

the welsh agenda

North by Northeast

Ken Skates talks to
Rhea Stevens

Grahame Davies, Hannah Blythyn,
Llyr Gruffydd & Darren Millar
on connecting North East Wales

Exclusive Fiction:
Dai Smith, Rachel Trezise,
Rhian Elizabeth

Plus

- Gill Morgan on How Change Happens
- Ruth Hussey on Health and Social Care
- Philip Dixon on *Successful Futures*



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editorial

As we live through an ever-evolving present and face an uncertain future, it is sometimes tempting to think that our own times of tumultuous change are unprecedented. But the flurry of anniversaries this year – not least our own – are a reminder that Wales, and the world, for better or worse, are constantly in flux; such is the nature of history.

If we think that this has been an apocalyptic autumn – hurricanes battering the Caribbean; test missiles flying haphazardly across the Sea of Japan; a Nobel Peace Prize laureate seemingly turning a blind eye to ethnic cleansing – then we only need to cast our minds back a century to find an autumn which included the Battle of Passchendaele, the Russian Revolution and the Balfour Declaration.

It can sometimes seem that we are trapped in an endless cycle of jubilees, but if nothing else they can provide a sense of perspective to our current challenges. At this year's IWA summer party, we were pleased to introduce some of The Next Thirty, individuals profiled in the last issue of *the welsh agenda* who we think are worth watching in the years ahead. Writer Rhian Elizabeth commented that Wales excels at remembering its past but is perhaps not so focused on shaping the present, citing the recent centenaries of Dylan Thomas and Roald Dahl as examples of a country that celebrates the achievements of its long-gone great and good at the expense of emerging talents.

As a continuation of our thirtieth anniversary celebration, we are pleased to have given Rhian the opportunity to write a contemporary story as part of an exclusive fiction series. 'The Difference between a Terrorist and a Hero' depicts three Welsh teenagers en route to London in the aftermath of the awful fire at Grenfell Tower. Following Rachel Trezise's story set against the backdrop of a demolished

Cardiff Arms Park on the morning of the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, and Dai Smith's story 'Passing(it)On', narrated by a woman whose world is dying with her, the stories together paint a picture of a south Wales that has both changed irrevocably but also – in some senses, and for some people – stagnated in the thirty years since the IWA was created and in the twenty years since Wales said Yes to devolution.

If the three Rhondda-born writers of fiction suggest a south Wales bias that many have suspected of devolution itself, then our other major series this issue, focusing on the oft-neglected region of north east Wales is an attempt at counterbalance. Rhea Stevens talks to Ken Skates about growing up in the region and its economic prospects, Grahame Davies offers a personal reflection on his Welsh-speaking Wrexham identity, Hannah Blythyn outlines the potential for cross-border working contained within the nascent Mersey Dee Alliance, while Darren Millar and Llyr Gruffydd each offer their take on the future of the north.

Twenty years on, questions remain about the nature and extent of a devolution dividend. Just what difference has the National Assembly made to the lives of the people of Wales? Whatever progress has been made on the structures of governance in Wales, it is lives like those depicted in this issue's fiction (and those in articles like Vanessa Webb's on young carers), to which we need to be paying very close attention as we continue the task of bending history in the direction of justice, building a Welsh society that works for everyone. That's why the work of the IWA matters, and why we are ever grateful for your support.

Auriol Miller,
IWA Director



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A report card: Wales – will do better

The gravitational pull of rising global prosperity and widened horizons is too strong for even the most insular establishment to withstand

Kevin Gardiner offers a candid assessment of where Wales is at, and advice on how the nation might go forward from here

*We have grown sentimental in London
Over things that we smiled at in Wales*

'London Welsh', Idris Davies

Not always: distance can bring perspective. May I offer some constructive criticism, from the personal viewpoint of a London-based, Cardiff-born economist and author – one flattered to have been asked to participate at the margins of Welsh public affairs?

In contrast to Westminster, and much of the rest of the developed world, the left is the establishment in Wales. But it is radical in name only. In practice it is conservative with a small 'c', clinging to an unambitious, suppliant outlook in which people know their place – geographically as well as socially. Love it to bits, but it could do better.

It needs to, because the world has moved on. Most visibly and unattractively, of course, there has been a hardening of attitudes to immigration. A more subtle,

longer-established and far-reaching change, however, is a constructive one: as people have become better off – even in Wales, and even if they don't acknowledge it – their attitudes and priorities have shifted. As technology has brought so many more experiences within reach, their horizons have lifted too.

The Welsh establishment has either overlooked or ignored the progress made, and may now draw the wrong conclusion from June's Westminster election result. There may be no collectivist resurgence at hand: instead, the long-term tide may still be running in the other direction – towards the individual, and towards prosperity.

It doesn't feel like that just now. Having snatched near-defeat from the jaws of victory, the Westminster government is poised to tack towards the centre in response. The wilder Brexiteers seem determined to remind us why the Conservative Party used to be known as 'the stupid party'.

But who knows why people vote as they do on the day? Students are no more immune from self-interest, or protest, than older voters worried about taxes and immigration. Collectivism is still retreating

globally, and the June result may have been a case of 'sticking it to the man' (as it were). October 2017's anniversary may remind us who the real reactionaries are.

So what practical and positive advice might we offer the Welsh establishment – Plaid Labour? – if it wants to retain its grip? Assuming, of course, that it deserves to do so.

First, accept that things are not that grim, acknowledge the last three decades' progress, and embrace the future more positively.

Because contrary to the impression conveyed by a sensationalist media, global capitalism is not in crisis, but thriving. History suggests this will not be reversed. Venezuela is just the latest in a long line of predictably sad endings to supposed alternatives. The evidence is compelling: it is simply the least bad system there is for managing human affairs. Deal with it.

This means placing current issues (fiscal austerity, Brexit, Trump) in context. Globally, the average person has never been better fed, housed or clothed, nor less exposed to violent crime, conflict or disease. The UK economy is twice as big

as it was when we said Mrs Thatcher was destroying it, and four-fifths larger on a per capita basis. Unemployment and inflation are much lower, industrial relations and corporate profitability have been transformed. Life expectancy has risen. Meanwhile, in our hip pockets we routinely carry more computing power than a 1970s university, a two-way video connection to the world, and a large portion of the artistic canon.

Wales has lagged behind for sure, but to read much local commentary you'd think things have actually gone backwards. They haven't. And the journey is not over yet.

Why does this matter? Because you need the support of the better-off majority to help the people who are struggling, and you can't credibly ask for it if you don't acknowledge it's there to be given.

Second, ditch the kitsch. There is nothing wrong with passion in public affairs. But emotion flowing too freely and in the wrong place can become kitsch. The default setting for much local 'analysis' is a garishly maudlin, nostalgic sentimentality – which permeates even some economic writing.

Kitsch can win votes short term. The celebrity dancing gambit is political genius. 'A new sort of politics' is today's Youkali. But pandering to easy emotion only takes you so far. Ironically, it was a Welsh politician who coined the phrase 'emotional spasm' – he knew what he was talking about.

Sentiment doesn't foster literacy, numeracy, oracy and ambition in parentally-challenged schools. It can't diagnose problems in an exhausted health service. It cuts little ice with employers asking why they should expand or relocate.

We need less barracking and cheerleading, and more objective analysis. And in Wales that includes a more honest appreciation of the economic challenges posed by physical geography.

And for goodness' sake, stop squabbling.

Third, focus on outcomes. There is a tendency to look for high-altitude answers to Wales' lagging performance. Are they really best sought at an institutional, prescriptive level, or might a bottom-up,

Wales has lagged behind for sure, but to read much local commentary you'd think things have actually gone backwards. They haven't

enabling approach be better? As Deng Xiaoping said, it doesn't matter what colour a cat is, as long as it catches mice.

We seem always to be looking for one-stop solutions, killer policy apps. But has Wales really been held back by a missing development bank, myopic pension funds, an absent Mittelstand, an unambitious entrepreneurial community – or do we just not make enough things (or provide services) that people want to buy?

Perhaps fewer institutions might be better – could there simply be too many Welsh local authorities, too many ineffective politicians, too many reports? The Welsh Government itself needs to guard against complacency: the margin in favour of devolved government was smaller than that for Brexit, and its leaders have been all but invisible as ambassadors for Wales. Some recent AMs seem to have used Wales to kick-start failing careers elsewhere.

Democracy is not perfectible. Economies are not optimisable. Life is surely about muddling through, finding an acceptable solution – satisficing – and then getting on with things. In the management jargon: JFDI. Germany did not become an economic powerhouse because its government picked winners, its banks lent more or the euro was cheap, but because it gets basic education right, works hard and makes good stuff. It's that easy – or difficult. We do of course have successful Welsh (and British) businesses quietly doing just this, just as we have world-class university research and a cluster of innovative public sector agencies.

Finally, be more inclusive. This is the really sensitive one, so apologies for any offence. But in south east Wales at least there seems to be some resentment at the heavy-handed way in which Welsh culture is being protected – and not just because of the embarrassing, indulgent and unsustainable waste of resources (protecting future generations by printing our intentions on twice as much paper as necessary?). Why make people feel excluded if you don't have to?

Let's be honest: when the definitive accounts of modern times are written, they are unlikely to conclude that the world would have been a better place if only there'd been more nationalism. There can be a fine line between nationalism and chauvinism. The rise of the SNP has not exactly been the left's finest hour. And it is not the middle classes who might pay to place our 'otherness' ahead of employment.

Conclusion? The Westminster election result might seem to suggest that the Welsh establishment can relax. I think this would be a mistake.

The long-term challenge to the left in Wales comes not from UKIP – it never did – but from economic progress. The gravitational pull of rising global prosperity and widened horizons is too strong for even the most insular establishment to withstand. Which, ultimately, has to be good news for Welsh people, whoever governs them. Wales *will* do better.



Kevin Gardiner is a City-based economist educated at Glan Ely Comprehensive (Cardiff), UWC Atlantic College (St Donats), the LSE and Cambridge. He is a governor at Atlantic College, a member of the Welsh Government's advisory panel for Financial and Professional Services, Chair of the programme board at Wales Public Services 2025, and was a member of Cardiff Council's Growth and Competitiveness Commission which reported in December 2016

‘Something must be done’ Thirty Years. Three Stories.

As the IWA marks its thirtieth anniversary, and Wales itself celebrates twenty years since ‘Wales Said Yes’ to devolution, we invited three of the country’s foremost writers of fiction to offer short stories that capture moments in our national story. **Dai Smith** (born Rhondda, 1945) has set his story ‘Passing(It)On’ in 1987; **Rachel Trezise** (born Rhondda, 1978) takes up the baton in 1997 and **Rhian Elizabeth** (born Rhondda, 1988) brings us right up to date with a story set earlier this year, in the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire in London. Read together, the stories offer snapshots of lived experience in Wales over the last thirty years, revealing aspects of social change, whole worlds that have disappeared, and the human drama of individual lives pitted, for better or worse, against a Wales and a Britain that is as riven by class and pocked by disadvantage as it was when Edward VIII uttered those famous words.

Illustrations: Dan Peterson

1987 Passing (It) On

DAI SMITH

‘What dreadful people.
We are really wasting our
time. What is the point of all
your efforts if they appreciate
them so little?’

Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher speaking to Nicholas Edwards, her Secretary of State for Wales, 1979 to 1987, after a vocal demonstration against her appearance in South Wales.

Only, see, I hope I don’t linger. Better to go sudden, isn’t it. In any case, I wouldn’t like to think of her having to listen to my death rattle. Nice kid she is, willing to do anything for me, love her. Bit wild I know, but still time for her to change given half a chance. She won’t have heard anyone die yet, will she. Not so likely these days what with people dying more out of the way, in hospitals mostly, those geriatric wards. Ach y fi. But I’ve always had a feeling, daft really I suppose, that I’ll pass away in this bed. ‘Course I’ve seen and heard dozens and dozens dying myself, sitting with them, waiting for them to slip away, not always easy that, and washing them after, and laying them out too, for neighbours to come and pay their respects. Paid work that was, mind. The way it was, then. And not very nice for a young woman as I was. All the same at

the end, and yet all different somehow, and that old death rattle at the last. Not a proper rattle, really, more like pebbles, but hollow ones, bumping and grinding against each other, everything gurgling up from the chest, blocking the airways, flooding the passages, gasping life out. Years ago people generally died in the beds they were born in, or at least in the beds they lay in for most of their lives. Passed on they were, like this one, with the lilies hand carved into the pine headboard, and the irons to hold the base with, for years and years an old lumpy tick mattress on top, though I have chucked that out now. It was Mam and Dad’s bed before me, passed down to me and Alec after their time, and we were glad to have it. Don’t suppose she’ll have any looks on it, or anything else I’ll leave, not clothes for sure, so they can all go to charity. A bit of my china maybe, or that nice ivory bangle I had from my Bopa Lel. I’ll ask. I’ve had the bed from the summer my mother died in it, fifty years ago, the year the King abdicated. That was in the December, Edward the Eighth he was going to be, and the month before, as Prince of Wales, he came to South Wales to see for himself he said, and he said after that something must be done. Only, then he went, didn’t he. I saw him close up in Dunraven Street, in his car I mean, when he passed through Pandy, and you know what, he had makeup on. Never seen makeup on a man before, but he did, honest. A sort of orangey face powder it was, quite thick, and his hand kept rising up to flick his bowler so he seemed almost like a mechanical thing, a tiny one all scrunched

up in a big black overcoat against the cold and damp. I told Alec when I got home. He said that he had better things to do than to gawp at royal wankers. Only he didn't of course, not then. Something must be done my arse, was what Alec said. And when the war came and he got back in the pit, good wages underground for a bit, it was too much for him after all that time out of work and he went a surfaceman which he never liked, with all his butties as colliers, and after the war he was on the council, sweeping the streets or on the ash lorries to empty the bins. Not much of a life was it, and if I'm honest, now that he's long gone too, I don't think, looking back, that he was ever fully himself after the first war. So many boys dead in that one, and others terribly crippled for life, some with no arms or no legs and you'd see them, for years after, on crutches or on homemade bogeys with little iron wheels, mooching about, just going up and down the street or on the road, waiting at the corner or outside a pub. Pitiful it was, to see them, and in Alec's case it was there, too, but more in his head, what he'd seen, what had been done, and he was only seventeen when he went, different entire when he came home. We'd been sparkling a bit, not proper courting, when the war had started, and after it we got engaged but years before we could manage to marry, and I do think that even then it was as if a light had gone out in him, one that never really, not fully, came back on, ever. Lovely feller, everybody said, your Alec. And he was, I know, but still we both had to settle for less than anyone should have to do. I told her that once and what d'you mean she said and I said curiosity killed the cat, my girl, and that there are some things which are for me to know and to keep to myself. Though she is persistent that one, won't let go, so I had to tell her that we weren't all born behind a gooseberry bush back then, though I made her laugh when I told her about what we called courting, going out together seriously, and she said it sounded dull, so I said, hoy madam, I've seen a bit more of life than you might think. Oh, she said, hard to believe that, and she was grinning, cheeky with it now, because if it isn't on TV or happening outside the valley, for all her generation I think, it just isn't happening at all, is it, and I told her straight that I hadn't always been stuck at home, had had lots of different jobs to do, places I'd been to, over the years, cleaning big houses in the city before I was married, serving

stuck-up buggers as a live-in maid, hands all over you if they could, then after I was married, later on, travelling to the munitions factories during the war, your hands going yellow with the sulphur, making you cough and splutter, some of the girls actually killed in explosions, stomachs blown open, all hushed over at the time of course. And when people could afford to buy wallpaper there was paper-hanging, which lots of women did in houses in the valleys, front-rooms for best or bedrooms perhaps, come in early in the morning, set up a foldaway trestle table and cut to size wallpaper lengths and slather on thick, cold, globby paste, and then onto the wall, with a cloth to flatten it, and do two or three rooms in a day, all on my own, word of mouth reputation bringing in the work, with women being neater perhaps than men, and besides not all men being handy about the house at all, so it was good pocket money, especially when Alec was out of work or on short time. She listened to all this, a bit bored I could tell, so then I said, all casual like, that oh and there was that other time when we were right on our uppers, desperate for a couple of bob, and I'd catch the bus to Cardiff, all dolled up. Fitted right in, I told her. You never, she said. Only once or twice, I said. Alec never cottoned on, so no harm was it, I said. Well, you should have seen her face, I'm telling you, and I kept mine straight as a die, see, for ages and ages until I had to burst out laughing. You cow, she said, you old cow, laughing with me now. I would have liked to have had a daughter like her, even if she's too sassy sometimes for her own good. I tell her I like to think my Mary Ellen would have been like her, if she'd lived. She says, oh go on, but it's true and I think she likes me to say it because she always looks again at the snap, fading brown it is, I have in that little slate frame on the wicker table by the bed. Only three she was when she got the Dip, I tell her. She didn't know what diphteria was, another killer of our kind that is gone, thank God, I say, like a lot of things we had to fight against. I tell her good things don't happen by accident. She says that so far as she is concerned nothing good ever happens around here anymore. Nothing happens at all, she says, but it comes out more like a question in her voice, cos it's all over and done with round here, she says, and I have no answers for her, not really, only more stories to tell her.

The General Election of June 11 has brought about a change of personnel at the top in the Welsh Office, with Mrs Thatcher's appointment of Peter Walker as the new Secretary of State for Wales set to usher in a new initiative: the Programme for the Valleys. Mr Walker, who believes the provision of major tourism and arts centres to be vital to his plans for urban renewal, said: 'In the case of the proposed Rhondda Heritage Park, I consider this to be an extremely exciting project which epitomises many of my aspirations for the valleys. Based on the industrial heritage of the valley communities, it will transform a derelict site with its symbols of former glories into an attractive heritage park and so help to change many of the unwarranted perceptions that still exist about valley life.'

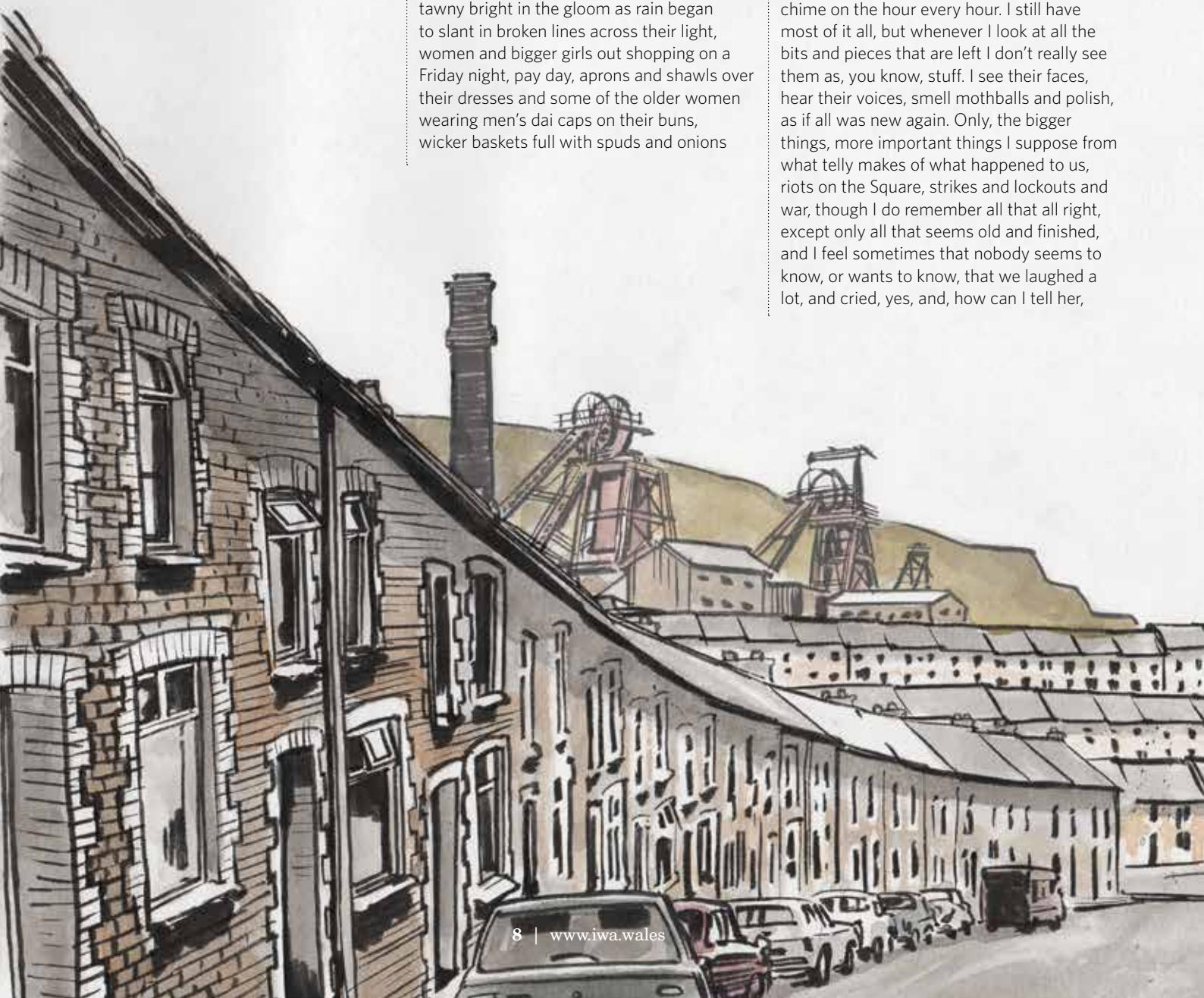
Associated News Reports, June 12 1987

I just don't see where all the furniture will go to when I'm gone. Too heavy, too dark, most of it, for youngsters today. I have found it hard to part with any of it, each piece saying something to me, the only one left now, that would mean nothing to anyone else. I tell her though, all the same, whenever she pops in to see me. I tell her how proud my mother was to put blue-and-white china on that tall pine dresser we bought from Twissler's in the first war when, for a time, there was good money to be earned, and pianos, though we never had one, put in lots of front rooms, for show mostly so never played, their tops

covered by crimson velvet cloth with tassels hanging down the side. I still have that marble topped washstand upstairs and its creamy yellow bowl and pitcher, not that we used it except from time to time, all of us washing in the bosh in the kitchen, with a bath in the tin tub in front of the fire once a week, us girls first, Davy John after. Sounds primitive she says, especially now there's indoor lavs and baths, but she can see it was fun too, all of us more together then, and neighbours walking in and out without let or hindrance. In my mind now I keep going back, with those early things, big and small, all crowding in and jumbled up higgledy-piggledy, like the very first time I got out of the train in Trellaw, six hours we'd been what

with changing trains and waiting, with Mam and my older sister Gwen carrying a suitcase each, walking over the railway bridge up the main road into Tonypandy, then up Dunraven Street, all the way to the Square, a crossroads really, and suddenly Dada was there, still blackfaced from the pit, and I squirmed when he went to kiss me, his moustache all bristly and wettened with beer, smudging coaldust all over my face so that I wriggled and pulled away, and he laughed and threw me in the air. We hadn't seen him for almost a year after he'd left to join his brother Tom, working as colliers in Clydach Vale. I had never seen so many people milling about, much more than in Blaenau Ffestiniog, all filling up the pavements and spilling onto the road, the stench of horse manure strong and the shops open though it was almost night time proper with the electric arc lamps tawny bright in the gloom as rain began to slant in broken lines across their light, women and bigger girls out shopping on a Friday night, pay day, aprons and shawls over their dresses and some of the older women wearing men's dai caps on their buns, wicker baskets full with spuds and onions

and carrots and leeks, and all chatting, with more Welsh than English being spoken, so it did not seem a strange place to us, not at all. I was just gone eight years of age then, in 1908, younger than my cousins, Mam's sister Ellen's boy Davy John and daughter Sarah, the four of us to share a bed until we found a house to rent, later to buy. So every year since then, I tell her, I can mark off by the things which came to surround us. A deal table, wooden curved back kitchen chairs, a horsehair sofa eventually, and then another one with button backed chairs to match for the front room, which was only for visitors of course. And on the mantelpiece there, when Dada retired as choirmaster from Eglwys Dewi Sant, all from the north they were like us, we put the brass faced clock in its walnut case they clubbed together to give him, with its big brass key to wind it up and make it chime on the hour every hour. I still have most of it all, but whenever I look at all the bits and pieces that are left I don't really see them as, you know, stuff. I see their faces, hear their voices, smell mothballs and polish, as if all was new again. Only, the bigger things, more important things I suppose from what telly makes of what happened to us, riots on the Square, strikes and lockouts and war, though I do remember all that all right, except only all that seems old and finished, and I feel sometimes that nobody seems to know, or wants to know, that we laughed a lot, and cried, yes, and, how can I tell her,

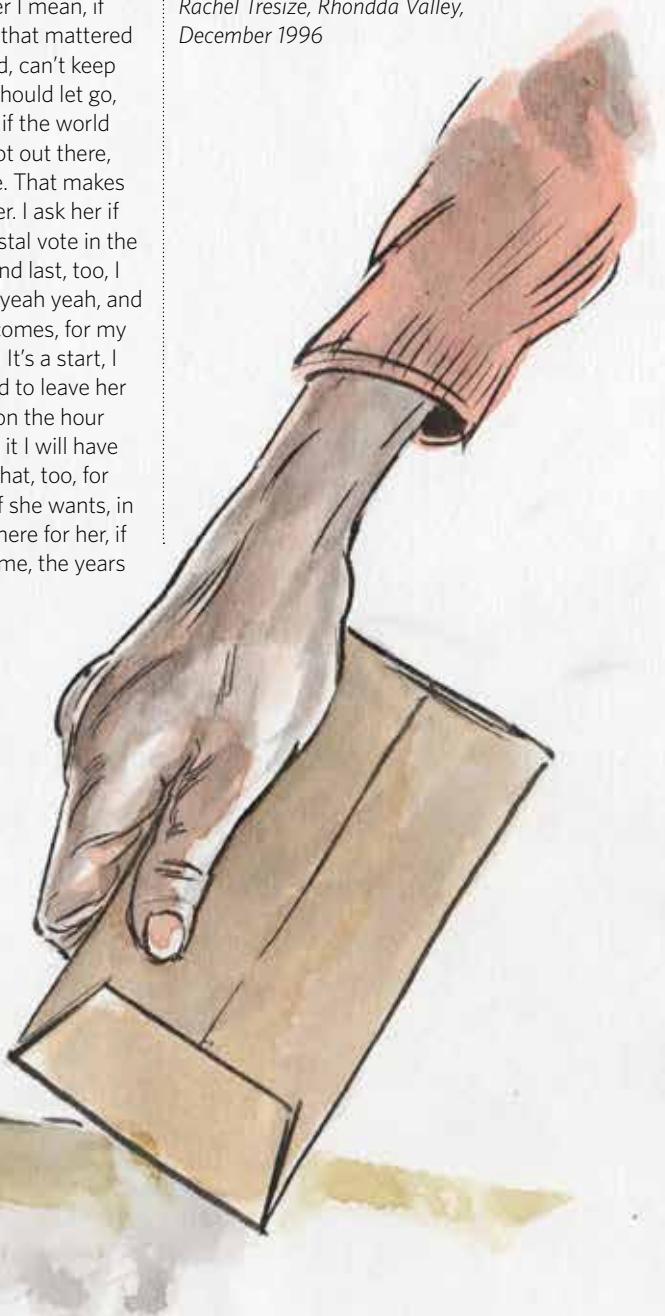


dared, that's it, we dared to be giddy. I think she'll understand that. And it's the same, you know, as later, when we could go on HP, and we rushed out to buy washing machines and vacuum cleaners, and had fitted carpets instead of that icy cold linoleum and that rough and dusty coconut matting. That was who we were and wanted to be, too, from new TV sets and the wireless before, and going to the Pictures, all of it a proper mark of us, and nothing to regret or be ashamed of as if we were selling out after all we had coped with. No, I think, in a way it was why we were there in the first place, isn't it, you know, moving there for work and wages, and a better life we hoped. Same the world over, then as now, and will be. Staying put when it wasn't, better I mean, that's different, and harder to explain, though lots left most didn't, and I think it was, in part anyway, because we had come to belong, one to the other, and to the place in a funny way. She says she hates it here. I tell her we are not cemented down, so stay or go, as you please, and what matters is what you keep with you or take with you which is of us, as we made ourselves into something more, together I mean, more perhaps than at times we realised. I tell her that I know this is true, and I mean it but I can't prove it, and it's for her to find out. Look, I say, let me put it another way, I'm not political or anything like that, but I say, I always vote, always have since women could vote equally with the men, only since 1929 I say, and that's because I know, from living and being here, what counts and what's what. And what's that then she says, all cocky with me. Knowing your enemy, who and what and why, I say and can see she is surprised at how serious I am being.

She grins at me, but a bit awkward. We don't usually talk like this, us two, but I go on, won't leave it there, tell her she will have to find out for herself, that things always change, but one sign of it is when things are closed down and people are fixed by it, not allowed to grow, not released to be different from what went before, as we once were in this place, and did. And you can do it again, I say. Fat chance, she laughs. No way, she says. Find a way, I tell her. This won't be now forever, I tell her. It never is I want to say, and that I can see most of all that was and really mattered has already gone, or is going, being tidied away, maybe soon forgotten. There is so much to tell, and I worry that she will not be ready for what is facing us, coming for her I mean, if we just disappear, as if nothing that mattered ever was. She says I try too hard, can't keep up with everything at my age, should let go, stop banging on about 1985 as if the world had ended, only here maybe, not out there, she says. Get a life, she tells me. That makes me laugh, and we smile together. I ask her if she remembered to pop my postal vote in the box, first time for me like that and last, too, I suppose. She says, to stop me, yeah yeah, and that she'll vote when the time comes, for my sake, she says, no other reason. It's a start, I told her. Anyway, I have decided to leave her the clock, the one that chimes on the hour every hour, but only if you wind it I will have to tell her. She'll need to know that, too, for the years to come. I'll say that if she wants, in her heart I mean, I can still be there for her, if she wants, over the years to come, the years without me, her time. ●

I was jealous of my Gran because she was dying and I wanted to. She, with a healthy appetite and a house full of possessions and a lifetime of riveting stories... And me, me with not even a thought in my head, was living. Just didn't seem right... She told me I had first pick of her wardrobe, and she told me I could have her sewing machine... (but) she gave me more... She gave me treasured stories and examples and standards to live by, reasons to fight my way to where I want to go... She equipped me with everything I would need to begin a new forceful life of my own making. The strongest woman I have ever known handed out to me her gift-wrapped strength... Imagination tells me someday soon something amazing will happen to me.

Rachel Tresize, Rhondda Valley,
December 1996



1997

Zig-Ah Zig-Ah

RACHEL TREZISE

'The sun makes people mental, that's what my mother says.'

Rhian Elizabeth Six Pounds Eight Ounces

He dropped me where he'd found me; off the Despenser Gardens at the corner of Beauchamp. The passenger door of the hatchback squealed as I threw it closed behind me. The men had already started work across the river, or they'd been there working all night, the site machinery grumbling softly. All the girls came here these days, even the Custom House beat; looking for business with the demolition workers. There was no-one here now though. It was Sunday, seven in the morning, late in August. The sky behind the cranes was a pure, perfect blue. I didn't want to go near the main road but the first quaver of the delirium tremens was developing in a cavity in my heart and at that time of day sugar was the only option. The Pakistani teenager at the counter of the newsagents on Ninian Park Road pretended not to notice the bruising on my neck. The aluminium cans were so cold it was painful to carry one from the fridge to

the till. I noticed something about the front pages of the newspapers; big writing, no pictures. They all shared the same words. 'Diana' and 'Dead.'

'Is true,' the boy said, nodding. 'She's dead.' Without thinking I opened the can of cola and drank, the bubbles spasmodic against my lips. 'You see she sleep with Fayed,' the boy said. 'So murder!' He pretended not to look at my neck again. 'The mother of the king of England with an Egyptian Muslim? Cannot be.'

'Bollocks,' came a voice. There was someone behind the rotating confectionery display, a Yorkshire terrier on a lead. 'Paparazzi's what's killed her. Persecuted her to the death.'

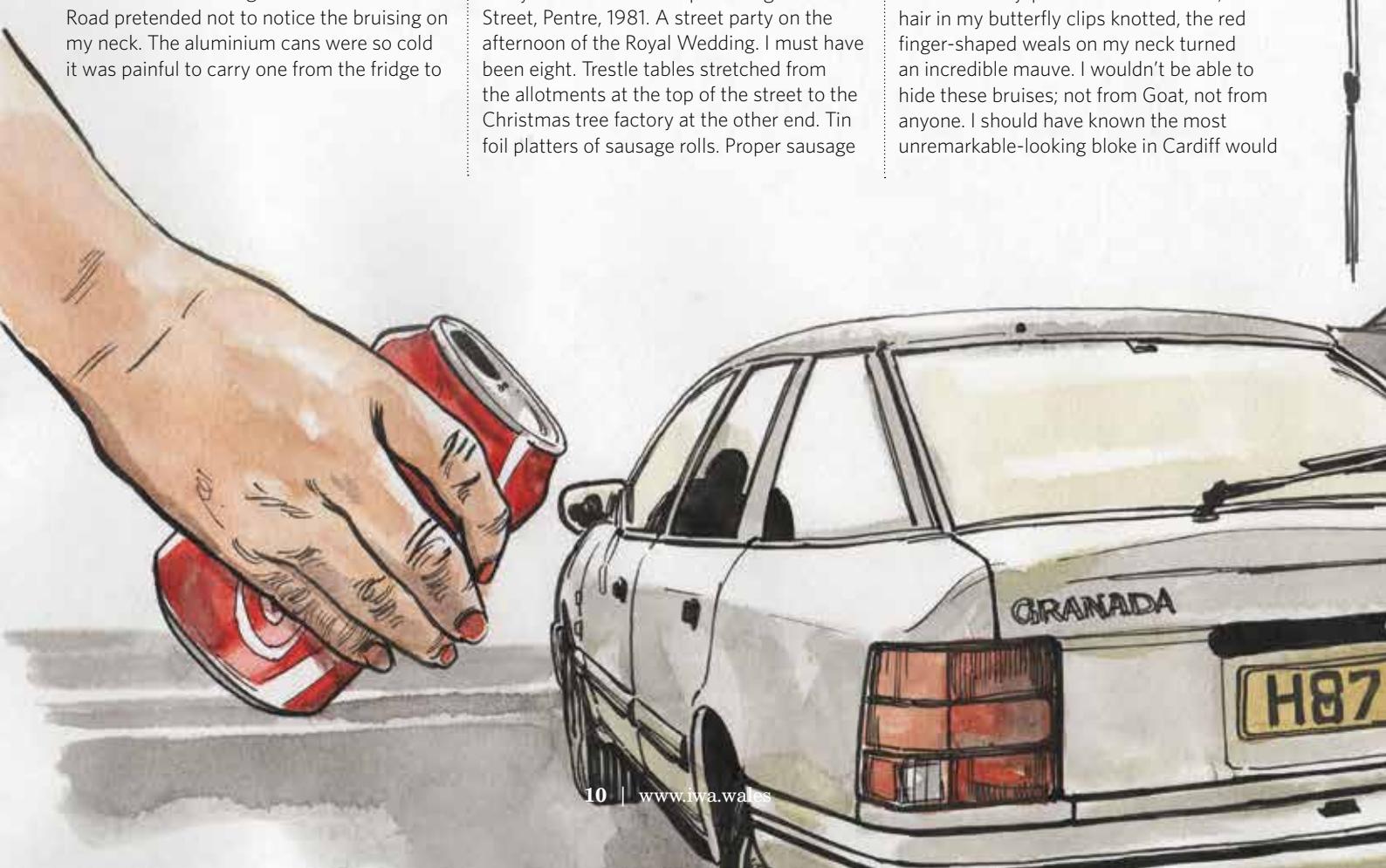
'Christ on a bike,' I said, more shocked at the stranger's interjection than the news itself. 'Paparazzi on bikes,' the voice said. 'No word of a lie.'

It seemed hotter on the street when I stepped out, as if the sun was breathing in my face. I couldn't help thinking: John Street, Pentre, 1981. A street party on the afternoon of the Royal Wedding. I must have been eight. Trestle tables stretched from the allotments at the top of the street to the Christmas tree factory at the other end. Tin foil platters of sausage rolls. Proper sausage

rolls; the meat inside soft and pink and salty.

I was wearing a red dress, a hand-me-down from my ten-year-old cousin. My cousin was there too that afternoon. We were playing musical chairs to a Shakin' Stevens cassette playing on the Griffiths' ghetto blaster. When my cousin got bored of playing she'd told Nicole Griffiths that she'd given me the dress I was wearing because I didn't have any clothes of my own. Nicole'd called me a tramp. I marched over to the Griffiths' path where my cousin was standing, fists clenched so tightly my fingernails bit into my palms. 'Go on then,' my cousin said when I got to her. 'What are you going to do?' I'd turned and stomped back to the buffet to the scraping sounds of their laughter, stupefied with humiliation. In my head I vowed never to accept a single second hand item ever again.

As I thought about it I realised that I hadn't and I almost smiled. Despite everything, I'd kept that promise to myself for sixteen years. I walked full tilt, tottering on wedged heels, the stale taste of cigarettes clinging in the crevasses between my teeth. I paused at a side street overlooking the city's railway sheds and quaffed the dregs of the warm coke. 'Diana's dead,' I said to myself, wondering what to make of it. Then I caught sight of my face in the wing mirror of the clumsily-parked car next to me; the hair in my butterfly clips knotted, the red finger-shaped weals on my neck turned an incredible mauve. I wouldn't be able to hide these bruises; not from Goat, not from anyone. I should have known the most unremarkable-looking bloke in Cardiff would



turn out to be a raging sado. It was obvious, wasn't it? Because he'd taken me to an actual flat with an actual bed *and* he'd been willing to pay full price and use a condom. I could still feel the pain behind my eyeballs where he'd choked me so hard he'd almost popped them out. A hot cramp like a streak of solder being laid around the edge of the socket. I couldn't go back to my room on Moira Terrace. Goat was going to batter me. And worse he'd take every penny of my hard-won sixty quid.

The sky was still brilliant blue, as if God hadn't realised yet that Princess Diana was dead. It seemed to be getting hotter every minute. I kept walking west, away from Adamsdown.

The small indoor swimming pool behind Fitzalan High School was open; parents arriving with little packs of kiddies. As I neared the building a fire exit opened suddenly revealing a four-year-old boy stood stark naked, a tiny pig's tail of a penis. In a second the child's mother appeared and nimbly pulled him back into the depths of the changing room. But nobody closed the door. I reckoned I could hide out there for a while, maybe even get a shower. Amid

the brouhaha of steam and reeling infants I slipped into a cubicle and pulled the curtain. Outside the mother's were talking. Ordinary conversations about everyday things but a revelation to me. 'Only the north stand's left now. Can't wait 'til it's down, I can't. Town's lookin' like a bomb site.'

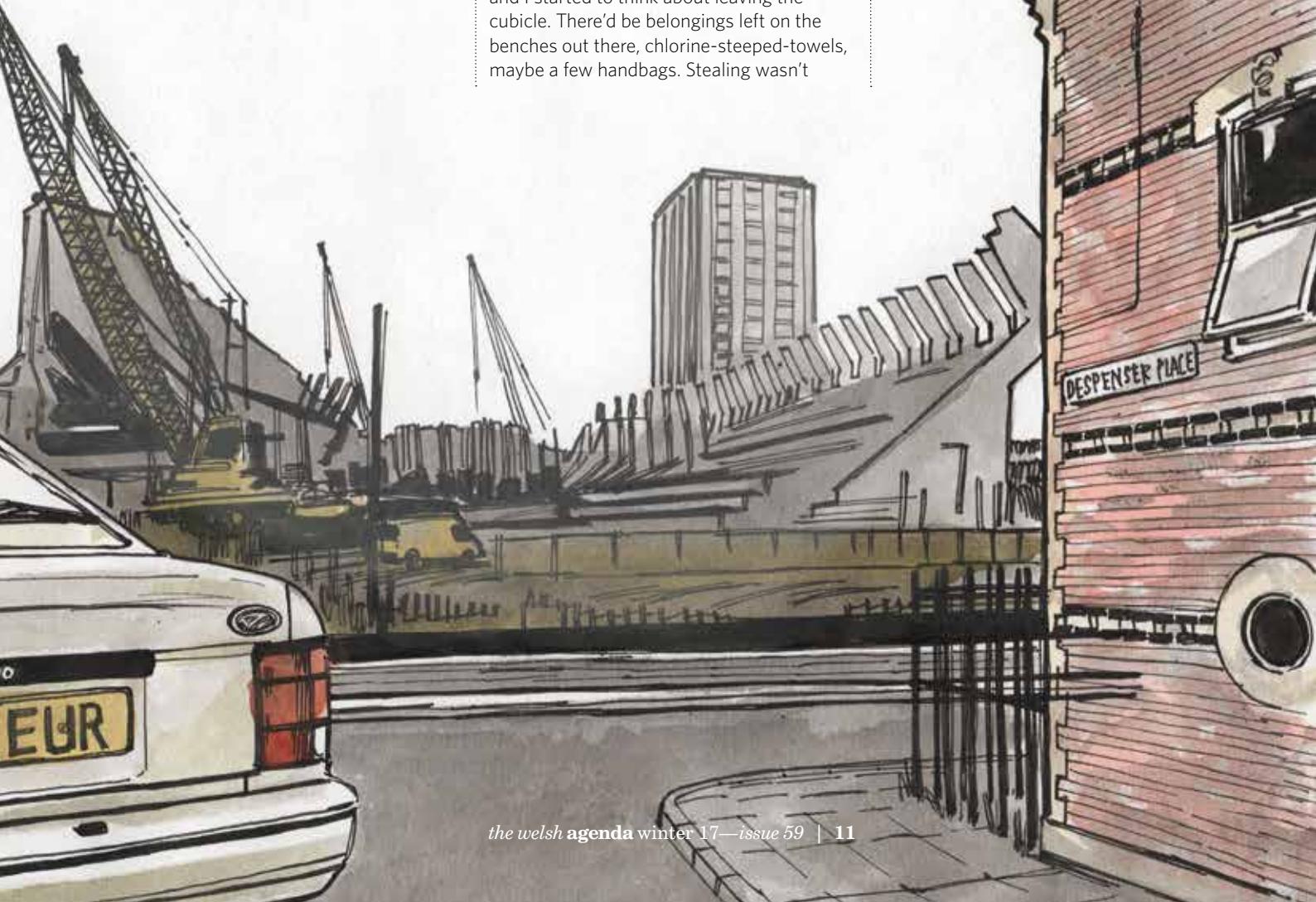
The boy who'd been naked was slapping at the tampon vending machine and wailing, 'I want sweets, Mummy. Put some money in. Get the sweets out!'

'But I wonders what the new stadium'll look like, Trace. Could be worse off in the long run. You turns around one day and iss all different. Wales is changing. Things is changing fast.'

The Spice Girls were on the radio and someone raised their voice to sing *Zig-Ah Zig-Ah*. 'See that boy on the desk out there? I goes to 'im, 'you're oright, innew?'

I didn't know many women because I thought myself cheap and undeserving of friends. I thought briefly about my cousin and then stopped and lobbed her image back into the seldom-visited memory-bank with everything else from Pentre and John Street. 'Aber-fucking-nowhere' is what Goat liked to call it. After a while the voices disappeared and I started to think about leaving the cubicle. There'd be belongings left on the benches out there, chlorine-steeped-towels, maybe a few handbags. Stealing wasn't

accepting, stealing was alright. I whipped the curtain aside to see a cleaner, stood within touching distance, a hose in her hand. 'Oh my God!' she said. She was blocking the fire exit so I ran the other way, into the swimming pool area. It must have been around half past eight now; another three hours until the off licences opened. I was hotter than I'd ever been before, eyelids perspiring. The splashing in the pool waned as the kids began to notice me. The cleaner appeared again in the doorway behind me. There was nowhere to go but the water. ●



The Difference between a Terrorist and a Hero

RHIAN ELIZABETH

Johnny was wearing the red t-shirt he'd had printed off eBay. On the front it said *For The Many, Not The Few*. And on the backseats of that Megabus, he had something to say, as he always did.

'It can't go on like this. Something has to be done.'

Johnny never did well at school but he wasn't stupid. He knew a lot of things. He could roll a spliff standing on his head with his eyes closed but he could also tell you the name of a political party and what their policies were and how many votes they got in the last election. Johnny knew how the world worked. Johnny knew it all.

Dicky's real name is Geraint but he got the nickname Thicky Dicky from Johnny in Primary School. Because he didn't pick up his times tables as quick as other kids, or perhaps because he would do whatever you told him to do, however stupid of an idea it was. Dicky came along for the ride because he had nothing else to do.

I'm Sal, and I'm one of the lads. If you saw the photograph they took of me on my first day of Comp, you'd never believe you were looking at the same girl. My once blonde locks have been shaved to a skinhead and that innocent, curious smile has turned to an almost constant scowl. Back in school I used to want to be a forensic scientist but I hate everyone and everything now, apart from Johnny.

He opened a can of cider, taking in the view of the water beneath the Severn Bridge as the bus crossed over it. He was still talking, about taxes and bankers, about Saudi Arabia and benefits and his own unfair sanction from the Job Centre, when I tried to

shut him up. 'Stop talking so loud, will you?'

I was worried about the two guys in suits down the front of the bus, and hidden cameras and microphones and other things the government use to track you everywhere you go, so from then on we spoke in whispers.

'Lives ruined and lives lost,' Johnny hissed, 'all because the rich people living opposite that tower didn't want their nice view spoiled. So the council covered the building in all those cheap panels that went up in flames. You can't polish a turd but they tried – and look what happened. And they're covering it all up now, like they cover everything up.'

Even in whispers, Johnny's voice was intimidating. He was on about Grenfell Tower. He hadn't stopped getting angry about it since it happened and he had convinced me that I should be angry about it, too. He could convince me of pretty much anything because I love him. I've loved him since Primary School. Dicky didn't have a clue what either of us were talking about. He drifted in and out of sleep as Johnny went on and on.

'You should care more than most, Sal. It could've been you.'

I live on the top floor of a council block. Not that the council give a shit about me. I've had to take care of my mental bitch of a mother since I was eight years old. Try

going to school, or getting a job, when your mother is constantly calling you, telling you that she's going to kill herself, or that the crack dealer downstairs is trying to kill her, or that she's going to kill you if you aren't at her mercy twenty-four seven. I should've been taken into care years ago, but they left me there to rot, in that shithole riddled with damp and broken lifts and crack dealers. Johnny said that's the way it was. No one cared about us. No one cared about me. Not the government or my counsellor or my mother. No one. Only Johnny. And it was, he reckoned, only a matter of time before my own block of flats goes up in flames if something isn't done.

I got up and went to the toilet to calm down. I have a habit of punching things, and Johnny was telling me not to kick off on the bus and risk getting us all chucked off, even though it was Johnny himself who was talking about my mother. The toilet was disgusting. Piss swamping around my trainers and shit stains in the bowl, but I didn't care. I took my piece of glass out of my jeans pocket and dug it into my arm. Slowly skin gave way to sharp silver and blood dripped out, fast and thick like the piss.

'You shouldn't do that, Sal,' Johnny said when I got back. 'It's not cool.'

I'm covered in scars. Most of them I've done myself, but not all. Johnny's covered, too. He's like a walking tree, his body a trunk, his scars living proof of all his enemies. Like lumberjacks over the years they'd taken swipes at him with their axes, or fists or crowbars. People got fed up of him talking. See him anywhere, down the pub or walking down the street, and he'd stop and talk to

you. Like one of those Christian nutters who stop you to tell you all about God and Jesus, only he'd stop you to tell you how the Tories had destroyed the Valleys way back when and that they didn't give a toss about the poor or the disabled and that if all of this went on any longer, then we'd all be even more fucked than we already were.

We hadn't decided who was going to do it. Johnny was the obvious candidate. He was tough and had already had a spell in a young offenders' place as a kid and he fought all the time. Johnny fought for revenge but he also fought for fun. I'm tough, too. I cut myself all the time so if I could hurt myself then surely I'd have no problem hurting someone else. Dicky would do it as well, just because you told him to.

The decision was left to the straws. Johnny had clipped them to three different

sizes. The straws were stripy and pink. He had taken them from the condiment stand in McDonalds on the way out after another unsuccessful job interview, seconds after he punched the cardboard Ronald McDonald in the face. He closed his eyes and the others did the same, and as if he was shuffling a deck of cards he shifted and swapped and rolled the straws about in his hands. He held them out and each of them picked one.

'They will say we are terrorists,' I said.

'No they won't,' Johnny answered.

'They'll say we're heroes.'

I pondered that for a bit while I downed the dregs of my cider.

'So what's the difference between a terrorist and a hero?'

Johnny explained: 'Terrorists kill innocent people. Heroes kill the bad guys.' ●

Ken Skates: people, place and politics

Rhea Stevens meets Ken Skates, Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Infrastructure and finds a man rooted in formative experiences in his native north east Wales

'My best friends are still the best friends I had when I was 3, 4, 5 years old,' says Ken Skates when we meet on the 5th floor of Ty Hywel. 'I grew up against the backdrop of high unemployment, recession and also a political drive, centrally to promote individual material wealth and individual gain over community and societal improvement, and so that certainly shaped not so much my political thinking at that early age, but my values.'

Values and loyalty, including political loyalty, are strong themes during our discussion. Skates isn't from a political family, but there's a sense he's been politically shaped by his experiences from a young age. He grew up with the Shotton Steelworks closure, 'the single biggest loss of jobs in a single day in modern European history.'

He explains: 'People were just trying to get by. People didn't lose ambition, or aspiration, or hope, but people were struggling for opportunity. I think that's

No matter where I go, I am always pulled back to [North east Wales]

what drove me, that's what ignited my fire and my passion to do something that would enable all people, no matter where they're from, what background, to get the best out of life, to have the opportunity to succeed'.

Success has a wider definition than income for Skates, who grew up in a small village just outside of Mold. Wellbeing and community cohesion seem equally as important as income for the man now charged with delivering economic prosperity for Wales. 'During the period of Reaganism and Thatcherism, where we were being encouraged to judge our success by how new the car was that sits on the drive, or how big your house was, or what label was on your jacket, there was a loss of community spirit. People cared for one another a little less and cared for material items more'.

I'm quietly amused to see the ever-present hi-vis jacket and hard hat Skates is so often photographed wearing, hanging

proudly alongside a signed Wrexham FC shirt in his office, ready to go at a moment's notice. It's clear this is a man who puts great value on getting out of Cathays Park. When talking about the future of the North East Wales economy, Skates points to discussions he's held with Metro Mayors, local enterprise partnerships, council leaders, Northern Power House representatives, and many others as evidence of his belief that 'there are huge opportunities to grow the economy and to enhance people's lives by working in a collaborative way across the England/Wales border.'

We meet in early September, ahead of the Assembly returning from recess and before *Prosperity for All* is published. This was widely expected to be the Welsh Government's economic strategy for Wales, but in reality was a cross-cutting strategic vision for the entire Welsh Government programme. Dashed expectations led to

criticism across the Assembly chamber, and muted disappointment across the policy community still waiting for the detail on delivery.

When I asked Skates what he hoped his economic strategy would deliver for north Wales, he set out a vision of the region as a 'centre of excellence' in advanced manufacturing and energy, as well as taking full advantage of the region's growing visitor economy. 'In 20 years time, I'd like to be able to look back and identify the investments that enabled us to transition to the economy of tomorrow and to the investments that improved our transport connectivity, not just within north Wales but to the rest of the UK.'

Skates is putting great value on the opportunities to strengthen the north east Wales economy by building on gains across the border in neighbouring English regions: 'culturally, socially, economically, there's a huge amount to be gained from stronger cross-border collaboration'. Whilst acknowledging the 'political tensions in cross-border collaboration in the age of devolution,' he points to Scandinavia, the Pyrenees, parts of Germany and Estonia as strong European examples of cross-border collaboration at a regional level. There's a clear vision that is driving Skates' thinking, and he paints a positive picture, however at present the ideas exist as generalities of what good might look like; the specific objectives, policy actions and measurable targets to judge progress, thought to be delivered in an economic action plan, are yet to come at the time of writing.

Communication is essential, and I think looking back and reflecting on the ring, I think that should have been conducted more thoroughly



Skates, already a Labour party member by 1997, actively campaigned for devolution and described being 'ecstatic when the final result was announced'. Rather than hang out at the local campaign HQ, he went back to his parents' house, with those same friends he's had since his earliest years, to watch the count late into the night.

Reflecting on the region's relationship with devolution over the past twenty years. Skates now characterises the relationship as 'far less tense'. 'To begin with, whether real or perceived, there was a belief that devolution could lead to tensions in the East-West/North-South relationship. But I think over time those tensions have eased, and people recognise that devolution actually gives north east Wales an opportunity to capitalise from decisions that can be made in Wales that can be different to those that are being made in Westminster.'

Speaking of decisions, when I ask about the recent controversy surrounding the iron ring sculpture proposed for Flint Castle, Skates is reflective. 'Sometimes it can be difficult to make the right decisions. Nonetheless you have to have confidence in reaching those decisions, and confidence comes from being well informed'. Following the decision not to pursue the sculpture, Skates has commenced a local engagement project, and is keen to stress that 'the town council, the county councillors, stakeholders locally... are all leading on the project... I've been very clear, that whatever emerges is for Flint from Flint'.

The controversy over the iron ring causes Skates to muse on the complexity of Welsh history, identity, and reading public opinion on deeply cultural issues. Alongside Shakespearean text carved into the ring, 'it also would have captured the views and opinions of people in Flint about what it is to be Welsh, about how they see their history, the history of their town'. He saw the ring as a memorial to lives lost and people displaced, but also a testament to endurance and symbol that the 'future of the castle is in our hands'. He acknowledges

I serve one purpose, and that's to make sure that this Government, led by Carwyn Jones, is a success

this context wasn't communicated clearly: 'communication is essential, and I think looking back and reflecting on the ring, I think that should have been conducted more thoroughly'.

It's clear the controversy has been a significant challenge, but he's determined to get it right. He doesn't perceive any tension in his extremely wide brief, insisting 'There are no tensions between examining and exploring history, and using history for economic benefit. I think provided you tell the story and capture culture in the right context, you can capitalise on it for economic growth and economic benefits'.

Towards the end of our discussion I reflect that Skates' name consistently comes up when people discuss potential successors to Carwyn Jones. On this matter he gives a perfectly politically polished answer, that expresses only loyalty to the man he sees as 'head and shoulders above anyone else in that chamber': 'I serve one purpose, and that's to make sure that this Government, led by Carwyn Jones, is a success'.

Trying another tack, I ask if there's any other area of Government policy he is particularly passionate about and at which he would fancy trying his hand. 'Health, and in particular mental health,' is the immediate, direct response. Skates' honesty about his experience of Generalised Anxiety Disorder at university, and the successful treatment he received, has rightly been celebrated by mental health

campaigners as a positive step to challenge stigma, and it's clear this experience has left behind a passion for improving mental health provision, and a focus on wellbeing more broadly. Years on, and after successful treatment, Skates still feels the same pull to north Wales, to the place, and the people he calls his 'anchor point': 'No matter where I go, I am always pulled back to that part of the world'.

It's a combination of place, people and wellbeing which Skates presents as the underpinning principles of his approach to the economy. He sees this as requiring a 'new economic contract between the government and business, between local government and national government, between the individual and government'. Reflecting on his relationship with his close friends at home, he says 'None of us have had opportunities put in front of us on a plate, we've all had to work hard. At times we've really had to support one another... and that's what's society's about. It's about making sure that everybody can be the best person they can be by hard work themselves, but also by getting the right support from friends, family, and government'.



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Are we building a successful future?

Dr Philip Dixon provides a detailed assessment of progress on schools' curriculum reform, and urges debate to ensure *Successful Futures* is given chance to fulfil its ambition

On 12th March 2014 Huw Lewis, the then Education Minister, inaugurated the biggest shakeup of education since the advent of devolution, and arguably the biggest change in education policy since the war, by announcing a full scale reform of the curriculum and assessment regime in Welsh schools. The veteran Scottish educationalist, Graham Donaldson, was commissioned to undertake a review of the current arrangements and produce a report on the best way forward. *Successful Futures*, published in February 2015, outlined a fundamental change in approach.

Donaldson summed up the curriculum as 'all of the learning experiences and assessment activities planned in pursuit of agreed purposes of education'. He stated that the 'purposes of the curriculum in Wales should be that children and young people develop as 'ambitious, capable learners, ready to learn throughout their lives; enterprising, creative contributors, ready to play a full part in life and work; ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world; healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as

It seems somewhat odd that the building of a new curriculum fit to prepare youngsters for this new world... has been entrusted almost completely to those who are largely people of one career



valued members of society'.

In a radical departure from the 1988 National Curriculum, and indeed from most curricula since the nineteenth century, but following some international trends, Donaldson proposed scrapping traditional subjects in favour of a curriculum structured around 'six Areas of Learning and Experience: Expressive arts; Health and wellbeing; Humanities; Languages, literacy and communication; Mathematics and numeracy; Science and technology'.

To further break down the silos that a subject-based structure had allegedly brought Donaldson also proposed 'three Cross-curriculum Responsibilities that should be the responsibility of all teachers: literacy; numeracy; and digital competence'.

Progress so far

The sheer scope of the reform now under way makes one blink. Up for grabs are obviously curriculum and assessment, but also Initial Teacher Education and Continual Professional Development for staff who will have to deliver the new regime. Changes to curriculum and assessment obviously have huge implications for the future shape of qualifications which could render the current GCSEs otiose. And in July the Cabinet Secretary for Education, Kirsty Williams, announced a rapid review of Estyn, the school inspectorate. It's almost as if a sign has appeared in the window of our entire school system - 'Closing down sale, everything must go'.

A network of 'Pioneer Schools' has been tasked with the development of the new curriculum and culture. These will 'play a key role as pathfinders for the new curriculum, supporting, leading and embedding realisation of the new curriculum framework both locally and nationally'. A two day conference in Llandudno earlier this year brought many

of the main players together to discuss progress and next steps. A rather shaky performance from Qualifications Wales at least gave reassurance that they are now thinking about the implications of the reforms for public examinations. Six reports of very variable quality were published by the groups developing the six Areas of Learning and Experience. Probably the most encouraging sign of all has been the praise heaped upon the new Digital Competence Framework from within Wales and outside.

Key concerns

But there remain some major concerns.

The first inevitably concerns implementation. Not even its most ardent supporters could claim that the Welsh Government's Department for Education and Skills has a reassuring track record in this area. Several independent reports have noted this as the Achilles' heel of many well-intentioned reforms, and the history of education since devolution is littered with examples of botched implementation.

In a damning investigation into major failures around the Scottish Curriculum for Excellence (which has a very similar pedigree, philosophy, and structure to *Successful Futures*) the Education and Skills Committee of the Scottish Parliament identified implementation as the weakest link in the whole endeavour. Given the fact that the

Curriculum for Excellence was first mooted in 2002, and began its roll out over 6 years ago in 2010 -11, this is a further warning that curriculum reform cannot be rushed. The original timescale envisioned by Huw Lewis, which would have seen first teaching in 2018, was wishful thinking at best.

A second concern is deeper and concerns the model of reform itself. There is a superficial attractiveness in putting the teaching profession in charge of the development of the curriculum. They, after all, are the ones with professional expertise in teaching and learning, and they are the ones who will have to deliver the new curriculum in the future. In his blog of July 4th this year, Donaldson claimed that Wales was almost unique in rejecting a top down approach to curriculum reform in favour of working from the classroom up. Whether or not that claim is justified is contestable; after all, the Curriculum for Excellence emphasised teacher autonomy, but even if true this is not a guarantee of success.

If the curriculum is 'all of the learning experiences and assessment activities planned in pursuit of agreed purposes of education' then it needs to be constructed by a broader range of interests and not restricted to school staff. However much some of the unions might wish the contrary we simply no longer live in a world where it is accepted that 'Teacher knows best'. Teachers know an awful lot, especially about how and why children learn. Their engagement is absolutely essential. Their relative absence from the 1988 National Curriculum sowed the seeds for its demise. They are a necessary but not sufficient cause for success. We need input from industry, the big public services such as health, social care, and local government, and the arts, tourism and sport as to what they need their future workforce to know and do.

It has become something of truism that there are no longer any jobs for life and that a youngster entering the labour market will have a number of careers in front of them. It seems somewhat odd then that the building of a new curriculum fit to prepare youngsters for this new world has been entrusted almost completely to those who are largely people of one career.



The third concern is deeper still and perhaps flows in some way from the second: why has there been so little debate about any of this? Given the scope of the reforms and the fact that they go to the very core of what we believe education to be it is puzzling that there has not been a lot more discussion. There are big questions here about what it is to be educated, what are the expectations and limitations of

There will obviously be differences of opinion... but the important thing is that debate is taking place about the content and scope of the curriculum. And it's taking place in the public domain

schooling, what we think youngsters should know at 16, and what we think they should be able to do. I suspect there is no easy consensus on these issues and so more argument should be expected.

Encouraging signs

However, there are some encouraging signs that these concerns are now being acknowledged and addressed.

Firstly, Kirsty Williams has been dropping very heavy hints that the timetable for implementation announced by her predecessor, Huw Lewis, is far from set in stone. 'This is such an important piece of work we don't want to risk it for the sake of sticking to a timetable.' Formidable when in opposition Williams realises that her lasting legacy as a Minister depends on getting these reforms right. There are no prizes for speed. It's also interesting to note that some of the human obstacles within the department to effective implementation have gone or are going. If the timetable is slowed down the resulting breathing space is not a hiatus but rather a golden opportunity to firm up some of the high level ideas developed in the Areas of Learning and Experience into more recognisable content.

Secondly, although the reports from

the groups developing the new Areas of Learning and Experience are of very varying quality there are some signs that there is now a realisation that more outside help is needed to create a broad and balanced curriculum. The Expressive Arts group realised the need to include the Arts Council Wales, FE and HE in its future deliberations while the Health and Well-Being group specifically mentioned Public Health Wales as one of its preferred dancing partners. The success of the Digital Competency Framework was partly because engagement of those outside the profession took place from the word go. It is not too late for this sort of engagement to occur elsewhere. The CBI and FSB have both done some innovative work about curriculum in recent years as have a number of other groups.

Finally, the main ray of hope is that debate is finally beginning about the content of the new curriculum. Earlier in the summer Rajvi Glasbrook attracted a fair amount of media attention with her plea that all youngsters should study English Literature until they were 16. As well as pointing out the implied elitism in restricting the study of English Literature to the chosen few in a school, Glasbrook also argued passionately that 'discussing these books in a classroom with a teacher and peers opens new ways of thinking, and brings awareness of the inventiveness of language'. A few weeks later two feisty school girls from Ysgol Glan Hafren petitioned the Assembly to end the requirement for compulsory collective worship. There will obviously be differences of opinion about both these issues but the important thing is that debate is taking place about the content and scope of the curriculum. And it's taking place in the public domain.

We should welcome concrete debates about what should youngsters should know and what they should be able to do. I suspect that there has been little controversy so far because the discussion has been too abstract. The great English writer, G.K. Chesterton, cautioned against this tendency over a hundred years ago:

Most of the machinery of modern language is labour-saving machinery; and it saves mental labour very much more than it ought... It is a good exercise to try for once in a way to express any opinions one may hold in words of one syllable. If you say "The social utility of the indeterminate sentence is recognised by all criminologists as a part of our sociological evolution towards a more humane and scientific view of punishment," you can go on talking like that for hours with hardly a movement in the grey matter inside your skull. But if you begin "I wish Jones to go to gaol and Brown to stay when Jones shall come out", you will discover, with a thrill of horror, that you are obliged to think. The long words are not the hard words, it is the short words that are the hard words.

This is very true of the jargon of education. We can sleepily agree with *Successful Futures* that 'Exposure to literature extends children and young people's understanding of the power of language. It can stimulate imagination, challenge thinking and introduce new ideas'. But if you argue, as Glasbrook has done, that all children should study English Literature to GCSE (see also Mike Jenkins' *Last Word*, p68) I suspect that we will wake up and argue. Similarly we can all nod in agreement with *Successful Futures* that 'RE can and should provide valuable experiences for children and young people that contribute to each of the purposes of education.' But does this mean that religious assemblies should remain the norm? Once we wake up I suspect this will be a hotly contested area.

None of this is to undermine the general thrust of *Successful Futures*. It usefully brought together current thought and practice about the curriculum in Wales and beyond. It provided a high level contribution to an ongoing debate about what, how, and why our children should learn. As we move into implementation however the detail will need far more expansion. We need to see in Wales some of the debates that have been had elsewhere. One thinks of the impassioned arguments in England, and the deep debates about the role of knowledge sparked by the works of educationalists such as E.D. Hirsch.

These debates are not arcane. They go to the heart of what it is to be educated,

There are signs of realism and progress but as far as I can see we have still one fundamental question to address: how will we know if *Successful Futures* has actually been a success?



and to how we can ensure that our children gain the widest possible access to a common culture which stretches across time as well as across geography. They also disrupt facile Left-Right dichotomies. Leighton Andrews, in his book about his time in office, approvingly notes that Hirsch claims that the great doyen of the European Left, Gramsci, believed that 'political progressivism required educational conservatism'. They raise the most profound questions of all, such as 'What is education for?' and 'Is it for anything other than itself?' These debates cannot be confined to schools as they touch on our very understanding of what society should be.

Measurement of Success?

So there are signs of realism and progress but as far as I can see we have still one fundamental question to address: how will we know if *Successful Futures* has actually been a success? How will we judge it? What measures will we use? At a recent conference about *Successful Futures* in reply to just this question one of the panel urged us to move away from the 'bean counting' of PISA and GCSE results. There is a lot in that. We should not see our schools as exam factories. 'Bean counting', as Alban Berg's opera *Wozzeck* vividly shows, can drive you mad. We need qualitative as well as quantitative judgments. But judgments we need. Some bean counting has its place. PISA woke us out of the self-deceiving torpor of *The Learning Country* and made us realise with the same sort of

shock that the Scots are now experiencing that Wales was not world leading. We need accurate, comprehensive, and helpful comparisons. Perhaps we need other international benchmarks such as PERLS and TIMMS to balance the insight of PISA. We need to give much more prominence to the OECD's judgement about the wellbeing of our children which showed that Wales was ahead of England in that regard. As well as GCSE and A level results we should look at the destinations of students. There are probably several other elements we will want to add to the mix. But we will need to make judgements and these will need to be based on hard evidence not wishful thinking. We will be world leading not when we believe we are but when we can show we are.

Challenge

These are exciting times to be engaged in education in Wales. We are embarking on a great journey which will decide not just our children's futures but also our own. Until we have more detail we do not yet know whether we will have engaged in an Aeneid taking us to a new world, or an Odyssey bringing us back to where we started. Even if it is the latter that eventually characterises what we are doing then as long as we remain intellectually curious and foster that curiosity in our children we will have made great progress. As T. S. Eliot puts it so vividly:

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.

Exploration requires skills but these are not an end in themselves. Even the knowledge that accrues is not our ultimate aim. The wisdom that comes from them both is the real gift that we would wish for our children.



Dr Philip Dixon has written extensively about Welsh education and published his acclaimed book *Testing Times: Success, Failure and Fiasco in Education Policy in Wales Since Devolution* last year. He was born in the Rhondda and educated at Treorchy Comprehensive School. He then read Politics, Philosophy and Economics at Oxford and later gained his PhD from Cambridge. Philip was Director of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers for over ten years, and is currently working on a number of projects in education and the arts



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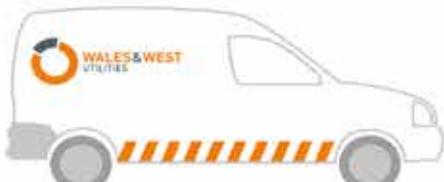
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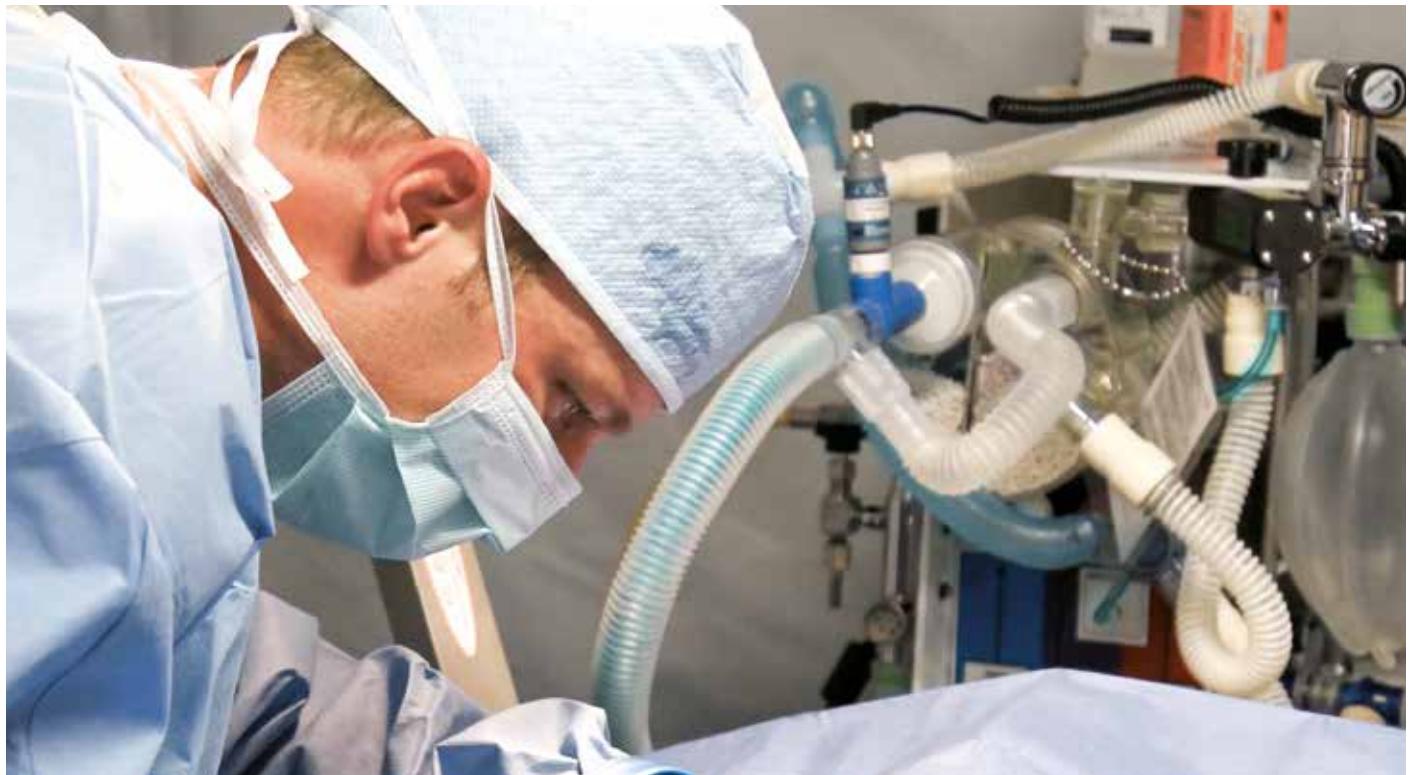
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How can change happen?

Gill Morgan argues that barriers to change in public services are bound up in the failure of policy makers to involve the front line staff charged with delivery

Fifteen years ago I was invited by the Cabinet Secretary, to discuss 'why won't the front line do as it is told' with a group of senior civil servants, reflecting the irritation of policy makers with service deliverers. I was asked to cover health, education and the police. This was easier than anticipated as the problems of getting policy delivered transcended organisational differences. Government legitimately sets direction where large sums of public money are involved but policy implementation often fails to deliver the desired political

outcomes. It leads to frustration, with politicians blaming the civil service for their failure to deliver and the front line for being resistant to change; civil servants criticising politicians for poorly thought out ideas; managers believing neither has any idea about the reality of change in large, public-facing delivery organisation; and front-line staff being convinced it is all about money.

Delivering desired and sustained change in any large organisation is complex, time-consuming and difficult. Public organisations do not have a clear bottom line. They deliver a mix of services with ambiguous and often conflicting objectives and are staffed by experts who have been trained and socialised to behave in certain ways. Staff have multiple loyalties: to the public they serve, their profession, the organisation they work for and the community. Loyalty to Government is very low down the hierarchy. Policy makers deliver nothing. At their best they create policy which is transformational. At their worse they tinker with subcomponents of complex adaptive systems without fully appreciating the complexity and interrelationships. This results in policy that delivers very little or can even cause harm.

An example is the Health and Social Care Act in England (aka the Lansley

Teachers, nurses, doctors [and] police officers are disengaged from political and managerial processes and just get on with their day job

reforms). The policy objectives of getting decisions made closer to patients, reducing costs and freeing up the service to be more innovative and flexible to meet the needs of an ageing population were laudable. Delivery required different approaches to the delivery of clinical care that could only happen with the commitment of clinicians. However, the only lever seen to deliver rapid change was organisational restructuring which took time and energy from the people needed to deliver the necessary changes to patient care. It became so complex that no one could fully predict the exact impact of any single component and led to the people working in the NHS being unclear about the purpose. Conspiracy theories of 'wholesale privatisation' abounded. The general

opposition was dealt with by asking a group of stakeholders to suggest improvements in a piecemeal way. Individual components were changed or deleted without any understanding of how these would impact on the whole. The spectre of large numbers of redundancies and their associated costs led to further fudges. The outcome has been the antithesis of the political desire; fragmentation, loss of grip, local inertia and more central monitoring and regulation.

Reorganisation is a beloved policy tool as it looks activist and gives the appearance of grip. The NHS has been subject to a minimum of twenty reorganisations since 1974. The evidence that this improves the things citizens and staff want is sadly lacking. Public services are complex and are delivered on a day by day basis by professional staff, the majority of whom (whether teachers, nurses, doctors or police officers) are disengaged from political and managerial processes and just get on with their day job.

Change can be delivered but it needs a clear and understood purpose that is shared and resonates with the people who are required to behave in different ways. This can be difficult as policy makers are often unclear about exactly what difference they want to make and may have simultaneous, conflicting desires. Every civil servant has a story of a political discussion where two opposing objectives are desired. Framing clear and unambiguous outcomes in an increasingly complex world is hard. It takes time, discussion and debate. And, for the most complex issues it takes time beyond the normal electoral cycle of four or five years and may require a plural, cross-party approach and negotiation. This means that really wicked problems that only Government can sort, such as social care reform, do not get tackled.

Simultaneously policy makers have become more interested in the means and mechanisms of delivery which, superficially, appear easier and quicker to prescribe and monitor. Thus policy focuses on the type of school, its governance and structure rather than what is desired – great teachers who drive and stimulate better educational standards in pupils leading to higher standards in school leavers. The purpose for

change is expressed as criticism rather than the need to deal with new challenges and appears hostile or ill-informed to the front line. Effective change engages the front line in identifying how to deliver what is needed but practitioners are involved late if at all. The actions prescribed are never owned by the people who need to deliver, and thus fail.

Effective change engages the front line in identifying how to deliver what is needed but practitioners are involved late if at all

Few politicians have ever worked in large complex organisations. There is an assumption that failure to change is due to weak management, intransigence or political opposition. The increasing managerialism often comes with a lack of respect for experts and a failure to recognise that some apparently simple things are complex in reality. For example, it is sensible to require every orthopaedic surgeon to use the hip prosthesis proven to be safest and cheapest in scientific studies. It is clearly nonsense for over ten types of prosthesis with a threefold variation in cost to be routinely used. But moving to implementation is not simple. Surgeons need experience and training in using the prosthesis as it can feel different in practice. Operations are likely to take longer initially and there will be more complications. Theatre staff may need retraining and new instruments may be needed. All without reducing productivity and affecting waiting

lists. It can be done but just exhorting the system to do it without understanding the challenge will not deliver at pace as small changes must be made and sustained by many people.

Poorly designed incentives can act as a block to change. Incentives result in individuals behaving in the way that is most favourable to them and their organisation, not in the desired way. This is seen in every public and private organisation. It leads to the current wave of academic fraud as individuals and institutions are rewarded for publication; to teachers sharing exam papers as exam success is used to judge performance. In the NHS it leads to patients being kept in ambulances when A&E is busy so that the hospital's target of 4 hours is not breached, despite the negative impact on the ambulance service's own targets and on patients. Properly designed incentives would reduce gaming of the system but are usually developed centrally without involvement from the frontline staff who understand the perverse impact of a poorly designed measure.

Finally, change requires time. For every month spent in developing a policy three or more months are needed for delivery. Yet all too often the time available is exactly the converse. Organisations are given an unrealistic timescale which leads to poor decisions and corners being cut. There is rarely proper piloting, adequate time, or double-running to ensure success before previously used mechanisms are discarded. Mrs Thatcher famously remarked that the war was won in less time than it took to change the NHS. A clear example of how rapidly people can respond to a clear, unambiguous and supported policy. Perhaps policy makers should use the observation to question the policy rather than blame the deliverers!



Gill Morgan is semi-retired, after a career in the health service as a clinician and manager and as a civil servant



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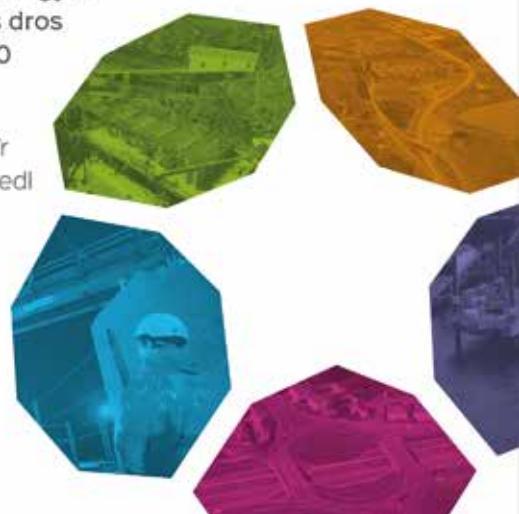
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North east Wales: Unfamiliar Complexities

Grahame Davies is proud to claim an overlooked, misunderstood identity

One of the most satisfying aspects about giving a poetry reading is getting feedback from the audience immediately afterwards. After all, anyone who believes their words are worth publishing and delivering on a public stage must have at least a degree of egotism, and I would be lying if I denied that getting a response is always gratifying.

Or almost always. On the occasion I have in mind, I had just finished a reading on the Glanfa stage at the Wales Millennium Centre – I was the Welsh-language half of a bilingual reading – when I was approached by an elderly couple. The lady had an interrogative air. She demanded from me the Welsh equivalent of identity papers – she asked me that question familiar to all of Welsh descent: ‘Where are you from?’

‘Well, I’ve lived in Cardiff for many years,’ I answered, ‘But I’m originally from the Wrexham area in north east Wales.’

She looked puzzled, and, if I was not mistaken, distinctly annoyed.

‘But nobody speaks Welsh in Wrexham,’ she said impatiently.

‘Well, I was born and brought up in Wrexham,’ I said – pleasantly, I hoped. ‘And I speak Welsh, and so do all my family.’

This was clearly not the answer she wanted. Her irritation became more marked. ‘Well I worked in the hospital there for three years, and *nobody speaks Welsh*.’

I have lost count of the number of times that I have had to explain that I come from the *north* Wales coalfield

Clearly, the simple truth of my personal history was an inconvenient one. She seemed to think I was falsifying my biography. I decided that mere assertion would not suffice; it was time to call invoke some facts. Like many culturally-conscious Welsh speakers, I have census figures at my fingertips, like some kind of secular catechism. I adopted what I hoped was a tone of reasonableness: ‘Well actually, according to the 2011 census, 11 per cent of people in the Wrexham county borough area can speak Welsh. That’s more than 10,000 people. And in some areas of the borough, like the Ceiriog Valley, the proportions are as high as 40 per cent.’ That should have settled it.

It didn’t. Irritation became indignation. ‘But NO-ONE speaks Welsh there!’ she said.

This was by now becoming more than a little irritating. My identity was being denied to my face.

At this point, the woman’s husband slid into view. He had the look of a man who had to wait for his chance to get a word in, and who was going to make the most of it when he could.

‘I’m going to annoy him even more now,’ he said, with a sly smile.

The use of the third person, was, I would have to say, pretty depersonalising. He edged a little closer.

‘Wrexham isn’t even in Wales, is it?’

Looking well satisfied, he melted back into his wife’s shadow again.

Hard though it may be to believe, this man was himself a fluent Welsh speaker, from Gwynedd. Surely he must have known that Wrexham was in Wales. Why, from their two separate perspectives, were this couple at such pains to exclude someone from their approved view of what their country should be? This was one occasion where feedback was less than affirming.

Coming from the borderland of north east Wales, you get used to being mis-labelled. I was born in the village of Coedpoeth a few miles west of Wrexham, and some nine miles west of the border with England. The eighth-century earthwork of Offa’s Dyke formed the border to one side of the village in an area



still known as Adwy'r Clawdd, 'The Gap in the Dyke', denoting the point where the A525 road, the former drovers' pathway, cuts through King Offa's barrier.

It was a symbolic border, a topographical border – on one side of the village was the escarpment of the Berwyn mountains; on the other the immense distances of the Cheshire plain – and, of course, it was a cultural and linguistic border too. I grew up speaking both languages: Welsh to some relatives and English to others. My espousal of Welsh became a conscious choice rather than an accident of birth when I was in sixth form college, when I made it the language of my first literary work. However, despite that commitment, I never felt the need to retrofit a Cymraeg identity to my personal history, to my name, or, for that matter, to my accent, which in English still carries the distinctive compressed vowel sounds of Merseyside, and in Welsh retains the kind of diphthongs which are more characteristic of English. I have been mistaken for a Liverpudlian by Liverpudlians; 'Nice to see another Scouser here!' said one of that great city's diaspora after I had read a lesson in church one day. On another occasion, I was introduced grandiloquently to a group of Welsh speakers by a beaming acquaintance: 'Friends, this is Grahame Davies. He has *learned* Welsh!' I was later able to gently explain that despite my

11 per cent of people in the Wrexham county borough area can speak Welsh. That's more than 10,000 people

anglicised accent, I have always spoken the language and cannot claim the credit of having travelled the hard road of a newcomer to the ancient tongue.

Sometimes, I wonder if it wouldn't just be easier to conform to people's expectations. I have lost count of the number of times that I have had to explain that I come from the *north* Wales coalfield. Both my grandfathers worked down coal mines. One of them was working down an adjacent pit when the explosion at Gresford colliery claimed the lives of 266 victims in 1934 – the last such disaster on that scale in Britain. My great grandfather was the miners' agent for north Wales. My mother and grandmother both worked at Brymbo steelworks, as secretary and cook respectively. I grew up to the sound of the rolling mill rumbling through the night, and the sight of the sky lighting up as the burning slag was tipped out from the

furnaces onto the bank. This was industry as heavy as anything in south Wales: hard, extensive and significant. But strangely, this reality seems to be weightless when it comes to the collective psyche, whether within Wales or beyond, allowing one's identity to be conscripted by more powerful stereotypes.

This is human nature of course: '... humankind / Cannot bear very much reality', said Eliot. We do not readily accommodate unfamiliar complexities. This is nobody's fault. I cannot be responsible for other people's assumptions. All I can do, when the occasion arises, is to own the ambiguity of my identity – the two halves that make one whole – without simplification or disguise. And I can hope that others who do not fit pre-existing identity stereotypes – an increasing number, surely, as geography ceases to be such a defining factor, and identities become more fluid – will find a growing acceptance that complexity can be just as authentically Welsh as simplicity. So if anyone asks, I'm from a former coal-mining community in north east Wales; it is a part of the world like no other, overlooked, misunderstood, and resistant to classification – and it is an identity that I will always be proud to claim.



Grahame Davies is a poet and author of *Real Wrexham*

Future of the North

Llyr Gruffydd argues that investment in north east Wales is vital if the region is to maintain its historic place in the Welsh national story



The late and much-lamented Welsh historian John Davies gave a lecture in 2007 about the importance of the north east of Wales. It concludes with these words: 'I began preparing this talk in the belief that without the north-east, Wales would have been a much poorer place. While working on the theme, I came to the conclusion that, without the north-east, Wales, in any meaningful sense, would not exist at all.'

Dr Davies lamented the fact that the north-east has missed out on much of Wales's nation building – no part in the University of Wales, no broadcasting headquarters, no national museum and precious few national institutions of note. Despite this, the north east has been an historically significant part of Wales – home to Owain Glyndŵr and significant pioneering events in the Industrial Revolution. The first trade union organisation in Wales was formed up here, for example. The Football Association of Wales was created in Wrexham with all our early football internationals played in the area.

The north east has always been an industrial powerhouse – pioneering significant changes in the iron industry and having a diverse economic base and skilled workforce. That expertise and skill is a base upon which we can build a stronger economy, linked to better research and development facilities, supported by our excellent education institutions at Wrexham Glyndŵr University and Coleg Cambria. The North Wales Economic Ambition Board is playing a key role in bringing everyone together to make this a reality, striving for equitable investment and prosperity across all of north Wales.

In the north east we can develop the next generation of workers to feed the hub

of local aeronautical or other advanced engineering firms in the area. The decline of Shotton Steelworks, once home to 13,000 workers, has seen the rise of the Deeside Enterprise Park and hi-tech manufacturing remains an important driver for the economy. Having this cutting-edge expertise means the north east is well placed for the next industrial revolution.

When it comes to Welsh identity, the north east has also been a pioneer. It was home to the first Welsh-medium secondary school at Ysgol Glan Clwyd and demand continues to outstrip supply in local Welsh-medium schools in areas such as Wrexham.

This is despite significant numbers of the population being more familiar with news and events in Manchester, Liverpool or Birmingham than their own country due to the inadequate TV transmissions from Welsh broadcasters. Why should we tolerate a situation where people in north east Wales are still denied access to BBC Wales, S4C and other terrestrial channels which the rest of us take for granted?

Transport links similarly make it far easier to get to Manchester, Liverpool or Birmingham than other parts of Wales. Labour's so-called north east Wales metro (in reality a Merseyside concept

with a Welsh add-on) means that further transport spending is likely to benefit towns over the border more than those in Wales.

If we are to ensure that the north east doesn't just become a commuter belt for Cheshire, Liverpool and Manchester (where house prices are significantly more expensive), then the Welsh Government has to provide far more than a glorified bus and train network to get to those commuter destinations.

The north east isn't asking for more than its fair share. When we see ministers, some of whom represent constituencies here in the north east, advocating huge infrastructure investment in some parts of the country to the detriment of others, it does make you wonder whether they have lost sight of the region.

There is a very real danger, as things stand, that the north east will be an afterthought to both the Welsh Government's South Wales City Regions and the UK Government's Northern Powerhouse. Are we destined to be marginal to both? Or does the north east, as part of a resurgent North Wales economic region, look to once again be a pioneering and dynamic region in its own right?

That sense of a no-man's land in terms of government priority is echoed

This mustn't become a debate about whether regional prosperity would benefit from strong cross-border working... it's about strengthening the region's economy in its own right and reinforcing [its] Welsh national identity – cementing its affinity with the rest of Wales



Darren Millar emphasises the importance of infrastructure, and calls for greater devolution to the region

Like many people in my constituency, I moved from the north west of England into north Wales in my childhood. I was born in Manchester, brought up in Towyn, attended local schools in Abergele, and went to the local technical college in Rhos on Sea before taking my first job in an accountancy practice in Rhyl.

This migration between north Wales and England, and vice versa, is common in this part of the world and is one of the reasons for the deep connection and affection that people on both sides of the border have for one another – but these connections are far from familial and social.

Many thousands of people cross the border, in both directions, to get to work, to access health services, to catch a flight, or to attend places of education each day. This isn't going to change, and nor should it; in fact, the people of north Wales get very upset when politicians in south Wales overlook these links or, worse still, seek to break them.

These cross border links are sometimes viewed as a problem by civil servants and political masters in Cardiff Bay, but the reality is that they ought to be seen as an opportunity.

One of the keys to unlocking the economic potential of north Wales is the forging of better transport links with successful metropolitan centres in the north west of England, such as Manchester and Liverpool. Yet Welsh Labour can't seem to see beyond the M4 and the Valleys when it comes to

in terms of a clear sense of identity. We need a frank discussion about the region's economic and cultural future. One that is firmly underpinned by a strong sense of Welsh nationhood, looking confidently outwards to build alliances that bring mutual benefit. Not the emerging sense of being cast adrift from the rest of Wales, clinging on to a Mersey Dee cross-border construct in the hope of a few capital projects. Begging for crumbs from the top table is not an economic strategy of a confident nation.

If the Well-being of Future Generations Act means anything, then the emerging well-being plans should at the very least start to tease out some of these issues. This is particularly true in terms of our cultural identity and the north-east's sense of place.

This mustn't become a debate about whether regional prosperity would benefit from strong cross-border working; of course it would. Rather, it's about strengthening the region's economy in its own right and reinforcing the region's Welsh national identity – cementing its affinity with the rest of Wales.

This Government has failed to do that. As Dr John Davies lamented, where are our national institutions in north east Wales? What do we have that signals to our people that we are an integral and valued part of Wales?

We could have had the Welsh Revenue Authority based here as part of a wider strategy to develop Wrexham as a financial hub for Wales. The skills are here. Wrexham's large HMRC office with its 300 experienced tax inspectors is closing due to UK Government centralisation. Faced with this opportunity, Labour

overlooked a skilled workforce in the north east in favour of a site just a few miles outside of Cardiff.

No wonder that the perception that 'everything goes to Cardiff' has never been stronger.

In contrast to the plethora of major sporting and entertainment hubs in the south east, many of which have benefitted from public investment, the oldest international football stadium in the world – the Racecourse ground – is now deemed by the Football Association of Wales as being not fit for matches at that level. Warm words by successive ministers about funding the 'Millennium Stadium of the north' have come to nothing – something that urgently needs redressing. The Racecourse stadium has the potential to be a modern sporting, conference and entertainments complex.

Add to it an eighth Welsh national museum (and a first for the north east) with a National Football Museum for Wales, based at its spiritual home and you would have a strong and visible statement of Welsh national identity that is in the heart of the north's largest town.

As Dr John Davies reminded us, we mustn't settle for north east Wales being an adjunct of Merseyside, rather an integral part of the Welsh nation. More than ever before, we need a Welsh Government that puts the whole of our country at the heart of its programme of government and recognises in particular the distinct needs of this part of Wales.



Llyr Gruffydd is a Plaid Cymru regional Assembly Member for north Wales

Future of the North

It cannot be right that it takes longer to get from Kinmel Bay to Cardiff Bay on the train than it does to get from Kinmel Bay to London or, via road and a short flight, to Paris, Brussels, Dublin, Belfast and Edinburgh

investment in the transport infrastructure.

While Ministers plan to invest around £1 billion into a solution to congestion between Newport and Cardiff, precious little is being invested to solve longstanding congestion problems on our vital transport artery, the A55 trunk road in north Wales. This lack of action is literally choking the life from the north Wales economy; not only is it a major inconvenience for everyone who lives in north east Wales, but it is also a deterrent to businesses wanting to invest and grow, and to visitors who come to enjoy all that the region affords.

Thankfully, there has been some improvement in terms of rail connectivity in recent years. The UK Government have given the green light to upgrading the Halton Curve, a little known piece of rail infrastructure which will allow for direct rail links between north Wales and Liverpool; and there are more direct rail services to Manchester Airport, a major international hub, from north Wales than ever before, although they are far too infrequent and

take longer than they should.

Rail services between north and south Wales have improved. Services are, in the main, reliable and frequent, but it cannot be right that it takes longer to get from Kinmel Bay to Cardiff Bay on the train than it does to get from Kinmel Bay to London or, via road and a short flight, to Paris, Brussels, Dublin, Belfast and Edinburgh.

North-South transport links also desperately need to improve. The A470 and the A483 do not lend themselves to the development of a modern vibrant economy between north and south Wales. It's no wonder that the two regions feel so disconnected. It is fair to say that devolution has only served to magnify the perceived divide between north and south Wales, and successive Labour-led administrations in Cardiff Bay have failed to tackle the geographical distance by improving transport links for the masses.

The Welsh Government has sought to improve links between north and south Wales by spending millions in taxpayer subsidies on an air link between Anglesey and Cardiff. While this has been very welcome for the few public sector workers, civil servants and Assembly Members using the service, it is of little value to most people in north Wales, the overwhelming majority of whom would be better served by a more accessible airlink to Broughton, Liverpool or Manchester. Such a link would be less costly for the taxpayer, more commercially viable, and provide a link with international airports which help to connect Wales to the wider world.

But such improvements in our transport infrastructure, including greater connections to our friends in the south and vibrant metropolitan centres in the north

west will only go so far.

North Wales also needs to ensure that it is able to benefit from a strategic plan which the UK Government, the Welsh Government, the public and private sectors can agree to work together to implement. Such plans have already been developed for the Cardiff City Region and the Swansea Bay City Region; and thanks to the leadership and drive of the UK Government, a North Wales Growth Deal will soon follow.

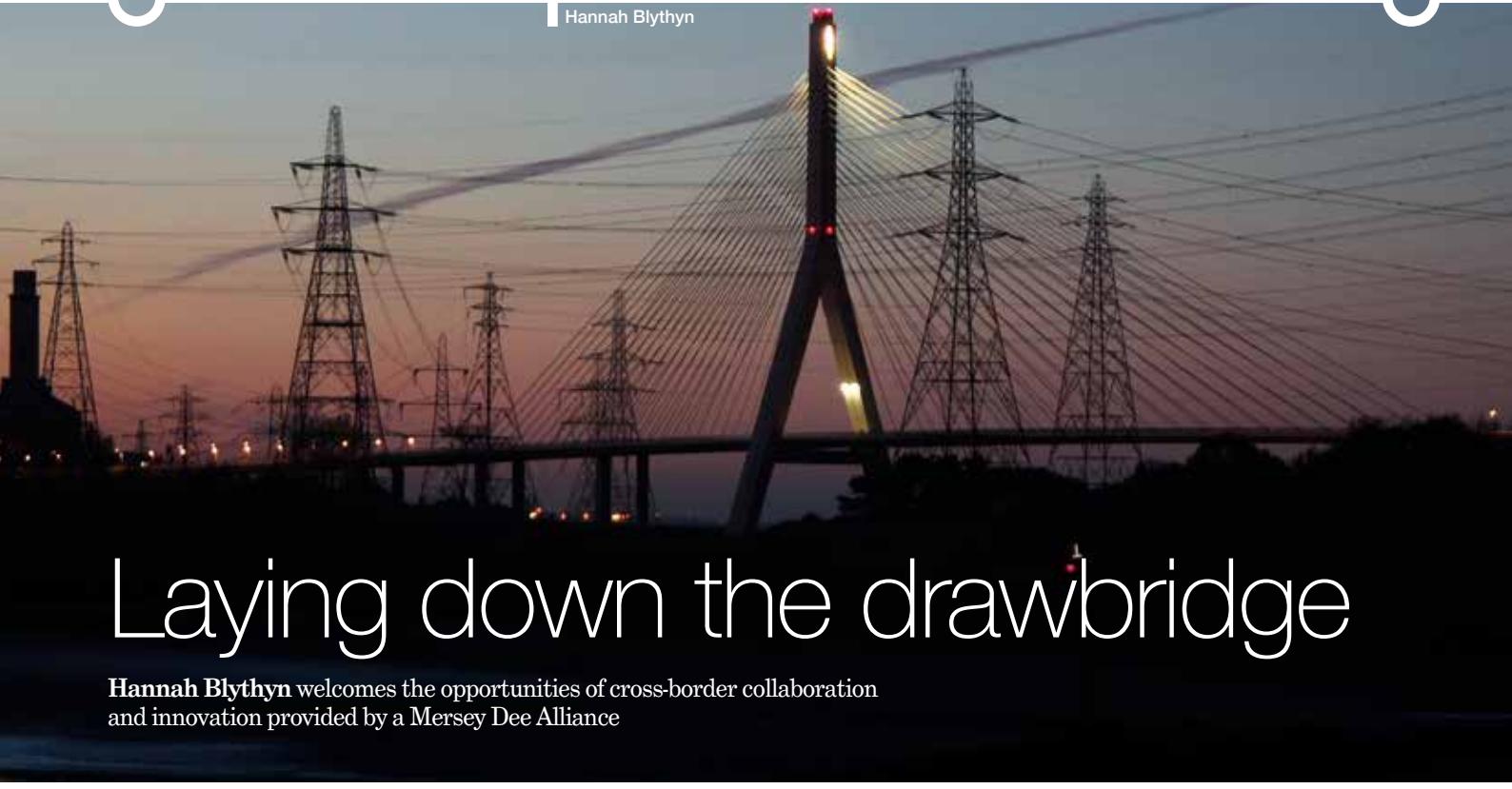
A Growth Deal could transform the region, rebalance the Welsh economy, and ensure that our proximity to the Northern Powerhouse over the border is something which can be used to our advantage. However, effective delivery hinges upon the Welsh Government doing what it has so far proven unwilling or incapable of during its 18 years in power; relinquishing the levers of power upon which such a deal will rely.

Local decision-makers are best placed to plan and deliver the economic development and key transport projects that the region needs – the Welsh Government should give them the powers and resources to attract investment and make it happen.

A failure to devolve powers and resources to the region will only serve to reinforce the regional divide between north and south Wales; conversely, devolution to the region would help to heal it.



Darren Millar is Conservative
Assembly Member for
Clwyd West



Laying down the drawbridge

Hannah Blythyn welcomes the opportunities of cross-border collaboration and innovation provided by a Mersey Dee Alliance

One of the landmark attractions of the north Wales borderlands found itself the focus of heated debate during the summer. Flint Castle, built in 1277, was the first of Edward I's castles in his campaign to conquer Wales, the site chosen because of its proximity to England. Whilst the foundations of Flint Castle were formed to impose the oppression of the Welsh by English aggressors, fast forward eight hundred years to a far more mutually beneficial cross-border relationship that collectively contributes £22bn to the UK economy.

Today, the region may not bear witness to an invading force; instead each day an army of workers crosses the border. In both directions. 22,800 commute from north Wales daily into the north west of England whilst 30,700 travel in the opposite direction to work in north Wales.

This is not a new phenomenon; it has been going on for decades, centuries even. At the height of north east Wales' proud industrial past, workers bridged the Dee to join their Welsh counterparts at the likes of Shotton Steelworks, Courtaulds, the Point of Ayr Colliery and Mostyn Ironworks. Over in Cheshire West, Vauxhall Motors in Ellesmere Port has long

had a large number of employees who are domiciled in Wales and to this day notable Welsh anchor company Airbus sees people travel from far and wide to work just this side of the border.

In north east Wales we're historically, physically and economically connected to our near neighbours in the north west of England – the value of the M56-A55 corridor economy is £35bn and over two million people live within a thirty minute commute of Deeside Industrial Park.

Investment in infrastructure is key to us being in a position to prosper from our pivotal location. Upgrades to the 'gateway to north Wales' – the key arterial routes of the A55, A494 and A43 – are not just crucial to physically accessing work and business, but also serve as an enabler to a dynamic, regional economy and our visitor offer. Around 37,000 people are employed within the tourism sector in north Wales, generating £1.8m each year, and many of our attractions in north east Wales are a stone's throw from the A55 corridor.

An integrated transport system that better connects us not just within the region and the country but beyond into the north west of England would make a

The GVA of the Mersey Dee is more than the GVA of Cardiff, Newport and Swansea combined

real difference not only to people's ability to reach work, but also for investment and for visitors to reach us. Yes, the new Wales and Borders franchise needs to address the well-rehearsed difficulties in travelling north to south and vice-versa – difficulties that often serve to magnify the perceived disconnect with our devolved democracy – but we also need to ensure

a more seamless experience that sees a single ticketing system and fare parity on cross-border public transport.

For people to be able to access decent work closer to home and to provide a further driver for businesses to invest and expand, we need improved accessibility to workplaces via public transport. New stations at both Deeside Industrial Park and Broughton (for Airbus and the new Advanced Manufacturing Institute) have already been proposed, but I would argue that an additional station is needed further west in Flintshire at Greenfield Holt in order to enable opportunities to reach skilled work alongside opening up supply chain opportunities.

The station would also sit at a key strategic point, nearby to the port of Mostyn which links the advanced manufacturing sector of north east Wales to the energy sector of north west Wales, shipping the A380 wings from the Broughton site to Toulouse, and in recent years becoming one of the main centres in Europe for the assembly and installation of turbines in the offshore renewable energy sector.

Energy is a high-value economic sector of the future for the north of Wales, with the chance to exploit opportunities as a result of Wylfa Newydd, offshore wind, biomass and tidal energy projects. To do this successfully, we will need to take full advantage of connections with educational institutions and research centres, not just in Wales but over the border in the north west of England. This sector also has a clear potential to open up cross-border supply chain opportunities.

The advanced manufacturing sector is the cornerstone of our regional and wider wealth, from the manufacturing might of Airbus to the industrial and business parks of Wrexham, St Asaph, Chester, Deeside and the new Northern Gateway. To drive this forward, young people and adults in the region need to be equipped with the skills that not only meet labour market demand but, more importantly, offer a personal passport to decent and sustainable employment. Links between FE, HE, business and the labour market are growing: Coleg Cambria has an aerospace

For people to be able to access decent work closer to home and to provide a further driver for businesses to invest and expand, we need improved accessibility to workplaces via public transport

facility that has benefited from over £2m of Welsh Government funding and Glyndŵr University emphasises the employability success of its learners, striving to shift to a point where all of its courses incorporate work placements and links.

This should start one step earlier, embracing the new curriculum planned for Wales to raise awareness of emerging sectors and opportunities and the related skills, and to offer school students 'tasters' of different career paths as part of a package of decent, quality work experience.

To unlock the real economic potential of north east Wales, Welsh Government and politicians in the region need to continue meaningful work with stakeholders such as the north Wales Economic Ambition Board, Mersey Dee Alliance and other partners to deliver an ambitious and achievable growth deal for north Wales.

The Mersey Dee area is made up of north east Wales, west Cheshire and the Wirral and whilst resting either side of a national boundary, the Mersey Dee forms a significant economic sub region. To put this into perspective, the GVA of the Mersey Dee is more than the GVA of Cardiff, Newport and Swansea combined - it's a GVA equal to half the Welsh economy and with a total population of 940,000 people - double that of Cardiff - the area could be considered a city region in all but name.

Arguably, any north east Wales/Mersey Dee Alliance Growth Deal has

a greater chance of success than the other City Deals that often garner greater attention. The Mersey Dee Alliance is an initiative rooted in both cross border and cross sector partnership, with strategic partners including local authorities and educational institutions from both sides of the border, Welsh Government, business representatives and transport in the form of Mersey Travel.

Clearly, by its very nature cross-border working brings with it a unique set of challenges but it also provides a unique set of opportunities and possibilities for the future.

In its publication *Mersey Dee: Our unique city region, unlocking our true potential* the Mersey Dee alliance outlines the ambition to double the economy of the Mersey Dee area from the present £22bn to £44bn by 2040, creating a minimum of 50,000 jobs and constructing up to 25,000 homes.

The Welsh Labour Government recognises the potential of north east Wales and that is why it has outlined plans to invest in the A55 gateway, a north east Wales Metro, the Advanced Manufacturing Institute and why it will base the new Development Bank for Wales in the region.

Prior to and since being elected, I've been clear on the need to be a strong voice for my constituency of Delyn but also for north east Wales as whole. It is in that vein that I've established and now Chair the north Wales and Mersey Dee Alliance Cross Party Assembly Group to provide a collective means of making sure that our agenda is on our National Assembly's agenda.

Now is the time to make sure that the political and economic levers that devolution puts at our disposal pay greater dividends for our region. For north east Wales and the north west of England the border need not be a boundary in unlocking our economic potential as we lay down the drawbridge towards a contemporary partnership of equal prosperity.



Hannah Blythyn is Labour Assembly Member for Delyn

The Hussey Report: Solving Wales' most urgent and intractable policy conundrum

Professor Marcus Longley meets **Dr Ruth Hussey** between her team's interim and final reports on Health and Social Care in Wales

It accounts for more than half of the total Welsh Government budget, it attracts headlines like no other area of public life, and the talk is of an existential crisis. No wonder, then, that all eyes are now on Dr Ruth Hussey and her eight eminent colleagues on the Parliamentary Review of Health and Social Care in Wales.

Their interim report in July rehearsed the fiendishly difficult problems facing this set of services; their eagerly-awaited final report, due by Christmas, will tell us what to do about them.

Their terms of reference are daunting. They've got a few more weeks left to tell us 'what the future... could look like... delivery models, organisational issues... metrics, systems, governance and the pace of change, workforce including culture, morale, education and training, rurality... quality and safety... innovation, productivity including data and insight'. The only thing missing from this terrifying list is how much money the NHS and social care should have.

When I spoke to Ruth Hussey, my first question was simply: can you do this? There is no doubting her immense capability and passion for these issues – as Wales' Chief

This is about redesigning the plane while still flying it

Medical Officer from 2012 to 2016 she was universally regarded as a breath of fresh air – but can any expert panel come up with a technocratic answer to something so complex and intensely political as the problems facing the NHS and social care? You could hardly imagine the political parties in Westminster all signing up to a single blueprint for the future – will they in Wales? 'I hope so', she says. 'It was set up explicitly with cross-party support. It's crucial that there's at least a shared sense of what success looks like'. (The term 'Parliamentary' Review remains a puzzle, by the way: Ruth confesses that she's not sure about the origins of the title, other than the fact that it emphasises its cross-party support.)



You get a sense of her own motivation when she tells the story of a frail old lady in A&E on a Friday evening who bursts into tears when told she can go home, because she's scared, and there's no one at home to care for her

When she was asked to take on this task she admitted that she had to 'sleep on it for a few days' before saying yes, but now her enthusiasm is palpable. She divides the task into two parts. The first is to set out what the future could look like; the second, how to make it a reality.

In both parts, paradoxes abound. On the question of what it could look like many people told her that Wales lacks a single, coherent and sufficiently detailed vision of the future of services – 'what it will actually look like in practice, what it will mean for me'. And yet she and the panel were 'inundated' by service models which had been developed locally across Wales.

So now the task is to shape this creative energy into something compelling and coherent. They are toying with the idea of the 'Triple Aim' as this central narrative. Developed in the US, it argues that healthcare systems should simultaneously pursue improving the quality of care, improving population health, and reducing (or at least constraining) the per capita cost of health care. The first two aims have been achieved with some measure of success in Wales, but seldom has the last.

And then there's the far more difficult question of how. If there is some consensus on what the future should look like, why do we still have a problem? 'If you can stand back, [the case for change] is compelling,' Ruth says. She optimistically describes the helpful legislative context in Wales, which encourages joined-up working and a focus on health outcomes and sustainability. She praises the many examples around Wales of services which already embody the long-term vision. So the question is: 'How do you scale that up and make change with pace behind it? This is about redesigning the plane while still flying it'. She recounts the dispiriting example of a great redesign

of services in one part of Wales, supported by all, which nevertheless took ten years to grind through the system.

Not surprisingly, there are complex issues here. For example, dealing with risk. In health and social care, if change goes wrong, people can suffer and die, and professional reputations can be ruined. Some change will fail, but fear of failure will stop all change. One way forward is disarmingly simple: to introduce professionals to each other, and to design a system which supports teamwork across both health and social care. Quite often, a simple lack of mutual understanding of roles gets in the way of the sort of trust and support which could actually manage that risk better.

The interim report calls for new service models which embody the Triple Aim. But hang on, I thought the problem wasn't lack of models, it was lack of pace? And that's where the debate turns to governance. Echoing last year's assessment by the OECD, the interim report has this carefully-crafted prescription: 'Faster change... needs stronger national direction and a better balance across the continuum of national direction and local autonomy'. Now we are getting to the nub of the matter, and I ask Ruth Hussey to translate this Delphic sentence. She emphasises both a stronger 'guiding hand' and a recognition that 'change happens at the front line'. You square the circle with the right mix of 'drivers and motivations'. But for what that actually means, we'll have to wait until Christmas and the final report.

What about the system architecture? Would we be better off with an internal market in health, like England? In response, Dr Hussey pointed out that we already have a mixed economy across health and social care in Wales, and also that many countries are moving away from markets toward greater collaboration and cooperation. So,

no, there's no obvious case for change here.

Ruth's passion for her task is obvious. She talks eloquently of the impending crisis in the social care workforce – that small army of employed and family carers which makes it possible for frail people to remain living at home. We will need more of them every year if this whole health and social care edifice is to work, but where will they come from? You get a sense of her own motivation when she tells the story of a frail old lady in A&E on a Friday evening who bursts into tears when told she can go home, because she's scared, and there's no one at home to care for her. She ends up being admitted to a ward. How can we get in place the support she needs to go home?

This is not the first such review, of course. Back in 2003, Sir Derek Wanless concluded after a similar review that 'tough decisions to remove... the unsustainable aspects of current provision must be implemented'. His prescription? 'There should be a long-term strategic adjustment of services to focus them on prevention and early intervention'.

If this isn't to be another worthy but ultimately fruitless exercise, what does she want her final report to achieve? Hussey says that leaders must be optimists as well as pragmatists. 'The simple answer is, be implemented. The opportunity is to create a full stop and a new start. Fresh ambition, to feel inspired to get behind something. The key issue is, can we marshal the evidence and frame this report in a way that chimes enough, with enough people, to say we really want to get on with this now?'

The Review Panel is seeking feedback on its interim report. Contact: parliamentaryreviewhealthandsocialcare@wales.gsi.gov.uk



Professor Marcus Longley is Chair of the IWA's Health and Social Care Policy Group and Chair of Cwm Taf University Health Board

Brexit and agriculture

What next for Welsh farming?

Dr Nicholas Fenwick argues that agricultural economic modelling highlights the need for a sensible Brexit timescale

The quantified predictions bring other adjectives to mind: ‘positive’, ‘disastrous’, ‘cataclysmic’

Computer models have put men on the moon, designed new vaccines for infectious diseases, and are now routinely used in almost every walk of life. In their most fallible form they can cause devastation – as happened in the run up to the financial crash of 2008, when models prioritising profit over risk were a major contributor to financial collapse on a global scale. But without them we are left with little more than intuition and blind faith.

In the world of agriculture, the Rolls-Royce of models is FAPRI, developed by the University of Missouri more than thirty years ago, and adapted by Queen’s University Belfast to analyse the impacts on UK agriculture of various different events.

On 16th August the results of the latest FAPRI modelling were published by authors from the UK’s Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute and the University of Missouri – work commissioned by the Welsh Government and the other devolved regions to look at impacts of three Brexit scenarios on agricultural prices and production.



The three scenarios looked at can be described as 'soft' - with tariff and quota arrangements between the UK, EU and rest of the world remaining similar to current arrangements; 'hard' - with the UK failing to achieve a trade agreement with the EU and defaulting to WTO tariffs and quotas for all trade; and 'radical' - with zero tariffs applied on imports to the UK, but standard tariffs and quotas applied to our exports to the EU and elsewhere.

The impacts for different agricultural sectors can be described using the same adjectives: 'soft', 'hard', 'radical', and the predicted trends in prices and production are just as the Farmers Union of Wales (FUW) and others have predicted. But the quantified predictions bring other adjectives to mind: 'positive', 'disastrous' and, potentially, 'cataclysmic'.

The predicted trends follow a general pattern: the impacts of a 'soft' Brexit are modest for all commodities, while the more a sector relies on exports, the greater the adverse impact of 'harder' Brexit scenarios, with the converse being true for sectors producing commodities of which we are net importers. And, of course, the

'radical' policy has a detrimental impact for all sectors, as cheap imports from all over the world swamp our markets.

For Wales, the figures make particularly stark reading: the estimated impact of a 'hard' Brexit on the sheep sector, in which around 80% of Welsh farmers are involved, is a 30% fall in prices and a 20% fall in Welsh production, highlighting our reliance on lamb exports in particular, while the need to make up the current trade deficit in beef and dairy produce leads to 17% and 30% increases in beef and dairy prices respectively, and a consequential 14% increase in Welsh cattle numbers. And there are even positive impacts for the Welsh pig sector, leading to a 20% increase in Welsh pig numbers - although it has to be pointed out that Welsh pig numbers are extremely low.

Inevitably, there are no such mixed blessings in the results for the 'radical' liberalised imports policy, with falls in sheep, beef, dairy and pork prices of 29%, 45%, 10% and 12% respectively, leading to consequential falls in production across the board - including acute collapses of 60% and 18% in Welsh beef cattle and

sheep numbers.

As the FAPRI report points out, the final outcome of Brexit is likely to be somewhere between the three scenarios looked at, with or without some kind of transition period, meaning that for the first time Welsh and UK policy makers have figures which help quantify the challenges and opportunities different sectors might expect under any final scenario.

As acknowledged by First Minister Carwyn Jones, the consequences of a bad outcome for Wales would be severe; while there are some 56,000 working full and part-time in farming, farms are just a link - albeit a crucial one - in a complex supply chain, involving upstream businesses such as vets, feed merchants, mechanics and contractors, as well as downstream businesses such as hauliers, markets and food businesses. And, of course, agriculture also plays a key role in so many other areas, not least maintaining the landscapes and habitats so cherished by visitors, and preserving the Welsh language, particularly in areas where less than half the population now use the language, but where the proportion in the farming community

**my commute
fy nhaith i'r gwaith**

Richard

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The estimated impact of a 'hard' Brexit on the sheep sector, in which around 80% of Welsh farmers are involved, is a 30% fall in prices and a 20% fall in Welsh production



While there are some 56,000 working full and part-time in farming, farms are just a link in a complex supply chain, involving vets, feed merchants, mechanics and contractors, as well as hauliers, markets and food businesses

remains close to 100%.

With so much at stake, but no knowledge of which of the three FAPRI scenarios the final Brexit deal will most resemble, it is impossible to make detailed plans for the future. And herein lies an added danger: despite the unknown, there is no end of individuals and bodies who have fallen over themselves to put forward radical, sometimes quite detailed, post-Brexit alternatives to the Common Agricultural Policy and its accompanying legislative framework.

These visions generally focus on narrow objectives which reflect the key aims of the body making the proposals, while also appealing to most policy makers' deep dislike of farm support, and are often drawn up with little or no regard for inconvenient truths, such as the need to trade competitively and in accordance with World Trade Organisation rules.

But above all else, not one proposal made to date has been drawn up with any certainty as to what trade deals (if any) will be in place post Brexit, or the estimated quantitative impact of different Brexit outcomes on each of our major sectors - how could they have been, given those estimates have only just been published?

In other words, the documents are better thought of as lobbying instruments which put forward untested, possibly brilliant, but possibly disastrous, proposals; useful food for thought, but dangerous if they gain purchase and are taken at face value without proper investigation.

So what precedent do we have for such a situation? The obvious answer is 'none', but the closest parallel is the Welsh Government's work with stakeholders in preparation for the introduction of a new CAP in 2015.

That work, which took place over many years leading up to 2015, involved detailed mathematical modelling to

examine the impacts on tens of thousands of businesses of scores of thousands of different options, with the key agreed aim of finding policies which minimised disruption and losses for businesses and regions of Wales.

By contrast, modelling post-Brexit scenarios is far more complex, with many more possible options and unknown factors - yet greater than ever is the need to thoroughly investigate options, not least to ensure superficially attractive, well-meaning proposals are not, in fact, leaps of faith which will plunge entire communities and sectors into an economic and social abyss. And if a government wants to pursue a policy which leads to such outcomes, then so be it, but it should at least do so knowingly.

Then there is the question of how much flexibility the Welsh Government should have to take such steps; current policies implemented by the Welsh Government have to fit within the CAP Regulations agreed by the 28 Member States, which are aimed at allowing some flexibility when it comes to rural policies, but also minimising unfair competition within the Common Market between, say, a sheep producer in France and one in Wales.

Given that the only guaranteed common market UK farmers will share access to post-Brexit is the one here in the UK, few disagree that a similar framework needs to be in place to ensure the approaches in, say, Scotland and Wales, do not differ to the extent that they give massive advantages to certain sectors in one or the other country.

Some in Westminster take the view that such a UK policy framework should be decided upon by the UK Government, and the UK Government alone, thereby undermining devolution, while some in the devolved administrations see Brexit as an opportunity to increase the already liberal

flexibility devolved to Wales and Scotland under the current CAP rules - equating to an increase in devolved powers which would also risk differences in agricultural policies which were grossly unfair to some producers. And one need not look far to see the risks - for example, the Scottish administration is a great fan of subsidised production for important and vulnerable sectors, but in England and Wales such subsidies are deeply frowned upon, and came to an end in 2004.

Such issues and power struggles are in turn intertwined with and overshadowed by the fact that rural spending through the CAP currently sits outside the Barnett Formula, and that the Barnettisation of such funding would slash Wales' budget by hundreds of millions per annum.

With so many layers of issues which need resolving internally, negotiations and wranglings between Westminster and the devolved administrations in many ways mirror those between the UK Government and the EU, while also sharing the same impossibly short timetable.

And herein lies both the greatest challenge but also the potential solution: the seventeen months or so we have until Brexit is a fraction of what is truly needed to undertake internal and external negotiations over trade, devolution, finances and common frameworks; the drafting and scrutiny of legislative changes; and the modelling of impacts of different policies and scenarios.

The obvious solution, and one argued for by the FUW since the 24th of June 2016, is to agree a sensible and safe Brexit timetable which allows sufficient time to reach rational agreements that work for Wales, the UK and the EU, and to properly examine and model the possible consequences of policy proposals - many of which may turn out to be drafted by those rushing in where angels fear to tread.



Dr Nicholas Fenwick is Head of Policy for the Farmers' Union of Wales. He holds a PhD in Theoretical and Computational Statistical Chemistry and has been working for the FUW since 2004



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A glimpse of the future?

Jim Stewart considers the rich tapestry of stories that have brought Christians from more than one hundred countries to now largely secular Wales

In 2013, a Guinness world record was set in Cardiff by Revd Irfan John of the Methodist Church in Wales for the most multicultural nativity play, with 55 nationalities involved – but even at the time it was known that the number could have been much higher, and it is likely that there are Christians in Wales from over 100 countries.

This perhaps surprising fact reflects the clear shift in the centre of gravity of global Christianity over the past century. In 1900, 70% of the world's Christians were found in Europe; the 'average' Christian then could be said to be a white Norwegian man. Today, 61% of the world's Christians live in Asia, Africa and South America; the average Christian now is female, black and living in a Brazilian favela or an African village. What we are seeing in Wales through Majority World Christians is a glimpse of the church of the future.

'Majority World' is a term that has become increasingly used in recent years, preferred because of the absence of negative connotations (as contained within the phrase 'Third World', or even 'Global South'). It denotes the parts of the world that are not in the West, and so includes Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, the Caribbean, South America and parts of Oceania.

In many ways, the composite makeup of Majority World Christians in Wales is not dissimilar to that which would be found in other parts of the UK. There are nurses here as elsewhere, for example, from the Philippines; Malayalam and Tamil-



A Welsh welcome; City Church Cardiff

speaking doctors from India; West Indians of the Windrush Generation and their descendants, and Chinese communities. Since 2004, the Welsh cities of Newport, Cardiff and Swansea and the town of Wrexham have all been dispersal centres where asylum seekers have been sent while their claims are assessed. This has meant that Christian refugee communities, as are found among Eritreans and Iranians for example, have begun to develop in Wales as elsewhere in the UK.

There are some examples, however, that are unique to Wales. In 1866, the Rhayader-born Welsh missionary Robert Jermain Thomas was martyred in the Korean peninsula in his quest to bring Christianity to the Korean people. Such has been his legacy that Korean Christians see

Wales as their spiritual home and hundreds of South Koreans come to Wales every year on pilgrimage. Others stay longer, and there are currently four Korean-speaking congregations in Wales and two South Korean leaders of English-language Welsh churches. Cardiff International Church had its beginning in 2008, when Bridgend-based South Korean Pastor Gi Jung Song began to dedicate time and effort to helping 25 North Korean asylum seekers from 11 families in practical and spiritual ways. The church has grown into a truly multicultural church in the years since then. Over the last nine years, they have had people from 91 nations (20 currently) in their services – from 26 European nations, 16 African nations, 34 Asian nations, 13 nations in the Americas and two nations in Oceania.



A barbecue in Bute Park organised by City, Church, Cardiff. Nations represented: Eritrea, Jamaica, Nigeria

Missionaries from the Presbyterian Church of Wales were also fruitful in bringing Christianity to tribes in north east India. Christians of Mizoram state, now 87% Christian, see the Presbyterian Church of Wales as the 'mother church' and pray daily for Wales. Revd Dr Sangkhuma Hmar came with his wife and family from Mizoram in 2006 to work for the Presbyterian Church in Wales, and has been serving faithfully for them since that time as Mission Enabler.

The link with Patagonia is, of course, also worth mentioning. The Welsh-Argentinian Christian link has been preserved over the years since the first settlers arrived in 1865. In recent years, this has been through missionaries and

ministers from Wales serving in the Welsh chapels of Chubut. There have also been some Patagonian Christians who have come to Wales and currently Judith Jones is working in north Wales for the Presbyterian Church of Wales.

Despite Christianity being the predominant religion of Wales and the presence of hundreds of churches here, the integration of Majority World Christians into Welsh society is not automatic, owing to linguistic, cultural and other barriers. Churches and Wales' Christians, nevertheless, are playing a pivotal role in helping their brothers and sisters in faith adapt to life in Wales. The needs of Majority World Christian communities in Wales are diverse. Some are perhaps insular through a focus on the employment, educational, health and housing needs of their own community. With others, such as Eastern European Roma, trust needs to be established because of discrimination experienced. At least two Christian communities are currently looking for premises that can be used for Sunday services while the Armenian community are still seeking closure over the 1915 Armenian Genocide because of Turkey's policy of Armenian genocide denial.

It is not uncommon to find an elderly African lady worshipping alongside a student from south east Asia, a businessman from the Valleys or a homeless person from Cardiff

Recent years have seen the growth of some excellent multicultural churches in Wales, each telling a unique story. City Church, for example – until 2016 known as City Temple – has been a landmark church in Cardiff since it began in 1934, growing out of the worldwide Pentecostal revival of the early 1900s. The diverse and multicultural character of the church began to form in its early days as growing numbers of Christians from Cardiff's Caribbean community began to attend. The appointment of Chris Cartwright as senior pastor in 1997 further strengthened this, as he had come from a multicultural church in London and gave Majority World Christians in the congregation an added sense of belonging. Today, the church has over 40 nationalities represented in its services and it is not uncommon to find an elderly African lady worshipping alongside a student from south east Asia, a businessman from the Valleys or a homeless person from Cardiff.

Meanwhile in Newport, Bethel Community Church currently has around 25 nationalities represented in its congregation. Bethel has always been a lively and vibrant church but after Newport became an asylum dispersal area in 2004,



A baptism service at City Church, Cardiff. Nations represented: Eritrea, Iran, Uganda

church work among asylum seekers and refugees developed, strengthening the church's focus on social inclusion and developing a sense of community.

A further way that host Christian communities in Wales have assisted Majority World Christians is through providing buildings or rooms to be used for church services. To highlight a few examples, St Mark's Church and Emmanuel Baptist Church, both in Cardiff, are used by Tamil Christians, Pantygywydr Baptist Church in Swansea and Highfields Church in Cardiff are used by Iranian Christians, City Church in Cardiff is used by Eritrean and Ethiopian Christians while Rhiwbina Baptist Church in Cardiff is used by the Arabic Church.

Many Majority World Christians come from cultures where religiosity is strong, compared with parts of Europe where

The average Christian now is female, black and living in a Brazilian favela or an African village

Religious and ethnic identities are often stronger than national identity, especially in those parts of Asia and Africa where states are weak or failing

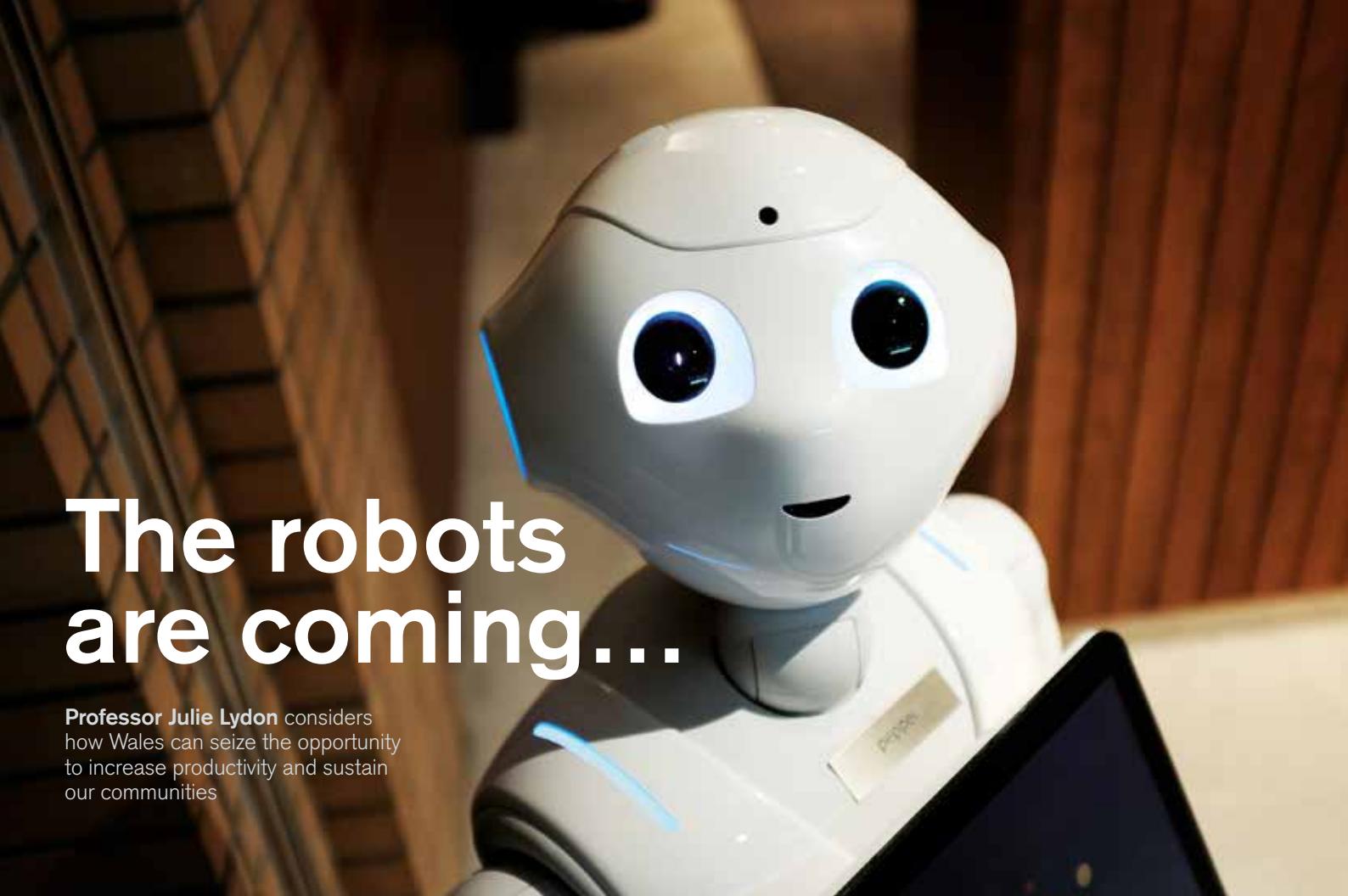
culture has become very secular. With the former, religious and ethnic identities often outweigh national identity, especially in those parts of Asia and Africa where states are weak or failing. This explains the importance attached by Majority World Christian communities to establishing a place of worship.

This summer Evangelical Alliance (EA) Wales organised an exhibition at the Senedd that highlighted the contribution to Welsh society of the growing number of Majority World Christians in Wales. Over 100 Welsh Christians whose countries of origin were predominantly in Asia, Africa and Oceania, came together to mark the opening of the work which told the stories and celebrated the achievements of these often remarkable groups of people. In the weeks ahead, EA Wales will be consulting

with the groups and individuals who contributed with a view to seeing how this work can be developed, in particular to raise awareness, improve cohesion and encourage greater participation in public life. It certainly seems to have struck a chord with many Majority World Christians and others, giving a fresh sense of hope and encouragement. In the uncertain times in which we are living, that can only be a good thing.



Jim Stewart is Public Policy Officer for Evangelical Alliance Wales



The robots are coming...

Professor Julie Lydon considers how Wales can seize the opportunity to increase productivity and sustain our communities

Much has been made of Wales' distinctiveness, from its unique geographical features to its historic language and culture. This distinctiveness applies equally to the nation's economic, employment and skills needs. The risks of automation and the oft-mentioned 'rise of the machines' have been frequent features in newspapers, articles and think pieces over the past few years, and Wales' response to the challenges that automation brings will need to be distinctively Welsh too.

The definition of automation and Industry 4.0 has by now been well-articulated: a future where machines, devices and people work alongside each other, with machines and devices carrying out tasks autonomously, making decisions and communicating with each other. These fast-coming technological leaps have consequences for Wales' workforce. Recent

analysis by PricewaterhouseCoopers found that up to 30% of UK jobs could potentially be at high risk of automation by the early 2030s. The same analysis found that, based on the risk of job automation and the proportion of the workforce, the most vulnerable areas are retail trade, manufacturing, and administrative support services.

These sectors are important parts of the Welsh economy, accounting for over half a million jobs in Wales. The proportion of employees in these areas in Wales tends to be higher than the UK as a whole. The risks posed by automation reach far across sectors and job-type. Work by the Institute of Public Policy Research predicts that by 2025 up to 30% of corporate audits, a traditionally 'white collar' profession, could be performed by artificial intelligence. And where jobs themselves aren't automated, automation will fundamentally change what

many jobs look like and involve.

Understanding the scope and impact these technological developments will have on the Welsh workplace is made even harder by the difficulty in predicting the exact nature of jobs in the near future. Recent work by Microsoft had leading technologists consider the jobs of the future, predicting job titles such as 'Virtual Habitat Designer' and 'Biohacker'.

These kinds of jobs may or may not come to pass and the Welsh workforce has shown that it can adapt to a changing world. However, we must still confront what these predicted and foreseeable changes mean for Wales and how we are to respond to them. Analysis by PricewaterhouseCoopers found that for those educated to GCSE-level or below, the estimated potential risks of automation are as high as 46%. This falls to only around 12% for those with undergraduate

degrees or higher. These findings come against a backdrop of already increasing demand for higher level skills with the CBI's Education and Skills Survey 2016 finding that more than three quarters of businesses in the UK expected to have more job openings for people with higher level skills over the coming year. The 2015 UKCES Employer Skills Survey found that the increase in the number of skills shortage vacancies in Wales outstripped the overall growth in vacancies.

Through this lens, the challenge facing Wales, and specifically education providers in Wales, becomes clearer. Demand for higher-level skills is increasing, and jobs at graduate level or higher are the least at risk to automation. To meet the increasing demand, and to enable the Welsh workforce to develop future skills whilst benefitting from automation, Wales must be able respond flexibly and quickly in providing people with the skills they need.

The challenges to doing this are multifaceted. Firstly, how do we identify skills needs and prepare Wales for the future? One important part of this is the interaction between businesses, people, and universities. By facilitating and expanding spaces and opportunities for

The workplace is changing, undergoing what Germany originally called a fourth industrial revolution

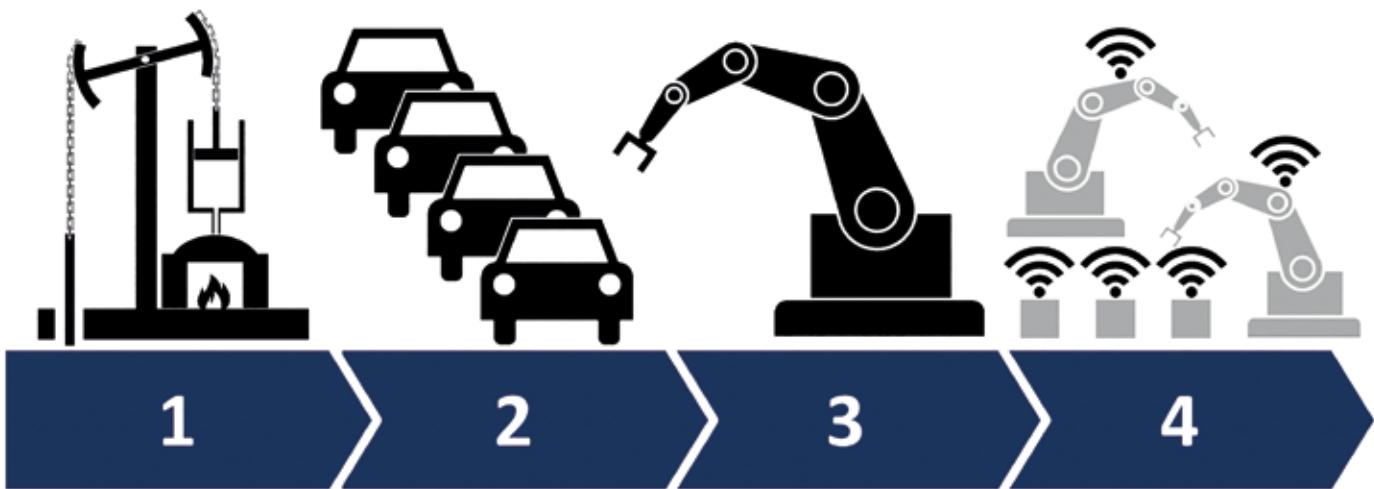
businesses and universities to collaborate, we can also create a greater flow of information between the two. This will not only highlight what existing skills needs are, but research and innovation by universities and businesses will give shape to the jobs of the future, and the skills that will be needed to fill them.

Wales is well-placed for this. Established areas of expertise in Wales such as smart and clean energy, advanced materials, cyber security, and compound semiconductors are widely seen as core sectors for the future of both the UK and global economy. And beyond these areas, research by universities in Wales is diverse and ambitious, the recent Research Excellence Framework exercise found Wales to have the highest percentage in the UK of research whose impact is

considered to be 'world leading' with almost half of it considered to be having a transformational effect on society and the economy.

The strength of research in Wales helps us understand what changes are coming, but this is only a part of the picture. We must also make sure that the ways in which we offer higher level skills can reach those that need them, and that provision is responsive to both the needs of businesses and individuals. Wales has an ageing population with increases in life expectancy set to continue and the number of people over 65 set to increase by 25% over the next 20 years.

With this in mind, as well as providing education and training to young people just entering the labour market, it will become increasingly important to ensure





that those already in the workforce are given the opportunity to upskill and retrain as the economy and the workplace enters a period of predicted rapid change. For this, we may need to explore and expand different ways of delivery, including ways to deliver degrees in the workplace. With the right structures, universities delivering degrees in the workplace could offer a choice to those who want to work full-time while studying, or whose circumstances may preclude them from committing to a full-time degree.

And what do we mean when we say skills? There are many components to someone's 'skills'. There are the cognitive skills such as literacy, numeracy and problem-solving, social and behavioural skills that enable us to collaborate, to work in teams and form partnerships, and there are technical skills which are often occupation specific. In the coming decades, many people in Wales will need to update and relearn technical skills as

Recent work by Microsoft had leading technologists consider the jobs of the future, predicting job titles such as 'Virtual Habitat Designer' and 'Biohacker'

occupations and technology change. A strong foundation in cognitive and social skills will help give people the flexibility and adaptability needed to do so.

The workplace is changing, undergoing what Germany originally called a fourth industrial revolution. For Wales there are risks, but also opportunities. Universities have an important role: in their communities working alongside colleges, as education providers, and working with businesses. This role means they are well-placed to not only identify the new jobs taking shape now and in the future, but also how best to develop, in collaboration with other education providers and employers, the skills these jobs will require.



Professor Julie Lydon OBE is Chair of Universities Wales and Vice Chancellor of the University of South Wales



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Earning Potential: What Welsh graduates can expect

Dafydd Trystan and **Hugh Jones** provide an analysis of new data that paints a detailed picture linking university courses to median graduate salaries

In June 2017 the Longitudinal Education Outcome (LEO), the first full data set of earnings data from University courses across the UK, was published. The information matches HE data about graduates' courses with earnings data from PAYE records at HMRC. As such it provides a powerful comparator of the salaries students at different universities studying different courses can expect to achieve. Some analysis has been undertaken of the UK-level data – most notably by the WonkHE blog – but so far no specific attention has been accorded to the data for Welsh Universities. It is also timely given the focus in Wales on the implementation of the Diamond proposals and, more broadly, the discussions about student fees across the UK.

Before considering the data in detail,

it is important to understand the context. This is raw data – the earnings data does not reflect the students' prior attainment or indeed their chosen location for post-university work. The data only include PAYE records – individuals who are self-employed or have more complex tax affairs are not included. This is a particular issue for some degree schemes where mixed patterns of employment are more routine, for example in the creative industries. Finally, one should be very wary about rushing to judgment about the comparative quality of universities in the different nations and regions of Great Britain. The data may well reflect the range of subjects taught at individual universities or more broadly reflect differences in regional wages. Data users need to beware of drawing simple conclusions.

Having placed the data in its appropriate context, we begin by comparing subjects across all Welsh universities.

It is probably no great surprise that Medicine and Dentistry is the most lucrative degree course five years after graduating – and the gap between that and the rest is indeed significant. There is then a cluster of subjects where graduates can expect to earn up to £30,000 including engineering, architecture and nursing. On the lower earnings side, Creative Arts and Design fares particularly poorly with earnings falling below a benchmark Wales-wide average for adults with or without degrees of £20,800. Now, there may be some high earning artists whose data aren't included here, but the

scale of difference is significant – and an undoubted challenge to the sector. (It should also be noted that the data shows salaries five years after graduation: the comparison with Wales-wide average salaries is the best available, but has to be treated with caution.)

Considering subject based data is one approach, but we can also compare universities and the earnings outcomes.

Here the differences are less stark, but there is a clear pattern. Graduates from Cardiff University are most likely to earn well after graduation, while Swansea's graduates fare relatively well in the salary market. The picture is less positive (and broadly consistent) for the remainder of the Welsh University sector, with Trinity St David graduates' salaries even falling a little below our benchmark average. An initial analysis of these data would suggest that earnings differentials across Wales have a significant impact on the earnings of graduates – particularly in those areas with large numbers of students who stay after graduation within the locale of the University.

Finally, we bring together subjects and universities and create a weighted table of earnings by subject and university. Wales' top 10 courses in terms of earning potential are listed in Table One (opposite).

The data here adds more nuance to the picture already discussed. It is striking that the subject table isn't totally dominated by Cardiff University. Here we find that particular courses have excellent earnings outcomes, despite the broader picture for

Facts & Figures

Table One

Wales HEIs: Subjects and Median Graduate Earnings 5 years after graduation

Agriculture & related subjects	19,500
Architecture Building & Planning	28,600
Biological sciences	21,900
Business & administrative studies	25,500
Computer science	25,100
Creative arts & design	17,800
Economics	27,400
Education	21,700
Engineering & Technology	30,200
English studies	21,900
Historical & philosophical studies	22,000
Languages (excluding English studies)	23,500
Law	23,100
Mass communications & documentation	21,200
Mathematical sciences	26,700
Medicine & Dentistry	47,800
Nursing	28,000
Physical sciences	24,200
Psychology	21,700
Social studies (excluding economics)	22,500
Subjects allied to medicine (excluding Nursing)	26,200

Table Two:
**Graduate Earnings One-Year, Three years
and Five years after graduating**

HEI	1	3	5
Aberystwyth University	14,700	18,500	21,500
Bangor University	15,500	18,700	21,100
Cardiff Metropolitan University	16,000	19,900	22,300
Cardiff University	21,700	26,400	29,700
Glyndwr University	17,500	20,200	21,800
Swansea University	18,000	21,200	24,300
University of South Wales	16,500	19,500	21,600
University of Wales Trinity Saint David	14,500	17,700	20,400

Table 3:
**The 'top 10' subjects / courses in
Wales for earning outcomes**

1	Medicine & Dentistry	Cardiff University
2	Engineering & Technology	Cardiff University
3	Engineering & Technology	Glyndwr University
4	Subjects allied to medicine (excluding nursing)	Cardiff University
5	Mathematical sciences	Cardiff University
6	Nursing	Cardiff University
7	Architecture, Building & Planning	University of South Wales
8	Engineering & Technology	Swansea University
9	Nursing	University of South Wales
10	Economics	Cardiff University

the host University. A case in point is the engineering and technology graduates from Glyndŵr who consistently fare better than 95% of other courses. A few moments' reflection leads one to consider the links between Glyndŵr University and Airbus and the prospects of well-paid graduate employment within the immediate vicinity of the University. A different focus comes from the appearance of several health professions in the top 10. Nursing fares consistently well in earnings outcomes from every University course in Wales – a testament to both the

common pay structure of the NHS across the UK but also of the close links between Schools of Nursing, the Welsh Government and the Health Boards (the major employers) in Wales.

Comparisons with Scotland and the English regions

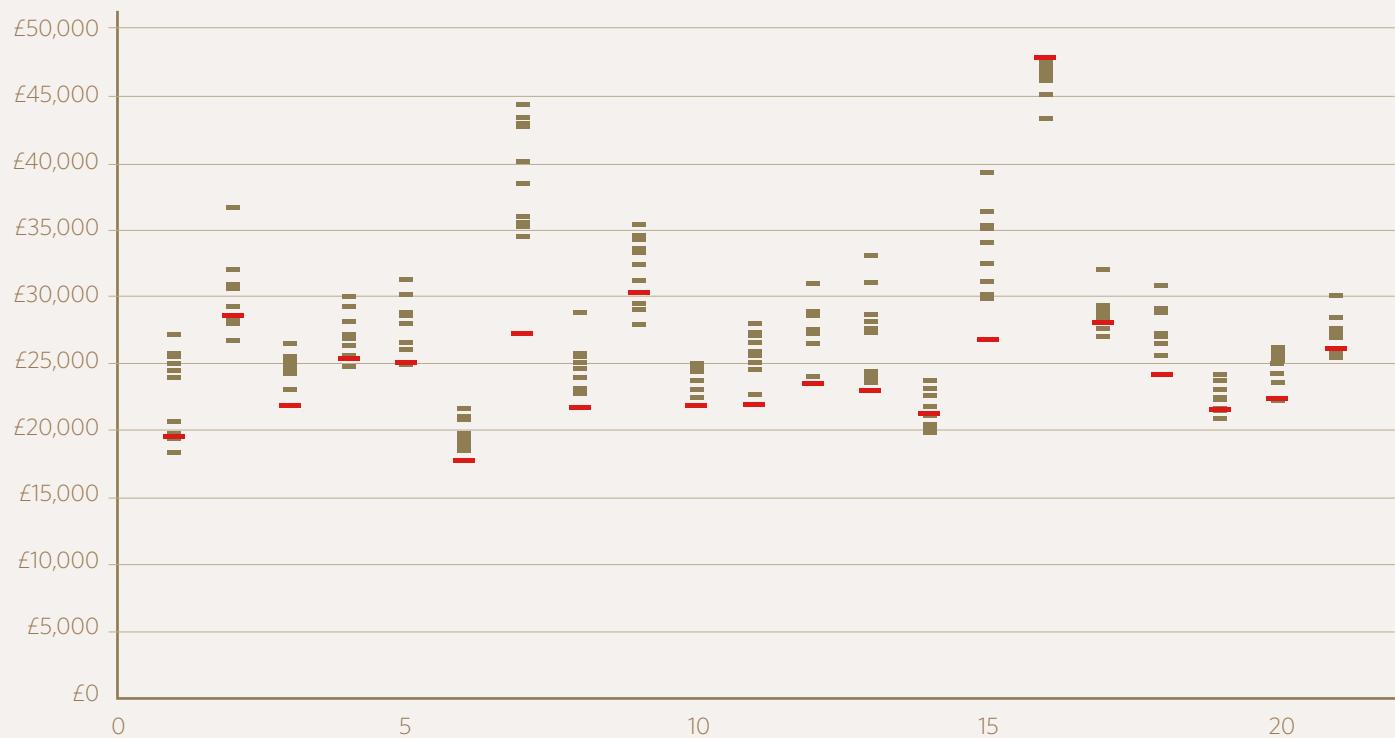
In comparison with Scotland and with the English regions, the data shows that in most disciplines, Wales is ranked lowly. Of the 22 disciplines, median salary for Welsh graduates is the lowest in 10; and is among

the bottom three in six others. Only in Medicine and Dentistry do Welsh graduates have the highest median salary.

Neither Scotland nor any of the English regions have median salaries consistently as low as they are in Wales. The north west of England has the lowest in five of 22 disciplines; no other region or nation has more than two.

The chart illustrates graphically this position: the red bar for Wales is almost always near the bottom.

Table Four
Weighted median salaries 5 years after graduation: Wales, Scotland and English regions



Policy conclusions

Students will no doubt consider these graduate outcomes data alongside the increasing amount of granular data that they can now access about university courses. We would suggest, however, that here context is king. Subjects that are clearly linked to professional outcomes fare well – health professions particularly but also engineering and technology. There are however a number of courses where the graduate premium is less obvious, and a challenge to the sector in Wales is to improve employability for students on those courses.

Other research demonstrates the significant boost in likelihood of graduate

level employment for students who have undertaken a period of work experience during their university career. More challengingly, however, there are clear differences between the impact on local economies of some courses or subjects. Government may wish to consider the public policy benefit of incentivising students to choose particular subjects, and for universities to prioritise those disciplines. The related challenge here is that if numbers of prospective students are to be controlled, then government must be able to direct resources to those areas to ensure the quality of provision.

More broadly however, this data also points to the parlous state of the economy

in much of Wales – and the challenge faced by Government, universities and society more broadly in developing the economy. Successfully addressing that key question would have a very significant impact indeed on the earnings potential of students, both currently and in the future.



Dr Dafydd Trystan is Registrar of the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol. **Hugh Jones** is a Cardiff-based consultant supporting the higher education sector across the UK



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'We don't have to catastrophise'

Ahead of the opening of *P.A.R.A.D.E.*, a reimagining of the 1917 ballet that birthed a cultural revolution to match the politics of that fateful year, Dylan Moore meets **Marc Rees** and **Caroline Finn**

Caroline Finn. Image: Mark Douet

'It's just a peg,' says Marc Rees, running through a brief history of Wales' connections with the Russian Revolution being commemorated in the R17 season that takes in Chekhov, Shostakovich and an entire season of Welsh National Opera. 'Lenin wrote to the South Wales miners, and there was the establishment of Hughesovka, but we're not exploring that. An anniversary is just a convenient peg to put things on.'

'What we are doing,' chips in Caroline Finn, Artistic Director of National Dance Company Wales, 'is putting it in the context of today. And in some ways it's a little scary, that in some respects the world hasn't progressed at all... we're still facing the same situations and in terms of the essence of the feelings of the people, things have not changed much at all.'

'It's the *cultural* revolution that we're celebrating,' enthuses Rees, emphasising the pivotal importance of the original *Parade* (pronounced the French way) that opened in May 1917 at the Theatre du Chatelet in Paris. In the programme notes, poet Guillaume Apollinaire described the ballet as 'a sort of surrealism', thus coining a concept that was to describe much of the art created in Europe in the period that followed. The remarkable show, which drew on popular entertainments of the era - music hall, silent film and fairgrounds - blew open the elite world of ballet with its experimentalism and ensuing scandals as the critics reacted badly to the provocation the artists obviously delighted in making.

Parade was a collaboration between a 'supergroup', comprising composer Erik Satie, writer Jean Cocteau, conductor Ernest Ansermet and choreographer Leonide Massine directing Sergei Diaghilev's Ballets Russes. Pablo Picasso designed the costumes in a cubist style that massively restricted the movement of the dancers. This was theatre of the absurd decades before that phrase came in vogue.

Marc Rees is quick to insist that P.A.R.A.D.E. is not a cover version. In fact, Rees and Finn's *Parade* is just one half of a double bill that also includes Marcos Morau's piece *Tundra*; together the two

THE BEAUTY OF CONTEMPORARY DANCE IS THAT IT'S AN INCREDIBLE TOOL TO BE ABLE TO SAY SOMETHING VERY POWERFUL WITHOUT HAVING YOUR HEAD CHOPPED OFF

works are being bannered as P.A.R.A.D.E. 'It's not even a remix, really. The only thing that's the same is the music.' He describes 'this extraordinary score by Erik Satie', which uses foghorns, mop and bucket, gunshot, and milk bottles, and delights in the fact that the BBC National Orchestra of Wales will be producing a 'pure' version of what was clearly designed to be provocative as well as surreal. 'Imagine ballet,' says Rees, 'this artform for the *crachach* - the snobs - and then you've got these everyday street things, making this music that drew from ragtime'.

I observe that *Parade*'s status as what Marc Rees happily calls 'a museum piece' creates a unique set of challenges for the artists. Rees' previous work has included the madcap adventure of *For Mountain, Sand and Sea* in Barmouth (2010), the cultural olympiad inside an aeroplane of *Adain Avion* (2012) and the multidisciplinary spectacle of *{150}* to mark another anniversary (the

sesquicentennial of the founding of Y Wladfa in Patagonia, 2015). So, how does he go about creating a surreal, playful, contemporary response to the iconic piece that invented both surrealism and, in some respects, the kind of boundary-pushing work that he has previously produced?

Looking out across Cardiff Bay, Rees cites the site-specificity of where we are sitting: the Senedd juxtaposed with the closing-down *Dr Who Experience*. 'We've chosen to clash politics and sci-fi,' he explains, referencing Fritz Lang's Weimar-era dystopian film *Metropolis*, which has its own associations with communism, as a major influence on P.A.R.A.D.E. '*Metropolis* has given us a kind of visual aesthetic, which fits well with the second half of the evening.' Rees explains that *Tundra* is 'a freakish, futuristic folk dance'

A major feature of our conversation is the artists' reluctance to be drawn into



Image: Mark Douet



discussing too many specifics about the production, perhaps understandably given their primary hope that 'it will be surprising'. What I do manage to prise from Marc Rees is that 'it will not be everybody's cup of tea', and from Caroline Finn the idea that collaboration has been 'at the heart of the journey that Marc has been on.' The creative fusion that has happened is reflected in the way the two overlap and finish each others' sentences, and in the way they laugh about having bonded over a mutual love of Caroline's dog.

As a result, Rees admits that 'this won't be a typical Marc Rees show – and it certainly won't be a typical show for the

WMC.' He pauses and adds: 'Some of the original artists were imprisoned for being cultural anarchists; people threw oranges at the orchestra; somebody slapped Erik Satie. We're honouring how radical *Parade* was. We're focusing on that pioneering ballet. We shouldn't be afraid of creating something out there. That's a note to self, by the way.'

The collaborative nature of the project extends to its connection with dancers from grassroots community groups like Dawns i Bawb (in North Wales) and Rubicon (in Cardiff), and just like *Parade*, P.A.R.A.D.E. has drawn together a kind of artistic supergroup, including the graffiti artist Pure Evil and the architecture installation artist Jenny Hall. Students at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama have been involved in creating the costumes.

I ask about whose idea it was to reimagine *Parade* in the first place, and Finn is quick to credit her Rehearsal Director, Lee Johnston. 'Since we started brainstorming the idea it's become even more relevant – almost by coincidence,' she confides. 'We tour, we work with international artists. 50% of the dancers are not from the UK, and they're in a fragile situation.' But Finn is determined that 'an

ever-changing landscape' and the doom and gloom predicted in the wake of Brexit and the election of President Trump doesn't necessarily spell the end for progressivism or Western civilisation. 'We don't have to catastrophe,' she insists.

Her own artform is symbolic of the fact that 'we have more possibilities than we think we do. There's a universality to dance, and an ambiguity that is open to interpretation. The beauty of contemporary dance is that it's an incredible tool to be able to say something very powerful without having your head chopped off.'

It is this positive political message, couched in the abstraction of dance, that Rees ends on too: 'There is a narrative within abstraction that is not didactic. Art has to be the heart, otherwise, what's the point in anything? That's what the piece is trying to say.'

SOME OF THE ORIGINAL ARTISTS WERE IMPRISONED FOR BEING CULTURAL ANARCHISTS; PEOPLE THREW ORANGES AT THE ORCHESTRA; SOMEBODY SLAPPED ERIK SATIE. WE'RE HONOURING HOW RADICAL PARADE WAS



Dylan Moore is Editor of *the welsh agenda*. P.A.R.A.D.E. is at the Wales Millennium Centre, Cardiff (24-25 October) and at Pontio, Bangor (28-29 October)

How Red Was My Valley?

Dr Ben Curtis gives an assessment of the historical significance of the Communist Party within the south Wales coalfield

In March 1962, the *Western Mail* published a three-part report on the influence of the Communist Party (CP) in the south Wales coalfield, particularly within the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) there. Although the reports noted that 'Communism seems largely to have vanished from the valleys where it once growled like a tiger', they nevertheless commented that 'It is as traditional that a Communist be president of the South Wales NUM as it is that the chairman [sic] of the Cheltenham Women's Institute be a Conservative'.

There was an important element of truth in these observations. The south Wales coalfield was one of the very few places in the UK where the CP succeeded in establishing a significant long-term presence – and was particularly to the forefront in the troubled years of

the interwar period. Within this, more specifically, Communists were able to attain and retain a degree of prominence within the South Wales NUM; this remained a long time after the broader influence of the CP within the coalfield had waned. This short article will offer a brief assessment of this remarkable element in the modern political and industrial history of south Wales.

Support for Communism in the south Wales coalfield grew out of the circumstances in the coal industry in the early years of the twentieth century. By the eve of the Great War in 1914, the south Wales miners had already acquired a formidable reputation for radicalism. Between 1901 and 1913, Welsh miners were 70 per cent more strike-prone than the British average and also five-and-a-half times more strike-prone than the British average for all workers. A major strike at

REVOLUTIONARY UPHEAVALS IN RUSSIA IN 1917 WERE GREETED WITH WIDESPREAD AND ENTHUSIASTIC SUPPORT IN THE SOUTH WALES COALFIELD. PETROGRAD-STYLE WORKERS' COUNCILS APPEARED IN THE RHONDDA AND RED FLAGS FLEW AT SOME PIT-HEADS

collieries in the Rhondda area in 1910–11 heralded the emergence of south Wales as a 'storm centre' of industrial unrest, involved large-scale and persistent unrest not only during the Tonypandy riots of November 1910 but for months thereafter.

Support for radical socialist politics was encouraged within South Wales Miners' Federation (SWMF) – as the miners' union was then called – by the Unofficial Reform Committee (a grouping of rank-and-file activists) and their influential and famous pamphlet *The Miners' Next Step* (published in 1912), as well as in the coalfield more generally by the Plebs' League (an organisation which promoted Marxist-oriented adult education classes). In a rules conference in July 1917, these militants succeeded in rewriting the constitution of the SWMF to include the abolition of capitalism amongst the union's objectives.

The revolutionary upheavals in Russia in 1917 were greeted with widespread and enthusiastic support in the south Wales coalfield. Petrograd-style workers' councils appeared in the Rhondda and red flags flew at some pit-heads. When the Communist Party of Great Britain was formed in 1920 via the merger of several smaller Marxist parties and organisations (including the South Wales Socialist Society), it became the main

vehicle for revolutionary left-wing politics in the country.

By 1918, it was clear that the popular culture of the south Wales miners had come to adopt radical socialist tones. An enthusiastic contemporary observer claimed that Marx's writings had become household words. Similarly, in 1921 a prominent Swansea Liberal lamented that 'Marx's *Capital* has displaced the Bible from the minds of thousands of young Welshmen'. As a reflection of this, the miners' leaders were also increasingly militant. S.O. Davies, for example, elected Dowlais miners' agent in 1918, was a committed Marxist. A.J. Cook described himself as 'a humble follower of Lenin'. Arthur Horner, the future SWMF president, was a long-term Communist Party member and activist.

The 1918–39 period was an extremely difficult one for the south Wales coalfield, characterised by a dramatic decline in the fortunes of its coal industry and bitter industrial unrest. The General Strike and miners' lockout of 1926 proved to be a key turning-point, a disastrous defeat from which the labour movement did not recover for a generation. Afterwards, Communists played an important role in the essentially defensive rearguard actions that ensued. The Hunger Marches from south Wales which took place in the late 1920s and early 1930s were largely the work of Communist activists and sympathisers. These paved the way for the much larger anti-unemployment protests of the mid-1930s. In February 1935, about 300,000 people demonstrated in south Wales against the government's unemployment relief policies, the biggest demonstration in Welsh history. South Wales coalfield society also gave extensive support to the republican government during the Spanish Civil War including, most famously, supplying many volunteers to the International Brigade who went to fight in Spain. This support was due largely to campaigning by the SWMF, itself encouraged and galvanised by Communist activists. Undoubtedly, the Communist Party played an important role in the south Wales coalfield in the 1930s. Within the SWMF,

AS LATE AS 1979, ANNIE POWELL BECAME MAYOR OF RHONDDA BOROUGH COUNCIL – BRITAIN'S ONLY UNAMBIGUOUSLY COMMUNIST MAYOR

its energetic work gave it an influence unparalleled elsewhere in British trade unionism. The election of Arthur Horner as president of the SWMF in 1936, a major victory for the CP, is a clear example of this.

Communist influence was not evenly spread across the coalfield but tended to be concentrated in particular regions and also individual colliery branches (known as lodges). The main area of CP influence was in and around the Rhondda valleys but other areas had strong Communist sympathies too – such as the upper Dulais Valley and the village of Bedlinog, near Merthyr Tydfil. Maerdy, in the upper Rhondda Fach, was nicknamed 'Little Moscow' during the 1926 lockout on account of the extent of its staunch Communism!

Communist influence in the electoral politics of the coalfield was less apparent than its role within the SWMF. After 1922 the south Wales coalfield was an absolute Labour stronghold, with every constituency electing a Labour MP. Within this, though, the CP was certainly the main political opposition to Labour in the 1930s. By 1935 the CP had a total of sixteen elected councillors in the coalfield, seven of whom were from the Rhondda. Communist candidates performed strongly in various parliamentary elections in the 1930s, principally in the Rhondda area. In the 1945 general election, the CP lost by only 972 votes in Rhondda East. Overall, though, it should be emphasised that they remained a long way behind Labour. No Communist was ever elected to parliament from the coalfield and the party made

a significant impression only on a few local government bodies. (This influence lingered in some districts, though. As late as 1979, for example, Annie Powell became Mayor of Rhondda Borough Council – Britain's only unambiguously Communist mayor.) Undoubtedly, Labour dominated the politics of the coalfield – a pattern which still essentially continues down to the present day.

The post-war period saw a decline in the significance of the Communist Party within south Wales as a whole. Partly this was because circumstances in the coal industry were not as dire (until the 1980s) as they had been in the 1930s. No doubt, too, the onset of the Cold War made overt support for Communism more problematic and less popular. Even so, Communists continued to play a noteworthy role within the South Wales NUM, within local colliery lodges and the leadership as a whole. There was certainly some basis for the *Western Mail* quotation referred to at the

MAERDY, IN THE UPPER RHONDDA FACH, WAS NICKNAMED 'LITTLE MOSCOW'

beginning of this article; many of the union's leaders were Communists. These included Arthur Horner (president, 1936–46), Will Paynter (president, 1951–9), Will Whitehead (president, 1959–66), Dai Dan Evans (general secretary, 1958–63), and Dai Francis (general secretary, 1963–76). Furthermore, Communists within the NUM were amongst the staunchest advocates of more militant policies regarding wages and opposition to pit closures. These policies resulted in the victorious miners' strikes of 1972 and 1974, as well as the (ultimately unsuccessful) attempt to halt the colliery closure programme of the Thatcher government in the 1980s.

Overall, it is fair to say that the Communist Party and its supporters certainly were a significant factor in the south Wales coalfield in 1920s and 1930s, which did then decline in the second half of the twentieth century. We must take care not to exaggerate: at no stage did the Communist Party ever dominate the politics of the south Wales coalfield as a whole, nor come remotely close to doing so. Nevertheless, Communism *did* play a noteworthy and important role in the region, particularly via the work of its supporters within the NUM – and this marks it out as something remarkable and highly distinctive within modern British history.



Ben Curtis is a historian of the south Wales coalfield and the author of *The South Wales Miners, 1964–1985*

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Who cares for young carers?

Vanessa Webb outlines the outcomes of the stresses and strains on the lives of young carers, and calls for national monitoring to ensure a joined up approach

Young Carers

I presume that 'young carer' is now a fairly familiar concept. The idea of children taking on adult responsibilities for a family member with a disability, long-term condition, mental health issue or problem with substance abuse has been widely described by the media and has been the subject of academic research since 1988. The actual number of children under 16 providing unpaid care in Wales was estimated in the 2011 Census to be nearly 8,000. The Welsh Government itself quoted the figure of 11,000 in 2011 for young carers aged 5-17. Other estimates by researchers have suggested much higher figures since there are many 'hidden' young carers. Many families don't want people to know about their situation, afraid of the family being broken up, and young carers themselves fear shame and ridicule from their peers. It's also true that many young people don't recognise

what they do as unusual or meriting the description 'young carer'.

The negative effects on young people in this situation can easily be imagined. There is already abundant evidence of the time taken, of the emotional stress, of the physical effort and often also the unpredictability of the demands. In some cases this can impact on school work, damage health or severely limit social and personal time. Only appropriate and timely support can avoid this affecting the rest of children's lives. The Welsh Government recognised this problem and decided on a cross-policy approach to address this issue, stating most recently in the *Carers Strategy 2013-16* that they intended to 'integrate young carers and young adult carers fully into this Carers Strategy for Wales', unlike the Scottish Government, which produced a separate Young Carers Strategy in 2010. The Wales strategy made young carers one of the priorities and recognised the additional issues for young carers aged 0-15 and young adult carers aged 16-18. However, a cross-cutting approach demands a major effort by numerous agencies to understand young carers' issues, to identify them and to learn how to support them so I wondered how this was working out in practice.

A survey of provision

A survey of provision showed that only Social Services and the Young Carers Projects delivered support directly. The projects, managed mostly by third sector organisations, provide group social activities, advice and information and emotional support. To achieve this they often provide respite to enable the young carers to get away and transport to assist them to participate. Social Services and the projects networks are overstretched and concerned about their capacity to deal with unmet need. Meanwhile the projects are not always financially safe. Responses to a question on sources of referrals to Social Services and the projects disclosed that Health was the poorest source, GPs being the poorest of all, and that very few referrals came from leisure and youth services.

Interviews with young carers

Interviews with 62 young carers aged 11-16 in projects in Mid and South Wales focused on measurable short-term outcomes that had a knock-on long-term impact: literacy, emotional literacy, performance at school, health and social capital. To consider literacy, as a group young carers' scores were below those of young people their age in the general population. Individually,

although there were some high-scoring individuals, 71% were below their age equivalent in reading and 86% below their age equivalent in spelling.

A questionnaire developed with the help of a small group of young carers covered other areas such as performance at school. Between answering questions on attendance, punctuality and completion of homework, comments from participants made it clear that parents and young carers themselves made great efforts. More than one participant said that with homework they just stayed up until it was done. Several said that they were never late nor left homework unfinished, because 'my mother wouldn't let me!' Some anecdotal material revealed that teachers did not always grasp these children's circumstances - for example, requests for extensions on assignments had been refused. Most concerning is the fact that 44% reported worrying about family whilst at school. These responses raise questions about the effectiveness of schools in implementing the recommendations of the Welsh Government, the Children's Commissioner and the Princess Royal Trust on identifying and supporting young carers.

Results from the emotional literacy test were similar to those from the literacy



A cross-cutting approach demands a major effort by numerous agencies to understand young carers' issues, to identify them and to learn how to support them

Stock photo, posed by model

test. Although some individuals had above average scores, at a group level the score was below that of their age-equivalent in the general population. Exploration of young carers' social and leisure activities produced much new empirical data in a relatively unexplored area. Data about young carers' lives outside caring and outside school form an important part of the foundation of later outcomes. These activities enable young people to build social capital. Familiarising themselves with the adult world, and the world outside their immediate family, prepares young people to participate in adult life. The potential of caring responsibilities to interfere with age-specific development is therefore significant, especially where the formal education route to employability and engagement with wider society may have been affected.

section, 19% scored zero for use of public facilities and a further 15% visited only one public facility only sometimes. Asked about voluntary and paid Saturday jobs, 46% had done neither. This degree of non-participation could in part explain the lack of responses from social organisations to requests for participants during the recruitment phase of the study.

The questionnaire enabled data collection of biographical details and the caring profile. 51% of this group were providing more than five hours care per day, some saying 'all the time available'. Some had been in a caring role 'as long as they could remember'. Only 39% were having help from an external source, i.e. Social Services or a voluntary organisation. 66% had not had or could not remember having training for their caring tasks and 58% had no information on their entitlements.

having someone at home with whom they could share their feelings. This emotional outlet could presumably override economic factors. Interestingly, the caring factor most associated with negative outcomes was the amount of time spent in providing emotional support for the cared for person.

A strong correlation was found between outcomes in emotional literacy, performance at school, health and social capital, supporting the case for the Welsh Government's cross-cutting approach. However, there are indications that the sectors concerning young carers named in the *Carers' Strategy* – health; social services; education; transport; social and leisure activities – may not yet be fully aware of the difficulties young carers experience and therefore identifying and supporting them appropriately. The cross-cutting approach will only succeed where all agencies are contributing equally.

In a previous article for *the welsh agenda* (Spring/Summer 2012), I had recommended a specific Young Carers Strategy. Further down the line, armed with the results from this research, in the absence of a Young Carers' Strategy, I believe that the Welsh Government should consider designating responsibility at national level for monitoring provision across the board – schools, health agencies, leisure and youth agencies – following up with further research on outcomes in order to ensure a good future for young carers.

There was a strong association between positive outcomes and having someone at home with whom they could share their feelings

Questions covered group activities and individual activities outside school hours and participation at community level. In each of these categories, there were some who scored nil. For 10 of the 62, the only group activity was the local Young Carers Project. Between questions, many comments were made to the interviewer about the value and importance to them of what the Young Carer Project offered them. 61% never used a local library, 53% never used a leisure centre and 74% never used a community centre. In this 'community'

Nevertheless, every one of the participants reported feeling satisfaction at some level at helping their family member. The majority rated their own health as fairly or very good and a few individuals managed the energy and drive to pursue an amazing number of leisure activities.

Prompted to look for associations between outcomes and factors in their situation, surprisingly no association appeared between outcomes and socio-economic status but there was a strong association between positive outcomes and

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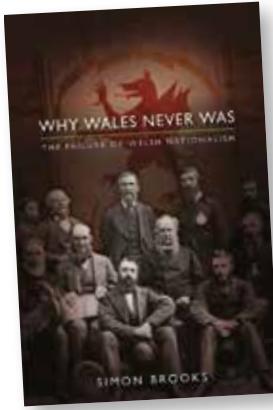
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Reviews

Why Wales Never Was: The Failure of Welsh Nationalism | Rebel Sun | Women who Blow on Knots | Aarhus 39 |
Hinterland – Ceredigion Landscapes | Into the Wind: the life of Carwyn James



Why Wales Never Was: the Failure of Welsh Nationalism

Simon Brooks
University of Wales Press, 2017

Aled Eirug

I declare an interest: I know and like the author. I work with him in the new Rhodri Morgan Academy based in Swansea University. He is one of the few academics in Wales today able to combine a knowledge of social and cultural history, literary theory and political thought. He is also a rare academic in combining his active 'praxis' as a councillor in Porthmadog in Gwynedd with his original and thought-provoking theoretical work.

This volume is a wonderfully provocative and stimulating account of the failure of Welsh nationalism, and Brooks' confident thesis is reflected in his stirring - and controversial - conclusion that 'the Welsh nation was murdered by its own left wing'. It attempts to overturn our conventional understanding

of Welsh history since the mid-nineteenth century which has focused on the growth of liberalism and the rise of Labour, and instead suggests that Wales' seduction by universalist liberalism was deleterious to the Welsh language and culture and prevented the growth of Welsh nationalism. Whilst Victorian industrial Wales was arguably the most modern society in the world, its middle class believed in *laissez-faire* liberalism rather than ethnically-based nationalism.

Brooks contends that Welsh nationalism failed because it gave English liberalism its unconditional support. He presents a conservative critique of the progressive politics of the time, and emphasises how it is the tendency of liberalism to promote the dominant, whilst claiming neutrality. His case rests on the basis of his study of Wales in the context of the growth of nationalism in the mid-nineteenth century and those small nations within the Habsburg Empire who clamoured for political independence and recognition of identity and language. Why didn't the same happen in Wales ?

He believes that the failure of nationalism in Wales is the 'failure of ideas'. He blames the Welsh establishment of the time, and specifically the liberal 'radical' Nonconformists, who believed in assimilation rather than retaining distinctiveness. They subsumed Welsh nationalism within the liberal ethos of universalism and British liberalism's view of Celtic nationalism as marginal and better subsumed within the greater needs of Empire.

The paragons of Liberalism he castigates are those in the pantheon of saintly radicals, such as Samuel Roberts, Llanbrynmair, Gwilym Hiraelthog and Lewis Edwards. Brooks' judgement is that these individuals played

a conscious part in the active denigration of the Welsh language and culture, although he does not persuade this reviewer that learning English necessarily meant forgetting the Welsh language. His argument, whilst superficially persuasive in placing Wales within the continental context, underestimates the difficulty of creating a viable nationalist movement at a time when Wales' economic development was so closely tied with that of England and Empire. His refreshing perspective on the mid-nineteenth century's growth of European ethno-nationalism colours his attitude towards the cultural and political reality of Wales' absorption into the Empire. His analysis dwells on the rural rather than industrial and lacks a consideration of the social impact of the growth of the coalfield, which changed south Wales radically by the end of the nineteenth century.

His synoptic approach provides an original perspective on a subject that is too often mired in received wisdoms and dogma. My main quibble is Brooks' inability to empathise with those he berates for their inability to foresee the impact of their political choice, which failed to give sufficient priority to Wales's political future and most crucially the needs of its language. To read Samuel Roberts' bitter denunciation of the oppressive regime by which the Williams Wynn family of Wynnstay abused their tenants and forced hundreds to leave for a better life in the United States should remind us that the right to the vote and land rights had more salience than nationalist aspirations in mid-nineteenth century Wales. The author criticises Gwilym Hiraelthog's campaign for Land Reform and its failure to point out that the injustice meted to the Welsh language by monoglot English landlords was central to the

issue, rather than 'merely reflecting a social wrong'. But the extremely well argued historical theme of this book seems to originate more in the author's frustration at what he feels as the failure in Wales to emulate the nationalists of central Europe, the Baltic countries and Italy and less so in an understanding of what motivated men like S.R. and Gwilym Hiraethog. It was certainly not simply a desire to please and 'assimilate'.

Brooks' heroes are Michael D. Jones and Emrys ap Iwan, who fought against the Liberal consensus and championed the Welsh language. Jones' despair at Wales' lack of desire for nationalism and raising the status of the Welsh language led him to opt out of political life in Wales and create a new self-governing colony in Patagonia.

Brooks argues that the Welsh were wronged because 'assimilatory liberalism had thrown dirt in their eyes'. He instances other minority nationalities such as the Slovaks, Slovenes and the Baltic peoples, where national identities were not as strong

as that of the Welsh in the nineteenth century, yet have now become sovereign nations in spite of years of Russian and/or German occupation, including Nazi occupation. Yet surely this is partly the reason why those countries clung on to their language and national identity so passionately: because they provided a bulwark against an oppressive and inhumane state. It may have been better for Welsh nationalism if England and the Empire had exhibited similar intolerance. But, as Brooks might think, the liberalism of the British state has been too clever for that, and in spite of devolution and the hiccup of Scottish exceptionalism, the continuity of the British state is still a cause of wonder.

Brooks has an original and refreshing perspective, and this book constitutes a challenge to Welsh historians, cultural and political commentators to raise their game. There are elements that will cause the liberal reader to throw it against the wall, since it challenges the present dominant Whiggish and Llafurist interpretation of Welsh history and

bolsters a considered alternative view of Welsh history that owes more to Saunders Lewis, and his concept of Welsh nationalism as a 'non-anglophone cosmopolitan nationalism'. As Lewis was out of sympathy with the liberal and labourist ethos of his age, so Brooks is out of sympathy with the nineteenth century Welsh radical Nonconformist leaders he berates. In provoking and challenging the reader in equal measure, we should thank him for being prepared to undermine cherished Welsh historical myths.



Aled Eirug was BBC Wales' Head of News and Current Affairs from 1992-2003 before becoming adviser to the Presiding Officer of the National Assembly from 2006-2011. He has also been chair of the Welsh Refugee Council and the British Council in Wales

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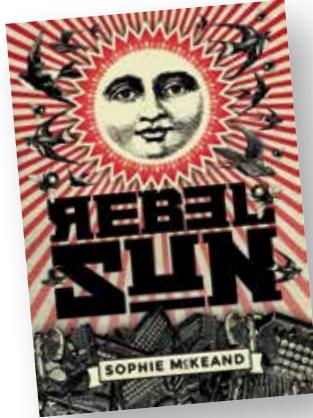
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Rebel Sun

Sophie McKeand
Parthian, 2017



Rachel Carney

The dramatic title and cover artwork of Sophie McKeand's first full-length collection give a strong clue as to the themes covered within. Her poetry is distinctly left-leaning, with references to socialist and Marxist ideologies, alongside a Welsh nationalist thread and a fierce determination to 'rebel' against the norm and speak on behalf of the voiceless. Her poems play about with language, breaking conventions, experimenting with form and taking poetry to its extremes. There is also a powerful sense of immersion in the natural world. The first poem begins with the act of 'Returning to water' whereby we 'embrace cloudlikeness' and 'assimilate' with nature.

The title poem, 'Rebel Sun', is a metaphorical tale of working life in which ordinary situations are transformed into an immense struggle between nature and humanity. The intensity of language pulls you in, and the pace carries you along as you read about office workers 'cavorting with birds in the sunlight', but the warning voice explains: 'They won't last. You've seen it before. Socialising with agitators burns skin to ash.' It is this edginess of rebellion, combined with bright, surreal imagery, which sets the tone for the whole collection.

McKeand is the current Young People's Laureate for Wales, a fact that comes across in her work. She uses Welsh phrases

The intensity of language pulls you in, and the pace carries you along as you read about office workers 'cavorting with birds in the sunlight', but the warning voice explains: 'They won't last. You've seen it before'

within her poems, often without the English, although translations are provided at the back of the book. These are poems which emphasise the inconsistencies and marvels of the language, whilst celebrating its survival and complexity. 'Eleven Signs you are Escaping Insanity' refers to the letters of the Welsh alphabet, and the process of learning Welsh, ending with the line 'NG – You accept language is defunct and hOwl into reality.' It also links the language of Wales with its natural landscape, as the learner becomes more and more immersed in the realms of 'water', 'mynyddoedd' (mountains) and 'trees'.

Other languages also appear in these poems, most distinctly in 'Process (in memory)' which commemorates the Sewol Ferry Disaster in South Korea. Lines such as 'I had a dream of swimming in the sea all week' portray a sense of communal grief and shared experience, while disjointed phrases, punctuation and capitalisation evoke an atmosphere of shock and horror: 'synaptic sTutTer//process & form'.

Poems such as 'Minimalist Living', 'Declutter' and 'Fair Trade' have overt political messages, and the book has a strong didactic feel to it when read as a whole, denouncing materialism, uniting humanity with nature, and bringing people together. Alongside this, there is an exploration of what it means to be Welsh, with an emphasis on reconciliation and embracing difference. Poems such as 'Cymro' make this very clear: 'Cymru is

our country – land of brothers, a family of all races and none,' ending, as ever, with a pull towards the power of language and the natural landscape: 'we will sow poetry across these Welsh mountains and valleys together.'

There is also a series of poems which explore the problems of living in a global society, such as 'Community Artistry', where refugees are forced to 'snuggle tiny children onto bright beaches' whilst others attempt a 'knitting' together of community. 'Paper News' provides a horrifying list of world problems, from 'drones dropping bombs' to 'mothers raped' and 'gunshots ringing across the playground', creating a sense of overwhelming helplessness in the face of greed and conflict, and protesting against the inadequacies of the media. Other poems touch on apathy, anarchy, prejudice and the need to be aware of how our own lives impact on the lives of others.

The book ends with 'Dharma', another longer piece, depicting an epiphanic experience on a journey between Varanasi and Kolkata, questioning the intricacies of modern life, and driving towards what the whole collection is about:

*Your body knows what you need and you can either lift your face up to the heavens and give thanks to the soft rain praising your skin
or you can hide in brick houses, behind solid doors*

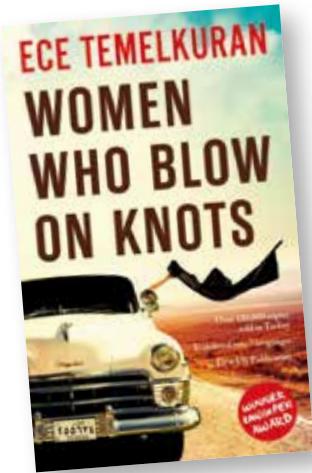
This is a collection which centres on relationships: between individuals and communities, between humans and nature. There is a sense of being 'rooted' in Wales and in the Welsh landscape, but there is also frustration: with nationalism, politics, globalisation and the ongoing damage we cause to the natural environment. McKeand's poetry is instructive and forceful, provocative and tangible, yet it is also complex, with a subtlety that explores our reliance on language as a means of expression and communication.



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Women Who Blow on Knots

Ece Temelkuran
Parthian, 2017



Caroline Stockford

'Once you cross a border you have no idea how many more you keep crossing. But the desert you get lost in is the one that finds you...'

You may not have read a book quite like this before. It tells the story of four women, led by the enigmatic Madame Lilla, as they embark on a road trip from Tunisia to the Lebanon by chauffeured car, camel and, it appears, no short amount of magic. The title of this Turkish bestseller comes from the *Fellak* verse of the Quran which warns of enchantresses, saying, 'Keep away from those inauspicious women who blow on knots'.

The narrator, who is a journalist from Turkey, is told it is not safe for her to return home and finds herself taken on a series of adventures in which she meets desert revolutionaries, poets, mystics and enemies, following the indomitable Madame Lilla, who is on a quest to find and take revenge upon the love of her life. She tells her fellow-travellers, 'I wanted to put my heart to the test in a wild, unknown forest. That's what we make of life, there are no coincidences. We breathe into life all these signs, magic and serendipity.'

Madame Lilla, former agent with a reputation that precedes her in almost all encounters, imparts life-wisdom to the

three younger women during the course of the trip, teaching Amira how to dance so that the audience 'should sink with a desire to be part of it' and telling her companions, 'Love, ladies, is a game played with absence. And the more trust that your absence will be felt deeply, the better you play.'

Temelkuran does not romanticise the male characters in her writing and pulls no punches in her descriptions of Middle Eastern boys, sometimes brought up to believe they have a right to the affection and servitude of a host of women. 'When he puts his hands on his hips you see that spoiled behaviour particular to Middle Eastern men that can be enticing to watch but only causes pain if you actually love the man... He'll always be forgiven. And if he is ever asked for an ounce of love he'll get terribly bored and restless, and say so and leave.'

The four main characters in the book are Muslim and are portrayed with the exacting honesty of a woman who is not toeing any patriarchal or political line. Ece Temelkuran has been an outspoken author and columnist in Turkey for many years and this novel is a refreshing and bold portrayal of four women and their secret histories, thrust into testing situations in the desert. We are taken into their confidence and friendship and hear tales of murder, loss, ambition, longing and motherhood: 'When men understand that women can thrive without them at their side, that they can live on that magic... That's when they begin calling us sorcerers. You will learn it. You will learn how not to fear this magic, learn how life is made of it.'

The strands of the many stories in this book are like skeins of wool, sitting on top of the carpet loom and waiting for the carpet-maker's hands to select a thread, pull it out of the past and tie this anecdote or that memory firmly alongside the many other knots that will, in time, reveal the bright pattern and destiny of the carpet. Voices that add to the pattern further, criss-crossing time, come in the form of Amira's lover Muhammed's letters to her, and the tablets of Dido, read from the notebook of Meryem, who has been researching the Queen of Carthage in Tunisia.

As Temelkuran pulls in as many references to powerful women as she can, it

feels as though she is single-handedly trying to rewrite history for Muslim women to read, that she is on a mission to empower, inform and entertain.

The translator is the accomplished Alexander Dawe who has enabled the text to be as fluid in English as it is in the original Turkish. There were places in the book that prompted me to think about the role of translator as editor and I do think a stronger work could have been produced if the original Turkish title had been put through a tighter editing process. Having said that, the whole character of the book is fast and free-wheeling, so perhaps, as a translator, I've naturally subjected every line to an over-close reading.

Temelkuran also has a poetry collection to her name and her lyrical style provided some beautiful and memorable moments that co-exist with the women's more gritty memories of the Arab Spring, such as Amira's recollection of being attacked in Tahir square. 'Your body feels bigger when you are being beaten. Not smaller, bigger. Till then I didn't know I had so many places for them to hit.'

The book is many things. A female version of a *Mirror for Princes*, perhaps. A Middle Eastern feminist's guidebook. It is not a Thelma and Louise-style road trip, for sure. There is violence, war and aggression, but there is also beauty and the strength that comes from the characters having to persevere in testing situations in strange lands, where harsh experiences sharpen the prism of self-perception and help them to see more clearly who they really are and where they need to be.

Caroline Stockford is a poet, translator and activist for language rights. She graduated from SOAS with an MA in the History of the Turkish Language and attends the Cunda International Workshop for Translators of Turkish literature. Caroline is Chair of the Translation and Linguistic Rights committee of Wales PEN Cymru

Quest and Odyssey: Stories of Journeys from Around Europe from the Aarhus 39

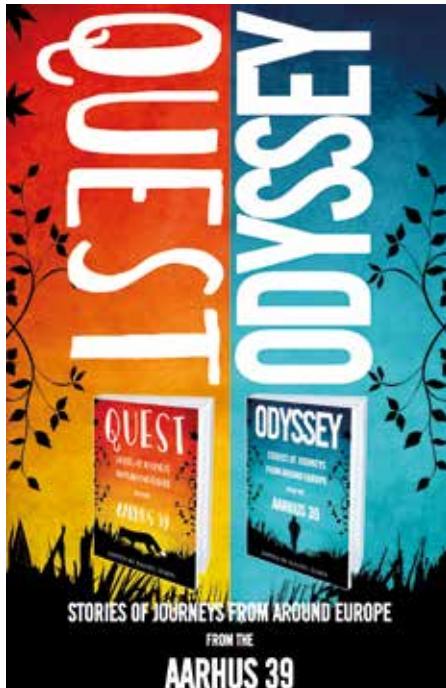
Ed. Daniel Hahn
Alma Books, 2017

Hayley Long

Aimed at children (*Quest*) and young adults (*Odyssey*), these two volumes of short stories were compiled for the Hay Festival in order to celebrate the Danish city of Aarhus being appointed as European Capital of Culture for 2017. Edited by Daniel Hahn (*The Oxford Companion to Children's Literature*) and comprised of stories written by writers from all over Europe, the illustrated anthologies are entertaining, often surprising and really very charmingly unique, covering a range of subject matter and genres that far exceeds most other short story collections.

As stated on the cover of each, the common thread which binds together these otherwise eclectic stories is the thematic sense of journey, both literal and metaphorical. In *Quest*, the reader can also expect that journey to be fantastical too. The volume opens with 'Beware Low-Flying Girls', a story from UK writer, Katherine Rundell. With the aid of her dead father's coat, Odile is able to fly whenever the wind blows. It's an enviable skill but also a dangerous one, especially in a mountainous world where nightmarish Kraiks live high up in the trees and wait to prey on unusually adventurous little girls. Fortunately, like all the best fairytales, good triumphs over evil, a timeless piece of wisdom is imparted and the young reader can journey on to the next story having experienced nothing darker than a delicious thrill.

Several other stories in *Quest* have a similar fairytale feel about them, most notably 'The Great Book Escape' by Ævar Pór Benediktsson (Iceland) and Alaine Agirre's 'Lady Night' (translated from the Basque). The former is a riotous romp about unhappy library books who break free from an over-watchful librarian while the latter - a sweet story about three sisters who hate going to bed - is likely to delight parents as much as it will delight their children.



In truth, this volume might work better if read by parents to their children rather than by children themselves. The stories are frequently thought-provoking and sometimes demand to be read aloud. One such offering is 'Mr Nobody' by Laura Dockrill (UK). Dockrill writes a breathless, excitable, lyrical gem which trips off the tongue and positively pulsates with warmth and charm. Mr Nobody is an eccentric, devilish whirlwind of energy and Oli's best friend - which seems easy enough to get on board with until you realise that Mr Nobody lives in Oli's wardrobe and Oli's family are very keen for this friendship to fade. Even the family pet has doubts about Mr Nobody. In typically exuberant delivery, Oli tells us, 'Our dog, Roly Poly, doesn't like him when he's naughty, and he tries to be a singing canary and tell on Mr Nobody to Mum, but Roly only speaks dog language so Ha. Ha. Ha.' One final story in *Quest* which must be mentioned is 'Peeva is a Tone-Deaf Cat' by Anna Woltz (Netherlands). Woltz bravely and adeptly tackles one of the most difficult journeys of the volume by gently introducing children to the reality of miscarriage and stillbirth. Tommy's mum is upset and in hospital. Young Eva, our narrator, explains it simply and effectively. 'Yesterday she still had a baby in her tummy. And today she doesn't.'

Although dressed in a similar jacket, *Odyssey* should not be understood as a continuation of *Quest*. From the offset it is clear that this collection targets an older audience. The illustrations are smaller, the language is distinctly grittier and the journeys here are often voyages of self-discovery covering ground popularly explored in teen fiction - identity, sexuality and a sense of internalised torment. Of these, the most striking is perhaps a story by Endre Lund Erikson (Norway). 'Everyone Knows Petter's Gay' is startling because it gives voice to a character who is homophobic, bullying and unpleasant; and yet, in a reversal of stereotypical notions of the bully and the bullied, the reader realises that Petter is probably not gay and that the troubled teen narrator is struggling to process his own homosexual feelings. In a world where so much is called out for being problematic, Erikson creates a complex and challenging character who is absolutely un-airbrushed. Another Norwegian who explores adolescent sexuality is Nina E. Grøntvelte. 'RMS Titanic' is a touching tale of a high-school crush which ends so sweetly that it must surely prompt a smile.

But not all these stories are so universally familiar. Themes of asylum and displacement are also explored. Laura Gallego's 'The Longest Pedestrian Route in the World' (translated from Spanish) and 'What We've Lost' by Sarah Engell (Denmark) are shocking and powerful depictions of people risking everything in search of a better life. In these stories, internalised teen angst is noticeably absent. Instead, the torment comes from outside and it's physical and deadly. In summary, *Quest* provides many magical journeys and *Odyssey* much more imaginable ones. But within the pages of both volumes, there is surely something to stimulate and interest or else challenge or comfort every reader. And at the very least, these wonderful anthologies are highly entertaining.



Hayley Long writes fiction for teenagers. Her latest novel is *The Nearest Faraway Place*

Hinterland: Ceredigion Landscapes

David Wilson, Ed Talfan and Ed Thomas
Graffeg, 2017



Mike Parker

Twenty-five years ago, as I trotted around the country researching the inaugural *Rough Guide to Wales*, there were many surprises, even in places I thought I knew from photographs. The fashion at the time was to crop out anything that detracted from the prettiest view, a trend that reached an almost absurdist zenith in the gothic ruins of Neath Abbey. I'd seen the photos, which led me to expect a Tintern *in urbis*, only to find blackened stumps squatting in the middle of a belching, metal-bashing landscape straight out of *Mad Max*.

The wheel has turned, for now it is those very rusty nuggets and post-op scars that photographers cherish the most, while the conventionally cute gets cropped out. It is perhaps the inevitable imagery for our gloomy and solipsistic age. Even areas not much known as post-industrial like to frame themselves in its decaying penumbra; Ceredigion is no exception. A generation ago, it was all bucket-and-spade resorts and pony trekking; now, thanks to the TV series *Y Gwyll/Hinterland*, what was once the land of milk and honey has become our homegrown patch for hand-me-down Scandi Noir. Three series of the TV show have now spawned a large and pricey photo-book – evidently intended as the ideal Christmas present for

that hard-to-please miserabilist in your life. We've all got one.

The book includes behind-the-scenes photography from the filming process, together with some sparky and thoughtful essays by series creators Ed Talfan and Ed Thomas, writer Cyanan Jones and David Wilson, the photographer commissioned to evoke the wider spirit of *Hinterland* in his black-and-white images of Ceredigion. In his essay, Wilson makes the point that 'in many ways... Ceredigion is hidden and secret', which sounds like the tritest of tourist board clichés, but actually has quite a serious truth within it. Wales' three national parks – Pembrokeshire, Snowdonia and the Brecon Beacons – surround the county, and tend to push it off the radar. Yet there is within its

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boundaries much of the best of the national parks, with a fraction of the footfall. Even the county's name is shrouded in mystery to most, a fact that infuriates local tourism professionals. For them, anything that gets Ceredigion more widely known is welcome.

Whether the funereal landscapes in this book will do the job is a moot point. Some of the images are magnificent and genuinely feel new: the shapes and textures of Ynyslas Boatyard, the spine-shivering cold of Llyn-yr-oerfa and the Teifi Pools, the sour teats of hills in Cwm Ceulan and Cwm Brefi, or

Aberaeron shown not in its customary jolly colours but as a place of quite harsh and sinister shadows (a sensation I've long felt there; the vicious forces unleashed recently over racism at the town's carnival only seem to confirm it).

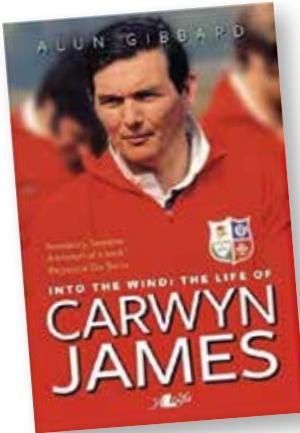
Not so successful though are most of the other pictures. Too many tip into cliché: the geometric patterns of lobster pots and ropes at every seaside stop, or of log-piles in forestry; black skies and barbed wire straight out of Hammer Horror, but without the knowing camp wink. Most compromised, for all the fine words that 'this was an opportunity to capture one of the grittiest and most authentic landscapes in Wales' (David Wilson), or that this is 'a love letter to a disappearing Wales' (Ed Thomas), we've seen so many of the images before, countless times. Here once again are Ceredigion's Greatest Hits: Mwnt, Llangrannog, New Quay, Cwmystwyth, Borth, that view from Consti over Aber, and none of them framed in a way that offers anything very much different.

Even Devil's Bridge, the lynchpin of the *Hinterland* saga that was captured so gutturally on film, is rendered curiously flat here, hovering uneasily between bog standard postcard shots and something monochrome'n'moody off a millenial's Instagram feed. The sum total of the book is that for all the flashes of wonder and undoubted moments of art, it takes itself very much more seriously than its rather superficial reality deserves. In that, it is the perfect accompaniment to the TV series.

Mike Parker is an author and broadcaster based in mid Wales. His last book was *The Greasy Poll: Diary of a controversial election*; his next will be *On the Red Hill: a search for the Queer Rural*. mikeparker.org.uk

Into the wind: the life of Carwyn James

Alun Gibbard
Y Lolfa, 2017



Lee Waters

I asked more than 170 A-level students at Llanelli's Coleg Sir Gâr recently if they knew who Carwyn James was, and just one tentative hand was raised; and he wasn't entirely sure. Even to my generation he is not a fully formed figure. Little more than a rough biographical outline would be familiar: inspirational Scarlets and Lions coach who didn't get to manage Wales and died a solitary figure, haunted by questions around his sexuality.

Alun Gibbard's engaging biography is a much needed portrait which succeeds in bringing this enigmatic figure to life for a new audience. A reworking of the Welsh language book he published last autumn, *Carwyn - yn erbyn y Gwynt* (Y Lolfa, 2016), Gibbard's full-length study (428 pages) draws fully on Carwyn James' rich cultural hinterland.

The formative influences of Cefneithin and the Gwendraeth valley, as well as the Ceredigion of Rhyllews (the hamlet of his parents upbringing), of the 1940s and 50s are vividly explored. We learn how his love of Welsh literature, that was firmly embedded at University in Aberystwyth and given full expression in his study in Llandovery College and later in the lecture rooms of Trinity Carmarthen, ran in parallel with the development of his poetry on the rugby field.

His coaching style is described as

encouraging 'Free, open rugby, full of style and grace'. But in truth he was a natural leader and innovator, not just a coach – a fascinating sidebar is how he contributed to the development of coaching as a genre. At first it was viewed with great suspicion, even as a form of cheating: 'Boys needed coaching then, not men'. Planning and preparing for games went against the spirit of the game.

But as Alun Gibbard writes, 'We do Carwyn a disservice by reducing him to being a rugby man above all else. There was much more to him than that, much more'. What is surprising about this book, given the subject, and author, is that this is not a book about rugby, but a study of a man of many parts. A portrait of a tormented soul, and above all a man ahead of his times in so many ways.

unbelievably – doing early morning shifts reading the sports bulletins on Radio Cymru!

'Sensitive' is the adjective typically used to describe Carwyn James, though all too often it is employed as a euphemism. Alun Gibbard confronts the speculation surrounding his sexuality with a tender deftness.

The book is a social and cultural account of post-war Welsh Wales, successfully drawing out its complex tensions and cleavages. It draws widely on the reflections of friends and contemporaries, and is enhanced by its use of poetry and the author's understanding of his subject's literary influences.

Its chief weakness in my view is its treatment of Carwyn's politics. It portrays him as quintessentially a cultural nationalist,

He dared to be different, and for all of his deep insecurities he had a confidence in his own professional judgment which was unshakable

He dared to be different, and for all of his deep insecurities he had a confidence in his own professional judgment which was unshakable. When confronted with the inevitability of having to negotiate team selection for the Welsh squad with the WRU hierarchy he withdrew his application for the national coaching job. Though he ached to add shepherding the Welsh team to his (still unparalleled) success with the Lions and Llanelli, he had the self-belief to walk away.

But it came at a price, and the account of the years that followed is a poignant one. Gibbard convincingly argues that his decision to move to Cardiff to pursue journalism removed his ballast. In his most creative period he was embedded in rooted communities, and nourished by his teaching of literature and his coaching roles. Removed from these he was vulnerable to his demons.

The account of his later years is difficult to read. Being unable to refuse an endless stream of perfunctory speaking engagements; drinking too much and renting a room in a Cardiff shared house, while –

albeit one prepared to use his celebrity to advance his cause. Gibbard almost offhandedly suggests that James was ill-suited to politics without fully exploring the reasons. But its biggest failure in this area is not to capture the seriousness with which Labour treated the prospect of his candidacy in a by-election. Having seen majorities in valley heartlands collapse in the wake of Plaid's upsurge in the late 60s, there was genuine fear of the impact that the celebrated coach of Scarlets could have should the elderly James Griffiths not be able to finish his term.

That aside, this is a rewarding read. It succeeds in being admiring and affectionate, without being sentimental or sensational. It deserves a wide audience.



Lee Waters is the Assembly Member for the Llanelli constituency and a Fellow of the IWA

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Music Fights Back!

Last word Mike Jenkins

Writer and broadcaster Owen Sheers was on BBC Wales in September, complaining that English Literature was being made optional at GCSE and pupils would suffer greatly as a result. I was on Radio Wales about a year ago making the same point.

The response of the Welsh Government – Labour, but with a LibDern Education Minister in Kirsty Williams – was typically evasive and disingenuous. They deflected it by saying they'd look into the teaching of literature in schools!

When GCSE results were seen to be deteriorating they responded similarly, by pushing all responsibility onto schools and claiming that too many pupils were being entered in Year 10.

In both instances their policies are to blame, just as the austerity-driven agenda of authorities like Labour-controlled RCT have failed music services in the poorest parts of this country.

Welsh Government have decreed that Literature is optional; it's not a matter for schools to contest. It's no longer a core subject, at the heart of Labour's highly flawed scheme of traffic-lighting schools, which amount to league tables.

The consequences are already grim: 40% taking Literature this year, down from 80% two years ago! Many pupils will be denied the only opportunity in their lives to read drama, poetry and fiction. Texts like *Blood Brothers*, *Of Mice and Men* and a whole range of poetry (including some by Sheers no doubt) open up young lives to worlds they wouldn't otherwise encounter, not to mention key books in world literature by the likes of Maya Angelou and Arthur Miller.

My life was changed irrevocably by studying several books for 'O' Level, many of them non-fiction texts, such as Laurie Lee's *As I Walked Out One Midsummer Morning*, Graves' *Goodbye to All That* and, amazingly, the account of a south Pacific island by a colonialist Arthur Grimble, *A Pattern of Islands*.

The English Language course will pay lip-service to literature, tackling it merely through extracts, and I doubt poetry will have any place whatsoever.

With regard to music, I heard a disturbing story of a former peripatetic teacher, now self-employed, who has to try and get individual schools to employ him on an ad hoc basis. His job, and therefore the teaching of his instrument, is under threat. Many excellent peris, with great expertise, now ply their trade as music teachers in Comps and the future of our orchestras looks very bleak. Welsh Government's intention to set up feasibility studies is far too late.

The way music fights back and sings out loud and proud has been brought home because of my younger daughter's involvement in the Glam Choir and Orchestra. I took great pleasure in attending their musical at the Muni in Pontypridd, which told the story of the Glam through songs, film and narration; a story which ended in hope and defiance.

Then, at St Elvan's in Aberdare, there was an orchestral and choral concert involving many former Glam members and those from the present. Performing there – and at their own concert in Pontypridd next day – were a group of young cellists from southern Germany, Cellikatessen. It was a breathtaking and unique performance by 13 cellists and one double bassist, together with their director, Roman Guggenberger. Playing with no sheet-music and in an astonishing variety of styles, from jazz to baroque to Catalan folk music made famous by Pablo Casals (a song of freedom for his nation), they are a symbol of what could be achieved in Cymru given the right commitment and investment.

Sadly, the utilitarian and narrow-minded policies of our Government make me despondent.



Mike Jenkins is a poet and writer, and former teacher

Educating for results

Of course, the libraries had long ago been taken over by computers ; in some schools they'd even made a pyre of the old books including ones on the rise of Hitler.

The writing of poetry was replaced by comprehensions which could easily be assessed, moderated; pupils trained in class to pass examinations: Plato's *Republic* realised at last.

Music was a fringe pastime for those with enough money to buy instruments, pay for lessons; orchestras dwindled to Chambers and then were merely bands.

Pupils opted out of literature, no longer at the core it was more like a stump thrown through the window of a car, left to rot by the roadside.

Drama was for big productions only, with Mayor and politicians invited; believing their money well-spent they returned to Councils and the Bay to analyse results like business trends.



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