

the welsh
agenda

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Wales: The heart of the debate?

► In the rush to appease Scottish and English public opinion will Wales' voice be heard?

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*Gwyneth Lewis | Dai Smith | Helen Molyneux | Mark Drakeford |
Rachel Trezise | Calvin Jones | Roger Scully | Gillian Clarke | Dylan Moore |*

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Clare Critchley, Rhea Stevens

Political Cartoonist:

Mal Humphries (Mumph)

Design:

marc@theundercard.co.uk

Proofreader: Rhobat Bryn Jones

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Institute of Welsh Affairs

56 James Street, Cardiff Bay,
Cardiff, CF10 5EZ

Tel: 02920 484 387

Email: wales@iwa.org.uk

www.iwa.org.uk

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c/o Huw Lewis

6 Maes yr Haul, Mold, Flintshire,
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Gwent Secretariat

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September 18th is turning out to be a highly significant date in the constitutional history of these islands. It was on Thursday September 18th 1997 that Wales voted to establish its first ever democratic Assembly, and it was on the same date in 2014, that Scotland voted to reject Independence.

Indeed, you could argue that it is the Scots who have done the most to secure powers for Wales. Had it not been for Scotland voting Yes to devolution in 1997 one week before the Welsh referendum, it is highly unlikely that the majority of just 6,721 would have been secured for a Welsh Assembly.

Fast forward 17 years and it seems that, again, it is votes cast in Scotland that will set the pace for Welsh devolution. The 'Vow' made to Scottish voters to persuade them to stick with the Union in the last week of the Scottish Independence campaign is likely to result in extra powers flowing to Wales too.

Which powers? We simply don't know. Wales has not been included in the debate about the future of the UK. The UK Government's Wales Bill is currently going through Parliament and will deliver some of the Silk Commission's recommendations, but not all. And the rush to be seen to be responding to Scottish and English feeling may well overtake the thoughtful report of the Silk Commissioners.

History suggests that Whitehall will not be overly worried about producing a settlement that is consistently applied to all parts of the

UK. Indeed, in one area we can be sure to see double standards – that of referenda. The limited powers over Income Tax set out by the UK Government for Wales can only be drawn down if there is yet another referendum (the fourth in less than 40 years). But there is no mention of further devolution to England being predicated on a referendum.

Not only is Wales being largely left out of the debate, but we are being held to a higher burden of proof of public support than other parts of the UK.

Once again an expedient response to pressure will produce a 'settlement' that will not last. Just as in the 1950s a Scottish Covenant movement, and a mass petition for a Parliament for Wales, was defused with conceding some change – a Cabinet Minister for Wales in our case – so the pressure for a Parliament for Scotland, and aversion to a 'democratic deficit' in Wales, produced a modest devolution settlement in the late 1990s.

Short-term tactics are not successful in stabilising the Union, in fact they have brought the Union to the brink of collapse. To survive, as David Cameron recognised the morning after the Scottish vote, the Union has to be fair and balanced to everyone. And that will need our leaders to take the long view.

The IWA hopes to help generate a debate about what kind of settlement would work for Wales by hosting an online 'Constitutional Convention'. I set out in more detail what we have in mind in my article in this issue of agenda.

Funding this project, and the other work of the IWA, remains one of our biggest challenges. As Gerry Holtham, himself a former Director of the leading London think-tank the IPPR, says in his tribute to Geraint Talfan Davies in this issue, "As any think-tank director knows, the money is erratic and uncertain. The whole operation, impressive as its output has been, lives hand to mouth".

That has never been more true. As the constitutional flux once again shows, Wales needs an independent voice to help articulate and organise our thinking. But without additional help and funding, the IWA's ability to meet this need cannot be taken for granted.

**Lee Waters,
Director, IWA**



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Lessons from Scotland

Roger Scully draws some conclusions following the Scottish referendum

The end came quickly. The Scottish independence referendum had been decades in the making. The campaign had lasted nearly three years. But after all that, and despite many expectations that we could face a long, tense and uncertain night, it wasn't like that at all. It became clear rather early on that Scotland had voted No.

In the end, the final tally gave it to No by 55.3% to 44.7%. Yes won in only 4 of Scotland's 32 local authorities. Over the months and years ahead, there will be plenty of detailed analyses of the patterns of the results, and of survey data on individual voters, to try to uncover in more detail precisely who voted Yes and No, and why. But here are five immediate conclusions that we can draw from Scotland's referendum.

Constitutional Referendums Do Strongly Favour the Status Quo:

We have now had three major constitutional referendums in the UK during the current parliament: the March 2011 Welsh referendum on enhanced powers for the National Assembly; the May 2011 referendum on voting reform; and now Scotland's vote. These three referendums had rather few things in common. But one thing they all show is quite how difficult it is to get people to vote for constitutional change. Two of the ballots, of course, rejected proposed changes. Yet perhaps Wales' referendum, the only one to produce a Yes vote, illustrates this point best. In March 2011, Yes had support from across the political spectrum. They faced – Rachel Banner aside – no serious opposing campaign at all. Yes also had behind it broad public sympathy, devolution having some years previously become the settled, majority will within Wales. Yet 36.5% of people still voted No. Scotland's experience further reinforces this general lesson. Yes clearly won the campaign but still came up some way short. This lesson might usefully be born in mind by those keen to foist additional constitutional referendums on people in Wales.

Opinion Polls are still the best way of measuring voting intentions; but they find referendums more difficult than most elections: The months leading up to September 18th 2014 saw considerable criticism of the opinion pollsters. Inevitably, much of that criticism came from supporters of the side that the polls suggested were behind, Yes. A few suggested that the pollsters were deliberately skewing their results; some more sensible critics questioned whether the polls were correctly detecting the grass-roots enthusiasm that the Yes campaign was steadily building. Even some neutral observers were concerned that pollsters whose methods had been calibrated against normal voter registration and turnout levels might struggle in the face of a voter registration drive that had brought several hundred thousand Scots back into the electorate.

In the end, the polls actually did pretty well. The final polls from all the mainstream pollsters got the final result within the 3% 'margin of error'. But though they were not wrong by very much, they were all wrong in the same direction, and not in that suggested by their pro-independence critics. This tendency of polls to overestimate

support for change in constitutional referendums is one other thing that has been common to all three major such recent referendums held in the UK.

Tomorrow Belongs to Yes?: Polls conducted immediately after the independence referendum have suggested, as did all those conducted before the vote, that there were

But for the future of Scotland the most important question may be a rather simple one: were these age-group differences simply an example of life-cycle effects, or were they actually generational in nature?

substantial differences between age groups in voting behaviour. Younger voters were generally more supportive of independence, while older ones – particularly those 65 and above – were much more likely to back the union. Detailed studies will try to unpick the reasons behind these and other differences in how people voted. But for the future of Scotland the most important question may be a rather simple one: were these age-group differences simply an example of *life-cycle effects*, or were they actually *generational* in nature? That is, were the elderly less inclined to vote Yes primarily because older people are always less willing to embrace radical changes? Will those who are currently young voters in Scotland come to adopt similar views and behaviours in time? Or, are at least some of these differences about older generations having grown up at a time when Britain and its governing institutions were held in an esteem that no longer holds? As that older generation inevitably dies out, will a solid block of support for the union vanish with them? If the former is the case, then the age-group differences between older and younger voters in the independence referendum are probably of no great political consequence. If the latter is true then long-term demographic trends will favour those seeking Scottish independence, and support for the

union may ebb with every passing day.

The Most Amazing Thing About the Referendum is that the Result Was Ever in Doubt: The immediate reaction of most Yes supporters to the referendum result was, inevitably, one of deep disappointment. But they should, perhaps, reflect that they did extraordinarily well to get

within 5.3% of victory, given the formidable odds against which they fought. The Yes campaign faced not only the general status quo bias of constitutional referendums, but started off the campaign about 2-1 behind in the polls. Most importantly of all, the Yes campaign had behind it too narrow a coalition of support. Yes were backed by parties that had won 21% of the Scottish vote in the 2010 general election; No by parties that had won 78% of the Scottish vote. The No campaign also had the support of nearly all newspapers, and the fairly-undisguised sympathies of many of the broadcasters. A Yes vote was also opposed by most of the trade unions and much of big business, even though most of Scottish civil society stayed neutral. Yes built up a vibrant internet presence, and a (mostly) impressive grassroots campaign. But it was always facing a very uphill battle.

There are lessons here for any potential second independence referendum. Put simply, to be confident of success a Yes campaign would need to broaden their coalition of support. They would need a greater presence in the mainstream, as well as the on-line, media. They would need a greater basis of support in the main political parties. And, perhaps most of all, they would need to have established the idea of independence as ‘common sense’ across much of Scottish civil

society – just as devolution had been so established prior to the 1997 referendum. To be confident of success, a Yes campaign would need to have arrived at the point where people were not asking the question ‘why should Scotland be independent?’, but ‘why isn’t it independent?’

A Pyrrhic Victory for No? For the parties that collaborated in the Better Together campaign, the result of the referendum laid to rest one problem – and possibly created several new ones. The initial stated ambition of some on the No side was to achieve a crushing victory that would bury the idea of independence permanently, and cause severe damage to the SNP. They fell well short of those ambitions. The SNP has come out of its referendum defeat in amazingly good heart, with buoyant opinion polls ratings and a membership that has trebled in size. Moreover, to stave off the Yes campaign during the frantic final fortnight, leaders of the main UK parties were forced to play-up promises of ‘further powers’ for the Scottish Parliament. But it is far from clear at present that agreement can or will be found on quite what powers those will be, and when they will be delivered; nor is it at all clear how they will fit within any wider constitutional reforms across the rest of the UK. Indeed, with a UK general election looming ever larger on the horizon, we face the prospect of constitutional reforms being debated in just about the least suitable context possible. Any backsliding from the unionist parties on delivering their ‘Vow’ may elicit a substantial vengeance from the Scottish voters. Meanwhile, Nigel Farage has already shown himself very willing to stir the pot of English resentment. The victory for the No campaign is already starting to look rather pyrrhic in nature.



Roger Scully is Professor of Political Science at the Wales Governance Centre, Cardiff University.

Did Scotland say no, or just not yet?

Eberhard Bort says change for the union must be forthcoming or the No vote on the 18th September will be nothing more than a reprieve.

55.3 to 44.7% – the result of the Scottish Independence Referendum was reasonably decisive. Not quite as decisive as it looked for a long time – the poll of polls in 2012 and 2013 had pointed towards a 60:40 split against independence – but much more comfortable in the end for Better Together than the final run of polls in September had suggested. And yet, the mood since then has been astonishing, glum faces among the alleged winners and some buoyant if not exuberant losers.

Immediate elation and relief on the No side soon gave way to serious concerns, particularly among Scottish Labour. The party that so long dominated Scottish politics came out of the campaign bruised and deeply worried, having hemorrhaged votes in their heartlands to Yes (e.g. all eight Glasgow Holyrood constituencies voted Yes). It took a miraculously revived Gordon Brown to prevent a total exodus of Labour voters – but, according to Lord Ashcroft's poll, more than a third of Labour voters of 2011 did not follow their leadership and voted Yes. Moreover, long-standing Labour activists have left the party; some of them switched to the SNP, potentially taking droves of voters with them. Some took delight in Alex Salmond announcing his retirement as SNP leader and First Minister, but Nicola Sturgeon, a shoe-in for his succession, is a dyed-in-the-wool social democrat. 'If there is anyone in the SNP capable of compounding

Labour's decline,' Jamie Maxwell warned in the *New Statesman*, 'it is the deputy first minister.'

Labour and the other 'Westminster parties' are also painfully aware of the pressure they have put upon themselves with their pledges for more powers for the Scottish Parliament – over tax, borrowing and welfare – and the tight time table for delivery they have 'vowed' to honour in their panic-stricken scramble for votes in the final week of the campaign.

In the pubs up and down the country the possibilities of a 'Yes Alliance' contesting the 2015 Westminster elections is being weighed up.

True, some Yes supporters still find it hard to come to terms with the, from their point of view, frustrating if not depressing result. But Alex Salmond could proudly pronounce at First

Minister's Questions, just a week after the referendum, that the SNP had now 62,500 members, nearly trebling its numbers in the wake of the polling defeat and thus turning into the third largest party in the UK. The Socialist Party and the Greens enjoyed a similar surge in membership. 'My own party's youth wing is now bigger than my entire party was 5 days ago,' tweeted Patrick Harvie, the convener of the Scottish Greens, on 23 September. And, as a rally of 3,000 Yes supporters, demonstrating at Holyrood under the 'Voice Of The People' banner on 27 September, showed, there is now a mass movement for independence, supported by an array of very diverse, self organised groups. Addressing that event, SNP MSP Marco Biagi said: 'True power has not been given back to Westminster, it has been lent to them and one day we will take it back.'

In the pubs up and down the country the possibilities of a 'Yes Alliance' contesting the 2015 Westminster elections is being weighed up. 'The 45' – those nearly 45% of Scots who had voted Yes, see themselves as the embodiment of a campaign that changed Scotland. In the immediate aftermath of the referendum, everybody felt compelled to praise the 'electrifying' grassroots campaign, an unprecedented 'triumph of democracy', with huge numbers of people participating in the national conversation about Scotland's future. Hardened cynics were astonished about

the revival, from city to rural hamlet, of political meetings in parish and town halls, often organised by grassroots groups, some by Better Together, but mostly by the Yes campaign(s).

What now?

The easiest decision coming out of the referendum will be to extend the franchise generally to 16- and 17-year-olds, as their participation in the debate and the vote was deemed a resounding success. Everything else is much more complex. As became immediately clear when David Cameron, in his statement on the morning after, linked delivery on the 'Vow' for Scotland with English devolution, particularly 'English votes for English laws'. This would create two classes of MPs at Westminster, and a potentially tricky situation for Labour if it won the next UK election, but would depend on Scottish (or Welsh) MPs for its majority. It would then not have a majority for the passing of English laws. That is, of course, if Labour can hold on to its Scottish seats in 2015 – a big if.

That these UK reforms had to proceed 'in tandem' has since been withdrawn, as Scottish commentators immediately pounced on it as a sign of renegeing on the pledges. But the necessity for change across the UK has become undeniable. Ed Miliband promised at the Labour conference in Manchester that he would 'axe' the House of Lords and create 'a new senate of the UK nations and regions'. He also spoke of devolving power to local government. But it is also agreed that fundamental constitutional change, overdue as it is, cannot be done on the back of a fag packet, nor can it be a 'Westminster stitch-up' – it will need time.

What nobody seemed to have on the radar while focusing on Scotland, is the impact on England and the UK constitution the Scottish vote is likely to have. 'Though the Scots will gain significant new powers to add to those Edinburgh already enjoys,' Patrick Smyth observed in the *Irish Times*, 'it is south of the border that the real political earthquake will happen, potentially the most profound and qualitative changes

What nobody seemed to have on the radar while focusing on Scotland, is the impact on England and the UK constitution the Scottish vote is likely to have.

to the constitutional order since Ireland broke from the union.'

The SNP has decided to join and work 'in good faith' with Lord Smith of the Kelvin Commission which has been tasked by Cameron to coordinate the proposals and get agreement between the SNP, Scottish Labour, the Scottish Liberal Democrats, Scottish Conservatives and Scottish Greens on the way forward by 30 November. Scottish civic organisations and the wider public would, Lord Smith assured, also get a say on the issue of more powers for the Scottish Parliament.

Quite apart from the constitutional change affecting the power relationship between London and Edinburgh, it is to be hoped that in Scotland itself the dynamics of the referendum campaign will mean an end of the centralisation of power at Holyrood. The island councils, the Scottish cities, and CoSLA's 'Strengthening Local Democracy' commission have all persuasively argued for greater local autonomy. The last months have shown that there are thousands of capable people across Scotland who can take on the responsibilities of running their own communities. There also seems a growing will to tackle land reform in Scotland – still the country with the most concentrated pattern of private land ownership in the developed world. And there is an emerging consensus that legislative power on gender equality should be moved to Holyrood.

Silent majority v. majority for change

The silent majority of Scots may have defeated the independence cause on 18 September, but about a quarter off No voters, according to Lord Ashcroft's poll, voted No in the expectation of change and new substantial powers for Holyrood. There is a clear Scottish majority for change. And if that majority felt that the promised powers were not forthcoming, that what Alex Salmond likes to call a 'powerhouse parliament' or, quoting Gordon Brown, 'home rule ... as close to federalism as it can be', was not materialising, that could give rise to demands for another referendum.

Many in the Yes parties and the wider independence movement are now only waiting for the 'Westminster parties' to slip and fail to deliver. If the UK voted to leave the European Union, while Scotland voted to stay in, it is difficult to see how another Scottish independence referendum could be avoided. On 18 September, a majority of Scots rejected independence – but for it to be more than a reprieve for the Union, change must be radical and forthcoming, otherwise the referendum No may have been no more than a Not Yet.



Eberhard 'Paddy' Bort is the Academic Coordinator of the Institute of Governance and a Lecturer in Politics at the University of Edinburgh.

England awakens



Michael Kenny says
English-votes-for-English-Laws
doesn't just pose problems
for Labour.

Prime Minister David Cameron's response to the result of the Scottish Referendum campaign – in which he set out the case for addressing the English question in conjunction with the Scottish one -- has injected powerful new territorial dynamics into British politics. But, while the initial political fallout from this announcement has worked to damage the Labour party, it may turn out that he has unleashed forces and demands that are harder to manage than he imagines.

Labour's last Conference in the run-up to the General Election was overshadowed by the movement of the English question out of the shadows, onto the main political stage. A number of its English MPs are aghast at the party leadership's insensitivity to the danger that Labour comes to be seen as the party that prioritises Scottish over English voters, and a momentum – now probably unstoppable – is growing around the idea of generating a distinctive English Labour presence and identity. Voices from Wales, meanwhile, are wondering why the party was prepared to allow the retention of the Barnett formula to become part of the big promise made to Scottish voters just before the Referendum.

It has been increasingly apparent that the Conservative party would address English grievances once the Scottish Referendum had happened, not least because of the steady, and inevitable,

transformation of UKIP into a vehicle for English nationalism. But, while Labour is floundering with the idea of English-wide devolution, the Conservatives are also facing difficulties with this issue. The Prime Minister and other senior figures who have spoken out most vocally on it, have at times been muddled about what exactly they are advocating. The idea of English-votes-for-English-Laws has been advanced as if it is a principle that can and should be straightforwardly enacted at Parliament, when there are in fact a number of substantively different ways in which it might be introduced.

There is a world of difference between some of these ideas. The kind of quasi-English parliament idea which has been developed by, for instance, John Redwood – which would involve separate sessions of the Commons for English MPs and the prospect of creating a separate English executive authority – has been extensively criticised on the grounds that government at Westminster could well become unworkable if the UK and English executive authorities are led by different parties. This kind of proposal represents a slippery slope towards the creation of an English parliament, and the creation of that might well represent the death-knell of the union.

Such thinking is a far cry from the kinds of proposals that the party's leadership has tended to favour since 2001. These include the more modest reforms sketched out in Ken Clarke's Democracy Taskforce which reported before the last election, and the overlapping, but slightly different, idea of an English Grand Committee which Sir Malcolm Rifkind has advanced. Cameron initially conveyed the impression that he was envisaging the first kind of proposal and has gradually rowed back towards the kind of

The idea of English-votes-for-English-Laws has been advanced as if it is a principle that can and should be straightforwardly enacted at Parliament, when there are in fact a number of substantively different ways in which it might be introduced.

reforms which Rifkind and Clarke advocated.

Cameron's team has come to appreciate that advocating radical constitutional ideas underpinned by a fairly naked transparent partisan interest might well leave the party exposed to the counter-arguments of both Labour and the Lib Dems, and is unlikely to provide the basis for durable and enduring reform. It makes sense therefore to start by urging consideration of the proposals set out in the independent McKay Commission which reported in March 2013, and which argued for enhanced scrutiny powers for English MPs. These may well turn out to be insufficiently robust for those who want English-only legislation to be passed only when it has the consent of English MPs. But, tabling discussion on this basis does not prevent the Tories from insisting that other, more robust, options are also tabled.

Importantly, too, those advocating EVEL (as 'English votes for English laws' is often referred) need to appreciate that there is

much devil in the many procedural details that any of the reforms which have been proposed on this issue imply. There is, for instance, the notoriously tricky question of how exactly English-only legislation is to be delineated, and by whose authority that decision gets made. Would a future government operating under this system simply add UK-wide clauses to Bills that focused predominantly on England? And will the role of the Speaker become even more contentious, if their office is required to adjudicate on these issues? And, does trying to address the West Lothian issue in the Commons make sense while leaving the Lords untouched?

There are other reasons too why the Tories need to tread carefully. Cameron should, above all, consider whether there is more to be gained from seeking to reassure broadly centrist voters – whom he desperately needs to win over if he is to form a government again in 2015 – that he is not a patsy for right-wing populists,

and has the capacity and inclination to set short-term advantage to one side in the name of statesmanship.

It may well be that there is an even bigger prize looming in the minds of Tory strategists on this issue. This concerns the prospect that the election of 2015 results in the formation of a Labour, or Labour-led, government which does not hold a majority of seats in England. Now that the West Lothian question has moved into the political spotlight, the potential formation of a UK wide government which did not command a majority of English MPs has become a much more fraught and politically contentious prospect.



Michael Kenny is Professor of Politics, Queen Mary University of London and Associate Fellow at the IPPR

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How can Wales be at the heart of the debate?

Lee Waters says empty reassurances put Wales at risk of being left behind again.

David Cameron's statement the morning after the Scottish referendum result was significant: "There are proposals to give the Welsh Government and Assembly more powers. And I want Wales to be at the heart of the debate on how to make our United Kingdom work for all our nations".

It is worth re-reading because these words were not thrown together in the

wee small hours - they were weighed carefully, and the subject of much discussion. Stephen Crabb, the new Welsh Secretary, made it known that he had made representations to ensure that Wales was mentioned, and our attention was drawn to the importance of the Prime Minister's words: "I want Wales to be at the heart of the debate".

These are the well-used tactics of statesmen and politicians through the ages, grand statements which appear to say everything, while, in fact, saying nothing. Perhaps the more significant part of the statement was the sentence "There are proposals to give the Welsh Government and Assembly more powers".

Yes, of course there are – the Prime Minister commissioned them from Paul Silk and his committee. The Deputy Prime

already opened up. But as he announced a Commission to implement 'The Pledge' made by Gordon Brown in the final days of the campaign in Scotland, and an announcement of a Cabinet Committee to address the English question, both to report by January, Wales got a holding position – a pedestrian, "There are proposals to give the Welsh Government and Assembly more powers".

Why so non committal? Well, there

the UK Government last spring. The PM may have over-reached with his charge that 'Offa's Dyke has become the line between life and death', but there's life left yet in the narrative. However, the charge would lose its potency if David Cameron was simultaneously proposing to send more powers to Wales.

And thirdly, the PM is fighting on too many fronts as it is, why open another one? The case for dealing with the constitutional questions in a joined up way is powerful. However, as Gerald Holtham told the IWA conference held a week before the Scottish vote, "Mathematicians will tell you if you have a complex series of interrelated problems the optimal solution consists of looking at it all together and solving the set of simultaneous equations. In practice, in politics it never works that way. Problems can only be managed when they are compartmentalised".

Politicians are always frustrated by academics, they feel that they simply don't understand the pragmatic judgments leaders have to face. In this case, the idea of simultaneously tackling reform of the House of Lords, a written constitution with a Bill of Rights within a Federal structure without consensus within or between the parties is not realistic. "They will try and ease the shoe where it pinches next. They will try and solve them one at a time, sequentially, according to urgency not importance because in politics the urgent always dominates the important" Holtham noted.

For all these reasons, and more, there is unlikely to be much movement this side of the General Election. And that's not necessarily a bad thing, it gives us time to figure out what we really want. The current uncertainty is not lost on London observers. Sir Simon Jenkins, Guardian columnist and Chair of the National Trust, offered this view from centre to the IWA conference delegates:

"I think the real problem is that nobody knows what Wales really wants; you knew that the end game in Scotland was independence, you either get it or you don't. In Wales I get no sense of there being anything. I really don't know what it is that's wanted...If you want a convention, have a convention,

We want to follow the example of Scotland in the 1980s following in the wake of the 1979 referendum where the trade unions, churches and voluntary organisations came together to fashion a way forward.

Minister quickly committed his party to implementing the second part of the Silk report within days of its publication back in March. In contrast David Cameron was non-committal. In his defence, he had tricky politics to deal with. His then Secretary of State for Wales, David Jones, was profoundly opposed to further devolution. When Mr Jones was sacked in the July reshuffle the well-connected Conservative commentator Iain Dale said he was 'told' it was because "Cameron thought he was too gobby in Cabinet".

His successor, Stephen Crabb, has also been hostile to devolution but says the majority in the 2011 referendum was a 'game changer' for him: "There's a clear direction of travel there and that's something that we need to be sensitive to and work with" he told his first press conference.

The leader of the Conservatives in the Assembly, Andrew RT Davies, has long since abandoned his opposition to further devolution. He was bold in facing down his internal critics in calling for the UK Government to offer more flexible tax powers to Wales earlier this year and is now justifiably smug that the Government has changed its position.

So, as David Cameron stepped out into Downing St on the morning of September 19th to announce a new "balanced settlement" his internal political space had

are a number of reasons. Firstly, why not? What would the reason be to give Wales more powers? There is hardly a clamour to implement the full report of the Silk Commission.

Labour has pledged to introduce yet another Government of Wales Act to move the devolution settlement onto the Reserved Powers model. This would mean that rather than listing the things the National Assembly can pass laws on, as is currently the case, Parliament would draw up a list of subjects that are 'reserved' to Westminster, defence for example, and anything not listed would be assumed to be the responsibility of the Assembly. This would end the unseemly cases before the Supreme Court where judges have been deciding where the lines should be drawn – and incidentally moving towards a de facto Reserved Powers model in any case. But Labour has not yet committed to many of the Silk Commission recommendations beyond that, so the political pressure on Mr Cameron from the Opposition is not intense, and his own party is divided (as is Labour).

Secondly, the political strategy of attacking Labour's performance in Wales in order to undermine the case for voting for Ed Miliband in May's General Election is still in play. The Conservative inspired 'War on Wales', as Carwyn Jones tried to characterise it, generated some traction for

stop waiting for someone to give you a convention. What's the matter with you, have a convention, decide what it is you want to do and then present it to London and just at this particular moment in time you'll just about get it".

So that's what the IWA is going to do; we're going to hold our own Constitutional Convention, with a twist.

Drawing on the example of the Icelandic experience in citizen involvement, as well as the Scottish Constitutional Convention that mobilised support for a Parliament in the 80s & 90s, and the more recent experience in Ireland, the Institute of Welsh Affairs intends to bring a group of civil society figures and organisations together in the coming weeks to plan a digitally-led Constitutional Convention.

The IWA has already trialled this approach on a smaller scale to form some of our evidence to the Silk Commission. We've piloted an approach using the web to 'crowd-source' policy development by bringing

people together to debate policy changes. We gathered experts from around the country online over a 6 week period at the end of last year to discuss the practicalities involved in devolving powers over policing and justice. We plan to build on that to generate a wide ranging conversation with people across Wales, and beyond, about creating a stable constitutional settlement.

We don't have a fully worked out model, we want to develop this approach as we go along with your input. We want to follow the example of Scotland in the 1980s following in the wake of the 1979 referendum where the trade unions, churches and voluntary organisations came together to fashion a way forward. Our first step is to gather some of the key stakeholders together to design a citizen focused on-line Constitutional Convention.

David Cameron has set-out a timetable for plotting initial proposals for Scotland and England by January, with Parliament taking action after next May's General Election. We want to make sure

Wales' voice isn't lost in this process. And crucially that it's a conversation that goes beyond the political classes.

We need help to make this work. We need you to take part in the debate, but to get there we need your help to get it up and running. We have launched a crowd-funding initiative to enable us to get this exciting project off the ground. Please help us make sure Wales' voice is heard by making a donation here:

www.indiegogo.com/projects/iwa-s-constitutional-convention

"There are proposals to give the Welsh Government and Assembly more powers". Now lets get some engagement with the people who will be affected to make this debate meaningful



Lee Waters is Director of the IWA.

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Gender equality: Claiming back the 'lost decade'

50:50

Joy Kent examines the drive for gender balance among the decision-makers in a post-devolution Wales.

It's been more than 10 years since Wales could first boast of equal numbers of female and male members in the National Assembly, and a majority of women in the Cabinet.

The post-devolution enthusiasm that Wales could lead the way in rectifying gender imbalance among senior decision-makers in the public and private sectors has waned.

The recent 'Who Runs Wales?' report from the Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) revealed that a mere 2% of chief executives of Wales' 100 leading companies were women and only one in six of senior civil servants and local authority chief executives.

Even in the NHS, where nearly 80% of staff are female, only 10% of health board and health trust chief executives were women. The picture wasn't much better in the media, where just one in five newspaper editors were female, and even in the third sector, only one in three top post holders were women.

The EHRC report described the years since 2003 as a 'Lost Decade' which put us back to where important decisions affecting all of our lives are still being made by a largely homogeneous group of middle-aged, middle class white men.

The lack of logic here is illustrated by the fact that, while company boardrooms are currently male-dominated, 70% - 80% of those making household purchasing decisions - ie the companies' customers - are female.

There's ample research showing that diverse boards make better judgments because they apply more perspectives and consider wider options. This is true whether they are company directors, school governors, local councillors, trustees, politicians or others.

There's certainly no shortage of female talent to fill these roles. For example, at Chwarae Teg, we've been helping housing associations to find women for their boards and many excellent candidates are coming through. Moreover, when

National Assembly Presiding Officer, Dame Rosemary Butler AM asked us to mentor 12 women for roles in public life we had nearly 200 applications from women who want to play their part in civil society.

So the challenge must be to send a powerful and consistent message to women that they are wanted, needed and welcomed in all senior decision-making fora.

When it comes to board appointments, the law forbids positive discrimination but, provided selection is made on merit, it is perfectly legal to; 'address disproportionately low participation on boards by enabling or encouraging applications from a particular gender.'

Everyone involved in the process of search, selection and appointment needs to take steps to ensure that, women are fully in the frame when board vacancies are being filled, particularly where they are under-represented at present.

This won't just happen naturally. Unconscious bias means we look for people like ourselves when we recruit, so, where one group or gender dominates a board, this will become self-perpetuating unless action taken to reverse it. Also, current representation gives men more opportunities to promote themselves and we know from research that men are more likely to put themselves forward for roles that will stretch them. Conversely women tend to apply only for roles they're confident they can already do.

We need to change the culture which type-casts women in secondary roles. Journalists for instance can make pledges not to refer to women's age, appearance, marital or parental status unless it is specifically relevant to the story. Retailers can do a lot more to ditch gender stereotypical labelling from toys.

To achieve real change, all of us need to challenge our thinking and play a part. Gender balance at the top will come from gender balance at many other levels in society.

Joy Kent is chief executive of Chwarae Teg, which is among the lead partners in the current 50:50 by 2020 campaign to achieve gender balance on Wales' senior decision-making boards.

50

Putting a price on gender inequality

Helen Molyneux says companies should be penalised for not having women on their boards.

I recently floated an idea to the audience at the Business Breakfast club in Cardiff about how we could increase female representation on boards. I have a natural hesitancy about quotas – borne entirely from the fact that having achieved board status myself, I believe that anything which could label women on boards as ‘tokens’ or quota fillers will make us all second class board members. Instead, how about charging an extra 0.01% corporation tax to those PLCs that don’t have women making up 30% of their board members?

The problem, as I see it, is the way in which the debate is framed. It’s very difficult to prove that having women on boards – either as executives or non-execs – makes any difference to the performance of the companies concerned, but this is often the argument that is advanced. There have been numerous studies over the years, and the statistics can be made to say pretty much whatever you want. There are plenty of reports that support the view that more diverse boards perform better – but even when the statistics are supportive, the findings are often caveated in a way which casts doubt on the true contribution of the women involved. There’s the study that confirmed that companies with more women on the board do better but questioned whether that was simply because those companies are just generally more enlightened, creative etc – a compliment to the ‘good men’ running the business who allowed the women to take part, not to the impact the women had.

Then there’s the research (by Credit Suisse Research Institute) that says companies with women on the board do better during recessions – well obviously, because women are so good at housekeeping and keeping to a budget – but they’re not creative and risk taking like the men.

I think we should take issue with the assumption that to justify their position on a board, women have to enhance performance. It sets the bar for women’s entry to the board room too high. We have to add demonstrable value, over and above that contributed by the men. But why should women have to persuade the markets that they will boost the share price before they are considered worthy? Isn’t it enough that they are as good as – or even just no worse than – the male board members? Companies do well when they have a broad range of skills and expertise available to them. Good board level talent is hard to come by at the best of times – so why limit your business to half the available talent pool.

So, is a penalty better than a quota? In my view it would simply shift the burden of proof. Women wouldn’t have to prove they are better; instead, the businesses would have to persuade their shareholders that having mostly men was so much better for business that it actually covered the cost of the tax penalty. It puts a price on gender inequality – something which all good business people understand the true value of.



Helen Molyneux is the Chair of the Institute of Welsh Affairs and Chief Executive of NewLaw Solicitors.

It's time to wake up and smell the coffee: poor places stay poor because of rich places



Professor Calvin Jones argues that no place develops within a vacuum.

Economists live in a vacuum. By that I don't mean we've all recently been blasted off to live on the International Space Station (though the world can dream), but rather that our theories and approaches are bereft of any wider context. The economics we use almost wholly a-historical, a-political and a-social. Our laws apply everywhere and nowhere. This problem is currently sending a slow shock through the profession, generated largely from outside the learned professoriate, and taking issue with the way the economists have failed to come to terms with the implications of the credit crunch, and the extent to which socio-economic inequality is undoing the manifest material successes of industrialised rent-capitalism.

Economists' understanding of prosperity and place is, with a few noted exceptions, just as narrow. Economists – and by extension public policymakers – seek to diagnose, analyse and ameliorate the problems of poor places as if they were hermetically sealed in vacuum jars, with

the lid only opened to admit or excrete a few traded goods; some migrant labour; perhaps a soupcon of aid or welfare and an occasional healthy dose of inward flowing capital. We shake the jar, and put it back on the bottom shelf.

The problem with this approach is that we are always looking for explanations for the prosperity gap within poor places. Not enough skills? Not enough roads? Uncompetitive wages? As if solving these thorny problems will somehow catapult Wales, Sicily, or the Democratic Republic of the Congo to the top (or at least middle) of the domestic or international economic league. This blinkered approach ignores a reality obvious to most non-specialists. No place develops in a vacuum.

The reality is that for places, development, prosperity and the fundamental wellbeing of their people is contingent. Contingent on the relationship they have with neighbouring and related places. And what matters most is power and politics, not economics and exports. For example, almost every place outside Eurasia bears a colonial stamp; a history of uneven power politics running through their societies like words through a stick of Blackpool rock. We can see this in the strident economic nationalism

and volatility of Latin America. In the windswept deserts of North Africa, soils ruined by Roman grain. In the vast tea (and once opium) plantations of India, the world centre of textile exports until the Brits got there. And in the hanging, brooding slag heaps of South Wales.

If all this matters, if yesterday shapes today, and today shapes tomorrow, then we must re-evaluate how we think about places and prosperity. The Economics of Place is the Economics of Empire, then and now. And this particular spatial appellation is not just solidly tethered, but increasingly cemented in place. We can look around for some sketchy, indicative evidence. For example the 'problem regions' of 1930s Britain are largely the 'problem regions' of today – eighty years of economic history, a World War, fundamental industrial transformation and the death of an empire has done precisely nothing to rearrange the hierarchy of places in Britain – although regions move apart or sometime squeeze together a bit (as we know and obsess over). No regional policy or social intervention, be this from Westminster-Whitehall or the regions themselves, has done one whit to knock the South East from its perch, move the Midlands from their comfortable mediocrity or drag the North and Wales up by their bootstraps to some

If all this matters, if yesterday shapes today and today shapes tomorrow, then we must re-evaluate how we think about places and prosperity.

semblance of decent economic functioning.

The cynical, spatially oriented post-Marxist (there are one or two) might suggest that this is because the objective of regional policy is precisely not to upset the applecart. Such policies have, in the UK, supported regional employment through the allocation of public service activities; through subsidy-support for firms in problem regions; and through preferential terms for foreign inward investment. It has salved the balm of economic 'uselessness' through generous unemployment benefits, universal health care and free education (up to a point); these latter nominal social policies that are also de facto regional interventions. What it has not done is moved any genuine control or autonomy from the core to the periphery. The North East gets Work and Pensions, Wales gets the ONS, but Sir Humphrey and his pet ministers stay resolutely on the Thames. Regions get 'innovation systems' and 'knowledge transfer partnerships'. The 'Golden Triangle' of London and the South East gets the bulk of defence and research spending and a frankly staggering level of infrastructure development including, in the last decade alone the Olympics, Crossrail, Terminal 5 and HS2 (which interestingly, although posited as an emancipatory tool for the Midlands and North, starts construction at, yes, the London end). This kind of regional imbalance masquerading as regional policy does nothing but embed existing power relationships and economic dependencies still further. Meanwhile, London keeps welcoming our skilled and

enterprising youngsters, eventually giving them back older, less productive and often considerably grumpier.

All this may well be an accident of history; a natural tendency of social organisms to self-organise in interesting ways. When the first joint stock adventurers set out from the Thames for points Oriental in the 17th century, cementing the primacy of the South East over the regions was probably not foremost in their minds. Neither was it the concern of Hooke, Wren and Newton as they debated and created the Royal Society in the new coffee houses of the 17th Century City of London. And today, there are (probably) no nefarious meetings between fat plutocrats in smoke filled, oak panelled London clubs, arranging regional prospects like chess pieces. This does not detract from the key implication of these real relationships, a fact that is un-discussed in mainstream economic literature and development policy: capital behaves differently in different places. It is not only less abundant in poor places (a well known fact) but it, and its benefits, are less 'anchored' to poor places, being constantly drawn by the rich core. This is true of financial capital that arises in rich regions, which is far less likely than neo-classical theory suggests to be invested in poor, low-cost regions. It is true of human capital that is born in poor places; much more likely to move, innovate and commercialise in neighbouring or far flung rich places than the reverse. It is true of natural capital, which in many cases cannot be moved, but where pre-existing regulatory, wealth and ownership structures still deposit the benefit largely outside

the resource-rich but economically poor locality. And the character of capital in the periphery is problematic, at least in terms of its use. Social capital in a rural backwater may lead to the creation of a community enterprise that struggles against inflexible structures to make headway in creating assets for community renewal.

If capital, resources and money are like this: hard to find in poor places, unwilling to move there, and in even the best case, leaving quickly via the nearest Tesco, the implications for regional and local economic policy are stark. Traditional economic policy, whether of left or right stripe, is unlikely to work, at least in delivering the needed economic transformation or rationale. A fundamental change in political relationships is needed to generate economic success relative to the core. And no, Silk will not suffice. Indeed, arguably, under this hegemonic reading, full political independence for a small European country might only see a reordering of relationships with the new capital at the top and with a political elite still skimming off the rest. Complicated stuff.

I feel the ghosts of future commentators queuing up already. Typical whinging Taff, excusing failure. The word 'socialist' may also be bandied (although I think that the State, at all spatial scales, is very much part of the problem, not a solution). The words 'his', 'on', 'shoulder' and 'chip' may be rearranged. Well, maybe. But I'm going to put my time where my mouth is. Over the next year I'll be doing some statistical digging to see whether places ever do claw their way up regional league tables, and if so, whether this is due to political or economic shock. I'll be getting out to talk to people, businesses and organisations in poor but interesting places to find out how they see prosperity and development, and assessing how this fits with what governments say these places 'need'. I'll be trying to find out whether the economics of place really is the economics of empire.



Comments >

1

John Winterson Richards says:

The obvious truth that local economies do not exist in a vacuum has been well-documented since Adam Smith. That is of course why trade is the engine of prosperity.

The 'poor' – both people and areas – are those who, for whatever reason, are not offering goods and services that others want or need to buy. Looking at it for a moment in brutal, purely economic terms, leaving the question of morality aside temporarily, their existence makes relatively little difference to those others: those others would still exist if those who provide no goods and services did not. If, on the other hand, those who provide goods and services did not exist, everyone would be worse off. So it is not true that 'the poor' are poor because others are rich. If anything they are poor because they like to think they are poor because others are rich. Instead of directing their thoughts and energies towards trying to provide goods and services others might want or need, they prefer to sit back and blame others, i.e. those who are providing goods and services. There is no shortage of unscrupulous politicians willing to encourage and exploit that desire to blame someone else.

Bringing morality back into the equation, it should be clear that the right thing to do is to help and encourage those who are currently not providing goods and services that others want and need to aspire to do so. It should be stressed that there are no guarantees of success but those who try are bound to do better than those who sit back and blame others. Like most truths, this is not a popular thing to say in a democracy – too many prefer politicians who make excuses of their behalf – but anyone who is serious about ending absolute poverty and dependency culture must begin with it.

2

R. Tredwyn says:

It's not quite true that the pecking order of British regions has not changed. In the 1950s the West Midlands was one of the most prosperous areas in the UK. Now it is among the poorer ones. Scotland has moved up in the rankings. The first was caused by the collapse of low-skill metal-bashing and the domestic car industry. Foreign car companies set up elsewhere. Scotland found oil but also rode the financial services boom. Wales has suffered from the loss of the industries that led the population to be here in the first place. With devolution we have at least some of the power to do something about it but the vision, energy and understanding have been lacking among our political class. The Welsh electorate is at fault for not demanding more. There is a lot to be said for JWR's bracing view, though the implication that you always get what you deserve in a capitalist society is sentimental nonsense. Power counts. Both views are true: yes the game is rigged but yes there's no point whingeing, we have to get on and make the best of it.

3

Calvin says: @john

An interesting point, but assumes that the populations of places control, and can trade, their own products for their own benefit (trade in services is largely irrelevant here I think). For 95% of places and 95% of history that has not been the case. The Incas did not 'trade' their silver to the Conquistadors. Wales does not 'trade' its wind or water with England.

Even where this is the case, trade is free but not fair – cf. the huge agricultural subsidies paid by rich world governments to their farmers, rendering development-by-export incredibly difficult for poor, rural countries.

The point of my article is that there is no level playing field for places that aspire to join the club of the prosperous.

@Tredwyn

Indeed. One of the themes of my research will be around whether places that have a 'credible threat' to be disruptive to the status quo – e.g. Jacobite or Nationalist Scotland, centuries apart – can drive a better economic bargain with the core.

4

John Winterson Richards says:

Mr Tredwyn, your statement that "the implication that you always get what you deserve in a capitalist society is sentimental nonsense" is of course absolutely correct: indeed, the contrary was never implied in the previous comment. The overused and oft-misused word "deserve" is generally best avoided in rational discussion of economics. The real implication here is that we need to be hard-headed if we are to give the Welsh people viable hope.

Calvin, with respect, the first paragraph of your comment is a good example of how discussion of the Welsh economy tends to focus too much on (1) natural resources and (2) past injustices, both real and imagined. We can spend our time brooding or we can say, "We are where we are – so where do we go from here?" We are now in the 21st Century. The exploitation of natural resources is now less likely to be the basis of a prosperous economy than the exploitation of knowledge. The challenge for Wales is to build an enterprise culture that can take advantage of that – not easy but definitely possible.

There is, however, no argument with the last two paragraphs of your comment. A level playing field would certainly be highly desirable all round – but we should not make our plans on the assumption that one is likely to be provided in the immediate future!



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Getting Graduates to Teach First

Jennifer Owen-Adams looks at the potential impact of Teach First coming to Wales.

It is no secret that deprivation and its impact on the attainment gap is a significant problem in Wales. One in three children is affected by poverty, with 17% living in severe poverty - the highest proportion of any UK nation.

Across Wales, pupils who are eligible for free school meals are 2.5 times less likely to get five A*-C GCSE grades than their wealthier peers. In south Wales in particular, the performance of pupils that are eligible for free school meals is lower than their wealthier peers at all stages and in all performance measures. It is no coincidence that south Wales is a youth unemployment 'hotspot', with 1 in 4 children not in education, employment or training.

Such a deeply ingrained problem is one of Wales' greatest social injustices; it perpetuates inequality and confines thousands of young people across the

country to a lifetime of unrealised potential. But it does not have to be this way.

Research shows that truly excellent teaching in schools is a major change factor in enabling children from low-income backgrounds to succeed. This is especially true when the local community are at the heart of local schools - engaged parents and carers play a critical role in the journey of children and young people throughout their formal and informal education.

Addressing this challenge is now rightly a major focus for the Welsh Government and charities like Teach First Cymru. Our vision is that no child's educational success is limited by their socio-economic background. We believe inspirational teachers and leaders can transform a child's future and end the tragedy of educational disadvantage.

The charity recruits, trains and supports the best candidates to become inspirational teachers in schools serving low income communities. Having helped to transform the profile and reputation of teaching in these schools, in England Teach First has become the largest graduate recruiter since it was established in 2003.

We opened Teach First Cymru in 2013 and from this month will begin to recruit and train 2,060 graduates across Wales and ten English local areas - increasing the intake by 44%.

Research shows that truly excellent teaching in schools is a major change factor in enabling children from low income backgrounds to succeed.

Graduates are first put through rigorous and challenging assessment processes to ensure they have the right skills and qualities to teach and lead in some of the most challenging schools. Then, working in partnership with Universities and schools, they embark on an intensive six week training programme and commit to continued training and teaching for at least two years. They qualify with a PGCE and are offered the opportunity to study for a Master's degree. Following the two year period, they are able to decide on their future career progression.

Teach First's 2014 cohort shows an increasing diversity compared to the general teaching workforce:

- 46% have been recruited to work in STEM (science, technology, engineering and maths) roles to help Britain's schools foster an adequate supply of home-grown skills for the future.
- 39% of new trainees are the first in their family to go to university.
- 73% attended a Russell Group university.
- 26% of recruits were themselves eligible for Free School Meals and or Education Allowance Maintenance.
- 14% are from Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic backgrounds, compared with 8% in other teacher training routes.

In Wales participants take part in a month long intensive Summer training programme run by the University of Wales Trinity St David, and continue to work with subject specific tutors throughout the first year.

About two-thirds stay in teaching: those who go elsewhere remain part of the social movement for change that Teach First has become, acting as Teach First ambassadors and often working in positions where they can continue to work to improve the lives of young people; whether it be in business, the third sector or politics.

In England, Ofsted, the schools inspectorate, has judged Teach First to be an outstanding programme which is making a significant contribution to raising standards in schools facing challenging circumstances and providing top quality training for the participants.

In Wales, the second cohort of 38 new participants have just started teaching in schools where there are high percentages

of disadvantaged students and where the current levels of performance of the school has placed them in Bands 3 to 5 of the Welsh Government's secondary school banding system. They learn from experienced teachers in their school through professional and subject specific mentoring.

Throughout their first two years the participants are supported by their university partner and by Teach First Cymru staff, as well as by the schools. Participants also gain experience outside of the schools in the communities in which they are placed to better understand the backgrounds from which their pupils come and to support them and their families.

Impact is being measured by close monitoring of how well the pupils progress over the academic year. To do this, Teach First Cymru collect both academic data and survey pupils as to their perceptions of themselves, their level of engagement and of the overall content of what is being

taught and of their teacher.

Data collected so far from around 100 secondary pupils taught by participants revealed the following:

- 'I respect my teacher' - **94.3%**
- 'I feel comfortable asking my teacher for individual help about the things we are learning' - **88.6%**
- 'I believe what I am learning in this class is important for my future' - **88.6%**
- 'The teacher presents lessons in ways I understand' - **76%**

Whilst the new 2014 cohort settles into school life, recruitment for the 2015 cohort is now underway with a greater emphasis on attracting more home-grown talent to join the programme. To support this, Welsh has been added as one of the subjects teachers will teach from 2015 onwards and the charity will be moving into north Wales for 2015.

The arrival of Teach First Cymru has been an exciting development for Wales - no education system can exceed the quality of its teachers and Teach First Cymru is dedicated to helping raise attainment in Wales. There are many factors that contribute to overcoming the influence of educational inequality; having an outstanding teacher is one simple tool that can change the status quo.

In England, Ofsted, the schools inspectorate, has judged Teach First to be an outstanding programme which is making a significant contribution to raising standards in schools facing challenging circumstances and providing top quality training for the participants.



Jennifer Owen-Adams is Country Director for Teach First Cymru



WNO William Tell - David Kempster (William Tell) and WNO Chorus. Photo: Richard Hubert Smith

Arts in an age of endless austerity

Geraint Talfan Davies looks at the state of the arts in Wales in a challenging financial climate.

Like many people who deliver public rather than private goods, the arts are struggling to find the right response to the current age of austerity. The passionate belief in the value of the arts to the individual and to society is undimmed. The willingness to argue the case, however repetitively, is ever present. Yet the severity and endlessness of the public spending squeeze has subdued the more familiar clamour. The usual responses to 'cuts' don't seem appropriate any more. We know that the Oliver Twist reflex to ask for more will not only fall on deaf ears, but also earn

you a cuff on your own ear.

Arguably, the arts have done better in Wales in recent years than in England. Expenditure per head, although much lower than in countries like France and Germany, has been higher in Scotland and Wales than in England, simply because it costs more for small countries to keep their heads above water culturally. And yet it still accounts for less than 0.23 per cent of the Welsh Government's total annual expenditure.

The arts in Wales may have been helped by the arcane nuances of the Barnett formula that governs the size

of the block grant by which the Welsh Government is funded.

After the 2010 election the coalition government ring-fenced the health service in England. Since health spending is such a dominant factor in the Barnett calculation, ring-fencing health in England ensured that the public spending cut in Wales was less than expected. When the Welsh Government then decided not to ring fence health on its own patch, this meant that the cuts imposed on other departments were considerably lighter than on equivalent departments in England.

It was this, partly, that allowed the Welsh Government in 2011 to restrict the cut to the Arts Council of Wales to 4 per cent, while the Arts Council of England was struggling with a 30 per cent. I say partly, because this treatment

of the arts was not automatic, it also reflected a wish within government to give some protection to the arts. The arts do have friends in the Welsh Cabinet. The argument that savings on the arts are so small that they would be regarded as almost immaterial within the budgets of the health service - a mere rounding - has been effective, although countered by the argument that no area should be seen to have been excluded from cuts.

In September this year – only three months after the imposition of an in-year arts funding cut - the Welsh Government's draft budget for 2015-16 was published. This promised a cut of 3.1% for ACW in 2015-16 and the near certainty of a further reduction in 2016-17. ACW's chief executive, Nick Capaldi, said this was "extremely challenging".

Context is crucial. First, the Arts Council of Wales' portfolio of client organisations was pruned drastically at the time of the post-election spending review. The number of revenue funded

client organisations fell from 103 to 71. Second, despite ACW's best efforts, those organisations that survived are still financially stretched.

Third, the reduction in the Welsh Government's spending on the arts is far from the whole story. Cuts in local government spending have increased the pain for many. Expenditure on culture by local authorities has been crucial to sustaining the geographical spread of the arts in Wales, particularly at the community level. But since this has always been a discretionary rather than a statutory function, it is now more vulnerable than ever. RCT plan to close the Muni theatre in Pontypridd. Cardiff's Sherman Theatre has lost all its local authority funding. Cardiff Council is looking for a new ownership model for St David's Hall and the New Theatre. Newport Council is doing the same in relation to its Riverside Theatre. Similar situations abound across Wales.

Only the day after the publication of the Welsh Government's draft budget

Rhondda Cynon Taf, the second largest local authority in Wales, announced that it was cutting the funding of its music service entirely. This is a service that provides tuition and outreach projects to 3,500 young people across the three valleys, sustaining some 20 music ensembles including a youth orchestra and choir, as well as making input into the curriculum in schools.


The Council's leader defended the decision on the grounds that his authority had to save £30m per annum. One suspects that in the coming months the RCT Music Service will not be alone.


The irony is that at the very same time the Welsh Government's Education Department and the Arts Council of Wales are assembling an implementation plan for an ambitious Arts in Education strategy, to which they have jointly committed £4m per annum for the next five years (£2m from the Education department and £2m from the Arts Council's lottery fund). On the face of it, therefore, the RCT

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Net current service expenditure per person by Unitary Authorities 2012-13 (IFS)

Culture & Leisure (ex Libraries)

| | £ |
|-------------------|-----|
| Merthyr Tydfil | 111 |
| Blaenau Gwent | 106 |
| Cardiff | 84 |
| Rhondda Cynon Taf | 84 |
| Denbighshire | 83 |
| Newport | 83 |
| Conwy | 77 |
| Caerphilly | 74 |
| Powys | 74 |
| Swansea | 74 |
| Neath Port Talbot | 73 |
| Monmouthshire | 72 |
| Ceredigion | 64 |
| Gwynedd | 63 |
| Torfaen | 62 |
| Bridgend | 61 |
| Wrexham | 61 |
| Flintshire | 59 |
| Vale of Glamorgan | 58 |
| Carmarthenshire | 53 |
| Anglesey | 49 |
| Pembrokeshire | 47 |

cut represents a big policy disconnect. A similar disconnect can be seen in the ongoing fight over the funding of the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama, following the Higher Education Funding Council's withdrawal of 'premium funding'.

The Arts in Education initiative could be a game-changer for Welsh education, getting creativity into the heart of the curriculum. Creativity may also be a central theme of Professor Graham Donaldson's review of the

My advice would be not to expect miracles. The capacity in Wales for corporate support for charitable activities is low. Indigenous businesses tend to be small, with a limited capacity for charitable giving. Larger businesses are often headquartered elsewhere in the UK, or even overseas, leaving local managers with relatively low levels of discretionary spend in the corporate social responsibility field.

national curriculum for Wales, since he was instrumental in devising Scotland's Curriculum for Excellence, in which creativity loomed large. Alongside this, Estyn, the schools inspectorate, has been charged with reviewing best practice in arts in our schools.

All this has the potential to give Wales a leading edge in this sphere, but one has to ask, to what extent will delivery be blunted if the capacity represented by local music services is reduced or disbanded? The same question will arise if the largest arts organisations have to shrink their own powerful outreach activities that do so much to take the arts to disadvantaged communities.

One of these is Welsh National Opera that has long had a powerful youth and community department – a recognised leader in participatory work. WNO is one of the very few arts organisations to be funded by two Arts Councils, Wales and England. England pays the lion's share, but both sides have called it a cross-border bargain. However, funding from both sources has rarely moved in step, owing to differing budgetary situations and timing differences.

One simple measure illustrates the scale of the problem that many arts organisations face. If our total combined grant in 2007-08 had risen in line with RPI it would now be £2.5m more than it currently is. That is what we have had to absorb. We have already made cost savings of more than £1million, reducing

the permanent staff by 20 per cent, from more than 260 to 204. Perhaps we should have done it more noisily.

Even this does not balance the books, so we have had no option but to embark on a fundamental review of our business model to ensure sustainability and to hedge against further reductions in public funding. The Chancellor's announcement of cash credits equivalent to tax credits for commercial touring theatre will help, but are unlikely to bridge the gap.

We are, therefore, exploring new markets outside the UK in ways that also help the Welsh Government's inward investment objectives. We are seeking partners to extend the work of our acclaimed youth and community department. Our Development Department has raised more in private contributions this year than ever before – more than £2million. But it will be a fight to retain the present scale of operation – a scale that delivers a quality that this year won the UK's most prestigious opera prize – the Royal Philharmonic Society award. We have no wish to become a part-time company and will do everything in our power to avoid that fate.

In England many politicians on the right believe that the arts are a private good not a public good. They believe that it is up to private donors whether or not to take up the slack left by government cuts. In this year's Welsh



budget announcement there was a faint echo of that sentiment in a decision to provide money to Arts & Business to encourage a bigger contribution from the business sector.

My advice would be not to expect miracles. The capacity in Wales for corporate support for charitable activities is low. Indigenous businesses tend to be small, with a limited capacity for charitable giving. Larger businesses are often headquartered elsewhere in the UK, or even overseas, leaving local managers with relatively low levels of discretionary spend in the corporate social responsibility field. Typically, even regional managers of large professional service companies have to refer to headquarters outside Wales for sums in excess of £10k.

As for private giving, let's not forget that across the population as a whole, wage and salary levels in Wales are low, with even smaller numbers of 'high net worth' individuals. Remarkably, only a third of one per cent of Welsh taxpayers – 4,000 people – qualify for the top 45% rate of income tax, the lowest proportion of the four countries in the UK, and

fewer than 10 per cent even qualify for the 40 per cent rate. By contrast, Scotland has four times the Welsh figure paying the top rate, despite having less than twice Wales' population. This is highly significant since the top 50 per cent of households account for 92 per cent of all giving.

Put another way, those resident in Wales, and paying the 45 per cent 'additional rate', account for only 1.3 per cent of those paying the additional rate across the UK. London accounts for 32.7 per cent of them. That is why, in the case of WNO, much of our fund-raising has had to have a London focus.

Fund-raising in provincial cities in the UK is a different proposition from fund-raising within London and the south east of England, as is evidenced by the survey, *Private investment in arts and culture, 2011-12*, conducted by Arts & Business and published in May last year. The report dealt solely with England. Arts and Business Cymru is a separate organisation and has no comparable data, although Wales is not expected to be out of line with other peripheral regions.

The A&B survey concluded that the

combined contribution of individuals and business to the arts in London amounted to £412.43m. (85%) with the rest of England receiving £74.19m (15%) – almost precisely in inverse proportion to the distribution of the population. In terms of contributed income per head of the population, this amounts to £49.64 per head in London as against £1.64 per head for the remainder of England. These figures are being hotly debated over the border.

Contrary to the common perception of arts people as a rather unworldly, innumerate crowd, the sector is extraordinarily inventive in its search for survival. Passion breeds resilience. We have developed the strongest fingertips in the animal kingdom. That strength should not be taken for granted. The abyss below is deep – for everyone.

Geraint Talfan Davies is Chairman of Welsh National Opera and a Trustee of the Shakespeare Schools Festival.



Those in greatest need at the front of the queue

Image: Katie Dalton

At the IWA's annual health conference, IWA Director, Lee Waters, and Health Minister Mark Drakeford sat down to discuss the notion of 'prudent healthcare', the Welsh Government's 'big idea' to address the severe challenges facing the NHS in Wales.

Lee Waters: What's the difference between "Prudent Healthcare" and rationing?

Mark Drakeford: It's important to be clear - all healthcare systems ration. It's not an easy thing to say on public platforms but every single healthcare service has ways to match supply and demand. The difference is that in prudent healthcare what we are talking about is making clinical need the guiding principle in distinguishing between different sorts of demand. It means those whose needs are greatest will be at the front of the queue.

LW: What are the consequences of failure?

MD: That we will struggle more and more to go on running an unreformed health system. Because you simply can't run a health service with consistently rising demand and consistently lowering resources and think that there won't be a point in which those two collide in a pretty nasty way.

LW: We are facing a potential gap in public spending of £2.5bn over the

next ten years. One of the things you could do to try and get those savings is to suppress or cut pay. How do you square the circle between having to make those choices whilst motivating a workforce to deliver change?

MD: In an organisation where 65% or so of your costs are in the cost of staff, then it is unavoidable that the pay bill has to be part of what you scrutinise. My ambition is to keep as many people as possible working for the NHS and being members of their trade unions. But if I can't do a deal with them on pay and conditions then the stark fact is there will be fewer of them in future. When you explain to them that context, they'd rather be in a job than not, even if it means some painful accommodations. It is in fact harder to explain in recent weeks than it was a year ago because we are 40% of the way through the cuts that have been announced already to public expenditure in the UK. But people read in their newspaper in the morning that the economy has turned a corner and we're back in the sunny uplands. But as far as public services are concerned we are not even down the slope to the

floor of the valley yet, let alone coming out of the other side

June Clarke: My background is in nursing and health visiting which means a particular focus on prevention. How can you reconcile a commitment to prevention and early intervention (particularly among old people) while at the same time cutting access to certain services?

MD: Well absolutely none of this is easy to do in a time of austerity. But there is no avoiding the conversation that we have to have between the user and the provider of services because so much of what the NHS has to deal with is avoidable harm. If people want the NHS to be able to go on dealing with *unavoidable* harm then individuals are going to have to recognise there is more that they will have to do. And that's not an easy conversation to have with people because on the whole the consequences are years away. Now June's question: 'how do we do all this when the budgets that are most under pressure are always the prevention budgets?' I don't have any easy answer to, but there are some good examples of where by re-calibrating prevention services we build up people's own capacities to deal with things themselves rather than creating a dependency on the service. And in the field of elderly people in particular there is quite a bit of evidence that providing services of that sort early on can actually *accelerate*

someone's dependency rather than arrest it. We've got to be smart about prevention as well.

LW: In terms of incentives for good choices and consequences for bad ones. Cardiff and the Vale now have a scheme that if you smoke or are obese, you must go on a course before you're allowed on a waiting list. Is that a principle you are looking to build on?

MD: I am very keen on doing it. All the tests of opinion show that people are supportive of this because the message is *not* about not giving people treatment; it's about saying 'there is no point in offering you this course of treatment, until you are in a position to benefit from it. If your weight is of a certain level then that orthopaedic procedure is simply not going to do what it would do for you otherwise... if you're smoking at a level that a procedure would be dangerous for you, then that treatment is not for you.' Now I want to do more of that in Wales because one of the core principles of prudent healthcare is that we need to avoid harm and also not do things that do no good.

Dewi Evans: I'm a paediatrician. You mentioned the role of the patient but there is also the responsibility of those who work in the NHS...

MD: If we want prudent healthcare principles to work then there are big shifts in culture for people who work in the health service. There is a natural tendency that if we see somebody in distress our instinct is to reach out to them and say 'don't worry we'll look after that for you.' Although the motivation is very understandable and honest, the impact of it generally is to *disenable* people rather than to enable them to do more. I was struck very much by a conversation I had with a GP who said that in the last year or so he had very consciously changed his very first encounter with a patient. For most of his professional life people

would come through the door and he would say 'What can I do for you today?' But *now* when people come through the door he says 'What are *we* going to do to address the issue that has brought you through the door?' People used to just pass the problem over the table and make him and the NHS responsible. Now he is inviting people to put the problem in the middle of the table. This is where the cultural shift for clinicians comes, when they're able to recognise the expertise and real contribution that the patient brings with them to solving their own problems.

LW: But isn't there some blame to be shared around here in terms of the expectations created? On the one hand

need to restore both public institutions but also the values that inspired them. Prudent healthcare must be a people's service, a citizen's service...

Duncan McCombie, Energy Saving Trust: It is recognised that cold and damp homes have significant impact on health and admissions to hospital. The trouble is that housing sits across a number of ministerial portfolios. What are you going to do with your ministerial colleagues to stop people in cold damp homes ending up in hospital?

MD: One of the fantastic things about the NHS and one of the reasons it is so important to us, particularly in Wales is

If we want prudent healthcare principles to work then there are big shifts in culture for people who work in the health service. There is a natural tendency that if we see somebody in distress our instinct is to reach out to them and say 'don't worry we'll look after that for you.'

Mark Drakeford

you're saying 'look, there's less money around and we're going to have to do things differently' and on the other hand there was a lovely strategy the other day about neurological services, which suggested there would be all sorts of improvements. Why are you saying you're going to do things you can't afford to do?

MD: I spend most of my days sadly explaining why we are not able to do the things that we really would like to do. But that cannot be a gospel of despair. There are ways in which to redesign services that show what good prudent healthcare is about. It means that with the money we do have we do things better. There still are, even in really hard times, ways of squeezing more benefits out of what we have got. **Elaine Moore, Shared Lives Cymru:** We in Wales are all too conscious of the attrition of the public realm, and the

that it's probably one of the last great democratic forums that we have. More and more people only rub shoulders with people who are like them, but one place where you see everyone on an equal plane is when you go into an NHS waiting room. And that great sense that the NHS is part of the glue that still manages to hold together a society which in so many other ways is sharply unequal is part of why it is so important to us.

We have to join that up with other services, and it is one of the things about devolution that we ought to celebrate. I work on a corridor with many of the Ministers who have a shared interest in what decent housing conditions would bring for our population. I do not have to make special arrangements to see them, I'm able simply to open the door and talk to them. Now we may not do well enough and it may not be quite so easy

to translate those conversations into joined up activity on the ground but we have the opportunity to do that through devolution that is the envy of many other places.

Ed Bridges, Prostate Cancer UK:

You talked about one of the core principles of prudent health being not doing things that do no good, but where does that leave those patients who are terminally ill? Where a decision might be over treatment that could postpone their death by six weeks ...

Peter Evans, Transition Chepstow:

There is a loss of expectation and lack of belief of the NHS in Wales. I feel this, politically, isn't being effectively challenged, there is a great deal of work to be done in terms of perception of that public spirited and democratic nature of the NHS in Wales...

Jeremy Felvus, Pfizer: One of my concerns is that our industry thrives

on innovation... and yet there is a concern that this approach might end up restricting the NHS' ability to be innovative in terms of its new medicine.

MD: I don't think prudent healthcare drives out innovation; I think it's exactly the opposite. It does mean I think that we have to be less mesmerized by the new and more willing to focus on things that we know are effective. The Chief Medical Officer reminds me regularly that process innovation is more important than product innovation. An example of this is lymphoedema services in Wales which have been radically improved in recent years by a group of nurses who have process innovated to make them run in a new way. It treats more patients more quickly and more effectively and as it happens it does it at a lower cost, but that is a *by-product* not the intention of the policy. It meets every prudent healthcare principal you can imagine and it's innovative in its core.

For what it's worth my own belief about what is going on in the London media is that it's all about preparing the ground so if the Tories are elected again next year they will move -in England- from covert privatisation, which is going on all the time, to overt privatisation. They will do it because the public will have been softened up by a cascade of stories saying: 'well it was all rubbish anyway wasn't it? The NHS was a busted model in any case.'

Finally I'd like to return to Ed's point because I think he puts his finger on a really difficult dilemma. Those decisions have to be, I think, more powerfully informed by lay opinion. We have to, in a citizen's jury type way bring in lay opinion to help us to make some of those really hard edged decisions where we've got one sum of money and a lot more than one call on it.

You can listen to the interview in full on our Audioboom page: www.audioboom.com/channel/iwa



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Let's find a balance in the e-cigarette debate

Dr Julie Bishop explains why Public Health Wales is calling for regulation of e-cigarettes.

Imagine for a moment that a new product has come to the market and has achieved very rapid uptake with an estimated two million users in the UK alone. The product is available in a number of forms, some of which are brightly coloured and flavoured in a way that could easily appeal to children. The substance they contain is highly addictive, there is evidence that some people can become addicted and develop dependency very quickly. There are some negative health effects to its use, particularly on the cardiovascular system. The contents of the product are poisonous when consumed in quantity – there is rising evidence of consultations with the national poisons service on overdoses – particularly among small children. There are safety concerns that are arising on the quality of manufacture of some of the products with reports of injuries or fires arising from their use. There are no restrictions on the use of this product so it is becoming widely used in public places, including where children and young people are present. It is also being heavily advertised, including on television. It is being sold in a wide range of outlets, crossing traditional product boundaries.

Setting aside what we know about

the potential benefits to smokers – in any other circumstances is this a product that would be legally available at all, let alone without any restrictions on its sale or promotion? The answer is clearly no; there would be widespread calls to ban it from sale. The only reason that we are even considering its availability is because it is less harmful than a currently available lethal product.

Unfortunately, at the moment the public health/tobacco control community seems to be split. One group expressing concerns about the product itself, others only seeing the potential benefits to current smokers. Public Health Wales' view is that it is possible to find a balance, a compromise position that addresses the needs and concerns of both sides.

The 'precautionary principle' is well established in public health. Where we have some evidence, for example from theory or basic science or from other fields of health, that something may have negative health effects, we act on that basis not waiting for conclusive evidence of harm. It is true that we don't have conclusive evidence that children will take up e-cigs and start vaping in large numbers but there is sufficient evidence to suggest it is a risk. Why wouldn't they, they are seeing it all around them, it is

being widely advertised, adults do it and perhaps of greatest concern – it is widely touted as being safe.

We believe that if e-cigs are regulated and treated as a tobacco product (providing they do not make claims about helping people quit) they should be legally available. This means that they would be subject to the same sales and marketing restrictions as cigarettes and the same rules on where they can be used. This, we believe, would help reduce the potential risks and harms of e-cigs, particularly to the young. For smokers, they would be able to make the safer choice if that is their preference – we would advocate it should be a last resort, quitting is still the best option. They would still be gaining compared to continuing to use tobacco; they can take steps to reduce their risk. They cannot currently smoke tobacco where and when they choose so it seems illogical to argue that they are somehow disadvantaged by not being allowed to vape where and when they like.

There is a win/win situation possible here. It is important that the public health community does not allow the considerable vested interests in this debate to introduce tensions and divisions which ultimately can only harm public health.

Let's lighten up!

Jamie Insole, a long term smoker describes the effect that vaping has had on his habit.

I write this piece as a hardened tobacco-smoker of eighteen years who has, in the past, smoked anything up to forty Camels per day. Initially rejecting e-cigs as a bit of frippery, my then partner convinced me to buy one following the death of her friend's son. Since then, bar for the occasional drunken-accident, I have clung tightly to my 'photon-tank'. Significantly, this has nothing to do with any commitment to quitting. Rather, it is because I, like many, have quickly come to prefer the rich flavour vapour to that of smoke. What's more, a simple headcount at Cardiff Central would suggest that I am now in the majority.

Public health drives are rarely modelled by physicians. Rather they have become the property of canny advertising consultants. Whilst seeking to preserve the façade of scientific efficacy, they seek to shock and 'suggest' through an established set of referents. Often, the statistical probability of developing an unpleasant and ultimately fatal disease is bound to the suspicion of foul odours, bad-skin and impotence.

Overall, attempts to engineer aversion have proved broadly successful. Having grown up in the late eighties, when courtesy determined that one should only smoke on the top-floor of a double-decker bus, I have witnessed a gradual but radical shift in perception. What was once an everyday event has now become widely perceived as an act of aggression.

This is precisely why we need to draw a distinction between 'public

health' and social-conditioning. Whereas the one lends itself to rational debate, the other operates on a mute, subliminal level. In way of anecdotal evidence, I point to a friend who recently remarked "why should I be made to inhale somebody else's breath"? The stakes are high – the 50 or so senior health professionals whose letter featured in last weeks nationals estimated that e-ciggs might potentially save tens of millions of lives world wide. Is it not good sense to think that at least some of this might benefit Wales?

Granted; besides the welcome suspension of nicotine, gelatine and preservative, it would of course be desirable to have some certainty as to what it is I am actually inhaling. However, many of the current proposals far exceed normal quality control. For instance, the suggestion that access should be restricted to pharmacies is not only mean but frankly ludicrous. Clearly an attempt to 'medicalise by association', the likely effect of not being able to purchase out-of-hour 'e-juice' will be to drive addicts like me to the nearest off licence to wretch upon a packet of ten B&H. From this perspective, policy-makers might as well recommend that contraception be returned to the chemist's top-shelf (lest young people be tempted into unprotected sex).

Similarly, the notion that an e-cig will 'normalise' or 'glamorise' tobacco consumption can be easily refuted through the following simple experiment. Next time you are at the bar, offer a Lambert full-strength to a friend or stranger who has for the past three months been happily enjoying vanilla & amaretto. It would be wise to step-away as the effect can easily be compared to inviting a polished taster to knock back a can of special brew!

As any law undergraduate will attest, rights, far from being inviolable, coexist amidst a jumbled range of often contradictory categories. Consequently, my right to free expression is qualified by your right to life, a transaction governed by the principle of 'proportionality'.

However, what is proportionate can only be properly considered in the wider context of comparative harms. The fact that some Welsh Health Trusts are now prepared to countenance the suspension of treatment pending the completion of a 'quitters-course' possibly suggests some of what is at stake. Moreover, given the demographics (smoking is a class issue!), and peculiar strains on the Welsh Health Budget, far from attempting to prohibit or control these

the likely effect of not being able to purchase out-of-hour 'e-juice' will be to drive addicts like me to the nearest off licence to wretch upon a packet of ten B&H.

machines, it is difficult to see why policy makers are not insisting that charger-points be installed in public places?

So let's lighten up! Some of us have now acquired visible breath, a predicament not uncommon in Scandinavia. Similarly, the notion that mere exhalation carries a personal or secondary risk does not bode well for joggers, laughers or anybody else who happens to be engaged to strenuous public activity.

On a parting note, if Welsh Government are serious about tackling the major killers of our age, perhaps they would like to spend some time focusing on work-related stress? Speaking as a trade union organiser and ex-tobacco smoker who acquired the addiction as a part consequence of 'performance-management', bringing dignity to Welsh workplaces would possibly do more to save lives than restricting access to an innovation that has permitted me to at least mitigate one of the worlds most compelling and deadly addictions.

The IWA Senedd Papers

We look at the first two Senedd Papers, the IWA's publication series, which aims to promote new ideas to policy makers.



This citizen service is a considered response to long term demographic challenges facing Wales, with young people being part of a solution to the problems associated with an ageing population.

A Real Citizen Service for Wales Andy Bevan

In Wales last year 21.4% of 19-24 year olds were not in employment, education or training. Parallel to this is the ongoing problem of an ageing demographic. In the very first of the IWA series, *the Senedd Papers*, Andy Bevan puts forth his solution, a voluntary Citizen Service for Wales, where unemployed 18-25 year olds would be paid to work with older people.

Bevan's idea for 'A real Citizen Service for Wales' focuses on the dual problems of youth unemployment and a population in which one in six is aged 65 or over. These dual problems, he suggests, could be in part answered by one simple solution.

'A real Citizen Service for Wales' outlines a system in which 18-25 year olds not in education or employment would give between nine and twelve months of full-time paid service with a focus on intergenerational support.

This would create a new national institution, which would be "properly paid and properly organized". As evidence for the projects potential for success, Andy Bevan discusses a system in Germany, which has had a constructive and positive impact on those involved. Notably a Citizen Service for Wales would be "radically different" from the English National Citizen Service which was on a much shorter time span.

A version of the English scheme is

being piloted in Wales this Autumn with pupils who have recently completed their GCSEs spending two weeks away from home taking part in team building activities, followed by one week planning a community project then 30-40 hours delivering that project. While this scheme has an element of community service, Bevan's system goes much further than this current model.

This citizen service is a considered response to long term demographic challenges facing Wales, with young people being part of a solution to the problems associated with an ageing population.

Key to this will be the opportunity for this system to work for both disadvantaged young people who have been challenged in the education system and those from advantaged areas with good attainment levels as a transition to the world of work. Existing schemes across the world have shown that success relies on the scheme to provide opportunities for all young people, diverging from jobs scheme currently in use in Wales, such as Jobs Growth Wales, which do lend themselves to those aged 16-24 with higher attainment levels.

Bevan estimates that a Citizen Service for Wales would cost £14.79m, but could be up to 50% supported by European match-funding. This, Bevan believes, is a small cost for forging opportunity from a crisis.



“If residential property services were taxed at the same rate of other consumption, council tax would be over 1% of house values.”

Taxation in Wales Gerry Holtham

Council tax currently raises over £1 ¼ billion for local authorities in Wales. This makes it by far the biggest tax that will be under Welsh control, even after the devolution of taxes such as landfill tax and stamp duty. While the devolution of new taxes have seen much discussion as the Wales Bill passes through Parliament, it is perhaps those powers that we already have that we should be focusing on, according to the author of the second IWA Senedd Paper, financial expert and IWA Fellow, Gerald Holtham.

In his Senedd Paper Holtham argues that the reform of council tax could end the current inequitable system. At present the council tax system means that those in lower valued properties pay far more proportionally than those in high valued homes. Those paying council tax in the lowest band where properties are worth up to £44,000 pay nearly 1.9% of their value a year. This contrasts sharply with those in the higher band for properties above £424,000, where the tax is just over 0.5% of the value annually. “If residential property services were taxed at the same rate of other consumption”, Holtham states “council tax would be over 1% of house values”.

According to Holtham, council tax rates should be linked to inflation, thus preventing an annual political row about rising rates. Adjusting the base of Council tax to reflect the value of the property would cut taxes for those in Band A from an average of £851 to £459 annually, while Band I would be raised from £2,860 to £5,565. A cut for lower earners would also reduce the Welsh Government’s bill for housing benefit payments. Holtham emphasises that policy-makers need to start thinking about tax powers in an integrated way. Higher earners hit by his Council Tax changes could be compensated by a reduction in the

The blow to the higher banded homes could be cushioned by methods such as charging a premium on second homes, big business for some councils across Wales.

higher rate of income tax rates - if income tax was to be devolved.

Yet, political anguish would perhaps be the offset of this deal. Those in affluent areas often live in marginal seats, and an increase in their council tax such as this would be at the peril of the political party that imposed it. Holtham suggests that there are other possibilities for ameliorating that effect. The blow to the higher banded homes could be cushioned by methods such as charging a premium on second homes, big business for some councils across Wales.

As Holtham points out “Up to now the Welsh Government has not had to give any thought to taxation, just spending its block grant”. This, he argues, is an opportunity for this to change; “Wales has the opportunity to improve its own tax system and blaze a trail for the rest of the UK”.

To read the full Senedd Papers, please visit our website www.iwa.org.uk

Devolving to English Cities

David Waite examines decentralisation across England and its implications for Wales.

A consensus has developed that we are, in Ed Miliband's words, "far too centralised a country". With notions of a quasi-federalist Britain being touted in the wake of the Scottish Referendum, Westminster politicians are jostling for position with claims about leading effective devolution from the centre.

In the Welsh context, devolution takes multiple forms that are important to distinguish. First, devolution from the UK Government to the Welsh Government; and, second, devolution to local authorities within Wales. To date, focus has more obviously concentrated on the former.

With a concern for regional economic development in the UK, the idea that devolution to local authorities is critical for economic rebalancing is now a central policy stance for many. While academic evidence to support a link between devolution and economic growth is somewhat scarce, Lord Heseltine's report, *No Stone Unturned*, and Lord Adonis' review for the Labour party both accepted this premise in arguing for emboldened local authority roles.

In England, local leaders have long argued that they know their own constituencies rather better than a top-down Whitehall elite, and are best placed to tailor interventions. They want greater responsibility and freedom to take

investment decisions and are willing to embrace risk and place 'skin in the game'.

Following the dissolution of England's Regional Development Agencies (RDAs), established by Labour, a number of commentators consider that small steps toward effective decentralisation have emerged. Indeed, the Coalition Government's drive for localism has seen the creation of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and combined authorities along with 'City Deals' and 'Growth Deals'.

City Deals have been the most striking. Involving bespoke policy and investment packages as agreed between Whitehall and local actors, City Deals hinge on the quid pro quo of enhanced local capacity and accountability with long-term central government commitments. Deals vary in content across the participant

the idea that devolution to local authorities is critical for economic rebalancing is now a central policy stance for many.

cities, encompassing, for example, incentives and rewards for effective infrastructure investments and targeted labour market interventions. As others have remarked, City Deals are perhaps most encouraging for the policy experimentation they permit.

Reshuffling sub-national economic development approaches has drawn criticism nevertheless. The National

Audit Office has noted that changes to the regional development architecture have seen funding pots diminish through the recession (even though Growth Deal, from 2015-16, will be roughly the same size as the pots previously available to the RDAs).

In July this year, Ed Miliband upped the ante by suggesting that, where elected, a Labour administration in 2015 will devote £30 billion toward funding 'combined authorities', Local Enterprise Partnerships and individual local authorities, and will grant greater control over business rates. This sits alongside George Osborne's vision of a 'northern powerhouse' underpinned by high speed transport connections between the north's major city-regions (the detail and funding may be made clear in the upcoming Autumn Statement). The emerging policy contest has been described by one think tank as a welcome "race to the top" on city policies.

So what does the thrust towards devolution entail for Wales? First, the powers and capacities of the Welsh Assembly have been examined by the Silk Commission that recommended increased powers including devolved taxation. How or when these recommendations might be implemented is yet to be established.

Below this level, the extent to which local authorities can be supported will depend, to a large degree, on the Welsh Government's own funding. Ongoing budgetary tightening points to further challenges ahead, however.

Sub-national economic development policy is complex in the Welsh context given the varying roles and responsibilities of Cardiff Bay and

The City Deal recently agreed for Glasgow demonstrates that multiple administrative layers can be negotiated to fashion policies and funding settlements for city-regions.

Westminster. Nevertheless, city-regions have re-emerged on the policy agenda in Wales. In South East and South West Wales, city-region advisory boards report to the Minister for Economy, Science and Transport. Sir Terry Matthews has recently been appointed to chair the South West Wales region, while Roger Lewis, Chief Executive of the Welsh Rugby Union chairs the Cardiff Capital Region board. As the work of the city-region boards evolves, they will continue to interface with the policy remit of both Cardiff Bay and Westminster. The running dispute between the Welsh Government and the UK Government over the funding of the Valleys Lines electrification serves to illustrate the challenge.

The question of what freedom, revenue and spending flexibilities Welsh local authorities or city-regions should and will be allowed still lingers, nevertheless. Can city-region policies in Wales proceed with the same Westminster-Cardiff Bay-local authority interactions, or are local hands tied and capacities too constrained? In one sense, the nature of the advisory boards, with their direct line to the Minister, provide a channel for the local voice that is perhaps shorter and more direct than in England. This suggests that policy in Wales can already be flexible and responsive to local conditions, one of the core rationales for devolution. However, rolling infrastructure funds

premised on 'earn-back' models, as are being implemented in Greater Manchester, for example, have yet to be entertained in Welsh city-regions.

The City Deal recently agreed for Glasgow demonstrates that multiple administrative layers can be negotiated to fashion policies and funding settlements for city-regions. Based on an infrastructure programme, coupled with multiple labour market interventions to tackle deprivation, the deal was made possible through matched funding by both the UK and Scottish governments. While cynics might argue that the "Glasgow and Clyde Valley" deal was strongly influenced by pre-referendum positioning (given the Labour led administration in Glasgow City), an agreement between Westminster, Holyrood and the Glasgow city-region has nevertheless emerged.

What precedent does this set? Could Cardiff or Swansea seek to replicate this? The Treasury's appetite for further deals may be one obstacle, but if Wales' city-regions want a slice of the wider UK decentralisation pie, City Deals is the key game in town.

Further reflecting moves to engage with UK-wide initiatives, Cardiff Council has recently announced an agreement to join Glasgow in the Core Cities network. The Core Cities group provides a 'united voice' for, in the main, the major metropolitan areas in England outside London (the same cities that were party

to round one of the City Deals).

While tussles over the appropriate positions for policy levers will inevitably rumble on, and are by no means trivial in terms of effective city-region policy, policymakers will continue to be challenged to identify, and collaborate on, the many other substantive and procedural matters that city-regionalism brings about. From developing the Metro to considering the inter-linkages between housing markets, city-regionalism changes the policy-making calculi. In terms of procedural concerns, important questions will emerge, moreover, about the roles of civic society and social enterprise groups in forming an inclusive and deliberative policy-making context. Such actors may have visions for city-region development that challenge the orthodoxy in important ways.

Finally, and coupled with the close scrutiny of democratic accountability, useful aspects of previous sub-national economic development approaches – from Welsh spatial planning to the functions of the now disbanded Welsh Development Agency – should also feature in debates concerning the organisational and policy mandates our city-regions require.



David Waite is a Research Associate at Cardiff University.

Creu perthynas
iachach ag alcohol
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North Wales, a region without a city?

David B. Jones asks where a City Region agenda for South Wales and the North West of England leaves the north of Wales.

It is now well over two years since the Haywood report on City Regions was presented to the Welsh Government. It recommended two City Regions - both in south Wales. The inevitable reaction from the north of Wales led to Economy Minister Edwina Hart commissioning a further evaluation into the case. But when it reported in March 2013 that too rejected the case for a City Region in the north, and instead presented four recommendations linked to skills development, cross-border operations and partnerships, transport strategy and, of course, funding!

The fact remains, however, that Welsh cities currently generate only around a third of our income as a country, which is a significantly lower proportion than all the other UK nations and regions. Therefore, there is clearly still a strong rationale for us needing to do more to generate extra growth from our city and urban areas.

So, where does this leave North Wales, and what are the threats from the North West of England and border City Regions? However wide the net is cast, the concept of a City Region for an area broadly covering north Wales, central & east, together with Chester and into Cheshire doesn't really make sense, or sound right!

Ignoring for a moment the complexities and political tensions associated with straddling the border of Wales and England, the area in question consists of a small city (and a very small city!), a large town and some significant urban and industrial areas. Additionally, it is also largely rural and relatively sparse. The region that I've just described is, however, a genuine and well established socio-economic area, with a relatively strong economy built on manufacturing and professional services. The area is often referred to as the Mersey-Dee Area, and is an area with an innovative, can-do attitude.

Tens of thousands of us move daily throughout this area for work, living and pleasure, regularly crossing a national border without giving it a second's thought. I believe that the concern from stakeholders in the area in relation to the decision not to grant "City Region" status was not about the Mersey-Dee Area wanting

to be a City Region; the concern was to protect one of Wales' and the UK's most important and growing economic sub-regions. More specifically, the view was, and still is, that we need to establish a cross-border regional model that explicitly combines economic growth and transport planning - similar, but different, to the two City Regions established in south Wales, or to the City Region arrangements in England.

Locally there is widespread support on both sides of the border to support the creation of a unique, dynamic cross border economic region. On the negative side, a concern is that cross border collaboration of this kind may lead to an excessive amount of housing development, or to a dilution of our cultural identity. However, as Ken Skates, AM for Clwyd South, said back in 2012, "... the reality is that economic stagnation and decline are a bigger threat to our region than anything else."

Across the border, and less than an hour from Flintshire and Wrexham, City Regions initiatives and regeneration are moving apace. Into Cheshire and the Wirral, and beyond, to the established cities which are the homes to the Greater Manchester and Liverpool, Enterprise Zones abound: Sci-Tech Daresbury, Wirral Waters and Manchester Airport. Beyond the

designated City Regions, these are linked to, and interwoven with, the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) - Cheshire & Warrington Enterprise, Lancashire Enterprise Partnership and the Marches LEP.

Another development, no more than fifteen minutes from Deeside, is the Thornton Science Park – a “High Growth Centre” located at the former Shell Technology Centre, which has been bequeathed to Chester University, and supported by investment from the UK Government and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). So although not all of these developments are formally linked to City Region status, there is a coherence, and a great deal going on.

So should north Wales be concerned and what are we doing? The future success of the Dee region in particular depends on it being able to identify and market its complementarity to the big city regions nearby, in order to compete for private investment against international centres like Dublin, Stuttgart or Barcelona. We need to be doing as much to anchor the long-term location of existing global and more local businesses, as we do to secure the relocation of new business. This can be done, and in terms of relocation, the recent decision by US-based Cytori to relocate its European base in Deeside is just one example of what can be achieved.

So why did they choose Deeside over a wide range of competing opportunities elsewhere in the UK and in mainland Europe? A key issue was location, and in particular the proximity to Manchester Airport – this is a major advantage and something we need to further exploit. Another reason was Enterprise Zone status in Deeside, and with it the benefits which include Enhanced Capital Allowances, the Business Rates Scheme, and a local business-led Advanced Manufacturing Zone advisory board. The Welsh Government’s decision to establish three of its seven Enterprise Zones in

North Wales has given the region the ability to compete with similar English initiatives, and as a further example in Anglesey this has been a factor in the Wylfa Newydd project moving towards becoming a reality. Furthermore, the formation of the Ministerial Task Force for Transport has picked up the baton from the Haywood recommendations, and is providing a cohesive influence as it finalises its strategy and proposals by December 2014.

There is a leadership vacuum which prevents the region from becoming a real economic power-house that could punch above its weight in Cardiff, Westminster and beyond.

We don’t need to be called a “City Region” to make these things happen – business is not that gullible, and makes its decisions based on more tangible benefits such as location, connectivity, skills and quality of living. Of course financial incentives help too.

So all is rosy in the garden then? Not quite, and complacency would be disastrous. There is much duplication and a lack of coherence. In addition to the prime role of Welsh Government in economic development, we still have the involvement of the six local authorities, the MDA, the North Wales Economic Ambition Board (NWEAB), the North Wales Business Council and others too. There is an urgent need for a focus and for streamlining, to create a lean coherence.

There is a leadership vacuum which prevents the region from becoming a real economic power-house that could punch above its weight in Cardiff, Westminster and beyond. Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) is a necessary inevitability and has a key role to play to support economic leadership. It’s a hot and contentious topic, but I’d prompt for a “two council” model, recognising the complementary characteristics, needs and strengths

of North West and North East Wales. Anything less transformational is likely to be a painful compromise.

North East Wales in particular is a key deliverer for the Welsh economy, and the Haywood review clearly recognised this, stating that “...the (MDA) region ... is an important functional economic area to both Wales and England. There is genuine potential here, not for a City Region, but to develop a powerful economic

development model, based around the region’s primacy in key manufacturing sectors, which delivers prosperity and growth by focusing on a number of strategic priorities”.

Finally, and as another reason to be confident and optimistic, I am reminded about what happened last year when the Welsh Government choose to promote the benefits of the Deeside Enterprise Zone in billboard advertising at Manchester Airport and in the city. The simple messages about the benefits of Deeside were in place for a few days before senior executives realised what the promotions staff had agreed. They then had them all taken down. As annoying as this was, it is another reason to be confident and optimistic, and to work across the North Wales and MDA regions - others recognise and are threatened by what we have. It must be our priority to work together to turn this into success for North Wales.



David B. Jones is Principal/ Chief Executive of Coleg Cambria & Chair of the Deeside Enterprise Zone

A Raw Deal

Nathan Davies outlines why increased divergence between special education needs provision is a raw deal for Wales.

In recent weeks, the Welsh Government have invited views, as part of a formal consultation process, to their proposed changes to the Law in Wales relating to the support which will be given to children and young people with special educational needs. This consultation process has now concluded, although it remains to be seen whether the White Paper issued will be significantly changed from its original content following views being expressed from a number of organisations across the country.

This month, the Children and Families Act 2014 will be introduced in England. This is comprehensive legislation which provides a number of key changes to Education Law, most notably the onus on the respective Education and Social Care departments of each Authority and the local Health Boards to produce a collaborative document to ensure the child/young person's needs are

providing support. The Welsh Government have adopted an unhelpful approach in this instance which departs from the all-encompassing features of the Children and Families Act. Instead, the Government have concentrated on introducing new terms such as 'additional learning needs' to replace 'special educational needs'; a purposeless addition to any new legislation.

What is most concerning is that Statements of SEN will no longer be created under the new proposals. Instead an 'Individual Development Plan' will replace these which, given the proposed changes, will only seek to weaken the protection offered to those who rely upon it. Their description is similar to that of an Individual Education Plan (IEP) which has no legal force. One cannot expect a parent to have faith that their child will have the required legal protection with such a document in place for them.

The only positive from the process is that an IDP will now be in place for a young person up to the age of 25, thereby doing away with the need for a Learning and Skills Plan once a transfer to a FE College is arranged, for example. The IDP assessment process, however, is extremely vague with no mention as to which body will bear

alarming removal of the ability to challenge for parents. This could potentially lead to Authorities refusing to assess young people whereby parents would have to accept the decision of the assessing body; a remarkable removal of rights.

Overall, if one were to draw a comparison between the legislation in place in England next month and what is proposed for Wales, parents in England would be far happier with their ability to obtain the best possible provision for their children. Wales will continue to lag behind with an inadequate and diluted system.

It remains unclear as to why the Welsh Government did not seek to adopt the Children and Families Act 2014 which, having received substantial input from a number of influential figures and groups, represents a marked improvement upon previous legislation (Education Act 1996) and indeed the initial White Paper issued by the UK Government.

It is feared that Wales may slip further behind England in supporting young people with learning needs as a result of the dilution of protection that is proposed through the White Paper. One can only hope that the input given from various groups, including Sinclairslaw, is considered in detail and the legislation amended accordingly. A major concern is that the final legislative document will not contain specific, mandatory duties that an Authority (for example) must adhere to; instead discretion can be utilised thereby limiting challenges as to their decision-making. Without this action, there is a very serious risk that children and young people in Wales may not even have the same protection that they enjoy under the Education Act 1996 (s.324(5)).



Nathan Davies is Associate Education Law Solicitor at Sinclairslaw

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met utilising a holistic approach. This is very different to what the Welsh Assembly White Paper proposes.

It is inadequate to concentrate solely on a young person's educational needs when health and social care issues often need to be taken into account when

responsibility for conducting the same, not what the ingredients of the assessment will consist of. The rights of appeal that exist in relation to an Authority not conducting a statutory assessment, or one which is substandard, that exist at present may also not continue under the IDP procedure; an

More than a cynical name change

Mike O'Neill says that additional learning needs reform has the potential to make a positive difference in his work.

After almost ten years of teaching, holding literacy coordinator and Head of English roles in mainstream schools and now Head of English at a Pupil Referral Unit, the Additional Learning Needs White Paper has the potential to impact greatly on my work.

The philosophy behind the legislative proposals for additional learning needs is one to be welcomed; overcoming barriers to opportunity that young people with

Used properly, there is a clear opportunity for the better transfer of knowledge between institutions and tangible targets of responsibility for professionals to adhere to when catering for young people with additional learning needs.

It is also an important step to move away from an out dated notion of 'special educational need' to one of an inclusive nature. This is more than a cynical name change. Additional learning need suggests a level of inclusion that will be welcomed by teachers, young people and parents/carers. Indeed, it is symbolic of the very ethos we want in our schools; pupils of all abilities accepting each other and working alongside one another. This is a positive step for all.

The scope of the proposals does appear wide-ranging. I particularly welcome the commitment to develop a Code of Practice

This could mean that an IDP is established prior to starting school. But I would urge caution that we don't 'mis-statement' young people or fail to recognise the differing rates of development that young people exhibit. We should be quick to support, but not rush to statement.

My role as Head of English at a PRU means that the impact of deprivation is acutely felt. My colleagues at school and within ATL welcome moves to close the attainment gap and provide equal opportunity for all. The proposals do seem to support the wider picture of school reform and the raising of standards. I am pleased to see that young people with additional learning needs are being considered alongside 'mainstream' pupils. My concern is that we do not make young people simply numbers on a spreadsheet – learning should be a personalised process and national scales of measurement are not always appropriate for all.

In summary, the changes do appear to strengthen procedures surrounding those with ALN, even if it's too early to assess impact thoroughly. Streamlining paperwork for school staff, young people and their families, as well as the sharing of information is a key positive feature that will need time to embed. All teachers, particularly those like me, whose timetable is predominately catering for ALN pupils, welcome moves to ensure we can better support them. But we should not lose sight of the very real truth that money and time spent on improving provision is what changes lives, not simply making it easier to statement young people.

It is also an important step to move away from an out dated notion of 'special educational need' to one of an inclusive nature. This is more than a cynical name change.

additional needs often face. All teachers welcome this as they will all have young people in their charge who face barriers to realising their potential. The proposal to strengthen working links between the various agencies that work with young people will also be welcomed. In my experience, teachers often fear that the additional needs of young people are not always met when they are away from school and participating in learning across and from a range of providers. The Individual Development Plan does have the potential to address this concern as it can form a personal and bespoke route map to achieving the very best for young people.

that will also encompass work based learning providers. It has too often been the case that those with additional learning needs are given opportunities to access stimulating courses only for their needs to be missed as these courses are delivered away from school and the teachers that may know them best. If all stakeholders are involved in and actively catering for the IDP, then we greatly improve the prospects for young people with additional learning needs.

My colleagues in primary schools may be helped by the Code of Practice and its expectation that colleagues working with young people below compulsory school age help identify additional learning needs.



Mike O'Neill is the Head of English at the Ty Gwyn Education Centre. He is also a Casework Officer for ATL.

English nationalism – Friend or Foe?

Simon Brooks, Institute of Welsh Affairs Annual Lecture, Llanelli National Eisteddfod, 2014

According to the Census, only 72% of the population of Wales was born in Wales. This is not necessarily a problem. After all only 63% of the population of London was born in Britain. But London isn't Wales. Wales is a poor, marginal country, in a dependent relationship with her next door neighbour, and it has a minority identity. Such a country is far more open to threats to its identity as a result of demographic change than majority cultures.

Of course, there is no direct relationship between being born in Wales and empathising or sympathising with Welsh nationhood. There are tens of thousands of people in Wales who were born in England and who speak Welsh, and tens of thousands more who consider themselves to be Welsh. I say this sincerely as a lad from London whose sister is one of the English rugby team's greatest fans! Despite this, further Anglicisation of Wales in terms of the percentage of the population born outside the country will have political implications for Welsh identity.

It is not immigration in itself that is problematic for a stateless nation such as Wales, rather the difficulties that a minority culture faces in trying to

integrate newcomers.

I do not wish to raise concerns prematurely, but there is a strong possibility that Britain in the future will become a far more English place than it has been until now, and it is very possible too that Wales will become far more Anglicised as well. The dangers attached to this are intensified by the increasingly reactionary and anti-multicultural nature of recent definitions of Englishness, at least as seen in the growth of political parties such as UKIP.

So a painful question for us as a national minority is whether the recent xenophobia displayed by English nationalism represents the opening of a new path in the cultural history of England, where minorities will face a harsher, sharper wind, or is this merely a temporary storm?

There is a cross-party consensus in England that immigrants to Britain should learn English and that the state should promote this. Each one of the four main British parties are in favour of an unambiguous link between learning the English language and British citizenship. The Con-Dem government's attitude in London on this is clear enough, as seen in a recent proposal that those unable

to speak English should not receive dole money unless they are willing to learn English. The Labour Party's attitude is similar as well. During his period as Home Secretary in Tony Blair's New Labour Government between 2001 and 2004, David Blunkett introduced a number of statutory measures that made it impossible to gain British citizenship without passing a language test. And as we know, the future of the English language is one of UKIP's main concerns. Who didn't feel sympathy for Nigel Farage that the English language was not to be heard recently on a train journey between London and Kent?

Such messages come at us from across the border, and affect and influence us. This is scarcely a surprise; after all, the London based press is the main source of news for the Welsh people. As a result, opposition exists in parts of Wales to an imaginary enemy that doesn't exist, namely the immigration of a non-English speaking population. In Welsh speaking communities there could in future be a battle between the monolingual rhetoric of the British state and the bilingual rhetoric of the embryonic Welsh state. We cannot be certain that the Welsh state will win. The Language Commissioner, Meri Huws, has pennies and smarties to spend on the fight; the *Daily Mail* is published every day. Inevitably the rhetoric of UKIP and English nationalism will undermine the confidence of the Welsh speaking community to insist that Welsh remains a community language, and it will give new confidence to those who oppose this.

What has been the response of the Welsh establishment to all this? They have buried their heads in the sand! There's been huge reluctance to get to grips with the debate at all.

The reluctance stems from a problem in Welsh political ideology.

There is a political consensus in Wales that we should be civic nationalists and this is defined against that which is called, incorrectly in my view, ethnic nationalism. The Welsh political establishment has put the Welsh language in the ethnic box,

although via the creation of a concept of Welsh citizenship it could easily be placed in the civic category. Since they believe that language belongs in the ethnic box, politicians are not willing to tell immigrants to Wales that they are expected to do anything in relation to the Welsh language.

Politicians feel that this would not be welcoming, and perhaps it might be unfair too, and that we in Wales stand apart from this sort of politics. Yet it's false to argue that learning a language is an ethnic imposition. In England, English is taught for civic reasons, in order for the citizen to be able to speak the language of the country and to access civic privileges without being disadvantaged. But the viewpoint in Wales is that the Welsh state cannot place particular obligations upon anyone.

Though this appears quite tolerant, it is a policy which ignores the reality of social power. In Britain and Wales, this always leans heavily in favour of the English language and British identity and is likely to do so even more heavily in the future. A policy not to define Welsh citizenship is a *laissez-faire* policy. The trouble with *laissez-faire* policies in the field of language or nationality, as in

It would be great to have a simple statement by the Welsh Government that it would be desirable for people who move to Welsh speaking communities to learn Welsh.

the field of economics, is that the strong are always likely to come out on top. There is a massive irony in all this. The practical outcome of adopting a policy of not defining Welsh citizenship is to do Ukip's work for it as immigrants will be compelled to profess British civic values alone.

It would be great to have a simple



statement by the Welsh Government that it would be desirable for people who move to Welsh speaking communities to learn Welsh. I do not foresee that enforcement would follow this, and in the case of immigrants from England we could not introduce compulsion even if we wished. However, such a statement would be of great help in terms of promoting Welsh as a community language in Welsh speaking areas as it would emphasise that learning Welsh was the social expectation, and the psychological pressure on the indigenous population to turn everything Welsh bilingual, and everything bilingual English, would be considerably reduced.

In a perceptive article on citizenship and the Welsh language for the British Council, Gwennan Higham recently noted that the debate concerning language in Wales brings to English all the advantages that stem from being the language of social inclusion. This in turn rebuffs the right of the Welsh language to be a civic language, and downgrades it to the language of an ethnic group, which there is no expectancy of immigrants to learn. This unfairness is reflected by public policy in the field of immigration. Lessons to learn English as a second language, *English for Speakers of Other Languages*, are provided by the Welsh Government free of charge for all non-

English speaking immigrants in Wales who wish to take them, yet no classes exist that are tailored for immigrants who wish to learn Welsh in order to qualify for citizenship. This situation must change. British citizenship in Wales should not be a version of English citizenship. It is true that Welsh for Adults classes exist. But these must be paid for, which highlights the inequity still further.

To make things worse, it appears as if the Welsh Government is placing even less emphasis on this field today than ever before. What other way is there to interpret the government's recent announcement that it wishes to cut 15% of the Welsh for Adults' budget? This is money that exists, partially at least, in order to integrate immigrants who move to Welsh speaking areas. What message is conveyed by the fact that this expenditure is being reduced at the same time that the British State is forcing every immigrant to learn English?

Dr Simon Brooks is a Lecturer at the School of Welsh, Cardiff University. This is an abridged version of the lecture he gave for the IWA at the Eisteddfod in Llanelli in August. To read the full lecture, please visit the IWA website: www.iwa.org.uk.



Crisis? What Crisis?

Professor Gareth Rees questions the perception that the Welsh education system is under-performing.

The state of Welsh education has become a matter of widespread concern in recent years. Certainly, many of those outside of Wales appear to have formed a view of Welsh education that is extremely unfavourable. For example, following a series of well-publicised clashes between representatives of the two governments, the UK Government has made clear its belief that – as with the delivery of other public services – the Welsh Government’s educational provision is highly unsatisfactory.

Inside Wales too, there has also developed a conventional wisdom that the Welsh education system is under-performing significantly, based on much the same sorts of evidence as external critics use. Certainly, the Welsh media have become highly adept at delivering the message that Welsh schools and their pupils lag behind

their peers in other parts of the UK and internationally. Somewhat ironically, given the frenetic nature of the political arguments, the Welsh Government has itself acknowledged the need for substantial reform. The then Minister responsible for education in the Welsh Government, Leighton Andrews, in a speech delivered in February 2011, outlined a 20-point programme of educational reform that he deemed to be necessary to raise the performance of Welsh schools to acceptable international standards.

Again somewhat ironically, the effect of this reform programme has been to bring many aspects of Welsh educational policy into much closer alignment with the policies being pursued in England. More specifically, ‘school improvement’ has become the cornerstone of policy in Wales, with policies aimed at raising standards of literacy and numeracy for all pupils, using individual data to track pupils’ progress more carefully, and enabling new forms of accountability through a new inspection format and the publication of performance data for schools on an annual basis, being prioritised. Similarly, enhanced

leadership in all areas of the education system, the development of more effective forms of collaboration between schools (to share ‘good practice’), and the improvement of the quality of teachers and their teaching have come to be seen as key mechanisms for raising Welsh attainment standards. All of this mirrors rather closely much of the approach adopted in England (and more widely).

Of course, significant differences do remain, especially with respect to the organisation of (especially secondary) schooling (there are no academies or free schools and few foundation schools in Wales); the nature of the National Curriculum (most importantly in relation to provision during the early years of primary schooling and ‘core’ subjects at GCSE and, increasingly, GCE A level); and the system of qualifications (especially in relation to GCSEs and A levels, as well as the Welsh Baccalaureate). Nevertheless, the overall effect of the educational reform programme has been to bring the schools system in Wales into much closer alignment with that England.

Given this significant shift, therefore, it is worth asking questions about the basis for arguing that schools in Wales are underperforming in a major way. Addressing this issue very soon leads to the work of an organisation which most parents, let alone their children,

many of those outside of Wales appear to have formed a view of Welsh education that is extremely unfavourable.

are scarcely aware of: the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Hence, the immediate impetus to the educational reforms initiated by Leighton Andrews was provided by what was deemed to be a dramatically poor Welsh performance in the 2009 round of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). PISA is a sample survey of the attainment of 15-year-olds in reading, mathematics and science, conducted every three years in a wide

and students in schools and of other educational professionals. Its policy recommendations focus on four areas. Schools should develop the capacity to meet the learning needs of all their students, including those at lower attainment levels. Improvements should be made in the recruitment, training and career development of teachers; and good practice should be shared between schools. The assessment system for students should be made more coherent; and more stringent

The benchmark for judging levels of educational attainment in Wales has been comparison with those in other countries. Hence, Welsh educational performance has not been judged primarily by reference to, for example, changes in Welsh attainment levels over time; but rather by comparing levels of attainment in Wales with those in other parts of the UK – and England, in particular – and internationally. Moreover, the focus on improving levels of educational attainment in these comparative terms is justified in terms of a particular orientation towards education's primary role, which is defined essentially in terms of the perceived relationships between educational attainment and economic development.

In this context, policy-makers would do well to consider that the relationships between improved levels of qualifications and/or the cognitive skills measured in PISA, on the one hand, and enhanced economic growth, on the other, are in reality highly complex. Increasing 'human capital' will lead to improved economic performance only in the long run and, crucially, only if firms and other organisations adapt themselves to make full use of this resource. Improving productivity and rates of innovation are key to a competitive economy; but increasing educational attainment levels may be necessary, but is not sufficient to ensure that these are achieved.

Indeed, perhaps we all need to remind ourselves that high-quality education is about much more than the sorts of educational attainment that currently drive policy development in Wales (and elsewhere).



Gareth Rees is a Research Professor at the Wales Institute of Social and Economic Research, Data and Methods (WISERD).

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range of countries by the OECD. Wales participated in its own right in PISA for the first time in 2006; and PISA scores have subsequently become a key element in the debate. Indeed, the Welsh Government remains committed to the target of Wales reaching the top 20 of the PISA rankings by 2015.

More recently, the Welsh Government commissioned the OECD to carry out a focused analysis of the current state of schooling in Wales and how to improve performance, which was published earlier this year. Not surprisingly given its reliance on PISA results (from the 2012 survey), this analysis confirms the previously established picture of underperformance in Wales, compared with the other countries of the UK and internationally. The study team also spent four days in Wales collecting the views of teachers

evaluation of the practices of teaching and learning within schools should be applied. A clearer overall strategy for Welsh schools should be developed, committing the system to a clearly articulated set of objectives.

The OECD Report and its recommendations were widely welcomed, not only by educational professionals (and their trade unions), but also by the Welsh Government, despite the implicit criticism of its strategic performance. For the present, however, it remains to be seen how far these specific recommendations will affect educational policy in concrete ways. Nevertheless, more generally, the influence of the OECD and its ideas have been enormous.

In particular, the OECD has shaped the terms in which the public debate about education in Wales (and elsewhere) is framed.



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Rhian E. Jones revisits Blackwood for a festival of literature and music rooted in history, politics and the resurgence of Manic Street Preachers

The Welsh as a people have lived by making and remaking themselves in generation after generation, usually against the odds, usually within a British context. Wales is an artefact which the Welsh produce. If they want to. It requires an act of choice.

– Gwyn A Williams, *When Was Wales* (1985)

I recently returned to the place I grew up in order to attend Velvet Coalmine, the first occurrence of what will hopefully become an established music and literature festival for the South Wales Valleys. My journey down from London was spent in anticipation of problems caused by the festival coinciding with the NATO summit's occupation of Newport and Cardiff, resulting in roads closed, traffic slowed, barriers erected, tanks on the lawn at Celtic Manor and Cardiff looking, as one Twitter correspondent reported, like something out of *Children of Men*. In the end, though, I encountered nothing of this apparent invasion force apart from a lone copper loitering awkwardly in the vestibule of the train from Newport to Abergavenny. My father, however, grumbling at the shipped-in police presence, said the last time he'd seen anything like it was the Miners' Strike.

It's not as though nothing of note has happened in the Valleys since 1984-5, but the Miners' Strike remains a cultural touchstone. Velvet Coalmine opened with a screening at Blackwood's lavish

Maxime Cinema of Kieran Evans' *Culture, Alienation, Boredom and Despair*, a magisterial documentary on that other Welsh cultural touchstone, the Manic Street Preachers. In it, the band recalled the domination of the image of Wales in their 80s youth by awareness of the strike and its aftermath, as well as their consequent wish to offer an alternative picture, less bleak and hopeless, albeit still informed by the political consciousness behind the strike.

Velvet Coalmine's *raison d'être* is worth quoting at length for its reflection of the sense of history's weight, and the wish to escape and redefine it, that also fuelled the young Manics. Its founder, Blackwood boy Iain Richards, says the festival aims to allow:

our cultural heritage and identity to be expressed on its own terms without interference, without suppression and without agenda. The history of the Valleys is littered with exploitation, neglect and indifference but has proved a birthplace to a myriad of thinkers and pursuers of social justice and in an era when Old Etonian privilege continues to shape and influence decision-making and politics in the UK, creating an arts festival influenced by the radicalism of the 1984-85 miner's strike and the Centenary of the Senghenydd mining disaster feels both timely and appropriate.

Aside from having lent the name of my

blog to the festival, I was there to speak on a panel with the Rhondda novelist and playwright Rachel Trezise, in the slick if unlikely surroundings of a Manics-themed bar just off Blackwood's main street. Both Trezise and I spoke about having found the band inspirational in attempting creative and artistic careers of our own, and in allowing ourselves to become imbued with what felt like a distinctly un-Welsh sense of self-belief and ambition. We recalled, with equal parts bafflement and scepticism, 'Cool Cymru' and its late-90s co-option of the Manics, after their years spent wandering a pre-devolutionary no-man's-land, too Welsh for much more than ridicule in England and not 'Welsh' enough for full acclaim in Wales.

The room's enthusiasm for the Manics seemed to take a noticeable dip when discussing their career in the period roughly between *This Is My Truth Tell Me Yours* and this summer's almost universally acclaimed *Futurology*. The phrase 'ten years of mush' was used more than once. For me, it's been a distressingly long time since a new Manic Street Preachers album had anything more substantial to say than 'Hello, here's another Manic Street Preachers album'. Even previous release *Rewind the Film* – which, like *This Is My Truth*, was a fundamentally Welsh production full of militant melancholia – didn't altogether hit the spot. *Futurology*, though, is in many ways the renaissance and return to their roots that previous albums (*Journal for*



Plague Lovers, Postcards from a Young Man) were vaunted as but weren't. In particular, where previous albums were suffused with aesthetic and sonic bombast but had little lyrical heft to back it up, on *Futurology* any musical pomp and ceremony sounds like no less than the lyrics deserve.

Expanding the limited canvas of *Rewind the Film*, *Futurology*'s scope is continental, providing a reminder of the wider currents within which Welsh history drifts. Nicky Wire has at last emerged from behind domestic lines and reengaged lyrically with the world, no matter – or perhaps because of – how distasteful he finds it. The album reflects Wales' ability to make an active contribution to the world rather than to retreat from it in disgust or defeat. 'Dreaming a City (Hughesovka)', through which the listener learns of the currently strife-stricken city of Donetsk's original founding by Merthyr ironworkers, is in these terms a companion piece to 'If You

Tolerate This Your Children Will Be Next', which referenced both Wales' part in the Spanish Civil War's anti-fascist resistance and Patagonia's Welsh colony. 'The View From Stow Hill', touching on Newport's 1839 Chartist rising, locates this radical tradition closer to home, and the spine-tingling stomp of 'Let's Go To War' expands it into a contemporary call-to-arms. What the Manics have always stood for in the latter part of their career – an Atticus Finch-like insistence on retaining one's principles while acknowledging one's relative weakness and disadvantage – is performed on *Futurology* with an unusually vital defiance and immediacy. The songs here take the fight to the enemy, whether the Coalition government or Mumford & Sons, rather than giving a resigned sigh from afar.

The Miners' Strike, now receding into retrospective and recuperation, has cast a long shadow over the south Welsh coalfield for the three decades following its defeat. The geographic and social scars left

by these past battles and injuries is one notable focus of *Rewind The Film*. Kieran Evans' video for the title track, a day in the life of Trehafod in the Rhondda Valley, depicts both the dereliction and neglect that still afflicts these communities and the persistence of a working-class radical tradition – in myth and memory, at least. South Wales' instinctive inclination to socialist republicanism, which the Manics unapologetically uphold, still finds an audience in the shifting political landscape of the coalfield – the Tories still poison, Labour something of a lost hope following its hollowing-out by Blairism, and Plaid Cymru, under Valleys girl Leanne Wood, displaying increasingly sharp flashes of left-wing steel, seeking a place for Wales in the world as opposed to Wales against the world.

My part of the Valleys now appears at least marginally better-off than the bleaker-than-bleak vortex it seemed in the 90s, when I looked to music and culture to escape the grey post-industrial world in which I found myself immured, and to history to explain why this was so. Velvet Coalmine, with its children's poetry workshops, dramatic recitals in Wetherspoons, and the climactic sell-out 'Concert for Coal' in Blackwood Miners' Institute, demonstrates the extent to which culture, community and art still exist in the coalfield despite its obliterated industry and economy. This creative seam runs deeper than the superficialities of Cool Cymru. It is fitting that the Manic Street Preachers, as perhaps the most significant exponent of Valleys art in recent years, should be an absent presence throughout, and reassuring that the band themselves should now be offering engagement with the world rather than solipsistic withdrawal.

Rhian E. Jones writes about history, politics, popular culture and the places where they intersect. She is the author of *Clampdown: Pop-Cultural Wars on Class and Gender* and co-editor at *New Left Project*.

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‘Dragons, tigers and football-playing vampires’: *children’s literature in modern Wales*

Penny Thomas outlines the early successes of a series that brings fun to the heart of the National Literacy Strategy.

When I told my teenagers that Firefly had been given the job of publishing a series of five books for 7-9 year olds, set in modern Wales, that were funny and that children would want to read in and out of school they laughed. ‘That’s not possible,’ they added, unnecessarily.

Spurred on, and with four of these ‘impossible’ books now published and the final two forthcoming (yes, that’s one extra for luck), I still wonder why ... why did this seem such a tall order, even to me?

The truth is it’s a ticklish job to publish a book that large numbers of children are going to want to read outside school, set anywhere at all, especially if their friends have never heard of it (peer pressure and advertising can’t be underestimated). We can all name famous examples that make it sound easy. Set your masterpiece in a chocolate factory, for example, or a castle full of wizards; add loads of zombie extras. Have a great lead character – Horrid Henry, The Wimpy Kid, a touch of James Bond. We all have favourite children’s books, as do our children (perhaps not the same ones) but these favourites will be a tiny handful of the hundreds and thousands written and published every year. Set against this is the happy fact that children’s and young adult (YA) book markets have been growing in recent years, despite an overall decline in print sales.

And why not – why shouldn’t a wonderful book be set in Wales as much as anywhere else? Young readers will love a great book wherever it is set, just as adults would; writers can have heroes walking

the streets of Newport or Llanidloes just as easily as London, or even Hogsmead or Hobbiton. Wales, we know, has a varied and very often stunning landscape and a culture to match, a long history, vast stock of ancient legends and an absorbing and diverse contemporary society. Why *wouldn’t* you set a story here?

Frank Cottrell Boyce, for example, set his *Framed* in Snowdonia, and he knows a thing or two about telling stories. Then there is the fiction of Catherine Fisher, Hayley Long, Diana Wynne Jones, Lucy Christopher and Heather Dyer, to name just a few authors. Fisher writes brilliantly about fantasy worlds from her home in Newport. And it’s possible that Wales may have influenced one or two others: JK Rowling spent some of her schooldays near Chepstow (and its castle), and schooldays (and castles) seem to have been important to her. Even Tolkien had a fair inkling of Welsh language, botany (he’d’ve called it herblore) and landscape. And of course, who could forget Roald Dahl?

But despite this rich heritage, 2012 figures indicated that school literacy and numeracy levels in Wales were lower than those in other UK countries and below average for OECD countries. Last year the Welsh Government introduced the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework in a bid to help children develop excellent numeracy and literacy standards, with assessment against that framework now underway.

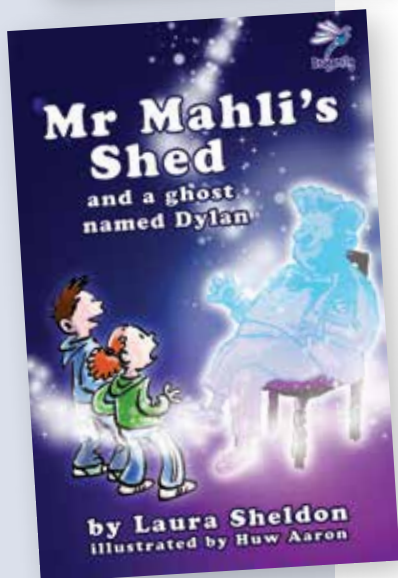
Meanwhile, in late December 2012, there was some very exciting news for children’s book enthusiasts in Wales. In a

move initiated by Huw Lewis, then Minister for Housing, Regeneration and Heritage, the Welsh Books Council was provided with some funds to publish and market a series of ten books for children, to support the Welsh Government’s objective of promoting literacy.

Applications were invited for ‘a lively and contemporary series of children’s books with a strong Welsh focus.’ They were to be books young readers in Wales could identify with, and intended to encourage children to read for pleasure outside of school. Five were to be fiction titles for 7-9 year olds, which should be ‘exciting and fun’ – an element of humour being ‘highly encouraged’. Five further non-fiction titles for 9-11 year olds were commissioned, which could focus on individuals such as young sporting heroes, pop, film and fashion stars, or other high-achievers or role models.

The non-fiction series, now called Sparks, went to Atebol Press, based in Ceredigion. New company Firefly Press, based in Cardiff and Aberystwyth, was lucky enough to be awarded the fiction series, which we have called Dragonfly. Our aim was to curate a series that would be dynamic, exciting and set in places that readers might recognise; we wanted Welsh children to be able to read about heroes and adventures happening in their hometowns, or just around the corner, rather than having all the fun happening in lands far away, somewhere else. But we were also happy for other, more or less traditional, elements to sneak in and delight our readers too: dragons, tigers and football-playing vampires all ended up making an appearance.

The Welsh publishing industry is tiny compared to the giants of elsewhere – Penguin Random House, Hachette, the Scandinavian-based Bonnier group. But it is vibrant and often high quality, frequently featuring in UK-wide prize lists. Gomer has been publishing English and Welsh language children’s books through its Pont



imprint for some years, as have others, including Atebol, Y Lolfa and Carreg Gwalch. Still more - Parthian, Seren, Honno and Candy Jar - have brought out occasional children's books, with Honno's *Bwgan Wood* being one of the publisher's best-selling titles. But other than Firefly, to my knowledge there is no dedicated English language children's and YA publisher based in Wales.

What is vital to reaching readers is that when we publish a book we do it brilliantly. A great story, great pictures, great design and marketing are all equally vital. There is vast competition from around the world, and in the shop, in school or online, and wherever it comes from, young readers want the best, the funniest, the most exciting, the most wonderfully illustrated and designed books they can find - the bar is very high and can be very expensive.

With all these challenges in mind, just a little cash in our pocket, and a lot of determination to succeed, Firefly Press came into being in April 2013. We were given just 18 months to find authors, illustrators, designers, markets and everything else involved in commercial publishing, and get the five Dragonfly books into the shops, all at a price point of £4.99 per book. And they were supposed to be funny!

We started with a launch at the Hay festival, where there were plenty of adults but no books at all. A year later we had another Hay festival event, this time with children actually reading and enjoying our books! By then we had published two Dragonfly titles: *Steve's Dreams* by Dan Anthony, set just outside Newport, (somewhere rather like Malpas), and Snowdonia-based *Dragon Gold* by Shoo Rayner. The other two books happened to be set in Aberdovey (*The Flying Bedroom* by Heather Dyer) and the mysterious town of Blackfin, which may or may not be lurking somewhere on the north Wales coast (YA thriller *Blackfin Sky* by Kat Ellis).

This autumn we present all five (or six) Dragonfly titles to Ken Skates, the new Deputy Minister for Culture, Sport and Tourism. We are publishing nine books in 2014, aimed at children from five to 19. It's

been hard work, but a fantastic journey, and early sales are looking positive, in Wales and in England. We've been amazed by the support we have received from bookshops, schools, librarians, the Welsh Books Council, and, vitally, from new and established authors and illustrators. Catherine Fisher, Francesca Rhydderch and Dan Anthony's agreement to being on our board, and in Dan's case, our first author, was a turning point. And publishing the likes of Malachy Doyle, Shoo Rayner, Wendy Meddour, Heather Dyer and (next year) Paul Magrs, alongside up and coming talent such as Sharon Tregenza, Sarah Todd Taylor, Kat Ellis and Laura Sheldon, is just terrific and hasn't hurt our profile beyond the Severn Bridge at all!

Two more Dragonfly books are out this autumn - Malachy Doyle's *Pete and the Five-A-Side Vampires* sees 9-year-old Pete and his faithful companion Blob the basset hound out after dark on the mean streets of Llani (a fictional Llanidoes), while *Mr Mahli's Shed and a ghost named Dylan*, by primary school teacher Laura Sheldon, brings us bedlam in a poetry lesson when two friends discover a rather grumpy ghost in a neighbour's shed near Cwmdonkin Drive, Swansea. The book was launched with Literature Wales as part of the Developing Dylan 100 project. We also have seaside adventure in *The Shiver Stone* by award-winning Sharon Tregenza, set in a fictional Saundersfoot. In October come the final two Dragonfly titles: prizewinning *Arthur and Me* by Sarah Todd Taylor, set in both Caerleon and Harlech, and the wonderful *Dottie Blanket and the Hilltop* by Wendy Meddour.

While Firefly may be small, we have great authors and support, and our determination is to publish children's books from Wales that are as good as those from anywhere else. Playing a role in improving national literacy is an important priority, but we also hope for a few future favourites and children's classics along the way!

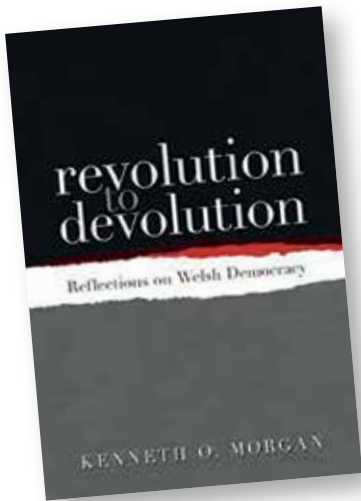


Penny Thomas is the publisher at Firefly Press.

Reviews

A towering achievement

Dai Smith



Revolution to Devolution: Reflections on Welsh Democracy

Kenneth O. Morgan.

University of Wales Press, 2014, £19.99

In the Michaelmas term of 1964, Balliol College's History Society, known after the wife of the college's Scottish founder of 1263, one John de Baliol, as the Devorguilla, had a Welsh secretary. And so it was that the undergraduate historian Gareth W. Williams, invited the young Swansea University lecturer, Kenneth O. Morgan, to Oxford to give a talk on that Welsh Prime Minister of the British Empire, David Lloyd George, the rascal who had so unceremoniously deposed his predecessor, that "effortlessly superior" Balliol man, H. H. Asquith, in December 1916.

Ken Morgan's first book, a small one on Lloyd George, had appeared from the University of Wales Press, in February 1963;

his second, a big one entitled *Wales in British Politics 1868-1922*, came out in the summer of that year. I saw it first, pristine and intriguing, on Gareth's then sparse bookshelves when we went up to Balliol together from Barry that autumn. Now, the following winter, thanks to Gareth's irrepressible patriotism, I was to meet Ken Morgan himself, for the first time and in the company of his Swansea post-graduate student Peter Stead. That night we felt we were out-gunning if not quite out-numbering the English on their very own Oxonian patch.

The talk was delivered with what we would soon understand to be his characteristic combination of lucidity, scholarship and intellectual force. He made a coruscatingly effective defence of the (then) rather maligned Welsh Liberal leader who had, after all, 'won the war'. At the time, the Oxford History syllabus had three examined courses, divided by dates to 1939, under the rubric of 'English History'. In this closed historiographical world, about to shatter under pressure from other histories 'from below', including that of Wales, Lloyd

George was an unwelcome interloper, albeit a British and Imperial one, the exception to the established rule. Revenge was at hand against this show of Welsh hubris when, during question time, some third year Balliol men, led by the son of the Bishop of Exeter and abetted by the future Governor of Hong Kong, lifted from the nearby dining Hall the enormous, gilt framed oil portrait of Herbert Asquith, Balliol 1870-74 and Prime Minister 1908-1916, and placed it prominently and intimidatingly behind Lloyd George's latter day champion. Well-bred sniggerers duly sniggered. But nemesis, from Wales for Asquith, was about to strike again. Someone, a Welsh someone - was it Howard Marks perhaps? - disappeared, only to return with a silk, red Welsh rugby rosette, no bigger than a small cart wheel, and sellotaped it to the rubicund chops of Squiffy Asquith. In some beating undergraduate hearts that night an idea, that to be an historian of Wales was no small thing but a large ambition, was planted.

Fifty years later Ken Morgan, doyen of all the historians of modern Britain, and of course of Wales, now in his 80th year, is still

Someone, a Welsh someone - was it Howard Marks perhaps? - disappeared, only to return with a silk, red Welsh rugby rosette, no bigger than a small cart wheel, and sellotaped it to the rubicund chops of Squiffy Asquith.

By an astute examination of four decades of stunning Welsh historical research and writing from its sudden emergence in the 1960s, he is able to assess the actual diapason of Welsh lived experience: its conflict and its consensus across two turbulent, yet civically evolving, centuries.

leading the way and still planting the seeds. His latest book should be promptly placed in all our schools and colleges. It should, with a hopeful smile, be put into the hands of all our MPs and AMs. It should be made compulsory reading for all journalists who pontificate so glibly on our political life. It should be given, with a friendly grin, to all Welsh political scientists, and any other ideologues who may be lurking in the formerly objective purlieus of academia. It is a triumphant encapsulation of his historically nuanced and sophisticated understanding and analysis of Wales and its distinct political trajectory. It is a sheer joy to read: informed and balanced and shrewd, as you would expect, but also committed and passionate, with no punches pulled about where and who we are now. Ken Morgan's dual sense of Cymru Fydd, the one that has gone and the one we need, pivots on the present life of Wales which, as he affirms, should always and ever be our true concern. Devolution, he reminds us so cogently, is not Democracy, only a potential helpmeet of that most desirable of political fates.

The book has twelve essays, and a 'Postscript: A Tale of Two Unions', which speculates on the kaleidoscopic shifts we may yet envisage between the UK, Europe and Wales. Whatever may, or may not, ensue in the wake of the Scottish referendum, all - brilliantly delineated in close-ups and surveys ranging across two centuries and several countries - is rooted in history. And in our

responses to its imperatives. Ken Morgan is strong in his faith in the continuing ability of democratic processes to deal with what might be in store for us in Wales. His essays, some of which overlap as befits their original form as lectures, give us cameo portraits of Henry Richard, Wales' Apostle of Peace and Aberdare's Liberal MP from 1868, that breakthrough year for democracy in Wales, and of Lloyd George's parliamentary genius. He shows how admired a figure Abraham Lincoln was in both Victorian and Edwardian Wales, and how the strains of internationalism have affected so much of our intellectual life. The huge importance, and effects, of both world wars on all aspects of life in Wales is underlined in three seminal pieces which also help explain the rise and continuing hegemony - for Wales do not see Scotland, here - of Welsh Labour.

But, beyond the nailed-down detail, it is the thematic nature of this book that is most impressive, and most relevant to our current travails. By an astute examination of four decades of stunning Welsh historical research and writing from its sudden emergence in the 1960s, he is able to assess the actual diapason of Welsh lived experience: its conflict and its consensus across two turbulent, yet civically evolving, centuries. Revolution threatened, yes, whether in the 1830s or 1910s, but devolution of power, democratically conceived, arrived whether via the centralising beneficence of the 1940s

or the cautious acceptance of the years after 2000. His other repeated contention is that much of what we gather around ourselves, in an institutional and cultural sense today, has its origins and its echo in the 'golden' years of Edwardian Liberal hegemony which had ushered in the power politics of Lloyd George himself, and brought a National University, a National Museum, a National Library, a Dis-established Church - again, for Wales do not see Scotland - and national sporting teams afloat on a euphoric wave of Welsh-based popular culture. He rescues for our attention Flintshire's obscure Liberal MP, John Herbert Lewis, Lloyd George's loyal if shadowy friend, to emphasise the cultural hinterland so creatively fashioned by such as Lewis in order to give heft and weight to that nascent pre-1914 democracy. The lesson and the implication for Wales, here and now, is clear and stark. It will be the creative culture of a historically-evolved society which will define us as citizens of purpose in Wales. Or not. For, as he concludes: 'At the start of the twenty-first century the long march of the Welsh democracy is very far from over'.

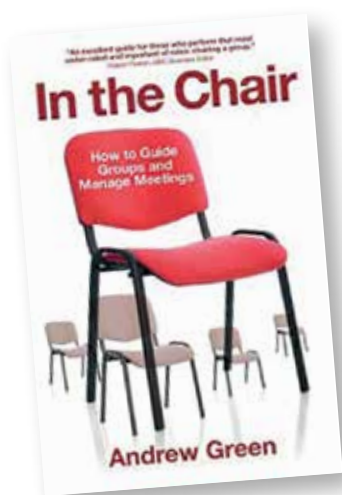
And note that definite article, 'the', placed deliberately in front of 'Welsh democracy', for the latter is, for our greatest living historian, itself a living, peopled thing not a constitutionalised box or a vapid concept. In his Foreword to the book he looks back over the years and concludes that his first, important book - first amongst the many superb biographies and governmental histories and sweeping narratives which would after 1963 follow *Wales in British Politics 1868-1922* from his productive pen - 'has helped to define my career ever since'. As one who read it back then, stirred with a newly discovered excitement for the history of my country, I can truly say and not only the career of Kenneth O. Morgan. His immense contribution, as historian and as public figure, amounts to a towering intellectual achievement for which his country can be deeply grateful, and of which his people can be justly proud. Long may it continue.



Dai Smith is Chair of Arts Council Wales

Managing meetings

Phil Morris



In the Chair: How to Guide Groups and Manage Meetings

Andrew Green

Parthian, 2014, £10.99

Perhaps the most pervasive and widely adopted of theoretical systems from the last century - more so than even Marxism, Freudianism and Modernism - has been management theory, in which the fundamental notion is that individuals can be brought together to achieve collective goals with optimal efficiency under the stewardship of supervisory managers who coordinate the activities of a business or organisation. Management theory has been given a bad name in recent years by countless self-help type books, retailed in airports and train stations the world over, which promise to revolutionise your business in a few, improbably easy steps. So it is with considerable relief that one finds in Andrew Green's *In the Chair: How to Guide Groups and Manage Meetings* a pragmatic and refreshingly jargon-free introduction to that most opaque of leadership roles, the Chair.

Green defines a Chair - he wisely avoids using the outdated Chairman, or the clunky, politically correct designation of Chairperson - as a leader who doesn't have the 'status of a director or chief executive but who uses influence primarily through coordinating,

orchestrating and persuading other people'. According to Green, the Chair has the onerous task of reconciling 'the individual and the social elements inherent in the group and harness both towards the group's goal' and very often has to do so whilst exercising limited executive authority. The requisite attributes of the ideal Chair are therefore harder to define than those of the Chief Executive, who as key decision-maker in any organisation has a more clearly identifiable set of powers and responsibilities. As Green makes clear, Chairs often play an equally important leadership role, but the manner in which they serve the interests of their organisations calls upon the so-called 'soft' skills of consensus building, tact and clarity in communicating a collective sense of purpose. He likens the Chair to a leader of a string quartet that is 'self-governing and non-hierarchical,' who has selected one member of their group to supply 'the non-verbal cues, movements of the head or eye, that bring in the other player at the right time'.

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In this paradigm, the act of chairing is presented as a performance, the success of which is determined as much by the attentiveness and empathy of the Chair as their professional knowledge or specialist expertise. Green is at his most insightful when stressing the importance of 'reading' non-verbal communication in a meeting, during which a good Chair will measure 'signals that members of a group send out in meetings: whether they sit forward or back, where they cast their eyes, whether they hold their bodies in an open or closed way, how still or mobile their hands are'. An amusing account is quoted from the Chris Mullin ministerial diaries, in which John Prescott continues an interminable rambling speech throughout a fire drill to the increasing tedium of everyone present. Green is acutely aware that organisations are comprised of people, and the ability to understand what motivates and maintains their interest is what makes for an effective Chair.

The book is also good on the Chair's

role as a counter-intuitive thinker within the leadership of a group. Green explains that as most people don't say things like, 'Let's forget about what we did before': 'It's the responsibility of the Chair to guard against over-familiar or unadventurous patterns of thought, and to challenge members to think anew'. He also counsels against individual participants of a meeting bolstering their arguments 'with evidence drawn exclusively from their personal experience' and recommends that an effective Chair should direct them to substantiate their points with broader based evidence instead.

The positive note struck throughout Green's book, most of which reads as plain-spoken common-sense, is that "Chairs are not born, but made", which is to say that his five groups of key skills and behaviours that a good Chair should try to master - attentiveness, empathy, integrity, acumen and leadership - can each be acquired through careful study. *In the Chair: How to Guide Groups and Manage Meetings* would be a good place to start.

Green is a very readable writer; his lucid prose is leavened with wit and snippets of dialogue that offer brief and illuminating examples of good practice. The text is accompanied by the quirky illustrations of Juta Tirona and quotes from a commendably wide range of sources. Having served as Director of Library and Information Services at the University of Wales Swansea, and as Chief Executive of the National Library of Wales, Green has a great deal of experience and knowledge to impart, and none of the business-school management speak that might muddle his message. He has also served as Chair of a large number of voluntary, public sector and official bodies, including the Board of Coleg Cenedlaethol Cymru, and this book is highly recommended to anyone with thoughts of chairing public and third sector organisations in future.



Phil Morris is Managing Editor of the Wales Arts Review

A centenary curiosity

Kathryn Gray



Image: Keith Morris

Advantages of the Older Man

Gwyneth Lewis
Seren, 2014, £7.99

Gwyneth Lewis's latest fiction offering from Seren, *Advantages of the Older Man*, is a breezy and engaging novella – and also something of a curiosity.

Lewis's heroine, Jennie, is a Bridget Jones-cum-Georgy Girl, returned to the family home in Swansea following a failed venture to carve out a meaningful life for herself in London. Her post-university career has come to nought; her romantic life has barely progressed to the point of sharing the occasional post-coital breakfast. Lost, friendless and parentally oppressed, and despite an avowed dislike of poetry ('[i]t seems to me to have something essentially shaming about it, like acne') and a humiliating childhood memory of performing Mrs Ogmores Pritchard in *Under Milk Wood*, she lands a job at the Dylan Thomas Art Gallery. But the position indirectly leads to the tantalising possibility of love in the shape of Peter, a Moleskine-toting poet she meets on her lunch break, while exploring the nearby Dylan Thomas Centre. Smitten and determined to secure her man, she feigns

a passion for poetry and helps him to run his open-mic nights. When the open-mic collective is invited to enter a float in the Swansea carnival parade, Jennie resolves to make quite the impression as an ample muse swathed in 'subtly revealing Grecian robes' and 'performing an Isadora Duncan dance with all the sexual wiles I could muster' – before a collision with another float sends her landing in the road.

As Jennie struggles to reconnect with Peter in the aftermath, a somewhat convoluted plot development follows – involving Dylan Thomas's death mask, 3-D animation, and a cameo by the Swansea photographer Bernard Mitchell – which results in Jennie being haunted by the great poet himself. Thomas apparently wants a second shot at artistic life; Jennie's desperate for union with Peter. And so a deal is struck between the two. She will set down the words of Dylan *redux*; he will find a way to secure her Peter's love. It makes for a less than harmonious partnership, as the odd

by his fellow Greats – with Wordsworth, wryly, the ringleader. Thomas even plans to defect to the athletes squad in heaven, if he can just get in shape. Meanwhile, Jennie, until now a figure of comedy for the reader, becomes rather more poignant and complex, frustrated with Thomas even as he acquaints her with meaningful human connection, adventure, transatlantic travel (literary tourism, anyone?) – and Edgar Allan Poe.

Along the way, Lewis, with her trademark wit, has a lot of fun puncturing poetic pretension ('I've been reading the Imagists [...] I'm horrified by how under-rated HD is. That crystalline talent, her pursuit of the pre-feminist orgasm of the mind and soul. She's much better than Pound') and competitiveness ('it's no accident that the collective noun for a group of poets is a paranoia'), even as she unobtrusively demonstrates her own elegant lyric talent:

It was as if the distance between me and the world had slightly altered. I was a match for the raw wind which had brought out early

The figure Lewis summons from the grave may be sharply Thomas in some of his less appealing aspects – boisterous, self-obsessed, sentimental and sometimes crude – but he's also sympathetically drawn.

couple bicker incessantly – teasing out, in the process, some serious ideas surrounding literary celebrity, poetic pecking orders, the anxiety of artistic endeavor, and the agonies of the un-lived life. And it's at this point in the narrative that Lewis's play-it-lite mode, entertaining though that is, gives way to something altogether more satisfying.

The figure Lewis summons from the grave may be sharply Thomas in some of his less appealing aspects – boisterous, self-obsessed, sentimental and sometimes crude – but he's also sympathetically drawn. A vulnerable depressive, he questions the value of his legacy, is fearful of self-repetition, beset with writer's block, and emotionally and psychologically scarred from an afterlife which has seen him perpetually bullied

snowdrops. My stride lengthened with joy, and I felt myself to be a fitting frame through which to watch the Uplands gardens.

Surreal, amusing, and with two significant twists in the tale, *Advantages of the Older Man* is a welcome antidote to the largely uncritical and one-note Dylan centenary year. And I suspect Thomas, for all his perturbation, would have rather approved of that.



Kathryn Gray is a poet, critic, editor and researcher. Her debut, *The Never-Never*, was shortlisted for the T S Eliot Prize and the Forward Prize for Best First Collection.

More than a mystery

Rachel Trezise



Significance

Jo Mazelis

Seren, 2014, £9.99

Some of the press for Jo Mazelis' long-awaited debut novel describes it as a 'literary murder mystery' which is to do the book a great disservice as it's actually so much more. Yes, the novel opens in a thriller-esque manner, pursuing London university lecturer Lucy Swann across the Channel on an impulsive holiday to a small town in Northern France, stalking her while she tests out a new guise: peroxide in place of natural dark hair and floaty and feminine dresses in place of moss green pullovers. As with traditional murder mysteries it effortlessly coerces the reader to the point of Swann's violent but unexplained death, proposing a scattering of pregnant clues as to how, why and at whose hand she may have perished. Then, almost imperceptibly, the novel transforms into something else entirely, the reader slowly becoming aware that the clues are not in fact leads to the killer's identity, but windows on which to observe the lives of the (perhaps) innocent people who surrounded Swann at the time of her death, most of whom she'd never even met, but who, having made the particular set of decisions she did, she has irreparably impacted. *Significance* is a novel that toys with and interrogates the mystery fiction genre itself, often

While it does not relinquish the traditional happy, all-encompassing ending, (the quiddity of murder mysteries and what the novel initially seemed to promise), what it does offer in conclusion is far more interesting; a bold, unceasing truth.

reproaching the stereotypes created there.

One of the side effects of this unusual machination is the extraordinary number of characters for an individual novel. No sooner are we introduced to a couple, a detective inspector and his beautiful assistant, for example, than we're introduced to a lone and ageing woman with a penchant for badly-applied mascara and astrology, for example. In fact the introduction of new characters continues almost to the end of the novel, way past the point any creative writing tutor or manual would advise an aspiring writer to stop. Yet Mazelis makes each and every one of them seem vital and engaging, weaving easily between the finer specifics of each of their fortunes and predicaments, adept particularly at locating and voicing what could easily be our own commonplace wisps of inner monologue, but which become critical in *these* character's thoughts, at *this* particular time: 'How does one forget? Is there, in truth, no forgetting? Only the work of the subconscious artfully spinning reality into the form it desires?' 'She began to consider these ... algebraic sums; lust plus time equals love, lust plus sex plus talking multiplied by habit minus fear and distrust equals love.' Also she has some striking analogies. Worrying about whether her brother-in-law's condition will somehow affect her unborn child, Marilyn reflects: 'Unless whatever was wrong with Aaron was genetic, could skip over individuals and

generations like a girl's feet skipping over hopscotch tiles, landing here, missing there, and then?'

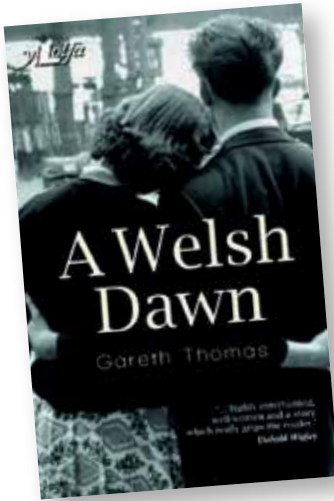
The result is a profusion of virtually microscopic details knitted to make a vast patchwork whole, reminiscent in some ways of Jon McGregor's quiet masterpiece *If Nobody Speaks of Remarkable Things*, but with entirely its own agenda and rationale, Swann's death a skimming stone pitched and posting surges into the unlikeliest of corners, or at least the places the media never ask us to dwell on. Despite its swift change of course a quarter of the way through, (deliberate of course), the prose retains its stride throughout the entire four-hundred-and-seventy-odd pages, keeping the reader lured. While it does not relinquish the traditional happy, all-encompassing ending, (the quiddity of murder mysteries and what the novel initially seemed to promise), what it does offer in conclusion is far more interesting; a bold, unceasing truth. With *Significance*, Mazelis has set her novel-writing bar at a breathtaking height.



Rachel Trezise is a novelist, short-story writer and playwright. Her work has won the Orange Futures Prize, the Dylan Thomas Prize, the Edge Hill short story Reader's Award and the Theatre Critics of Wales Best Production Award.

Novelise Tryweryn

Linda Christmas



A Welsh Dawn
Gareth Thomas
Y Lolfa, 2014, £9.95

Gareth Thomas is an established actor and director. This is his first novel and like most first novels it is partly autobiographical. Thomas, as a young boy in the 1950s, moved, via his father's job, from an English-speaking part of south Wales to a monoglot Welsh village on the Llŷn peninsula. From this vantage point Thomas plaits the novel's twin

I finished reading the novel during a trip to Aberdovey and mentioned it during a visit to the pub! Without prompting I got a speech in favour of the dam from someone who is a UK-oriented Welsh speaker and seconds later a passionate denunciation.

themes, the tussle between Welsh folk who feel that schooling in and constant use of English is the only route to university and a 'better life,' and those who steep themselves not just in the language but also the culture and traditions. This controversy, which is more than enough to ignite a fight inside one of the novel's central families, becomes engorged when dynamite drops in the form of a dam.

Liverpool wants to drown Capel Celyn in order to create a reservoir to service the needs of England. This means displacing 70 residents and destroying 800 acres of land including a school, post office, chapel and cemetery. Drowning parts of Wales in order to provide water for England happened twice before in the 19th century with Vyrnwy and Elan. Yes, that's right: this was the third time the English snatched Welsh water and then made money out of it by selling it.

This novel, then, is one of a fascinating genre in which historical events are brought to life through imaginary characters. In this instance, we have a warring family (already mentioned) and a pair of young lovers whose lives we follow over five years. The genre also enables past events to be brought to the attention of a new generation in an accessible fashion.

The English might need to be reminded but the Welsh do not. I finished reading the novel during a trip to Aberdovey and mentioned it during a visit to the pub! Without prompting I got a speech in favour of the dam from someone who is a UK-oriented Welsh speaker and seconds later a passionate denunciation.

The book is timely; Scotland's attempt to flex its independence muscle makes the English treatment of Wales all the more acute and embarrassing. No one in the 1950s listened to Wales screaming NO!

They pretended to: Harold Macmillan and his henchmen smoothed Welsh fears by pretending to listen, all the while ramming the bill through Parliament. The drowning of Tryweryn was an unequal fight between England and Wales.

As an English woman with Welsh blood I found myself asking why Westminster did not state its intentions clearly and do a decent deal. An honest approach might have

His style is spare, frugal, sober. He must be an admirer of Hemingway and Orwell.

satisfied the majority. Instead the disdainful way the Welsh were treated resulted in renewed interest in the Welsh language and an increase in demands for self-determination: Plaid Cymru's leader, Gwynfor Evans, was at the forefront of the campaign to halt the drowning of Tryweryn and he became the party's very first MP, winning the Carmarthen by-election of 1966.

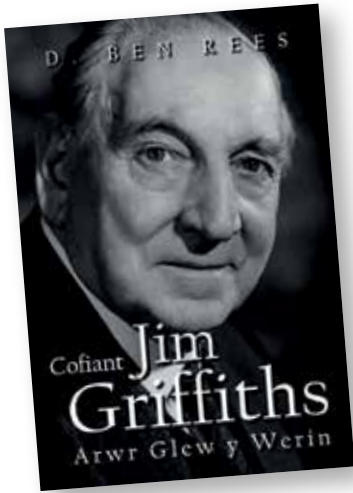
The book needs a decent introduction. Halfway through I resorted to the internet to make sure I had the history clearly in my mind. I have recently read Robert Harris' novel on the Dreyfus affair, which is so brilliantly detailed that no prior knowledge is necessary – but then it does run to 600 pages! An introduction would suffice here rather than more information being filtered through the pages. And while Harris' book is at times overwritten, Thomas cannot be accused of that. His style is spare, frugal, sober. He must be an admirer of Hemingway and Orwell. Or perhaps he wished to ape the austerity of the 1950s, the decade about which he is writing. In general the book could benefit from more variation in pace and perhaps a less sentimental ending. I see a film in the making.



Linda Christmas is an English journalist, based in London, with an interest in Wales. She has been running courses in Arts Journalism and reviewing fiction and non-fiction for many years.

A key figure

Aled Eurig



Cofiant Jim Griffiths, 'Arwr Glew y Werin'
D. Ben Rees
 Y Lolfa, 2014, £14.95

At last, we have a well-researched and passionate biography of Jim Griffiths that does justice to one of the giants of Wales and the Labour party during the last century. While his contemporary Aneurin Bevan has been lionised, memorialised and mythologised, Griffiths has until now been allowed to fade into obscurity, his accomplishments unsung and unrecognised. Only his own autobiography, and J. Beverley Smith's excellent and concise biography have

Rees traces Griffiths' roots to his working class community in Bettws, near Ammanford. He was the son of a blacksmith, and brought up in a cultured Welsh-speaking and Nonconformist family, where education, the chapel and Sunday School, miners' lodge and council chamber were the key influences on his development.

attempted to capture the significance of Griffiths' contribution to the Labour party, to Socialism and to Wales in the 20th century.

This book rescues Griffiths's reputation as one of the most effective Welsh politicians of the 20th century. His lineage

The author, Dr. D. Ben Rees, is a one-man cultural mission. A minister of religion and a former Labour Parliamentary candidate based in Liverpool, he has produced over 30 books on the topics of history, theology, and peace.

was that of the colliery, the classroom, the union and Westminster and his story is the epitome of the growing power of the working class and the Labour party in the last century.

Rees traces Griffiths' roots to his working class community in Bettws, near Ammanford. He was the son of a blacksmith, and brought up in a cultured Welsh-speaking and Nonconformist family, where education, the chapel and Sunday School, miners' lodge and council chamber were the key influences on his development. Although he was educated in the Marxist leaning Central Labour College, and was a friend and contemporary of Ness Edwards and Aneurin Bevan, his Nonconformist roots tempered the fierceness of his politics.

He became President of the South

Wales Miners' Federation in 1935, and MP for Llanelli in 1936 until he retired in 1970. A highlight of his career was as Minister in the post-war Labour Government, when he became Minister for National Insurance, thus working closely with Bevan to create

the financial architecture for the welfare state. He became the Secretary of State for Colonial Affairs for eighteen months in 1950-51 during a controversial period that saw colonies given their freedom but that also involved the British Government in Malaya adopt a 'shoot to kill' policy against nationalist rebels.

Throughout the 1950s, in his role as deputy chairman of the Labour party, he had a key role in attempting to maintain the unity of the party, at a time when the issue of nuclear disarmament threatened to cause a split. But his political Indian summer was undoubtedly his role as Secretary of State for Wales after the 1964 Election, and the creation of the Welsh Office. Rees tells how Griffiths fought hard to wrestle power away from Whitehall and to establish the new department with more than an advisory role.

In the late sixties, he was regarded by many young, brash Plaid Cymru supporters as one of the irrelevant old guard of Labour placemen. But this admirable biography should remind us that Jim Griffiths is possibly the key figure in the 20th century who ensured that Wales now possesses a democratic national institution.

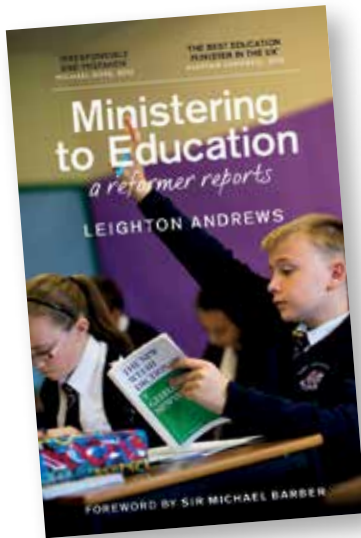
The author, Dr. D. Ben Rees, is a one-man cultural mission. A minister of religion and a former Labour Parliamentary candidate based in Liverpool, he has produced over 30 books on the topics of history, theology, and peace. This extremely detailed and thoroughly researched book is best when it described Griffiths' background and early development as a union activist. He pays tribute to Griffiths' skill to maintain unity within the Labour party in the difficult period of the 1950s, but also defends his refusal to work outside the party in order to pursue devolution in the 1950s. I suspect the author is rather kind about Griffiths' character and personality as well. Although Rees paints him as a humble and tolerant man, there is little sign of the steel and ruthlessness that Griffiths would surely have needed to survive in the murky world of smoke-filled committee rooms.



Aled Eurig is Chair of British Council Wales.

Standards over structures

Rajvi Glasbrook-Griffiths



Ministering to Education
Leighton Andrews
Parthian, 2014, £10.99

'State education served me well. I'm determined that it should serve all young people well.'

This is Leighton Andrews' driving ideology throughout *Ministering to Education*, and one that permeated his professional purpose as Minister for Education, 2009-2013. This sense of purpose is apparent in all the excessive initiatives and documentation pulped, authorities merged, schools and authorities dragged into special measures, grant funding reallocated, teacher training boosted, priorities re-examined and pared-down priorities formed.

Making him Minister for Education was, according to Andrews, a powerful signal from Carwyn Jones that 'for the education sector business as usual in Wales was over and transformation would begin.'

Four years on, this transformation cannot have missed the attention and working life of any member of the teaching profession in Wales. The Literacy and Numeracy Framework - delivering vehicle of Andrews' emphasis on placing Literacy and Numeracy at the heart of all learning - has infused the

curriculum and is certainly filtering through. It also appears to be visibly tightening standards in teaching and learning. As a working teacher I welcome this raising of expectations, with 'outcomes not output', 'standards over structures' at core. As Andrews admits, the word 'standards' did not feature in the 2007 Welsh Labour election manifesto.

As with all such things, the proof will be in the Test results. The National Reading and Numeracy Tests will be a benchmark, whilst the ultimate marker of gain will remain the PISA tests, arguably an overblown preoccupation but undeniably a yardstick by which to measure restoration of faith in the Welsh education system.

His third, underpinning, priority is that of reducing the impact of poverty and deprivation on opportunity and education:

My philosophy of education was very simple. It was that a child in Maerdy in my Rhondda constituency, one of the most deprived communities in Wales, should have the same life chances as a child in Monmouth, one of the richest parts of Wales.

Schools performing extraordinarily well in deprived communities are named and praised. Amongst them are Treorchy in Andrews' own Rhondda constituency, Sandfields in Neath, St. Mary Immaculate in Cardiff and Llanwern High in Newport which, under Headteacher Peter Jenkins, was one of the two most improved schools for GCSE results in 2013. Inversely, the shock waves still reverberate from placing Monmouth, a "coasting" LEA, in special measures.

There's impassioned feeling against socio-economic determinism and Andrews derives the term *inverse learning law* to describe a situation whereby the educational opportunities and experiences received offer themselves in an amount directly disproportional to the need for them. The indefensible 'poor dab' mentality has perpetuated this for a while now; a dire shame for a country once so proud of its culture of autodidacts, Institutes and empowering libraries. The Poverty Deprivation Grant and The Communities First Pupil Deprivation Match Fund are two examples of direct pots of money for

schools earmarked for direct ground-level impact. This is refreshing. Although, and not without some irony, funding is not always the solution. Candid, Andrews admits, 'spending and standards are different issues.'

Candour is a real strength of the book, particularly so in the clarity with which Andrews describes the workings of ministerial duties and life: 'I believe individuals as ministers can make a difference. But context, often, is all.' The meetings; the people; the internal power-jostling; the 'silo-mentality' blocking so much inter-departmental communication; lack of corporate memory; dubious degrees of accountability; initiative compounding initiative within a culture of cosy consensus in, too often, a 'quango mentality culture of sweetheart deals with local authorities': all pitfalls described with vim, humour and self-deprecation.

The challenges of shaping of education within a culture of devolved policy making and public administration, as described, provide an interesting insight into the more significant power-struggles at play - those between a devolved Welsh government and the UK government. 'We need more reflection on devolved politics - on what has gone well and on what has gone wrong - away from the self-important rhetoric of the Assembly Chamber and the glib simplicities of a TV studio', Andrews argues. That reflection and dialogue may take many forms, but take place it must.

Within bureaucracies - and you will see this all the time in Welsh local government, the land of little empires - too often you find process stifling creativity, slowing down decisions, with power trips preventing effective collaboration and innovation. I was determined the Education Department would work speedily, effectively.

Andrews' references and sources of inspiration are a respectable and important amalgam of historical and current - amongst them E.P. Thomson, Christopher Hill, Raymond Williams, Dai Smith, David Blunkett, Michael Barber, Michael Fullan and Stefan Collini. However, they remain politically narrow and self-fulfilling. A broader political spectrum would be more admirable, if only to provide Andrews with

There is, unsurprisingly, a blinkered over-regard for all ideals New Labour. If this is surprising in a Labour Minister, it is only because there is some promise of a more academically, broadly informed perspective.

stronger ammunition against things he so deeply opposes – namely grammar schools, academies being left to market forces alone, and educational privilege. There is, unsurprisingly, a blinkered over-regard for all ideals New Labour. If this is surprising in a Labour Minister, it is only because there is some promise of a more academically, broadly informed perspective. Jibes against Tories as ‘Cereal Killers’ and wagers of a supposed ‘War on Wales’ detract from the higher message of the book, and out of date pot shots at Thatcher endanger Andrews’ higher ideological ground.

Institution-to-institution cooperation is a highly viable way forward, to Andrews’ mind. This is in increasing operation already, in School Improvement Groups (‘sigs’), Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), Lead Practitioner/Emerging School pairings and amongst a rising culture of mutually beneficial working parties sharing practice between schools. Are the Cooperative schools the Welsh alternative to academies? Very possibly. Andrews argues that a system of federalised Headteachers and governors are in line with a Welsh tradition of mutuality. I work in a school significantly committed to this ethos and thoroughly believe in the value of this way of working.

Leighton Andrews’ time as Head of Communications at the BBC has certainly served him well. With his astute awareness

of media habits in Wales, he successfully endowed Education a broader appeal through Welsh television news. Moreover, Andrews personally never seems to be out of the *Western Mail*. At the time of writing, extracts from *Ministering to Education* are in press print. As yet Huw Lewis doesn’t get the same volume of coverage in the media. It comes as little surprise that nor does he get much coverage in this book. ‘Reform needs not more initiatives but relentless implementation,’ advises Michael Barber. However, steady, principled reinforcement is not as politically sexy. Truman’s words come to mind – ‘It is amazing what you can accomplish if you do not care who gets the credit.’

At times the whole text reads like an extended polemic – the language is rhetorical and there is much repetition. All perpetuates to feed the query which niggles throughout: why has Andrews written this book at all? And, more importantly, why has he chosen to publish it at this point? He is no longer the Minister for Education and, at the time of writing this, he was a backbencher. The message is clear: all this reform, and all the fruit it will inevitably bear, is Leighton Andrews’ handiwork. Lest we attribute credit elsewhere.



Rajvi Glasbrook-Griffiths is English Coordinator at Glan Usk Primary School, Newport

Why 1930s history matters in modern Welsh Politics.

Nick Powell



The Fascist Party in Wales? Plaid Cymru, Welsh Nationalism and the Accusation of Fascism. **Richard Wyn Jones**

Know a Hero by his Heroes: Saunders Lewis beyond apologetics. **Tim Williams**

Madrid's Barricades are at the End of our Street: Wales and Fascism in Historical Context.

Rob Stradling

The Fascist Party in Wales?
A critique by David Melding

As I started to read Richard Wyn Jones’ book and these three essays, I wondered if the vast scholarship on Fascism and the Second World War was finally reaching its outer limit, if the barrel of historiography wasn’t being scraped. Whether such considerable intellectual firepower should be concentrated on what a tiny political party did or did not do in reaction to global events in the 1930s and early 1940s.

The answer for me is that such efforts are fully justified. As the period begins to pass from living memory, it is still growing in importance and securing its central place in popular collective understanding of nationality and class.

In his September 2014 party conference speech, Ed Miliband offered a series of definitions of what it is to be English, including ‘Englishness: a spirit of

“As the period begins to pass from living memory, it is still growing in importance and securing its central place in popular collective understanding of nationality and class.”

internationalism. From those who fought in the Spanish Civil War to our generosity to those overseas’.

The use of verbless sentences is pure Blair of course but otherwise it’s almost word for word how Miliband’s mentor, Neil Kinnock, defined Welshness year after year at the Labour conference, albeit not from the platform but rather when speaking (before singing *Bandiera Rossa*) at Welsh Night on the conference fringe.

It’s not just that what happened in politics in the second quarter of the twentieth century still matters; what people think happened matters even more. Hence the shock value of the picture on the cover of *The Fascist Party in Wales?*. It shows the swastika flag of Nazi Germany being raised over Cardiff City Hall in celebration of the 1938 Munich Agreement.

Not that it was anything to do with Plaid Cymru, 70 years away from a share of power in Cardiff’s council cabinet. Still, as Richard Wyn Jones observes, his anecdotal experience is that many, if not most, Plaid Cymru members believe that their party was influenced by Fascism in the 1930s.

One example occurred in 2009 when Labour AM Leighton Andrews asked the rhetorical question ‘70 years ago, weren’t Plaid Cymru leaders supporting Franco?’. The response from one Plaid Cymru AM was ‘Cheap shot Leighton, how long ago is it that you were a Lib Dem?’. Leighton Andrews then quoted Gwyn Alf Williams on Plaid Cymru’s move to the right in the 1930s.

A more substantial response came from the Plaid AM Jocelyn Davies. She argued

that there were other views in Plaid Cymru at the time. Also that the party had certainly changed, as Gwyn Alf’s decision to join it confirmed. For good measure she added that the Labour party had also changed ‘from the socialist force for good it was then’. In 2009 Andrews and Davies were both deputy ministers in the One Wales government.

Before us now is not just Richard Wyn Jones’ examination –and for the most part rejection– of allegations against Plaid Cymru’s leaders in the 1930s, that they were pro-Fascist, anti-Semitic and at the very least far too sanguine about the prospect of a Nazi victory.

As well as a powerful counter-attack from Tim Williams, we have David Melding weighing the evidence and daring to rule where the verdict is guilty, where it is not guilty, where it is unproven.

Rob Stradling gives greater context to this debate. He highlights the influence of Fascism in 1930s Ireland, a country important to Plaid Cymru’s leaders as living proof that breaking away from the United Kingdom was possible. He describes the strength of anti-Catholic prejudice in Wales at that time and the centrality of the Spanish Civil War both to how people’s views on Fascism at the time and to how their views are seen today.

Richard Wyn Jones refers briefly to a resolution passed by Plaid Cymru’s annual conference in August 1937, sympathising with the Basque Country’s resistance to Franco. My former HTV colleague Hywel Davies gave the wording in *The Welsh Nationalist Party 1925-1945*: ‘The Welsh Nationalist Party desires that the Basques will have the freedom to live their own

national life, just as we work for our own nation’.

It took Plaid’s leadership six months to forward the message to the Basque government. When challenged about the delay, the party’s General Secretary blamed it on a reluctance to get involved in non-Welsh matters.

Richard Wyn Jones points out that until October 1937, Labour also had a policy of non-intervention in Spain. Tim Williams takes him up on this. Unlike Plaid Cymru, Labour is widely recognised as a party whose far more numerous membership opposed Franco. However, its leadership were ‘wary of foreign adventures’, writes Williams.

The influence of the TUC, rebuilding the union movement after the General Strike and the depression, ensured that union block votes supported non-intervention at the 1936 party conference. Internal opposition led to a reversal of the policy at the 1937 conference.

Although much mightier than Plaid Cymru, Labour was still only an opposition party and the National Government continued to support non-intervention. Williams also refers to the TUC raising money for humanitarian aid for Spain and for Spanish refugees. But what about those who fought in Spain, whose international spirit modern Labour leaders invoke?

In the 1930s, it wasn’t Plaid Cymru that was challenging Labour in its heartlands; it was the Communist Party. In one of the most intriguing paragraphs in *The Fascist Party in Wales?*, Richard Wyn Jones writes:

‘Indeed, the roots of the Labour Party’s Welsh organisation are (in part) grounded in the efforts of the party to counter the vigorous propaganda campaign being waged by Communists in Wales on behalf of the [Spanish] Republic!’

Never mind the flourish of an exclamation mark, it was the footnote I wanted to read. The source is an unpublished PhD dissertation. If Plaid Cymru’s policies in the 1930s are a worthy subject, not just for academic research but for publication (and they are), then surely so are Welsh Labour’s origins in a decade which looms as large as ever in our political consciousness.



Nick Powell is Head of Politics for ITV Wales

Books Round-Up

Dylan Moore finds poignancy in a collection of reminiscences, vivid imagery in an ultimately frustrating memoir and inspiration in an anthology of interviews.

'He taught me stuff, did Nigel,' begins Jon Gower's essay 'A Tutelary Spirit', on the death of his great friend Nigel Jenkins. It is the final essay in a fragmentary collection of *Encounters with Nigel* and a fitting tribute to a poet and performer who was also an encyclopaedist and psychogeographer, campaigner and teacher and who, by all of the accounts in this volume, was taken from the community of writers and culture-makers in Wales far, far too soon.

The volume is a tribute also to the irrepressible efforts of editor Gower and publisher Ali Anwar, of the H'mm Foundation, in bringing such an engaging and heartfelt set of reminiscences to the attention of a wider world so soon after

contributors – among them Jenkins' peers, former students, members of the critical community and his own two daughters – almost has the effect of making it seem that for a time the entire Welsh cultural sphere revolved around this uncommonly generous, fascinating and talented man. While that is not quite true, *Encounters with Nigel* indeed exceeds its remit as a collection of tributes, beginning as it does to shine a light on a man as well as an artist.

One of those paying tribute to Jenkins is his old friend, and musical-poetic collaborator John Barrie, the former editor of *Planet*, whose 'Remembering Nigel' is an exquisite series of anecdotes, often hilarious, that culminate in a remembered

"Why would I dedicate my life to anything else?"

the poet's passing. Published mere months after Jenkins' funeral at St Mary's Church, Pennard, on the poet's beloved Gower peninsula, the book is nevertheless a fully formed and coherent whole rather than the rush-job that it might have been given lesser lights at the helm; part of this is clearly to do with the esteem and yes, love, with which Nigel – his first name is used throughout – was clearly held by so many.

Anwar traces his own friendship with Jenkins back to the 1970s; his description of 'a true friend, an internationalist, a Druid, a limited edition, a one-off' is one reflected right through 200 pages of fragments, poems, essays and even pictures (David E. Oprava and Iwan Bala both contribute striking pieces of visual art in memory of their friend). The contents page, with its illustrious list of

haiku of Jenkins' that retains an almost unbearable poignancy now that Jenkins himself has gone.

Barrie has his own book out this autumn: *Footfalls in the Silence* (Cinnamon Press). The title refers to the poet's view of memory as visual, 'a gallery of images' where only rarely is silence disturbed. The metaphor serves to introduce a collection of essays and prose fragments that together paint a picture of an Abergavenny adolescence in the 1950s; the writer's quiet rebellion against his mother's Church of England sensibilities and a sexual awakening that runs alongside 'book raids' on various border towns. The twin poles of his years at King Henry VIII Grammar School are his English master Wyn – a man in possession of all the best qualities of a man in such a role, nurturing the writer's ability

to understand poetry and pointing him in the direction of influential classics – and his girlfriend Monica. Barrie's description of Monica conjures up not only the girl herself, but also puts one in mind of the great fiction-memoirs of Dannie Abse. John Barrie's prose is crisp and his imagery vivid, but the book peters out somewhat as the author's studies at Birmingham University lead to adventures in academia that only threaten to get interesting when the author moves to Denmark. But here the book ends, mysteriously and abruptly, leaving the reader with a distinct sense of having merely been granted access to the prologue.

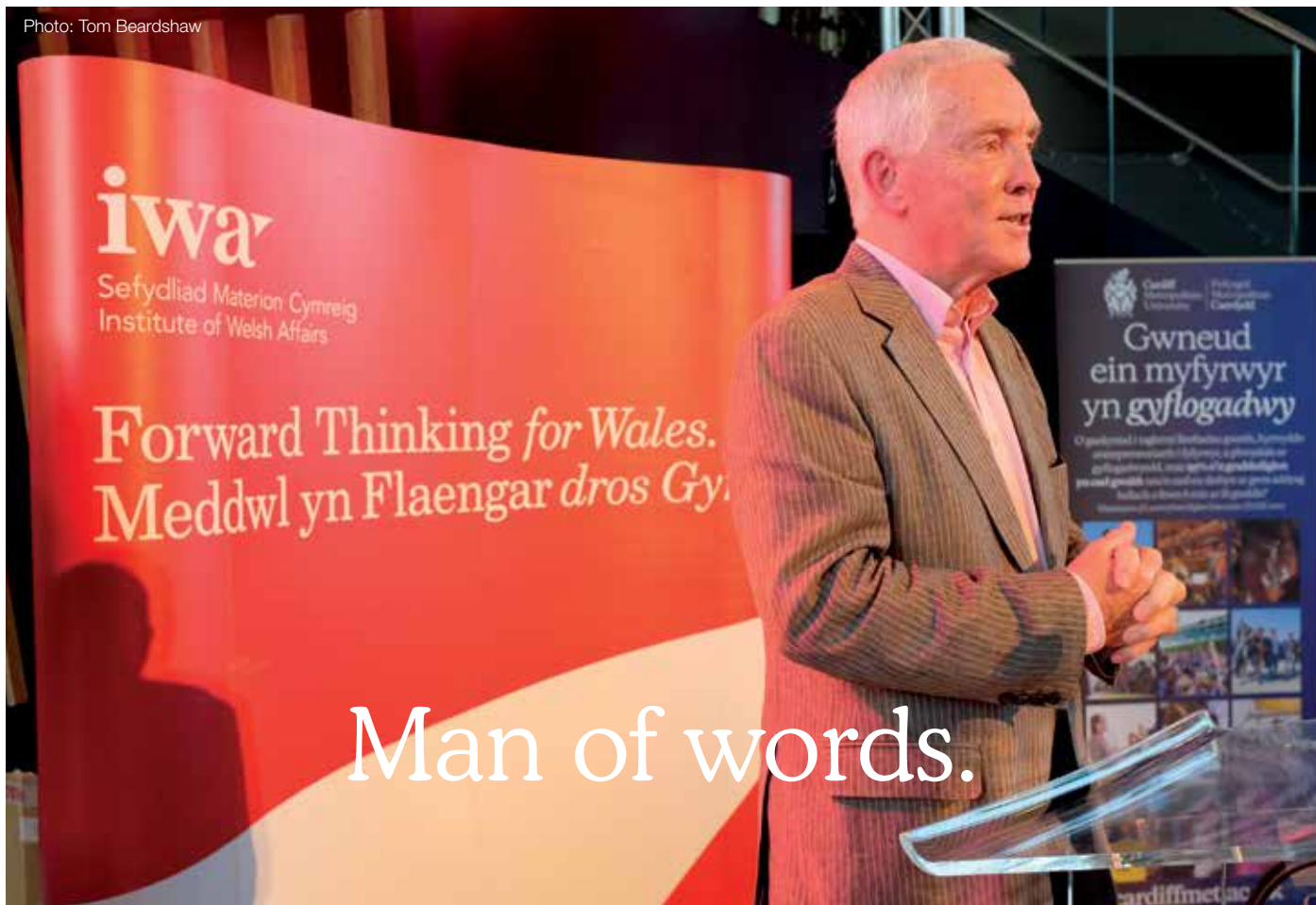
If one of Nigel Jenkins' many facets was his work as a radical campaigner, he would no doubt have been impressed by the latest collection of essays from Honno – the Welsh Women's Press. The volume situates the language campaigning of Angharad Tomos, imprisoned for her relentless activities to protect and support the use of the Welsh language, in a broad sweep of 'Women Changing the World', which indeed is the subtitle to *Here We Stand*. Compiled and edited by Helena Earnshaw and Angharad Penrhyn Jones, the book takes the form of a series of in-depth interviews with seventeen prominent British women campaigners.

Each conversation is as different as the women concerned, as is the range of causes represented, from animal rights to anti-nuclear, from raising awareness about forced marriages and honour killings to small group action against corporate giants like Nestle and McDonalds. Their methods are diverse – from drawing satirical cartoons through endless lobbying to nonviolent direct action – but the thread of absolute, unswerving commitment to the cause, whatever that might be, runs through all of their stories. The closing line of the entire book is Franny Armstrong's question: 'Why would I dedicate my life to anything else?'



Dylan Moore is the new Culture Editor of *The Welsh Agenda*

More on the web > Read Adam Somerset's full-length review of Roy Jenkins by John Campbell at ClickOnWales.org



Man of words.

Gerald Holtham looks back at Geraint Talfan Davies' contribution as Chair of the IWA.

Geraint Talfan Davies was instrumental in getting the IWA off the ground. Success has many fathers and a number of people can claim to have sown important seeds. The intellectual background to the founding of IWA is well set out in the 'history' section of the IWA website. David Waterstone, then head of the Welsh Development Agency saw clearly the need for a Welsh think tank and provided all-important early funding.

A clear milestone, though, is the paper written by Geraint and Keith James in 1986 setting out the case for a body to provide intellectual challenge in all spheres of Welsh life. The IWA was incorporated the following year in 1987.

Geraint succeeded Henry Kroch as IWA chairman in 1992 and in 1996 the IWA appointed its first full time director in John Osmond, thanks to donations from WDA, the Hyder Group and Sir Julian Hodge.

My own first contact with the IWA dates from about that time. I was running the IPPR, a think-tank and we collaborated on some of the policy issues of the day, notably the plans for devolution being hatched by the new Labour government in 1997. I quickly came to have great respect, indeed admiration, for the work that John and Geraint, as an active chairman, were doing. My staff and budget at the IPPR were a multiple of those at the disposal of the IWA. Knowing that, it was impossible not to be impressed by the quality and

sheer quantity of work they were procuring and turning out on the policy issues facing Wales. That work had to be accompanied by tireless fundraising, since organisations like IWA depend on donations and subscriptions. And as any think-tank director knows, the money is erratic and uncertain. The whole operation, impressive as its output has been, lives hand to mouth.

In the almost 20 years since those days, the IWA has become an indispensable part of the Welsh public scene. It has produced seminal reports on a range of policies and its magazine, Agenda, and its web pages are the first port of call for anyone looking for analysis and commentary on the issues facing Wales, whether social, economic, political or cultural. For that Wales owes Geraint and John a prodigious debt. They can be truly proud of what they have done for the country.

Not, that it always seemed like that. As two strong characters, they had their differences, always accommodated in private while presenting a united front to

On Air

for Geraint Talfan Davies

A swirl of fledgeling swallows in the sky
trying their wings, till one, too young to tell
transparencies of glass from air, flies
into my wide open room, and falls.

Its heart in my hand, I set it free to fly, bird
messenger, llatai - to you, man of words,
on page, stage, wire, satellite, air,
to bring you cadenza, chorus, opera, prayer,

that held-breath moment in the stalls,
a settling before the swallow-rush
of tuning strings, before the hush,
the lifted baton, the first chord,

before the choir, the aria, the heroine's fall,
and all to come on the wings of a singing word.

Gillian Clarke

the world. And sometimes that world did not respond as they, or any reasonable person, might have hoped. The IWA did important work, for example, on a Welsh baccalaureate, to which they both contributed. A great deal of scholarly and practical expertise went into drawing up a real blueprint for reform. Then in conversations with civil servants they hit the "not invented here" phenomenon. "We're going to have a baccalaureate", they were told "but not your baccalaureate!" The resultant half-baked compromise lives on - just - but is far from what it might have been. Not the least of Geraint's accomplishments - and John's too - was to keep faith and press on whatever reverses might occur.

It really does seem that nearly every Welsh artistic and business success of the past quarter century has Geraint's fingerprints on it.

Now you might think from all that that Geraint had made chairmanship of the IWA a full time occupation. However, while he was so deeply engaged with the Institute

Ar yr Awyr

Daw cywion adar i chwildroi'n y nen,
haid ar led ond am un rhy fach ei byd
i ddeall nad paen mo'r awyr uwchben
wrth blymio i'm stafell fyw, yn ei hyd,

mor llon yn fy llaw. Rhyddhau wnaif y cyw
yn gennad, llatai, - at etifedd geiriau
ar ddalen, llwyfan, gwifren, lloeren, aer,
cadenza, corws, gweddi, operâu.

Dal ana'l eiliad yn y seddau crand,
llonyddu cyn i wenoliaid yn ein mysg
byncio'u tannau, cyn gorchymyn 'ust',
A'r baton ar esgyn, nodyn ar aden

cyn y côr, yr aria - cwmp arwres,
A'r oll achlân ym mhig y gair a gân.

Gillian Clarke
Troswyd o'r Saesneg gan Menna Elfyn

he was also for ten years Controller of BBC Wales, responsible for TV and radio and the national orchestra and chorus, not to mention acting as Governor of the Welsh College of Music and Drama and serving on the Boards of several arts or charitable organisations. After retirement from the BBC he became Chair of the Arts Council of Wales for three years and Chair of the Welsh National Opera, which he remains. He was even involved in the setting up of Welsh Water as a not-for-profit company. It really does seem that nearly every Welsh artistic and business success of the past quarter century has Geraint's fingerprints on it.

He now leaves the IWA in younger and vigorous hands with Helen Molyneux coming in as Chair and Lee Waters having

succeeded John Osmond as director. The Institute has some 1,000 members across Wales and nearly 100 corporate members in the private, public and voluntary sectors.

If Wales has a "civil society" it is located in that membership. The prestige and importance of the IWA has never been higher. Yet the finances are as precarious as ever, with a crisis never seeming far away.

Perhaps the IWA is like Wales itself, a small country on beautiful but peripheral and marginal land with a language culture never used by more than a million or so people, right up against one of the most expansionary countries and cultures in the world over the last millennium. It really should not exist at all and defies the odds to do so. On more than one historical occasion Wales has looked to be on the verge of extinction. In treading such a precarious path and thriving against the odds, the IWA is a very Welsh organisation. I hope and trust that what Geraint was so instrumental in helping to found and build, will long survive both as a monument to him and his principal colleagues and as a huge asset to Wales.



Gerald Holtham is a Fellow and a Trustee of the IWA.



Letters that shrank the century.

Trevor Fishlock tells of the letters written by his Grandfather on the western front.

A century ago, Monday 26 October, my grandfather Herbert wrote to my grandmother. 'A horrible wet night, soaked to the skin, bitter cold.' He was in one of the squalid trenches of the western front. He could not, of course, tell his wife where he was. He thanked her for a parcel of tobacco, cigarettes and newspapers. Ever romantic and adventurous he told her of his hopes for the future, his dream.

Written in pencil in neat hand the letter was one of five I saw for the first time this year. I doubt they had been seen for many years. Their impact on me was immediate. They shrank the century, as if I were reading over my grandfather's shoulder his thoughts of home, wife and children. A long silence was broken. A once-remote figure was suddenly close: through his letters he had a voice, a personality.

The letters reached his home in Thurston Road, Pontypridd. A former farm worker he became a coal hewer at the nearby Albion colliery in Cilfynydd, one of the thousands of men attracted to the booming coalfield of the early 20th century. In 1905 he married Lily Williams, a florist from Nantymoel. Their three sons and a daughter were all born in Thurston

Road. My father was their first child.

In 1912 Herbert went to Australia for some months. It seems this was an exploration by a restless young man who wanted to escape the coalface and settle his family in a new life.

As an army reservist he was called up at once when war broke out in August. My father recalled watching his dad eat a departure breakfast notable for two eggs on the plate rather than one. On 22 August Herbert sailed for France with the 1st Battalion of the Somerset Light infantry, part of the British Expeditionary Force confronting the advancing German forces in Belgium and France. The battalion was soon involved in fighting at Le Cateau.

Three times this year I walked the landscape and serried stones of remembrance along the western front. I went to battlefields whose names are unfailingly resonant: Ypres and Cambrai, Arras, Thiépval, Mametz, Mons and Ploegsteert. On the edge of a field at Mametz Wood I saw a rusted hand grenade, the sort of relic still unearthed by the plough a century on.

The first trip was devoted to writing and filming, telling the stories of Welsh

soldiers for an ITV Wales series, *Wales and the Great War*.

We drew on a project by pupils at Glan Afan school, Port Talbot, who researched the lives of former students named on the school war memorial. They told us the story of Fred Gaen, a talented rugby player killed in 1917; and we filmed his name on a memorial at Cambrai.

We found the site of an airfield near Saint-Omer where the remarkable Ira Jones, from St Clears, was based. He went to France in 1915 and became a highly-decorated fighter ace, shooting down 37 German aircraft in three months. We also told the story of the Porthmadog schooner *Miss Morris*, sunk by a U-boat in 1917. The submarine captain, a film pioneer, shot extraordinary footage of the ship as its sails collapsed and it slipped beneath the waves, a dying swan.

We also filmed at Mametz Wood on the Somme, where the 38th Welsh Division so famously fought; and showed archive of the last survivors, speaking in the 1980s. People don't forget: the trees in the wood are bright with Welsh flags.

The letter my grandfather wrote from the front on 26 October was, as far as I know, his last. He was killed on 9 November, aged 29. In the letter he wrote of his dream. 'Well Dear whenever I return I think I shall try and give the Coalfield a bye, perhaps go to Australia again if you are willing.' We do not know where exactly he was killed. There is no known grave. His name is among more than 11,000 inscribed on the Ploegsteert Memorial, seven miles south of Ypres. I took my father there in 1976: he was eight when his dad was killed.

During my other visits to the western front this year I took my grandchildren to the Ploegsteert Memorial and some of the battlefields. I gave them copies of Herbert's five letters so that they too can see that he was a man of humour and humanity, a father; more than a statistic.

I also gave them a copy of the only photograph of my grandfather. I remember that a framed enlargement of it hung on the wall in my grandmother's home. She used to listen to the Remembrance Day radio broadcast from the Cenotaph in London, sitting in steadfast silence, never taking her eyes from the picture of Herbert.





Floundering

Peter Stead

There are days when the headlines are so dispiriting that one turns immediately to the cartoonists, hoping not only for humour but also for a sharper summing up of the situation than anything captured by reporters and photographers. A day or two after the Newport NATOfest, Gerald Scarfe had Obama in a Superman kit visiting Stonehenge (where at least the stones are Welsh) and reflecting 'Hmmm - So civilisations can collapse'.

Scarfe had fully reflected my despair on that Sunday morning. A terrorist state had emerged to dominate the Middle East, there was a beheading in North London, ebola was rampant in West Africa, the Russians were undermining Ukraine, and the electronic media were reducing culture and society to a pantomime by eclipsing all privacy.

On top of all of this there was a poll indicating that the opportunistic Scots were seriously contemplating grabbing independence without any consideration of the British constitutional and possibly financial crises that were likely to ensue. On a weekend without Premiership football there were no distractions: I was left to mull over the truth of what Scarfe's Obama had just realised.

The 19th and 20th centuries had witnessed wars, tragedies, exploitation and horrors but overall they did constitute a period of progress in which the majority of people experienced improved living and health standards. In general this was a process that was marshalled by the West, by both Europe and the USA who combined a strong sense of self-interest with rational and liberal economic and political principles. All of which prompts the question of where do we go from here: what will the 21st century bring? The prospects do not look good.

As one searches for something promising to build on, one becomes all too aware of the

forces undermining stability. An international ethos had been established by the Western pattern, first of trade and then of industry and banking. However in the era of globalisation, as the West left manufacturing to others, there was a fragmentation in which banking became divorced from industry and began to play a far more dangerous game. This process of surrendering the world to an uncontrolled economy coincided with a culture that encouraged self-expression whilst making available both the weapons and electronic technology that allowed identity to be projected stridently and violently.

History may record the names of the few political scientists and economists who identified this new era but it will have difficulty in identifying any elected politicians who have spoken openly and honestly about the situation and who will take a lead in suggesting how new patterns of investment and employment can be developed.

Whatever the complexity of the new international order, there is no way that a generation of failed Western leaders can be defended. When Lloyd George fell from power one contemporary spoke of 'the intellectual pygmies' taking over. The subsequent Tory administration was referred to as 'a government of the second XI'. Currently we are presented with leaders from the deepest recesses of the sub's bench.

We clearly need leaders prepared to explain the fundamental causes of tension and who will convene meaningful summits (not PR exercises) to negotiate real settlements. Already analysts are identifying the Obama presidency as marking the end of the era of American dominance. The great orator of 2008 has come to resemble nothing more than a basketball coach as he lopes to the podium, hands in pocket and chewing (one hopes a mint rather than gum). 'What gesture, what concession will get us through the weekend' seems to be the message.

There was a time a couple of generations ago when India, Africa and even the Middle East offered the prospect of powerful international leadership that would break through the rigidity of the Cold War. Nothing has taken the place of those lost voices. A few decades ago we began to speak of a new Europe that was based on a unique pattern of cooperation and which promised to sit alongside the USA as a global economic and ideological force. But Europe (for all its physical attractions) has remained inward-

looking and reluctant to embrace the economic and cultural freedoms and responsibilities that are explored by the English-speaking world. The visit of the French President to Newport reminded us that, whilst civilisation may be collapsing, France remained true to itself, locked inside a Simenon novella.

All of which leaves us with those British leaders and the undoubted constitutional crisis they have brought upon themselves. Even before that one infamous poll suggested the Scottish vote might be close, I was dumbfounded by the position in which we had been landed. Which crazy politician had conceded this referendum without first calling together a constitutional convention to spell out all the alternatives and likely consequences of sudden independence. The age of Blair and Cameron will go down as one of easy, supposedly 'soft', concessions to pressure groups without any consideration of cultural consequences.

I love Scotland for its physical beauty and the vibrancy of its two great cities. I gave thanks then that common-sense prevailed. Mercifully the silent majority had saved the day. But we are left with much on which to reflect. We still do not fully understand how democracy works. The SNP denounced a London Government for which 'they had not voted' but seemed unaware that a 'Yes' vote would involve a huge number of Scots living in a country they didn't want. The SNP were essentially and ruthlessly dividing Scotland in two.

Both before and immediately after the vote we were faced with opportunist politicians fighting for their own survival, but we also had English and Welsh minority politicians with wafer-thin mandates claiming new powers without any reference to what citizens as a whole desire. If you play constitutional games it seems as if anyone can join in.

If the referendum teaches us anything it is that every citizen needs to be considered. Clearly there has to be a Constitutional Convention and one with the imagination to transcend party. A lesson we are learning is that constitutions can too easily be a game for nerds. What people want is wealth creation and capital investment...The time has come for opportunities not committees: 'first XI' politicians will sense that.

This is Peter Stead's last 'Last Word' for the Welsh Agenda.

Wales can be a 100% renewable country
Join us and help make the vision a reality.



The IWA Fellowship has been developed as a special category of membership as a mark of recognition for those who have made, or are making, a significant contribution to the life of Wales. To discuss becoming a fellow of the IWA please call Lee Waters on **02920 484 387**.



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| - Dafydd Iwan | - Mr George Crabb | - Mr. Owen Gareth Hughes |
| - Dr Carl Iwan Clowes | - Mr Geraint Talfan Davies | - Mrs Christine Eynon |
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| - Dr Elin Jones | - Mr Huw Roberts | - Ms Ceri Doyle |
| - Dr Eurwen Price | - Mr Huw Wynne-Griffith | - Ms Clare Johnson |
| - Dr Geraint Stanley Jones | - Mr Ifan Evans | - Ms Deirdre Beddoe |
| - Dr John Burke | - Mr John Bryant | - Ms Diane McCrea |
| - Dr Julia Magill | - Mr John Osmond | - Ms Eve Piffaretti |
| - Dr Neil Thompson | - Mr John Wyn Thomas | - Ms Jenny Rathbone |
| - Dr Ruth Williams | - Mr Jonathan Evans | - Ms Kirsty Davies |
| - Helen Molyneux | - Mr Jonathon Poyner | - Ms Menna Richards |
| - Lord Rowe-Beddoe | - Mr Keith James | - Phil Henfrey |
| - Lord Alex Carlile | - Mr Martin Tinney | - Prof Gaynor Kavanagh |
| - Lord Brian Griffiths of Fforestfach | - Mr Milwyn Jarman | - Prof David Marquand |
| - Lord Gwilym Prys-Davies | - Mr Ned Thomas | - Prof Harold Carter |
| - Lord Kenneth O. Morgan | - Mr Nigel Annett | - Prof Jane Aaron |
| - Mme Helen Jones | - Mr Nigel Bowen-Morris | - Prof Judy Hutchings |
| - Mr Alan Francis | - Mr Nigel Griffiths | - Prof Nickie Charles |
| - Mr Alan Peterson | - Mr Paul Davies | - Prof Peter Stead |
| - Mr Alastair Milburn | - Mr Paul Silk | - Prof Phillip John Jones |
| - Mr Andris Taurins | - Mr Paul Twamley | - Prof Steven Kelly |
| - Mr Aneurin Phillips | - Mr Peter L Griffiths | - Professor Antony Chapman |
| - Mr Bill Capper | - Mr Philip Cooper | - Professor Elan Closs Stephens |
| - Mr Chris Jones | - Mr R G A Youard | - Professor Mark Tewdwr-Jones |
| - Mr Chris Rowlands | - Mr Rhys David | - Professor Nigel Thomas |
| - Mr D Huw John | - Mr Richard Eley | - Professor Paul Atkinson |
| - Mr Dafydd Iwan | - Mr Robert John | - Professor Richard Rawlings |
| - Mr Daran Hill | - Mr Robin Evans | - Professor Terry Marsden |
| - Mr David Clubb | - Mr Roger Geraint Thomas | - Reverend Aled Edwards |
| - Mr David Freed | - Mr Roger Lewis | - Rt Hon Lord Richard |
| - Mr David M Evans | - Mr Ron Jones | - Rt Hon Lord Dafydd Wigley |
| - Mr David Melding | - Mr Simon Baynes | - Sir Donald Walters |
| - Mr David Stevens | - Mr Steve O'Dea | - Sir Richard Lloyd Jones |
| - Mr Dyfrig James | - Mr Tom Jones | - Sir Roger John |
| - Mr Eilian S Williams | - Mr Tony Bagnall | Laugharne Thomas |