review, in 2009, Ofcom had come up with a different – but linked – suggestion for the devolved nations which "could be based on the establishment of independently funded consortia to provide an alternative source of news to the BBC" (Ofcom,

Putting Viewers First. 2009).

When the IFNC bidding process was launched, Richard Hooper, who chaired the Government panel, set out a vision of a new style of public service broadcasting:

"Let me be clear about what we are looking for: quality news reporting with a mix of local, regional and national (in the case of Wales and Scotland) audiences firmly in mind; genuine innovation, not just business as usual; strong multiplatform applications working together across the web, local newspapers, local radio and television where appropriate, utilising each different medium's special characteristics; and finally, a revenue generation model that aspires to longer term sustainability" (Department of Culture, Media and Sport press release, 13 January 2010).

Hooper and his team decided that UTV's

bid was the closest to this vision, but by the time the winner was announced in March 2010, it was clear that the project was likely to be still-born. Jeremy Hunt did not like the IFNC model and was determined to put public money into local TV.

Hunt had repeatedly pointed to the contrast between Birmingham Alabama with eight local TV stations and Birmingham England with none. Sceptics pointed to the failure of local TV in Britain – including the examples which Hunt cited in his announcement. Sly Bailey of Trinity Mirror said they did not see 'City TV' as a viable proposition. Their research suggests that the costs were too high and the revenues too low to support a sustainable business model (*Press Gazette*, 9 June 2010).

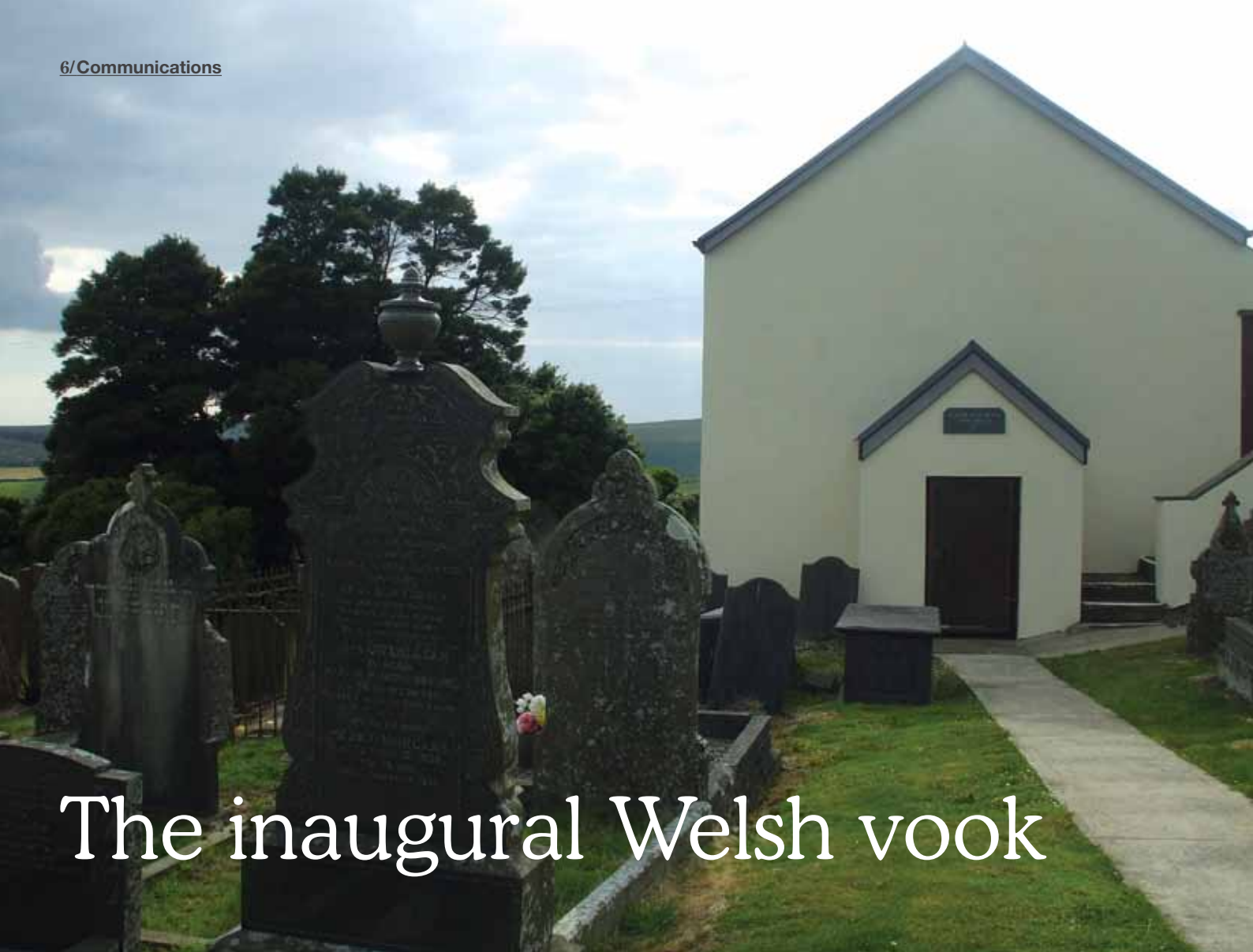
As the saying goes, only time will tell whether local TV in Swansea, Cardiff and other cities can succeed. The future of local programming on ITV may be more secure than it once seemed. But Wales is likely to regret the lost opportunity of the unfortunately-named IFNC.

James Stewart teaches journalism at the University of Glamorgan. This article is a shortened version of a paper, 'Mission aborted: public service broadcasting in Wales without an INFC', published for the first online issue of the *Journal of the Association for Journalism Education* <http://journalism-education.org/2012/04/mission-aborted-pbs-in-wales/>

clickonwales

www.clickonwales.org

iwa



The inaugural Welsh vook

Baran Congregationalist Chapel near Neath. In 1830 almost the entire congregation, about 50 people, emigrated to join an agricultural community of Welsh settlers in Bradford County, Pennsylvania. The Welsh Settlement, as it became known, established a church in the Pike township in the county, in an area that was later known as Neath. Photo: Hazel Gower.

Colin Thomas describes the production he has in hand for our first ebook, a combination of text and video, on *Wales and America*

Fifty years ago a Welsh friend and I were climbing the steps of the Washington Monument when, to our surprise and delight, we came across a stone inscribed *Fy Iaith, Fy Nglwad. Fy Ngendl. WALES. Cymry Am Byth (One language, One country. Our Birthplace. WALES. Wales For Ever).*

Bizarrely, at the same moment, we could hear the tune of *God Save the Queen*. It was being sung to the words *My Country Tis of Thee* at the Lincoln Memorial where we discovered hundreds were gathered to commemorate the centenary of Lincoln's announcement of the liberation of America's slaves. At that time Welsh-Americans overwhelmingly supported Lincoln and his decision.

Fifty years later I am just about to produce *The Dragon and the Eagle*, a vook on Wales and America. A vook or enhanced ebook is a combination of text and video downloadable on to a tablet like an iPad

or *Kindle Fire*. The video component comes from the rich archives of BBC Wales, ITV Wales and S4C, thanks to their invaluable and generous cooperation.

Text and video tell a remarkable yet familiar story. Familiar because Welsh emigrants to America faced the same dilemma that is encountered by all emigrants – how do you hold on to your language and culture whilst at the same time becoming good citizens of your new country? Remarkable because of the powerful Welsh-Americans I discovered in telling the story.

They included Cadwalader Morgan challenging his fellow farmers to explain how slave ownership could be reconciled with their Quaker beliefs, Evan Jones standing by the Cherokees when they were expelled from their territory, Margaret Roberts campaigning with equal passion against alcohol and for suffrage, John L. Lewis doggedly

defending American miners and the right of unskilled workers to trade union representation.

But not romanticising the story either, the vook remembers gangsters like John Llewellyn Humphries, known as 'Murray the Hump', the right hand man of Al Capone and said to be the organiser of the St. Valentine's Day Massacre. It also remembers the Welsh foremen and mine managers in America who kept the best jobs for fellow Welshmen, to the murderous fury of Irish immigrants who arrived later.

The vook seems to be an ideal way of telling these stories. However, I have had a problem in convincing Welsh publishers to embrace the new technology, many apparently reluctant to step outside their comfort zone. One of them responded to another proposal for a vook that I had suggested by asking me to rewrite it, dropping out the references to any video content!

Fortunately a Welsh television facility company, Gorilla Group TV, has taken a more far-sighted view. Despite the fact that *The Dragon and the Eagle* did not get funding from the Welsh Government's Digital Development initiative, Richard Moss, Gorilla's managing director, appreciated the vook's potential and provided editing, dubbing and graphics facilities. Cerys Matthews will be recording the voiceover for the video inserts and Evan Dawson, a young Welsh composer, will be writing the background music. Thanks to financial help from the Welsh Books Council, Wales's first vook will be published in Welsh as well as in English.

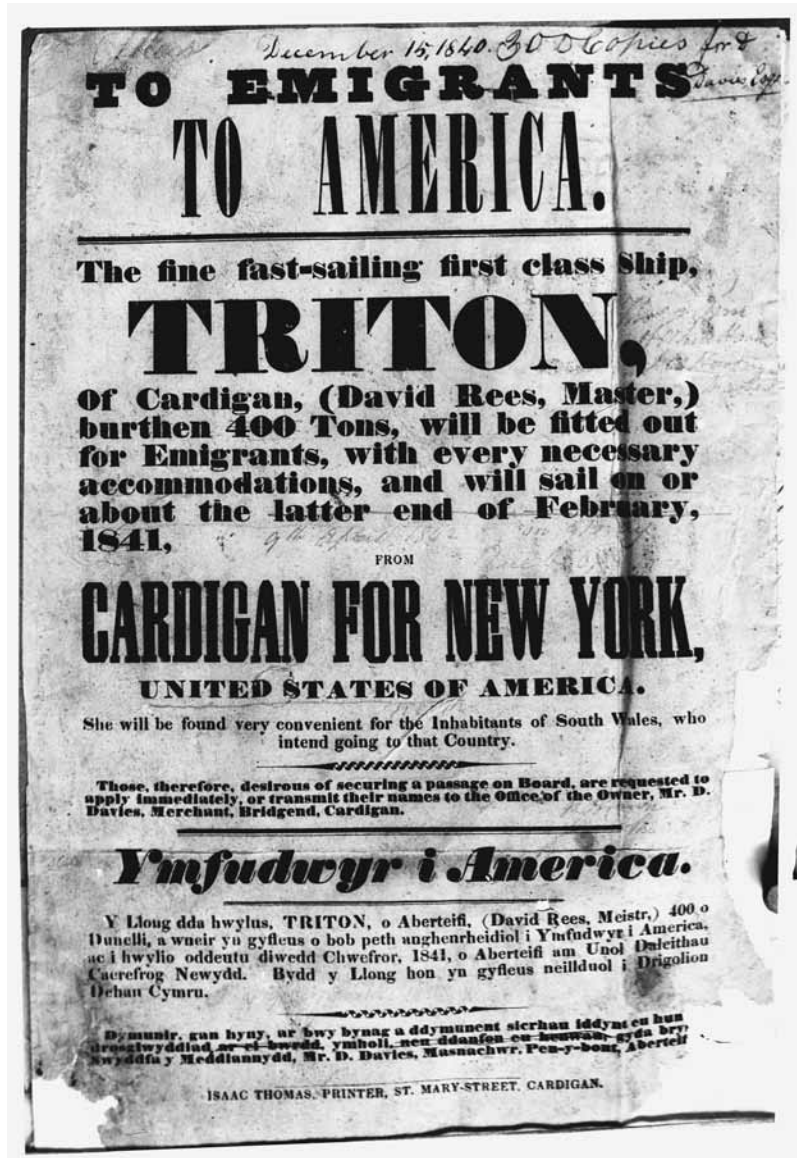
"The overarching aim is to get the lion of the economy to lie down with the lamb of culture," said Professor Ian Hargreaves in a talk he gave to an Institute of Welsh Affairs conference *Creativity in Hard Times*, in October 2010. Following up on his report *The Heart of Digital Wales* earlier that year, he stressed the need for "an intense focus being applied to growth sectors such as digital content". And he went

on to say "We need a government interface with the creative sector which is ambitious and entrepreneurial, not risk averse and timid."

Some UK publishers have seen the way that the wind is blowing, noting that the revenue from the sale of vooks or enhanced ebooks grew faster than those from plain text titles in 2010 – by 255 per cent compared with 201 per cent for standard ebooks, according to a

report from the Association of American Publishers in August 2011. Penguin plans to release 50 vooks this year, up from 35 in 2011 (*Wall Street Journal*, 20 January 2011).

Touch Press has spotted that there is a substantial market for highly produced apps, whether described as vooks or enhanced e-books. For some customers they are becoming the digital equivalent of coffee table books. Torch Press's *Wasteland*, based on T.S. Eliot's poem,



Poster advertising passage from Cardigan to New York in the sailing ship Triton in 1841. Subsequently, in the 1880s, the author Colin Thomas's great, great grandfather, Herbert Davies, captained the Triton. Source: National Library of Wales.



iwar
Western Mail
2012
business
AWARDS

in association with



Closing Date Friday 21st September 2012

Request an entry form at
www.iwa.org.uk/businessawards

Awards Ceremony Friday 9th November,
 Cardiff City Hall

Call 029 2066 0820 for tickets



Sefydliad Gwleidyddiaeth Cymru
 Institute of Welsh Politics

Cwrs Meistr Gwleidyddiaeth a
Chymdeithas Cymru - arloesol a dyfeisgar

- Llawn Amser neu Ran Amser
- Cyfrwng Cymraeg neu Saesneg
- Datblygu sgiliau cyflogadwyedd
- Amrywiol ysgoloriaethau ar gael
- Astudio mewn canolfan ragoriaeth fyd-eang

Welsh Politics and Society
Masters Programme - pioneering and innovative

- Full-time or part-time
- English or Welsh-medium course
- Developing employability skills
- Various scholarships available
- Study within a world renowned centre of excellence

Am fwy o fanylion, cysylltwch â / For further information, contact:
 Sefydliad Gwleidyddiaeth Cymru / Institute of Welsh Politics
 Prifysgol Aberystwyth University
 01970 622336 / sgc.iwp@aber.ac.uk

Marc Jennings,
Graphic Design.

Branding,
design for print & web.

07970 029185
 029 2049 9566
marc@theundercard.co.uk
www.theundercard.co.uk

Rondo Media produces drama, sport, music, events, factual and entertainment content, including:

- S4C twice-weekly youth drama series **Rownd a Rownd**
- RTS and Broadcast award winning BBC1 drama **The Indian Doctor**
- Comedy drama series **Gwlad yr Astra Gwyn**
- Football series **Sgorio**
- **Llangollen International Musical Eisteddfod** coverage for S4C and BBC Wales
- **The Incomparable Wynne Evans** BBC documentary
- **Pryd o Sêr** – S4C food entertainment format



rondomedia.co.uk
rondo@rondomedia.co.uk

RONDO

Cardiff Office
 029 2022 3456

Caernarfon Office
 01286 675722

Menai Bridge Office
 01248 715001

An 1832 painting of a Mandan Indian village on the upper reaches of the Missouri River. For many centuries the Mandan Indians were thought to be descendants of Prince Madoc, said to have discovered America in about 1180.



recovered its substantial investment within four weeks and, perhaps surprisingly, became No. 1 in Apple's list of best selling book apps. Other successful products from the press are *Solar System* and *The Elements*.

There would be no shortage of Welsh-American customers for *The Dragon and the Eagle*. In September 2011 I spoke to the Pittsburgh Saint David's Society about putting Welsh history on television and was struck by the vitality of the Society. They had persuaded Pennsylvania State University to include a Welsh room as one of the national rooms in the Cathedral of Learning – a miniature Welsh chapel. According to the Americymru website (<http://americymru.net>) there were 44 celebrations of St David's Day in the USA this year. An annual Festival of Wales will

be held once again in September and the Welsh-American newspaper *Ninnau/Y Drych* is still going strong.

The day after sinking a few pints with the Welsh-Americans of Pittsburgh in a bar adorned with a huge Y Ddraig Goch, I went down to the riverside in Homestead to the place where one of the most dramatic incidents in *The Dragon and the Eagle* had happened back in 1893. In the 'Battle of Homestead', Welsh trade unionists had joined a strike of steelworkers and an armed confrontation ensued with the Pinkerton guards hired by the owners, Frick and Carnegie. This led to the deaths of three Pinkerton guards and eleven strikers, one of them Welshman John Elias Jones. Another, John Edwards, was blacklisted when the strike was defeated and survived by

touring with an orchestra he formed with his eight talented children.

Not long afterwards, Carnegie sold Homestead and his vast steel empire to J.P. Morgan, an American of Welsh descent and one of the wealthiest men in the world. Did conditions for the Homestead steel workers, many of whom worked twelve-hour days without any holidays, improve? Not one iota. It's important that I don't oversimplify the Welsh-American story

Colin Thomas is a television producer and director and the author of the stage play *Mr Stanley's Magic Lantern*, the radio play *Hiraeth in Hughesovka*, and the book with accompanying DVD *Dreaming A City*.

Talking to India

Peter Finch delves into the opaque world of accessing the next generation of broadband

There are some services we buy that are clean and clear. They are value for money, regulated, fulfil an economic and cultural need, are usually comprehensible, and work when you plug them in. Radio, TV, electricity, water and gas are like this. But not internet access. Unfortunately, broadband is not one of those things.

Since the mid-1980s we've been told by governments, in London and in Cardiff, and from both side of the political divide, that provision of fast broadband is central to our economic needs. Without it we will be unable to compete with the rest of the world. Emboldened by the digital revolution, we have spent time either at the end of telephone lines dialling-up and listening to the squeaks our modems emit or putting filters into sockets so that the ADSL can work. We've tried. Somehow some of us managed to follow the instructions and the stuff has leaked through into our computers. Uncomprehendingly and often in awe we've engaged with the modern world.

It's now thirty years since all this started and things are once again on a roll. We are to get broadband at miracle speeds hitherto only available in the scintillating economies of the Far East. The stuff will arrive like free prescriptions or complimentary swimming for the over-60s. What will we be able to do with it? Possibilities include teleconferencing, desk top sharing, virtual exhibition attendance, instant music and video download, myriad-station on-demand television, believable 3-D environments, access to telemedicine, government databases, distance learning, national services, work sharing, remote operation of manufacturing facilities, and control of service industries from armchairs. Wave your arm, touch the world and all of it

will be yours.

"A superfast network will be the foundation for a new economic dynamism, creating hundreds of thousands of jobs and adding billions to our GDP," said Jeremy Hunt, Secretary of State for Olympics, Culture, Media and Sport. Geography, still a sticking point for most despite years of expectation, will at last dissolve.

There's a particular Welsh requirement for Super-Fast broadband. In a country where the economy is at the mercy of a dominant public sector which is addled by difficult and largely rural geography, and which operates against a post-industrial backdrop of low resource and significant need, effective digital communication is an essential. Presented at the highest speed possible Super-Fast Broadband may well be Wales's future salvation.

We need this stuff. And because most of us don't understand it we'll need it explained. Broadband is a service that has long suffered from the blandishments of the snake oil salesman. Service is promised and then not delivered. Advertised speeds are virtually never achieved. Service breakdowns can't be fixed. Dispute and non-communication exists between many of the service providers. Ring up to complain and you talk to India.

Most broadband reaches the user by one of two main methods. It either comes down fibre optic, of the kind laid by NTL a decade ago and now operated by Virgin Media. Or it arrives via the copper wire of the telephone cable. BT own that network and via their Openreach brand are a major player in the field of supply. Regulation requires BT to allow others to use its telephone network. Talk Talk, O2, PlusNet, Orange, Sky, AOL and other familiar names all buy wholesale access to BT's network

and then sell their services on. You know how it is. You ring up Talk Talk to complain about a break in service and they tell you the problem is with the line. That's run by BT. And BT won't speak to you because you buy from Talk Talk. Stalemate. Virgin Media keep their cable network to themselves.

But just to complicate things if you live in an area not reached by Virgin's cables you may well end up buying their broadband as delivered along BT's phone line network. Broadband is an opaque world.

In rural areas broadband supply via satellite can be installed. Set up costs are high and service delivery can be compromised by rainstorm and heavy cloud but such systems can get usable internet into those green deserts that fill Wales's central heart.

It is also possible to use UK cell phone companies' 3G mobile internet services to power Wi-Fi set ups which deliver internet browsing to local personal computers. Speeds are low, bandwidth fragile, and service subject to the location of phone masts. Bandwidth is the measure of not so much how fast the data arrives but how many users can be coped with simultaneously. The soon to arrive 4G network will certainly allow things to improve.

Meantime Wales has to live with low speed and creaky ADSL everywhere phone lines run. The top end is unbeatable fibre-delivered broadband if you are lucky enough to live in the heart of a city. If you don't then you survive on promises that things will get better.

They've hung in the air for a time now, those promises. But now at last they appear to be made good.

Aware that if left to the vagaries of market forces Wales will never get anything like a comprehensive broadband service, the Welsh Government established its Next Generation Broadband for Wales project in 2011. This seeks "to ensure that all residential premises and all businesses in Wales will have access to Next Generation Broadband by 2015, with the

ambition that 50 per cent or more have access to 100Mbps". Since most of us get by on flaky speeds somewhere below 4 Mbps, that will be quite a change.

If you live in an area where your regular service provider delivers below 2 Mbs you can already get Welsh Government aid of up to £1,000 to install satellite or other equipment to put things right. Hadn't hear about that facility? Neither had I. Check the web for details here: <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/businessandconomy/broadbandandict/broadband/bbss/?lang=en>

In addition the UK government's Super Cities Urban Broadband Fund, announced by the Chancellor in his Autumn 2011 statement, has selected Cardiff as an early beneficiary. The Welsh capital will become one of ten super-connected cities across the UK with total 80-100Mbps broadband provision.

Suddenly Wales sounds like the broadband place to be. Up ahead the providers jostle. To date both BT and Virgin Media, the two main players, have been resolutely commercial in what they deliver. Supply is made available only where the business case is proven. For Virgin this means no further cable laying and an exploitation of the network which already exists. The cables which Virgin inherited snake along the close terraces of Wales's urban areas; they rarely get to the leafy suburbs.

BT, whose new Super-Fast fibre provision is centred around what is known as Fibre To The Cabinet, have made the decision to supply as much of Wales as they can, so long as in each case their investment can return a profit. Inevitably there will be cold spots - difficult inaccessible rural localities, and zones in cities behind trees, on hills and at the end of long roads.

When I spoke to them, both companies told me that to date subsidy from public sources was not a component of their business models. Like Barclays during the banking crisis, Virgin cherishes its independence and will not accept the compromises



and conditions that public subsidy will inevitably bring. On the other hand, BT is more open and suggests that negotiations with those who will manage both Cardiff's Super Cities operation and the larger Next Generation project are inevitable. The Welsh Government has already announced that it is talking to 'several bidders' to ensure digital access right across Wales.

Seeing the future writing on the wall both Virgin media and BT are offering existing consumers new Super-Fast Broadband boosts at no extra cost. During 2012 Virgin will double their speeds, which in some cases means offering consumers 120 Mbs for the same monthly sum that once bought them 50. BT Infinity (BT's Super-Fast brand) will offer downloads at 76 Mbs with the added benefit of uploads at 19 Mbs, a speed Virgin has yet to reach.

This is great if you can get it and many can. But there are still those whose premises hide behind breaks in Virgin's cables or whose home is just those few hundred yards further from BT's cabinet, enough to downgrade traffic along their dedicated cable to mundane levels. Further out there's still little, although not for long.

Given the future contained in some of these super speeds it's surprising that consumer take-up has been as sluggish as it has. The ability to receive on line TV, for example, might have been enough to significantly enlarge the consumer base. But it clearly hasn't. "The Killer app has yet to arrive," Virgin told me. But once consumers begin realise what such high speeds

can deliver – social care, educational services, all the movies you could ever want – things will change.

Within the super city provision will soon be total. How do I know? It's what they've all told me. BT are enabling exchanges to offer Infinity at a prodigious rate. They still have some difficult areas in Penylan, Culverhouse Cross, Radyr, Roath Lock and Pentyrch. They've set themselves their target date for total supply by the end of 2012, which sounds reasonable. We'll see.

The City Council have submitted their Super City plan to the Department of Culture, Media and Sport and are now working on the details. These will be submitted by the end of August, 2012. The expectation is that an announcement with a figure attached to it, anticipated as somewhere between £7-12 million, will be made by the Chancellor in his autumn statement.

Not only will the city then benefit from total high speed 80 Mbs minimum broadband coverage by March 2015, but the central areas will also be saturated in accessible Wi-Fi. This is a far cry from where we came in decades ago, sitting and waiting for the image to arrive down the dialled-up phone wire, appearing line by tedious line on the tiny screens of our PCs.

What has driven this? Governmental economic future modelling is a more likely source than consumer demand. In the recent local elections all parties claimed responsibility, though the ones that shouted the loudest didn't find that it gained them that many votes.

In his seminal 1995 set of predictions *The Road Ahead*, Bill Gates, former head of Microsoft, postulated a future in which high-speed Broadband was the norm everywhere. Computers, he said, would be like radios. You'd turn them on and they'd work. It seems we're almost there.

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

7

Heritage

Articles

Farming
and food in
Abergavenny

Retaining the link between farming and food in Abergavenny

Andris Taurins says planners are playing fast and loose with the heritage of one of our oldest market towns

Visitors approaching Abergavenny are greeted by a sign welcoming them to an 'historic market town'. However, if Monmouthshire County Council has its way, very soon the sign will have to be changed to something more appropriate like 'Welcome to the dormitory town of Abergavenny'.

Markets have been a main feature of the town for many centuries and are now consolidated into two: the indoor Victorian Town Hall market including the outdoor traders' market in Brewery Yard, and the livestock market located between Lion Street, Old Hereford Road and Park Road. Located in the centre of the town, both contribute to Abergavenny's distinctive character. The town still has farming and food at its core, something that the community wants to keep. If ever there was a case to support a Mary Portas type of intervention this would be it.

Yet little has been invested in the maintenance of the livestock market over the last few decades. As a result it has fallen into disrepair to the point where the council now asserts that it is uneconomic to bring it up to the standard required. Rather cleverly, they have contrived a situation that neatly fits their argument.

The Council says the market, a valuable piece of real estate, is beyond regeneration and can only be sold to private developers. Yet, for more than a decade the site has been surrounded in controversy. In 2009 a £11million scheme to redevelop the site with developer Henry Boot collapsed.

The Council has never investigated how the site might be redeveloped as a modern market facility. Instead it claims the market is uneconomic, too small to warrant the investment needed to make it viable. This statement has been repeated so many times that many people have been persuaded that indeed it must be so – that is, until it was challenged by Abergavenny's Civic Society.

In March a feasibility study, commissioned by the Society from civil engineering consultants QuadConsult of Cardiff, said it would be cheaper to redevelop the existing site, at an estimated £2.25 million, compared with the Council's alternative proposals to build a new market at Bryngwyn near Raglan, which would cost about £5 million. The report also warned that the Council's plans for a supermarket and library on the present site would be damaging.

The consultants recommend modernising and upgrading the buildings to improve services, creating retail and office space and renewing the cafe to serve traders, visitors and promote local farm produce. It says a renovated and vibrant market could generate income for the council and promote the town as a centre of excellence

An auction underway at Abergavenny's livestock market, still a lively hub that contributes to the town's distinctive character.



The indoor market at Abergavenny's Victorian town hall.

for rural produce and agriculture. The report recommends developing links with rest of the town and introducing a pay and display car park for use on non-market days to serve the town centre.

The potential earnings from the Council's alternative Bryngwyn site, from

auctioneers' rent, are around £35,000 a year. Our consultants calculated that the net annual loss to the Council, after writing off the £5 million initial investment, would be in the order of £350,000 a year. By comparison, the regenerated Abergavenny livestock market has the potential to generate £258,000 a year after development costs have been paid off.

More important is the fact that the existing site, if redeveloped in a sensitive way would retain and enhance the links between the town and its hinterland, between farmers and the townspeople. In contrast Bryngwyn is a relatively isolated industrial site whose development would break the link between farming and food.

It is not as though the planners have an enviable record in redeveloping the old medieval part of Abergavenny. In the 1960s and 1970s they destroyed the important historic built environment in Mill Street and Tudor Street. We need only look at the buildings still existing in Nevill Street including The Kings Arms to gain some insight in what type of buildings

were demolished to make way for today's unedifying concrete cube which is the Post Office. And whilst the Mill Street commercial area doubtless provides valuable employment opportunities for local people, did the historic houses in the shadow of Abergavenny Castle really need to be destroyed when there were other places to build industrial units?

Supermarkets can find suitable locations elsewhere in the town if indeed a case can be made to add to the growing list of central grocery establishments: Tesco, Farnfoods, B&M, Premier, Iceland and very soon Aldi. Many people consider that the presence of another large supermarket will destroy the footfall for the town centre's independent shops. We are not against supermarkets as such. However, we are against one being built on a site of immense commercial and historical importance to Abergavenny which is best suited in its present role as a livestock market.

Andris Taurins is a member of the Abergavenny and District Civic Society.

*Fishlock's File*

The virtues of left-handedness

Trevor Fishlock muses on the sinister meanings of small things

Articles

Fishlock's File:

The virtues of left-handedness

Two lives in art

We have a real country now

Book reviews:

A warning against dominant narratives in recent Welsh history

'The best sort of crank'

Our shared web of interconnected European lives

Wide-eyed love of a Welsh pilgrim for Armenia

I like drawing stories from small things. In the landslide of complex events a tiny detail may gleam like a diamond.

Curiosity makes me an inveterate museum-goer. In the museum in Barbados, for example, I saw a signet ring once owned by a 19th Century magistrate. It encapsulated a story of slavery. The JP heated the ring to burn his initials into the skins of people he bought. In the years I reported from the waning Soviet Union the small details of ordinary people's lives taught me far more than Kremlinology. History and geography make Wales a country rich in stories; and the people have a keen sense of place and like to hear them.

One day at the St Fagans: National History Museum I happened to see, on the teacher's desk in the Victorian schoolroom, what looked to me like a knuckleduster. It was a piece of wood pierced by four holes. Victorian teachers called it a finger stock. They slipped it over the fingers of left-handed children to cripple their grip and force them to write with their right hands.

No doubt this was done with good intentions. I can hear teachers saying: "It's for your own good", and most parents agreeing with the treatment. It was a remedial device, a companion in a way to another small piece of wood on the teacher's desk, the Welsh Not. This was given as a corrective to children speaking Welsh: they were encouraged to pass it on to any classmate they heard using the language. We can suppose that

many parents approved of that, too.

I knew about the Welsh Not, but not about the finger stock or another remedial tool I saw on the teacher's desk. This was a posture board, like a dairymaid's yoke, prescribed by teachers to stop children slouching. It belonged to a time when children's health and posture were affected by poor nutrition, years in which the army was appalled by the quality of young recruits who were too sick and puny to fight for the empire.

School practice, then, encouraged children to be straight-backed, English-speaking and right-handed. And the cane, also on the St Fagan's desk, was there as a behavioural enforcer; and you can still see, in newspaper letters, that some people mourn its passing.

I used the finger stock as the small thing from which to draw a story on left-handedness for an ITV Wales programme. I soon found that many people were intrigued by left-right, but knew little about it. For many centuries a stigma attached to left-handedness and existed in some form all over the world; and still does. The Latin word for left is sinister, although the word means the pocket of a toga which happened to be on the left side. In English left originally meant weak. In French, gauche, and Welsh, chwith, also means awkward. Cack-handed, we might say, or having two left feet. A friend of mine says that at school in the north of England he was called a cuddywifty, Northern for southpaw.



Ysgol Mastir Victorian schoolroom at the St Fagans National History Museum, location of the finger stock - a piece of wood with four holes used to prevent children writing with their left hand.

Left-handedness was for years associated with the devil. The schoolroom and parental assault on it was driven by superstition and the wish for conformity. John Aggleton, a Cardiff University Professor of Cognitive Neuroscience - the ways in which the brain works - is interested in handedness partly because his two sons, born of right-handed parents, are left-handed. The left-right preference is driven by the brain, he said, and not by the environment. Babies in the womb suck a preferred thumb. And even identical twins are not the same: one might prefer the right and the other the left.

In spite of superstition and correction in the past the number of left-handed people in the population remains the same: one in ten.

Having seen *The King's Speech*, about George VI's stammer, aware of Aneurin Bevan's stammer, and knowing that both were left-handed, I wondered whether their stammers stemmed from anxiety or persecution over their handedness. Sounds plausible, said Professor

Aggleton, but there's little or no evidence of it.

He was also interesting on the considerable research into left-handers in sport. The common idea that left-handed tennis players, for example, are actually better than others is not borne out by research. And no left-handed sportsman, cricketer or footballer, has any advantage in spatial or athletic skills. The answer is that lefties are useful within the nature of the game. Left-handed bowlers usefully challenge and upset the concentration of batsmen in a way that righties do not. Another thing: many left-handed batsmen are actually right-handed. They throw and bowl with the right and by all the tests are righties, simply able to bat left.

So we have a mystery. Professor Aggleton reasons that if right-handedness were superior, nature would have eradicated left-handedness by natural selection. There is a right majority and a stable left minority, and left-handedness survives because it is a useful virtue.

Ken East, a teacher at Llansannor in

the Vale of Glamorgan, researches left-handedness. As a left-hander himself he remembers how upset he was as a child when forced to write with his right. His mother intervened. His teacher told her that left-handedness was associated with the devil, but let him write the way he wished. He runs an after-school handwriting club and encourages children to use the hand they find more comfortable. The way they hold a pen is important. The correct grip of an ergonomic pen, especially shaped for left or right, makes them more fluent; and good handwriting pays a big dividend in classroom confidence.

The finger stock at St Fagan's is now, mercifully, a museum piece. Our well-meaning forerunners used the stock, the Not and the cane for the good of the children; the cane until quite recently. We used to send children for resettlement in Australia for their own good. In Britain today we export care home children from the south to a version of exile in the north. It is for their own good.



The Rise of the Dovey, painted by John Piper in 1943-44: oil on gessoed canvas mounted on board. It is included in The Mountains of Wales exhibition that is touring Wales during 2012, currently at the Oriol y Parc Gallery, St Davids. Piper lived and worked intermittently in north Wales over a period of around 15 years during the 1940s and 1950s. Private collection and copyright of the John Piper Estate.

Two lives in art

Osi Rhys Osmond is captured by a study of John and Myfanwy Piper who reshaped perceptions of Englishness in the mid 20th Century

In *John and Myfanwy Piper – Lives in Art*, a fascinating, deeply researched and wide-ranging study by Frances Spalding, recently re-issued in paperback, we are given an extraordinary insight into the creative lives, working methods, cultural connections and domestic arrangements of two of the most prolific and influential artistic figures of mid 20th Century England. Equally interesting is what this portrait tells us – often discretely and sometimes unconsciously - about their times, and the evolution of their social dynamics and cultural values.

Piper, was born in Epsom, in 1904 the fourth son (another brother had died shortly after birth) of a solicitor who insisted the

young Piper follow him into the family law firm. Although Piper had always shown a preference for the creative life, an ambition supported by his mother, a career in art was considered too risky.

Piper's instinctive preoccupations were revealed to him very early in his life. He cycled extensively as a child, taking photographs and compiling drawing books with notes on local history, topography and architecture, especially churches. The Piper's were comfortably off, but like many families at the time suffered the loss of sons in the First World War. Death in action of his eldest son affected the father deeply. The number of families similarly bereaved, and the

subsequent effect on family life, is among the profound disclosures that this book discretely reveals.

Piper's father died soon after he had failed his law exams and so he was released to study first at the Epsom School of Art and later at the Royal College. There he quickly made his mark as an artist. He also made an impetuous and immediately unsuccessful marriage to a fellow student, Eileen Holding.

As well as painting Piper was writing reviews and articles on art and cultural matters on a regular basis in the *Listener*, *New Statesman*, *The Saturday Review* and other magazines. He never thought a great deal of his early journalism. However, his writing caught the attention of a young Oxford graduate, who was making her way in the world of English avant-garde cultural activism.

Myfanwy Piper had read English at St. Hugh's College, Oxford, leaving with an unimpressive degree, a swimming blue (her athletic figure and aquatic prowess later attracted the interest of John Betjeman) and a reputation as an original thinker and writer. Unbeknown to each other, Piper and Myfanwy had become friendly with the painter, Ivon Hitchens. Piper had recently written the catalogue foreword to his Lefevre Gallery exhibition of 1933. He was invited by Hitchens to spend the weekend on the Kent coast at Sizewell, and as he was arriving by car he was asked to meet another guest from the train at Leiston.

Alighting from the train was Myfanwy Evans, not beautiful in a conventional sense, but personally dynamic and attractive. She was petite, snub nosed, with bobbed fair hair and intense, intelligent, pale blue eyes. She and Piper swam together and spent the whole weekend in intense conversation. By the end of 1934 they were living together and Piper and Eileen were about to divorce (Ceri Richards played a supporting role in that drama). They set up home in a run-down farmhouse, Fawley Bottom, in the Chilterns, living without running water or electricity until well into the late 1950s.



Myfanwy and John Piper, pictured at their Fawley Bottom farmhouse in the Chilterns.

For the rest of their lives together the farmhouse became an extraordinary place creatively, socially and domestically, as they brought up their four children. Myfanwy established a reputation as an excellent and resourceful gardener and enthusiastic raiser of chickens and pigs, and they both became generous, life-enhancing and popular hosts. Their guests and those who entertained them represent a *who's who* of a particular kind of quintessentially English artistic society. Aspects of a certain kind of Englishness were important and inspirational to them. Their friends, who included Britten, the Sitwells and others, celebrated and called forth in their work the beauty and traditions, not simply of architecture and the landscape, but of the common people and their speech and ingrained social mannerisms.

Prior to meeting Piper, Myfanwy had spent time travelling in France and meeting influential modernists. She was soon persuaded to begin a radical art magazine that would promote the virtues of abstraction.

Axis magazine, published between 1935-37, was short-lived but highly influential. Designed by Piper, it discussed the work of significant international modernists, in literature, painting, architecture and music. Myfanwy's writing was sharp, energetic and witty, with little regard for

reputations. However, there was always a dichotomy for Piper, particularly in abstraction. He appreciated modernism, but felt its gospels too keenly preached. He saw the harsh dogma of modernism's leading lights as an obstacle to creative opportunity and to the wonders of the observed world. Even before *Axis* had ceased publication he had reverted to his familiar, dramatic and perhaps, conservative neo-romanticism.

John Piper is popularly known for the *Shell Guides* he produced, wrote and illustrated, initially in collaboration with John Betjeman, as Britain, particularly England embraced the concept of recreational motoring. That there were sufficient motorists with the time and money to use the guides to travel the regions they discussed is a surprise to someone like me in whose own home village the mid 1930s meant one thing, unemployment. If anyone travelled, it was to find work, usually in one of those areas where the *Shell Guides* became an important part of the library of the aspiring middle-class.

The *Shell Guides* were first published in 1934, under the editorship of John Betjeman. Piper came on board in 1937 and in view of his childhood passions it seemed a very natural thing to do. His involvement illustrates how his ambitions as an artist were continuously dissipated by his wide range of interest in other

matters - history, churches, architecture and landscape. Although they supported his creative work financially, the task of researching, writing and illustrating leached time and energy.

Myfanwy Piper, nee Evans was from a London Welsh family. Although brought up in London she had spent much of her school holidays in Wales and she and Piper developed a strong relationship with the more dramatic areas of north, central and eventually west Wales.

Piper began touring Wales in 1939, and later in the early 1940s. In 1943, as a commissioned War artist, he visited Manod Mawr quarry in Gwynedd where the treasures of London's National Gallery had been stored beyond the reach of German bombs. He was there to draw at the behest of the gallery's director, Kenneth Clark who had been responsible for Piper's appointment as a war artist. Clark was an oleaginous cultural mandarin, with a refined sense of who and what turned the wheels of

power. His friendship and patronage was critical to Piper's progress.

At the time there was real concern that much of England's architectural heritage might be lost to German Air raids. Piper was among a number of artists who were relieved of war duties and commissioned to make studies of important buildings. At the request of the Queen he also painted numerous studies of Windsor Castle - which lay directly under the bomber flight path to the industrial Midlands - and where the King and Queen spent much of the war. George VI's remark about Piper's "poor luck with the weather" may be a much more perceptive piece of art criticism than the old monarch has been credited with.

Recently National Museum Wales staged a major exhibition, *John Piper - The Mountains of Wales*, paintings and drawings from a private collection. In it Piper explores Wales as a physical mass and a geological subject. Included in the David Fraser Jenkins and Melissa Munro's catalogue are useful references

to the geological notes and terms that Piper made as he drew and painted. Here we see Piper at his best. His work in Wales is distinguished by its greater objectivity compared with his studies of English subjects. His examination of the landscape is less formulaic than his depictions of buildings, although *Llanthony Abbey*, painted in 1941, has that typically theatrical look, a quality that many critics found difficult to sympathise with, regarding this way of working as overly stylised.

As his painting *The Rise of the Dovey* shows, he was genuinely moved by the grandeur of Snowdonia. He also wrote well about his experiences, often putting himself at the mercy of the elements in his exploration of scree, mountain and moraine. This painting on canvas, like much of his work, is covered with a rough coat of gesso, giving it a pitted and textured surface that Piper uses to great effect. Additionally, the dense whiteness of the gesso allows him to create a sense

PARTHIAN

Goodbye, Twentieth Century
DANNIE ABSE
Ltd Edition 9781908069757 / 9781908069726
£20.00 / £9.99

Feet in Chains
Kate Roberts
Translation by Katie Gramlich
9781908069566
£8.99

Let us take you there....

www.parthianbooks.com



John Piper's view of Cader Idris, an ink and wash painting completed during 1944.

of dramatic illumination that appears to originate from below the surface of the picture.

Naturally, England, its architecture and landscape, was Piper's chief preoccupation, and the bulk of his work in painting, printmaking and writing reflects that. He is well known for his theatre design, photography, book design, stained glass, ceramics, and tapestries. He also created vestments and artefacts for the Anglican Church, becoming a somewhat reluctant convert at the prompting of his friend and collaborator, the poet John Betjeman. Piper's stained glass for the bomb-damaged cathedrals of Coventry and Cardiff are among his towering achievements.

His design for the stage was frequently for the operas of Benjamin Britten, and later for those of Alun Hoddinott who became a close friend of

the couple, as did Britten and his partner Peter Pears. The librettos of many of Britten's more successful operas, and much of Hoddinott's work, were written by Myfanwy, who was critical to Britten's success. He often came to their home, Fawley Bottom, to play the score on the Piper's piano. Music was central part to their lives. John could play jazz, popular and classical music to a high standard.

This wonderfully rewarding book describes in intense detail the social and cultural milieu of John and Myfanwy Piper as their extraordinary fruitful and bountiful lives unfolded. Their friendship and hospitality was a major part of that, as they entertained royalty and the aristocracy of the realm and the arts world. John predeceased Myfanwy by five years in 1992, following a short period of dementia.

Myfanwy continued to live as she always had, entertaining

enthusiastically, drinking too much, and diving carelessly into the swimming pool, just as she had dived fearlessly into the modernism debates of the 1930s. Most of all Piper and Myfanwy lived rich, fulfilling lives through their mutual love, their generosity, their children and their creative endeavours. After all art was their life, and their lives were fully lived as *Lives in Art*.

Osi Rhys Osmond is an artist, writer and cultural activist. *John and Myfanwy Piper – Lives in Art* is published by Oxford University Press in paperback at £16.99. The *John Piper - The Mountains of Wales* exhibition is currently showing at the Oriol y Parc Gallery in St Davids, until 7 October, after which it moves to the Mostyn Gallery in Llandudno.

We have a real country now

Richard Davies reflects on 20 years of bleakness counterpointed by hope in Welsh publishing

Lloyd Robson writes to me by email. There's a party and a poetry reading at the Royal Oak pub at the edge of Splott. It's a farewell to Cardiff party for Lloyd. He's got a Green Card. There's a woman waiting for him in New York, his wife.

I rewind six years and I'm sitting with him, Richard Gwyn and Gillian at a café just down from Shakespeare and Company bookshop. It's May and we have money and a reading waiting for us in the evening. The huge gothic spires of Our Lady soar up into the blue Parisian sky. We are drinking white wine; Richard Gwyn is drinking water. We talk about the possibilities of writing, the need to find an audience, the chance of finding a subject. We are all writers who have at one time established our own publishing concerns: Black Hat for Lloyd, Cranc for Richard, Parthian for me and my partner Gillian.

It has become part of the necessity of writing ourselves into the world, of creating a future. Richard suggests an idea for Lloyd, Robert Mitchum and a quest to find the truth about the actor who was also a poet and maybe the chance to have a drink in some of the bars Mitchum was known to frequent.

An age later we are different people, we've all fallen out in different ways and Lloyd is leaving the city that formed his work, leaving for the New World on a



A photo of the author's daughter Ela Griffiths jumping into the Baltic sea, used on the cover of Parthian's *Grace, Tamar and Laszlo the Beautiful*, a short story sequence by Deborah Kay Davies: winner of the Wales Book of the Year 2009.

Green Card. He'd written the book, *Oh Dad! A Search for Robert Mitchum*, it attracted good reviews but few sales. But he'd met someone in New York, married her and now he was leaving. Books, they do change you.

In the summer of 2011 Richard published *A Vagabond's Breakfast*, an account of his journey through life and the countries of the north shore of the Mediterranean as an itinerant poet, fruit-picker and drinker. It is a good book of

reflection, action, consequence and recovery which leaves the reader with a few questions to ask the narrator. Maybe I should have asked him while he was still speaking to me on the terrace of that café in Paris. It is six years on from a book he published, *The Colour of a Dog Running Away* which was translated into five languages and sold over 30,000 copies internationally. They were published by different publishers but shaped by the same editor, Gwen Davies. Gwen is now

shaping the *New Welsh Review*. I wonder about these circles in small worlds.

Looking back at twenty years in the publishing world, Wales is a different place. We have a real country now, not just one forced upon us. The wider political landscape has changed and closer to the ground writing has changed. Wales is a still a fictional and elementally real place, but the imagination is broader, wider, and more ambitious.

In the spring of the current year I send a letter to other Welsh publishers and our funding partners the Welsh Books Council, entitled *Where Do We Go From Here?* It stirs a few responses. It suggests a way forward in difficult times. We are currently at a crucial point in the development of a Welsh publishing industry able to compete in a national and international market. We are close to a decade on from the Welsh

Looking back at twenty years in the publishing world, Wales is a different place. We have a real country now, not just one forced upon us.

Assembly report into Welsh publishing which resulted in a significant period of investment in publishing in Wales and stimulated a significant increase in output. This was how the report set the scene.

“Publishers are few in number, inadequately resourced, have small profits and sluggish cash flows, and are over dependent on subsidy from public sources.... On a more positive note, Welsh publishing houses have ambition, talented and committed

staff and good quality authors.”

Welsh writing in English:

A Review March 2004, chaired by Rosemary Butler

I like this quote, with its bleakness counterpointed by hope. I think all

publishing and writing is a part of that theme. It is hopeless but we will try anyway. The Butler report did provide a framework for change in Welsh publishing and a crucial tranche of investment in the industry through support for publishers and writers. It produced books such as



Carousel image used as the cover photo for Parthian's *Love and Other Possibilities*, a collection of short stories by Lewis Davies, published in 2009.

Web. Apps. Mobile.
Social networking.
Digital media is
changing the world.
*We can get it working
for you too.*

CORE

DIGITAL EVERYTHING

Core specialises in all things digital, from website design and development to social media, mobile apps and search optimisation. With training and support along the way, we'll get digital media working for you.

Supporting IWA since 2009

hello@wearecore.co.uk
+44 (0)29 2070 4700
wearecore.co.uk
Follow: @WeAre_Core



The Parthian publishing team pictured at Swansea University shortly after moving into new offices there, in February 2011: from left to right Marketing Officer Eluned Gramich; Richard Davies; Financial Director Gillian Griffiths; and Editor Lucy Llewellyn.

Dial M for Merthyr by Rachel Trezise, Lloyd's search for Robert Mitchum, Seren's endless Mabinogologi, Chris Need's life story, Eddie Butler and his best ever rugby XV and a few other ones I seem to have forgotten. It also produced the Library of Wales series, and a slew of marketing initiatives which helped to sell books and promote writers. More books, more conversation, a carnival of voices.

Publishing is a bit like a carnival of books. They all seem so vital and immediate when you are publishing them but the energy and necessity in the pages usually falls away into a silence with the world only stirred when one is discovered on a shelf at Oxfam, a letter from an agent asking about sales or a junior lecturer conspires to put something new and forgotten on a syllabus.

For writers it is worse. When your book is published it is like the fair arriving in town, all flashing lights and rides on the waltzer. The phone rings and the

email screen lights up with excitement and tempting offers. But then, after the Saturday night of the launch, the writer wakes up bleary-eyed on a grey Sunday to find the fair packed-up and moved on. Your new friends are writing about someone else. Six months on you get a review in the *New Welsh Review* and a year on a royalty statement that doesn't quite cover your advance and you wonder where all the promises went.

But as a writer you need to be part of this conversation. Parthian Books published my first novel in September 1993. I had set up the company with a loan from the Prince's Youth Business Trust and an Enterprise Allowance grant. The business was based on two books, *Work, Sex and Rugby* and *How to Publish Yourself*, a manual on self-publishing by Peter Finch. I had spent six months researching the business while finishing the text of the novel. Nineteen years on and there are over two hundred books

in print with Parthian and a thirty-two set Library of Wales series. Each book holds its own story and journey into print, a conversation between writers, editors and readers that continues. The company has been part of a wider conversation of writing that has emerged in the last decade. Welsh writers and publishers are now becoming visible on the national and international stage for the first time.

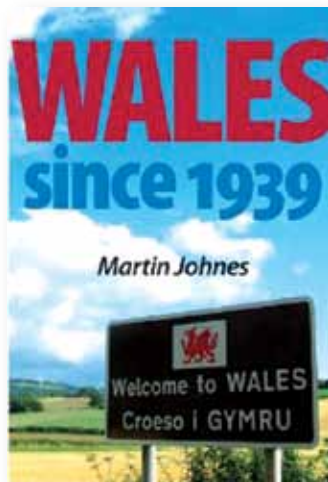
Maybe ambition is not always a good thing. But I'm trying to make a claim for Wales to make a claim to become the guest nation at the Frankfurt international book-fair. Gastland Wales 2015 anyone?

Richard Davies is a founding partner of Parthian.

Reviews

A warning against dominant narratives in recent Welsh history

Geraint Talfan Davies



Wales since 1939

Martin Johnes

Manchester University Press 2012,

£16.99

I feel sorry for the English. After centuries of not having to worry about their national identity – English? British? what does it matter? – they are now being enjoined by an alliance of Welsh and Scots to take the fluff out of their navels, do a bit of gazing at the revealed part and sort themselves out. All this, they are told, is a precondition of sorting out the union. Not content with having to deal with the apparently importunate demands of Scots and Welsh, and the rather more threatening northern Irish, they are now being asked to imitate the Celts by developing their own psychosis about identity. It must seem tiresome.

Worried by the hijacking of the Union Jack by the British National Party and the Cross of St George by football fans who treat it with rather less reverence than the American military show to their own flag, English politicians are getting serious

about what they have slowly realised is their own country.

The coalition government is bent on tackling the Gordian knot of the West Lothian question, while Ed Miliband showed just how knotty a problem identity is in a long lecture that, rather limply, tried to elevate an array of laudable but wholly ubiquitous personal characteristics into distinctive English virtues. The thought seemed to die on the page, and certainly didn't survive the first television probing. 'Worrying the carcass of an old song' takes practice. His only policy response was give local government more power.

If the Welsh response to its own circumstances and sense of identity had been to give more power to Anglesey County Council, I doubt that Wales would have been taken very seriously. I recommend that Ed Miliband read Martin Johnes's recent hefty survey of the last 70 years of Welsh history, *Wales since 1939*. It is instructive because it attempts to chart the connections between the changes in the way Welsh people have lived their lives in this period, the changing way in which we have thought of ourselves, and the way both have translated into political action.

Responding to the anglo-centricity of much British history – against which his fellow historian Norman Davies was again eloquent at the Hay Festival this summer – Martin Johnes subscribes to the view that "understanding Britain means understanding its margins". But a more profound purpose of his book is to emphasise the other side of that coin: that "Welshness has existed and still exists within the British state and culture, making Britishness not something external to Wales but part of Wales. A history of Wales that does not acknowledge Britain is deeply misleading".

In that sense the book is a reminder of the gap that often exists between political rhetoric and the daily lives of those who vote or, increasingly frequently, do not vote for them. Indeed, the first six chapters in the book touch relatively lightly on

questions of identity, or even the politics of Wales. Primarily, they describe the changing reality of life in Wales - from Wales at war through post-war austerity, and the cultural changes of 1960s and 1970s – moving the dominant colour of life and recollection from black and white *Picture Post* imagery to full technicolour, simultaneously with the corresponding move in television itself.

It is exhaustive, almost exhausting, in its factual detail. Johnes reminds us that the history of the last 70 years is rooted in the experience of war: 15,000 Welsh war dead, 33,000 houses damaged in Cardiff, 30,000 bombs dropped on Swansea. More surprisingly, the statistics also include five dying from bombing in Caernarfonshire, 200,000 people moving to Wales from England in only the first two years of the war, and 110,000 evacuees received by Welsh counties.

Combined with the fact that military organisation no longer tried to keep soldiers from particular localities together, this meant that the war sharply increased Welsh contact with the English. And yet, even during this wartime high point of Britishness, a 365,000-signature petition led to the Welsh Courts Act in 1942 which allowed Welsh to be used in some court proceedings.

Johnes describes how the "post-war economic and social transformations of British life were further tying Wales into the British system". These included the welfare state, the new National Coal Board in which Wales was at the outset part of a south western division, the record – initially disappointing – of the 1945 Distribution of Industry Act, grammar schools modelling themselves on English public schools, and the creation of the NHS.

On the last of these, rather than emphasising the role of the Welsh hero, Aneurin Bevan, Johnes is relentlessly factual: "Most of the hospitals in Wales were simply in too poor a condition for any serious opposition to their nationalisation". As on other matters,

Johnes also adopts the *pointilliste* approach: the impact of free dentures on people's self-confidence, or the fact that miners were the main customers for a Swansea manufacturer's subsidised wigs.

The 1950s saw the beginnings of affluence. Televisions, irons, vacuum cleaners and washing machines were bought in such profusion that the consumption of electricity doubled between 1949 and 1957. The emergence of supermarkets marked the beginning of the homogenisation of the shopping

did not have mains electricity, although in some cases this was, apparently, the result of their own stubborn parsimony. Even as late as 1961, 43 per cent of homes in the East Glamorgan and Monmouthshire valleys had no fixed bath.

The cultural impact of the 1960s was immense. The introduction in 1961 of local referenda on the Sunday closing of pubs is well known. However, it is harder to believe that in 1960 Cardiff Council was still refusing to let X-rated films be shown on Sundays, that the Football Association

and politics grew. It is in the second half of the book that issues of identity and language take centre stage. They revolved around the decline of religion and the detachment of the language from religious nonconformity, the beginnings of language protest and its effective deployment, the modernisation of the image of the language through television, the growth of rural nationalism partly as an expression of class antagonism as inward migration increased, and the growth of Welsh medium education. Other critical influences were the Aberfan disaster and the sense of betrayal by the state, the failure to plan for an alternative to steel, and the widely perceived vindictiveness of government in the miners' strike.

Johnes concludes: "The irony is that it was a Conservative government that did more than any other before it not just to bolster the official status of Wales and its language but also to encourage people to think about their nationality in more political terms."

The book is also an implicit warning about the ease with which dominant narratives become lodged in the mind and exclude uncomfortable or forgotten information. For instance, despite the 'spirit of the blitz' indictable crimes rose by 89 per cent during the war, and violent crime against property rose by 150 per cent. In the early 1950s 40 per cent of grammar school children went into jobs with limited prospects. In the so-called summer of love in 1969, 93 per cent of Welsh births were legitimate. Cardiff was proposed as capital by the vast majority of Welsh local authorities. The village defence committee opposing Tryweryn was run by outsiders because of a lack of volunteers within the community. More pits were closed in the 1950s than in the decade after the 1984 strike.

Neither is it a detailed political history. This is not the place to come looking for the minutiae of political debate and detail of the *dramatis personae*. At times it is frustratingly de-personalised. Mention is made of "a professor of industrial relations, a school teacher and a naval officer" being elected in Cardiff in 1945,

Affluence, consumerism, and a new youth culture resulted in the paradox of an individualism that expressed itself in a largely homogenised marketplace. You would be hard-pressed to distinguish any Welsh high street from that in any English town. Johnes strictures about the way 1960s planning ignored social needs and sowed the seeds of future calamity could be written about any place in Britain.

experience across Britain. But again the detail is telling. In 1960 Swansea had 257 butchers, but no licensed restaurants.

The economic signals, too, were mixed. It was in 1955 that Wales saw its lowest ever level of unemployment – 1.4 per cent – and it is chastening to read that in 1962 male manual wages were higher in Wales than in any other part of the UK except the south and Midlands. The average weekly wage was 30 shillings higher than in Scotland. At the same time, of the 270 branch factories that opened in Wales between 1945 and 1960, 46 per cent had gone by 1965.

There was also a dark side to the 1950s, the data reminding the reader of how much life in Wales has improved in subsequent years. During the decade 823 men were killed in Welsh mines. Rural unemployment was worse than in urban areas. In 1956 40 per cent of Welsh farms

of Wales did not allow competitive football on a Sunday until 1968, or that the Welsh anthem was not played at Twickenham until 1968, or in Paris until 1971.

Affluence, consumerism, and a new youth culture resulted in the paradox of an individualism that expressed itself in a largely homogenised marketplace. You would be hard-pressed to distinguish any Welsh high street from that in any English town. Johnes strictures about the way 1960s planning ignored social needs and sowed the seeds of future calamity could be written about any place in Britain. In the main it was Welsh topography that saved us from the blight of high rise developments.

The irony is that a sense of Welsh identity grew in part as a resistance to this homogeneity, and became more politicised even as public disillusion with the effectiveness of government

without mentioning that they were Hilary Marquand, George Thomas and James Callaghan. Johnes refers to the Archbishop of Wales pleading with Willie Whitelaw over the creation of a Welsh television channel, but not that he went with two others, Sir Goronwy Daniel and Cledwyn Hughes. The most important study of the first decade of devolution, the Richard Commission, is nowhere mentioned by name, merely referred to obliquely, "In 2004 one inquiry noted...."

Martin Johnes has written a meticulously informed account of our recent history, founded on prodigious data, and refreshingly enriched by the 'evidence' of poets and novelists. It is a healthy corrective to idealised narratives of Welsh progress, although perhaps a milder one than he may have intended. Johnes acknowledges that the National Assembly may have been, in large part, a creation of Welsh civil society, but it has written itself into the narrative of the lives of Welsh people with remarkable speed and thoroughness. Yet the British component of Welsh identity is undeniable but still unmeasurable. It is impossible to gauge what balance of emotion and pragmatism it encompasses.

You might even say the same about the crowds in London's Mall during the Jubilee weekend. Was it a personal tribute to a monarch? Was it a need to party in the depths of recession? Was it a pavlovian response to an overwhelming media and marketing barrage, a high mass of Britishness with the BBC as celebrant, or was it a real display of British patriotism? And if so how deep was it? Could it have been as superficial as the perceived 'republican moment' at the time of Princess Diana's death, and as fleeting? Beware people who believe they know.

Geraint Talfan Davies is Chair of the IWA.

'The best sort of crank'

M. Wynn Thomas



Keidrych Rhys: The Van Pool
Ed. Charles Mundaye
Seren, 2012, £12.99

The name William Ronald Rees Jones doesn't have the swagger of 'Keidrych Rhys', and in its prime the career of this raffish drifter (1913-1987) was rarely short on swagger. Self-promoting, he was an impresario of genius, circus barker and ringmaster of a generation of striking talent – the thirties generation of Dylan Thomas and his contemporaries. His greatest invention proved not to be himself but the 'Anglo-Welsh brand' as he set out to create a modernist aesthetic distinctively Welsh, but resolutely anglophone.

Wales, the brash, in-your-face 'house journal' he established in 1937 encouraged a group of disparate writers to establish themselves as a groundbreaking cultural collective. It also aggressively 'sold' its individual talents to a metropolitan London market that Rhys affected to despise, even as he frequented the bohemian haunts of Soho and Fitzrovia. Taking its cue both from the loudly opinionated Little Magazines of the Modernist movement and cutting-edge journals like *Life and Letters Today*, *Wales*, with its penchant for controversial

snippets, spiky reviews and general aggro, was always happy to start a textual riot. No wonder the piece by Dylan Thomas that fronted its opening number was entitled 'Prologue to an Adventure'.

Skilled at turning sacred cows into minced meat, Rhys produced marginal comments, manifestoes and editorials that still make for entertaining reading. "British culture," he grandly announces, "is a fact, but the English contribution to it is very small... There is actually no such thing as 'English' culture; a few individuals may be highly cultured but the people as a whole are crass."

An eccentric nationalist, he had a wicked eye for the wilder reaches of anti-Welsh prejudice: "...the Welsh are a nation of toughs, rogues, and poetic humbugs, vivid in their speech, impulsive in behaviour, and riddled with a sly and belligerent tribalism" (V. S. Pritchett, *The New Statesman*).

But behind the calculated bombast and the outrageous assertions lay a shrewd, calculating mind, an ability to spot genuine creative potential, and a readiness to encourage it. Hospitable to Dylan Thomas, Glyn Jones, Rhys Davies, Idris Davies, Vernon Watkins, Lynette Roberts, Margiad Evans and others, his *Wales* provided a platform for the young Emyr Humphreys, R. S. Thomas (whose first collection, *The Stones of the Field*, was published by his Druid Press) and 'Davies Aberpennar'.

Welsh-language writers such as R. Williams Parry, Gwenallt, Alun Llywelyn Williams and Aneirin Talfan Davies were also featured alongside Hugh MacDiarmid, Norman Macleod, George Barker, James Findlay Hendry – and Kafka. Even today, it can seem like a heady mix, a magical crucible of creativity. And Rhys's exceptional gifts as literary midwife were also manifest in a number of important poetic anthologies he proceeded to edit.

Charles Mundaye may well be the first scholar to have patiently untangled the skein of Rhys's self-mythologising. Particularly concerned to rehabilitate his subject's poetic reputation, Mundaye correctly sees the uncovering of new, accurate biographical facts as contributing

Mae'n argyfwng ar ein bywyd gwyllt Cymreig

Mae Cymru yng nghanol newid sylfaenol yn ei threfn lywodraethol amgylcheddol

Camwch 'Mlaen Dros Natur ac ymunwch yn y ddadl yma: www.rspb.org.uk/wales a chliciwch ar 'Get Involved'

Our Welsh wildlife is in crisis

Wales is undergoing a generational shift in environmental governance

Step up for Nature and join the debate here www.rspb.org.uk/wales/ by clicking on 'Get Involved'



CAMU 'MLAEN DROS NATUR
STEPPING UP FOR NATURE

Rydym wedi cael dylanwad mawr yng Nghymru am bron i 30 o flynyddoedd.

Mae ein huchelgais am ddyfodol gwyrdd a theg yn fwy nag erioed. Ymunwch â ni.

We've been hugely influential in Wales for nearly 30 years.

And we've even more ambitious plans for a green and fair future. Join us.

02920 229 577 cymru@foe.co.uk

www.foecymru.co.uk / www.cyddcymru.co.uk

www.facebook.com/foecymrucydd



cyfeillion y ddaear cymru
friends of the earth cymru

IAITH: y ganolfan cynllunio iaith
welsh centre for language planning



Castellnewydd Emlyn: 01239 711668
Llanelwly: 01745 585120
post@iaith.eu
www.iaith.eu

Would you like to reach our readers?

Advertising in the welsh agenda is only available to Corporate Members of the IWA. Corporate membership starts from as little as £250 and includes a **FREE** advert in the welsh agenda, on clickonwales.org our online news analysis website as well as a host of other corporate membership benefits.

Why your organisation should join

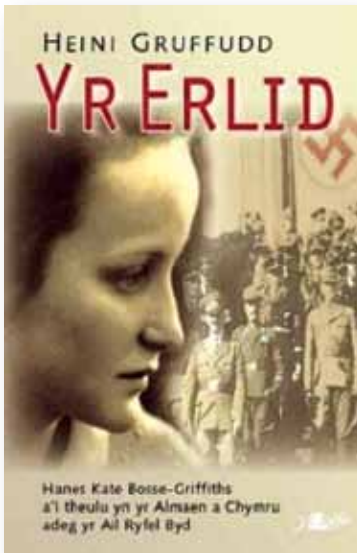
- Your organisation needs to keep abreast easily with what is going on in Wales
- It is crucial that your organisation/sector makes its voice heard on issues that affect you directly
- You want to help Wales become more competitive.
- The IWA's conferences provide an excellent networking opportunity

If you wish to discuss the terms of corporate membership, please contact:
Kirsty Davies, Deputy Director,
on **029 2066 0820** or by e-mail at kirstydavies@iwa.org.uk

iwa

Our shared web of interconnected European lives

Ned Thomas



Yr Erlid

Heini Gruffudd

Y Lolfa, 2012, £12.95

This is the story of Kate Bosse and her family. She came to Britain as a refugee from Nazi Germany in October 1937, a brilliant young Egyptologist who while working at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford met a young Welsh student of the same subject, J. Gwyn Griffiths, the son of a Nonconformist minister. Had they not married soon before the outbreak of war, Kate, as a German citizen, would almost certainly have been interned. Instead, she and her husband moved to the Rhondda where she learnt Welsh and was soon active, alongside her husband, in nationalist, pacifist and literary circles. On the evidence of this volume, Kate Bosse-Griffiths was the organising force behind the Cadwgan literary circle which met in the Rhondda during the war years, one of whose most celebrated members, Pennar Davies, in 1943 married another German refugee.

After a period in Y Bala where Kate helped German prisoners of war interned there, the couple moved to Swansea where J. Gwyn Griffiths became Professor of Egyptology, and Kate became curator of the

Egyptian antiquities collections now known as the Egypt Centre in the university. She was the author of novels, short stories and several works of non-fiction in Welsh. They had two sons, each of whom has left his mark on Welsh society: Heini, the author of this volume, through his indefatigable work for the Welsh schools movement and the teaching of Welsh to adults; and Robat, founder of Y Lolfa, the publishers of this volume.

But the present volume, though it provides a lively picture of the young Kate after she arrived in Britain, is mainly concerned with the family she left behind in Germany. Its title translates as 'the persecution' and it is a tragic story, and all the more frightening because it shows Nazism at work not only in the monstrous spectacle of the trains carrying millions to the camps, but in the seeming normality of the life of the small town of Wittenberg. Kate's father, Dr Bosse, was a well-respected doctor in the local hospital and became known more widely for his treatment of patients after an accident in the local explosives factory killed 120 workers and badly burnt others. Hitler visited the hospital at that time and accompanied Dr Bosse on his rounds. There is a photograph of them together in the book.

Kate's mother, however, came from a Jewish family and was Jewish by blood but not by religion. Two generations earlier, the family had converted to Lutheran Protestantism. Wittenberg, of course, is the town most closely associated with Martin Luther whose sickeningly anti-semitic writings were used by the Nazis in their campaigns against Jews. In the 1930s leading Lutheran bishops joined the National Socialist Party and it was during this period that the town was renamed Lutherstadt Wittenberg. Heini Gruffudd makes us aware of all this. Neither does he overlook the irony that the Welsh Nonconformist culture which welcomed Kate acknowledged its debt to Luther and sang his hymns in chapel.

Kate's mother's family were as assimilated into German society as it was possible to be and at quite a high social level. They were patriotic Germans during and after the First World War, but once the Nazi party came to power the net began to close around them. In 1937 Kate lost her first job as an Egyptologist at the Berlin State Museum when a colleague drew the authorities' attention to the Jewish

blood on one side of her family. That is when she moved to Britain. In 1938 her cousin Eva Monika came home from school to find that her mother Eva (Kate's aunt) had hanged herself. She was married to an officer in the German army who had been told he would receive no promotion while he was married to a Jew and that their children would be considered Jews unless they divorced. Eva Monika believes that her mother killed herself to save her family.

Kate's father too lost his job at the hospital and was invited to divorce his wife, which he refused to do. He managed to set up a private clinic and it seems that the Gestapo were long unwilling to move against him because of the respect he enjoyed in the local community. But their chance came after the unsuccessful bomb plot against Hitler in 1944. The Bosse family had no connection whatsoever with the plot or with the von Stauffenberg circle, but the event offered a pretext to arrest Kate's parents. Her mother was sent to the notorious women's prison camp at Ravensbrück where she died in dreadful conditions. Her father survived the war but died soon after.

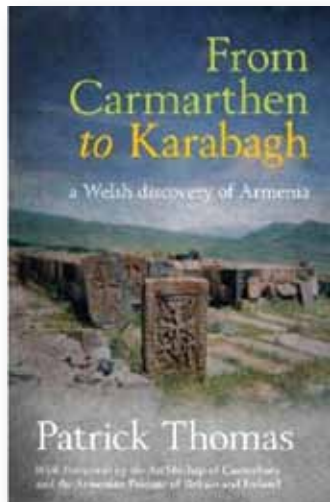
These are just Kate's immediate family and the most dramatic events. The book covers more ground including the story of her mother's second cousin Kurt Ledien who was drawn into the student underground resistance to Hitler, arrested and executed at the very end of the war. And the story does not end with the war since Wittenberg passed into the Soviet zone which presented surviving members of the family with new problems.

Heini Gruffudd has handled a far-flung story and a mass of documentation with a proper balance of personal involvement and objective distance. History is viewed close up as a complex web of interconnected individual lives which in this case span more than one country. It makes us aware of a shared European history in which an experience of terrible loss in one place nevertheless in time is turned to social gain in another.

Ned Thomas spent part of his childhood in the ruins of post-war Germany, an experience described in his recent memoir *Bydoedd*, Welsh-language book of the year 2011.

Wide-eyed love of a Welsh pilgrim for Armenia

Mike Joseph



From Carmarthen to Karabagh - a Welsh discovery of Armenia

Patrick Thomas

Gwasg Carreg Gwalch, 2012, £7.50

On 28 August 1963, Rabbi Joachim Prinz addressed a huge civil rights demonstration in the heart of Washington: “Our fathers taught us thousands of years ago that when God created man, he created him as everybody’s neighbour. Neighbour is not a geographic term. It is a moral concept. It means our collective responsibility for the preservation of man’s dignity and integrity”. Stirring as his speech was, Prinz had the misfortune to be instantly upstaged by the next speaker at the podium – the Reverend Martin Luther King, who delivered one of the century’s great moments of oratory: “I have a dream”.

But Rabbi Prinz had spoken on his theme for many years. Nearly thirty years earlier, as a Rabbi in Berlin before a hasty emigration to the USA, he had addressed a Jewish community meeting in Leipzig. Germany wanted the Jews out, and those who had thought themselves German were now forced to realise that they were Jews. In ten years, he said prophetically, Germany would have very few Jews. “To live, one needs food and water, but also neighbours”.

The exhortation to love thy neighbour is universal in human religion and culture. The ideal of empathy between the

dissimilar has been exemplified, interpreted and parabled in endless ways. This is less a matter of credit than shame to humanity. The exhortation is universal because at all times and in all places, human empathy has been severely lacking. In his *Welsh discovery of Armenia* Canon Patrick Thomas gives us just such a parable of empathy between “two small mountainous countries at either end of what was once regarded as Christendom”. Bishop Hovhannesian, Armenian Primate of Britain and Ireland in his introduction praises “a harmonious tale of two thousand years of Christian testimony and witnessing of these two nations”. Alongside, the Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams writes of this “love affair with Armenia”.

That such a modest and quietly written book attracts forewords by an Archbishop and a Primate suggests there is perhaps more here than meets the eye. The result of six years of repeated visits – Thomas calls them pilgrimages – to Armenia and the neighbouring Armenian enclave of Nagorno-Karabagh, *From Carmarthen to Karabagh* delivers in under 200 pages

In a quiet corner of Cathays Park, protected by trees and shrubs from the traffic of North Road, stands one of the most eloquent memorials to genocide you will find. It is a khatchkar, an Armenian stone cross, incorporating elements of the Celtic cross.

a survey and introduction to Armenian pre-history and history, myth and legend, religion, spirituality and culture, and inevitably and unavoidably, the genocide of 1915 whose traumatic consequences echo to this day.

That might be thought sufficient for one slim volume, but Thomas does more. As his subtitle announces, this is specifically a Welsh discovery of Armenia. In that, Thomas follows a well-worn Welsh path.

In a quiet corner of Cathays Park, protected by trees and shrubs from the traffic of North Road, stands one of the most eloquent memorials to genocide you will find. It is a khatchkar, an Armenian stone cross, incorporating elements of the Celtic cross. Patrick Thomas describes how in 2007, “it was dedicated with prayers in

Armenian and Welsh. A requiem for the souls of the victims of the Genocide was chanted... In the background the Turkish genocide-deniers attempted to drown the beautiful singing by monotonously (and shamelessly) shouting ‘Shame on you!’”

A year later on the eve of Holocaust Memorial Day, the khatchkar was attacked and shattered. What you see today is a newly-made khatchkar on the original design, and also – and this is the memorial’s unique testimony – pieces of the first shattered khatchkar are set in concrete in the ground, witness to the genocide-deniers’ aim to destroy memory.

How this century-old memory has come to occupy a corner of the Welsh capital is a story that even pre-dates the Armenian Genocide. Thomas relates how Armenia, at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, has been on the receiving end of invasions and occupation from every direction. In 1878, war between the Russian and Ottoman empires had resulted in Armenians finding themselves under Russian protective occupation.

Britain under Disraeli objected to

Russian expansion, and secretly negotiated with Constantinople to secure Russian withdrawal from western Armenia in return for taking control of Cyprus (and hence the Suez Canal) from the Ottoman Empire. Armenia would now be at the mercy of Ottoman rule, and the Sultan was

“...free to act towards his Armenian subjects in whatever way took his fancy... he instigated the systematic slaughter of Armenians... estimated at between 100,000 and 200,000. Gladstone, Disraeli’s old opponent, was horrified. The 86-year-old former Prime Minister gave his last great speech in September 1896 eloquently condemning the savagery of the ‘Red Sultan’. When Gladstone died

two years later, grateful Armenian merchants from Manchester paid for his tomb and a stained-glass memorial window in St Deiniol's Church, Hawarden."

So began Wales' active engagement with the politics of Anatolia. Nineteen years later, it was a Welsh MP, Aneurin Williams (great-grandson of Iolo Morgannwg) who brought concern about new massacres to parliament:

"We are in the presence of the greatest massacre probably that the world has ever known. Therefore it behoves us... to make every sacrifice and put forward every effort to relieve... suffering, and to save some thousands from death that must still occur..."

Williams brought news and evidence of the genocide to parliament as it was being perpetrated, and secured formal Ministerial recognition of the Ottoman's "long-considered, deliberate policy to

destroy and wipe out of existence the Armenians in Turkey".

Nearly a century later, the official institution of Holocaust Memorial Day, and the British Government's simultaneous refusal to admit the Armenian Genocide to officially-sanctioned memory, crystallised Welsh responses in a series of acts of recognition: by Members of the Assembly, by First Minister Rhodri Morgan and by the khatchkar on Assembly-owned public land at the Temple of Peace. Thomas writes:

"There are many things that make a person proud to be Welsh... The Armenian Genocide happened. Even if the British Government is still too obsessed by fear of upsetting Turkey to recognise this truth, we in Wales have not shied away from it."

The political agenda that has linked Wales and Armenia for over a century is well-established, but this book is not a political tract. Rather, Thomas gives us a reflective interweaving of spiritual and cultural

themes that link the two nations. He shares moments from his travels in Armenia when, far from home, he suddenly finds himself feeling powerfully reminded of home. He draws parallels but he also highlights contrasts. Yr Wyddfa is a symbol of Wales, as Ararat is of Armenia. But although the Welsh mountain can be a place of hiraeth, it is not a sacred icon of global significance, as Ararat is to Armenia.

Like Armenia, Wales has survived against the odds; but the odds against Armenian survival have been on a different scale of human suffering. Yma o hyd. In the excitement of discovery, it can be challenging to strike the right note. Canon Patrick Thomas largely succeeds. This is an account of the love of a Welsh pilgrim for Armenia, a love which is wide-eyed, rather than blind.

.....
Mike Joseph is a journalist and broadcaster, working on a history of genocide, memory and denial.

"Hooray for Honno!" Sarah Waters



25 years of great women, great writing, great books

"...achieved simply remarkable things – shining a light on treasures from our tradition, providing a platform for exciting contemporary authors and being an all-round fantastic indie."
Kathryn Gray



Llion a Lleddf a Storiâu Eraill
gan Sara Maria Saunders (S.M.S.)
Colywyd gan Resourse Press

LANSIAD LLLYFR

Llion a Lleddf a Storiâu Eraill
gan Sara Maria Saunders

Cyngor Llyfrau Cymru
Eisteddfod

Dydd Iau 9 Awst, 15.30

25 mlynedd o fenywod gwych, ysgrifennu gwych, llyfrau gwych

www.honno.co.uk



Wandering around a national conversation

Peter Stead

An old acquaintance of mine, the historian Lord Hennessy, was recently a guest on Radio 3's Essential Classics. When asked how he was going to spend the summer he explained that he would taking the time to promote his latest book at various book festivals, adding that he loved them because of the size and enthusiasm of their audiences and the intelligence of their questions. As he put it, "They have become our national conversation".

I'm keenly attracted to this notion of a 'national conversation'. We will experience a version of this phenomenon at the National Eisteddfod where, as we all know, the myriad discussions on and around the Maes on political, economic and cultural topics will be of greater import than anything that happens in the competitions. For one vitally important section of the population of Wales this will all add up to a fundamental stock-taking, a mighty national conversation indeed.

Earlier in the summer I experienced a tremendous national conversation of a different hue at one of the literary festivals that Peter Hennessy had in mind. Once more at Hay a real sense of occasion loomed. In the crowded green room one had to make one's way around Boris Johnson and Salman Rushdie. Meanwhile, in the main arena Hilary Mantel responded to excellent questions from Peter Florence and an audience of 1,700, by breathing new life into our British preoccupation with the Tudors. Hay is a thrilling but curious creation. The vast bulk of the middlebrow audience hails from the arts supplement-reading suburbs whilst the green room is populated by the literary establishment of Hampstead and Bloomsbury. The Englishness of Hay, however, has recently been infiltrated by our own literary establishment from the suburbs of Cardiff and the villages of the cefn gwlad. Accordingly the Hay conversation is enriched and made more truly British.

Reflecting on Hay and anticipating the

National Eisteddfod it occurred to me that to cater for the entire population of Wales we need a festival that takes on features of both events and thus become the occasion for a truly national conversation. Such an event could only be held in Cardiff. We were all riled by Reith lecturer Niall Ferguson's stupid observation that he always thought of Wales as 'Scotland lite' - to which I replied that I thought of Scotland as 'Wales tight'. Nonetheless, I have always envied Scotland's Edinburgh Festival. To be in Edinburgh at Festival time is to experience a fabulous festival of music, drama, film, books, comedy and art and at the same time a buzz of debate that allows Scotland to deeply inhale international influences. In Wales we need to come together to achieve this kind of intensity and urbanity. There is buzz that only cities can produce and a national conversation needs every sector to be there demonstrating their worth. The time has come to concentrate our minds.

Effective conversations, of course, require concentration. The rise of the electronic media has sanctioned aimless chatter. Hours of research has led me to conclude that the public users of mobile phones have little to say that is important. Once we used to laugh at published letters from 'Disgusted Tonbridge Wells' ('Disgusted Llandeilo' in our own national paper). Now the disgusted and even the mildly amused are encouraged to express their feelings via countless electronic means. Meanwhile, the real tragedy is that broadcasters and public agencies take their tone and level of argument from precisely those messages. Their notion of a national conversation is dictated by the model of ordinary chat in pubs, at bus stops and on mobile phones.

By any historical standard we are living in a dangerous and challenging era, one with which we have not begun to understand. At times during this strange summer I have

wondered whether the BBC had set out to divert us from new realities. I must confess that there have been days when the progress of the Olympic Torch has brought tears to my eyes but I do not begin to understand its significance nor why it has been reported on so seriously. Have we been all expecting a miracle to happen: the wounded to be made whole, a dove to appear? The infamous Regatta transmission was one long tweet. For hours this summer we have had to listen to sports pundits. Euro 2012 revealed both the mediocrity of British football and British pundits, the broadcasters sticking with the clichés of former players who speak the language of ordinary fans rather than opting for meaningful continental analysis.

Once again Wimbledon generated hysteria. Typically, the BBC aloofly commented on that hysteria as if they were playing no part. ('Let's have one more shot of Henman Hill'). Again the foreign pundits operated on a different level of analysis. There were several evenings as I waited to hear of the latest economic bad news when it occurred to me that the BBC treat Wimbledon with more reverence than any other topic. Serena's serve was discussed in far more detail than anything that went on at Barclay's Bank. This tennis tournament has become a religious festival in which young East Europeans, appropriately clad in baptismal white, are inducted into the English way of life. At a time when ecclesiastical issues are being aired we could do no better than make Sue Barker the first female bishop.

The current debates of the Anglican Church constitute a classic instance of idle chatter whilst the boat sinks. So does the Lib Dem emphasis on Lords Reform and the dangerous miasma of PR. A national conversation needs to tackle fundamental issues. Someone needs to clear the throat and say, "now to business!"



**WALES & WEST
UTILITIES**

*WORKING TO KEEP
OUR CUSTOMERS SAFE*



PLAYING A VITAL ROLE IN WELSH ENERGY

The Welsh Government says that Wales should once again be seen as a global centre for energy – and that energy represents a changing mix as we move to a lower carbon economy. With the continuing growth of renewable forms of energy across Wales, gas continues to provide a key part of that energy mix for the foreseeable future. Providing the critical gas infrastructure that brings low cost heat to homes and businesses across Wales is where Wales & West Utilities (WWU) plays its unique part in contributing to the Welsh Government's plans to maximise the benefits of all energy development and energy efficiency.



INVESTING IN THE FUTURE

Wales & West Utilities has made a £3 million investment in training facilities, aimed at maintaining its industry leading position in customer service and safety. This significant investment includes a new Training Academy based in Treforest and is another key investment by the company in the longer term future – a future where gas will continue to play a key role in the UK energy mix. In a few short years, WWU has recruited over 500 people, including nearly 100 apprentices who now represent over 10% of the company's operational workforce.

CUSTOMER SERVICE CHAMPION

Keeping customer service at the top of its agenda, Wales & West Utilities has achieved the unprecedented accolade of being the first gas infrastructure business to be awarded the industry's coveted Customer Service Award for the fourth consecutive year. With over 7 million people living and working within WWU's gas network, customer service is king and the company's impressive record will continue the drive for excellence.



 @WWUtilities  facebook.com/wwutilities

iwa new publications

Growing our woodlands in Wales

The 100,000 hectare challenge

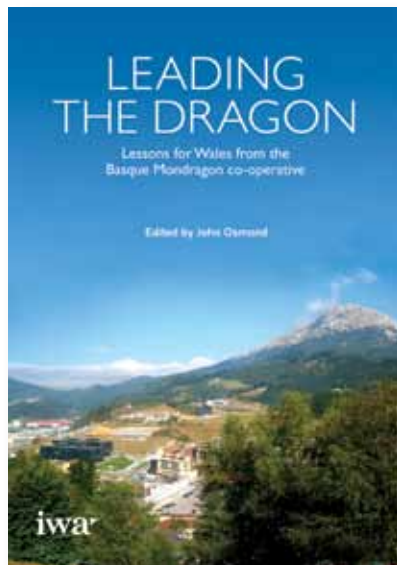
By John Osmond and Stevie Upton

This report engages with the Welsh Government's policy to significantly increase the woodland cover across Wales from the present 14 per cent of the land area to 20 per cent by 2030. Creating new woodland offers many benefits aside from helping mitigate the impact of climate change. The new woodland will consist of mainly native trees and will provide additional wildlife habitat, improve the quality of our landscape and waters and, at the same time, create useful timber products such as fuel and wood as a raw material.

However, increasing Wales' woodland by 100,000 hectares over 20 years presents a major challenge. It will require farmers to plant mixed deciduous and conifer woodlands across suitable parts of largely upland Wales. This will require establishing a new balance between conservation and sustainable development. We will need to weigh the benefits of maintaining existing habitats against the advantages of creating new ones. In addition we will need to return to the practices of former times when woodland management was seen as a natural part of farming culture, rather than being separated from it as is generally the case today.



£10 ISBN 978 1 904773 63 4



£10 ISBN 978 1 904773 64 1

Leading the Dragon

Lessons for Wales from the Basque Mondragon co-operative

Edited by John Osmond

The Mondragon Corporation is a federation of worker co-operatives based in the Basque Country in northern Spain. Founded in the town of Mondragon in 1956 and inspired by a Catholic priest José Ma Arizmendiarieta, its origins were modest, beginning with a small workshop producing paraffin heaters and later a technical college. However, over the next five decades the group expanded to become a major economic player. Today it is the leading business group in the Basque Country. It one of the ten largest Spanish companies in terms of turnover, comprises 120 co-operatives, employs more than 83,000 members, has a turnover of 14 billion, has a bank and numerous research institutes, and has founded a university with some 3,600 students.

In February 1981 a Wales TUC delegation visited Mondragon and came away inspired to found the Wales Co-operative Centre. This is now 30 years old and over the past three decades has had a substantial impact on the Welsh economy. In April 2012, another Welsh group, this time including today's Director of the Wales Co-operative Centre, returned to Mondragon to witness the progress it has made and to see what new directions might be possible. Informed by the visit, but focusing on the realities of Welsh experience, this publication suggests some developments that could further embed co-operative ideas in Welsh policy-making.

To order a copy, contact: IWA, 4 Cathedral Road, Cardiff, CF11 9LJ | Tel: 029 2066 0820
or buy online at www.iwa.org.uk (IWA members can purchase publications at a 25 per cent discount)