

**Bangor University**

## **MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**

### **Cydymdreiddiad**

### **The interpenetration of land and language as illustrated by Welsh Language Great War Memorials**

Stanton, Stuart

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Stuart Stanton M.Phil Submission

‘Cydymdreiddiad’ The interpenetration of land and language as illustrated by  
Welsh Language Great War Memorials

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<https://www.youtube.com/@hip81b>

17/06/2023



*This section is in part highly subjective in its personal nature. The events of 2020 on national and global stages provide opportunity to contemplate these beginnings with a renewed sense of purpose. Writing these notes in early August 2021 I am conscious that 'normal' is an outdated concept.*

#### FOREWORD

On 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1921 a memorial to the local men who died in the Great War was unveiled in the village of Llanymynech. The picture above depicts the scene of the ceremony with a throng of villagers spilling out into the roadway and beyond. This section of the crowd found themselves in Wales, the memorial itself and the villagers surrounding it having their feet in England. The road marks a physical border but is submerged by a united mass of people. The memorial bears the names of 19 men and an inscription that in part reads; 'The trumpet shall sound' alongside its Welsh equivalent 'Yr udgorn a gan'.

If there is as a single image that crystallises the purpose behind and investigations included in the script that follows, this is it. A frozen moment in time defined by the materiality of a memorial stone that is by later definition perpetual and by the coming together of two distinct cultures with a common purpose that overrides any thoughts of division.

The same sight, almost a full century later is pictured below. England with St. Agatha's churchyard wall sealing off the memorial is to the left; Wales, marked by the same road to the right; Oswestry (Shropshire) is due north, Welshpool (Powys) some miles further south. Llanymynech's population recorded in the 2011 Census was 477 on the English side of the road against 323 (29% Welsh

speaking) over the border. The names on the memorial have been increased in number following WWII, otherwise little, if anything, has changed.



The starting point for this thesis/survey/travelogue/report began in the mid 1960's when I took up membership, aged 14, of my local cycling club in Abertillery. The club's weekly meeting place for a regular Sunday ride ('run' in local parlance, be it by bike, bus or car a trip out was always a 'run') happened to be the site of the town's war memorial, on the corner of Queen St. and Somerset St. This was never anywhere elsewhere, a fixed location, just as the memorial was permanently set in its stone foundations. Strangely perhaps the memorial itself was barely noticed or commented on apart from a few days surrounding the annual November 11 Remembrance ceremony but there it was and is, a defining symbol of the townspeople who fought for their way of life in lands they did not know, for causes that was not of their making and (very often) in a language that was not entirely theirs but were never to physically return.

My still unconscious thread of War Memorial interest lay virtually dormant for many decades until sparked by the sight of the town memorial in Bala, outside the White Lion Hotel. Bicycles were on the agenda here as well as I was en route for a day of cycle races in the mid-Wales coastal town of Tywyn and Bala provided a convenient stopping off point. At the time, my knowledge of Welsh was rudimentary, apart from place names and greetings and so the sight of an indecipherable inscription, in this language, on the memorial proved enough to blank out all other thought. Odd really, recollecting that Friday evening encounter, that an object taken for granted by the people of Bala, could affect a stranger so profoundly. But, as with Abertillery, there it was, quite literally written in stone.

The encounter with Bala's memorial stayed in my mind long after returning to my Yorkshire home and I began to scratch around locally searching for inscriptions in stone that would mimic those I had seen in Wales. Oddly, there was nothing to be found in echo of the addresses, ages and places of death that Bala had presented me with. Usually, a personal name might be followed by that of a regiment, sometimes a place of death and little more, the memorial in the West Yorkshire village of Steeton illustrated below providing an example.



A few years down the line and with a considerable amount of scatter-gun research under my belt I began a formal study of the discernable differences between Welsh and English language memorial inscriptions and how Welsh identity was represented by them. There being very little obvious source material on the subject the starting off point had to be physical observation by way of a journey. 'Journey' however being not the ideal way to describe this travel as there was no planned finish, or even 'start', line I searched elsewhere on the bookshelves for an answer. George Borrow (1863) began his famous *Wild Wales* account by referring to a 'proposed excursion', the Valleys' expression of a 'run' again implied both start and finish but my trove of cycling related volumes provided a neat answer with a chapter title of '*Itineraries, Narratives and Identities*'. Christopher Thompson (2008) includes this in his cultural history of the Tour de France cycle race whose beginnings date back to 1903 and includes both World Wars as crucial features in its development as an existential presence and continuation as a physical permanence. The synchronicity of his chapter title with my objectives was just too good to be true.

It was indeed to Borrow that I owe my first themed encounter with a Welsh War Memorial. Having convinced the University of my genuine research validity and intention I set off to follow Borrow's trail into Anglesey. He was intent of finding a poet's grave, mine was an excuse to begin an itinerary with at least some purpose behind it. Borrow did indeed find his grave, on the cliff top to the north of what is now the village of Benllech but was to him only known by the parish name of Llanfair-Mathafarn-Eitaf and sure enough I discovered with the same sense of wonder experienced in Bala the name of a female civilian on the memorial stone just off the main street<sup>1</sup>. The *Narrative* was about to commence.

Mostly, research into Great War memorials has centred upon the names inscribed on them and the conceptual nature of Remembrance that has arisen from this. In my estimation it is impossible to argue that those who died in the War are not the most important symbols of it. The mass slaughter of an

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<sup>1</sup> The inscription reads '*Mrs. J. Howdle, Pantysaer, Mal 7, 1915 (Lusitania)*' Reference made to <http://www.lostancestors.eu/memwar/memorials/B/Benllech/gesamt02kl.jpg> where pictures are displayed, indicates that two survivors of the *Lusitania* sinking were Mrs. Howdle's sister (they were both employed in the kitchens) and Margaret Haig Thomas - Lady Rhondda.

estimated 17 million worldwide, for Wales round about 35,000 in total, is beyond comprehension to the snug, sometimes smug and ‘sort of melancholy’<sup>2</sup> character of the English. Writing almost a full year into the first measures taken by the UK Government to prevent the spread of Covid-19 virus and looking now at a death total well into 100,000 + for the UK as a whole with almost 5,500 of these in Wales<sup>3</sup> it is not difficult to begin to compare both cataclysmic disasters. If indeed they should be compared being quite another matter. Certainly, at least in the early months of the virus’s spread popular media was quick to jump on the bandwagon of rhetoric belonging to the two World Wars of the last Century without any hesitation and it is probably fair to say that those who lost relatives and friends at that time would have harboured both profound and disturbing feelings about this exhibition. My contribution came in a piece for [www.nation.cymru](http://www.nation.cymru) and the hope is that this particular narrative helped to balance and occasion reflection of opinion.<sup>4</sup> Sadly, this does not appear to be the case in official circles as only yesterday War sloganeering was wheeled out yet again by a Junior Minister speaking of raising a “Dad’s Army” to fill in as temporary teachers for proposed summer time schools.<sup>5</sup>

Examination of this jingoistic public posturing has been sadly missing from the national debate over Covid-19 and its consequences. Just as in the Great War the ideology driving the ruling classes has overwhelmed public opinion and resulted in a virtual subjugation of the population into a keep quiet and bear it mentality. At the time of the unveiling ceremony in Llanymynech the national mood was anything but subdued as bitter disputes raged across the Welsh coalfields against the Government forcing through a return to private ownership of the industry. The miners returned to work only after a prolonged lock-out threatened starvation. This state of affairs, mirrored in other parts of Britain by events such as the burning down of Luton Town Hall by disgruntled

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<sup>2</sup> S. Osborne, ‘Culture: The Theory of Everything’ *The Guardian Weekly*, 12 February 2021, p.53 Osborne details an interview with the film-maker Adam Curtis who talks of ‘a sort of melancholy about what they (the English in a wide cultural sense) have lost, even relating this to people, ‘who hate the Brexit voters because they go, “We’ve come to this”’.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.CSSEgisandData/Covid-19> (Accessed 07/03/2021)

<sup>4</sup> <https://nation.cymru/opinion/forget-the-pms-clined-war-rhetoric-but-there-is-one-way-war-can-help-us-understand-coronavirus/> (Accessed 07/03/2021)

<sup>5</sup> J. Berry, ‘Schools Need a ‘Dad’s Army’ of Retired Teachers’ *The Sunday Telegraph*, 06/03/21. P.18



ex-servicemen on 'National Peace Day' in July, 1919<sup>6</sup> led by stages to the General Strike of 1926. This was hardly the one imagined by Lloyd George when delivering his 'Homes Fit for Heroes' speech on the day after the 1918 Armistice. It adds to a proposition that despite all the deaths and untold grief of the Great War, nothing had changed for the better.<sup>7</sup>

The widespread turmoil in the immediate post- Armistice years was itself reflected in the pace of progress towards the almost universal construction and unveiling of war memorials in communities throughout Britain including, quite markedly, Wales. The *narrative* of my recorded *itinerary* includes stops at the tiniest of villages and the most heavily urban towns. Throughout all, the most marked and responsible feature is the duty felt by the inhabitants that the names and, most particular in the places where Welsh was the prime language at the time, the *identities* by way of age, home address, place of death in whatever combination of the fallen servicemen<sup>8</sup> be recorded and respected forever and ever. There were disputes over the form and placement of memorials and some of these are described in detail in further sections of this study but very little has been found to deny or debase the sense of *identity*.

In conclusion and to return unashamed to the events of the past 12 months in the place still known as 'Great Britain' the argument that Great War Remembrance remains a vital factor both in understanding Welsh national character and proposing a way for it to progress in a world that, despite official denials, will be radically different in respects as yet unknown from the much referred to 'normal' times that existed prior to 1 January 2020. The undervaluing of Wales via media channels both quasi-official and 'social' as an entity apart and distinct from England, Scotland and Northern Ireland has reached at times an insidious level<sup>9</sup>. Swallowing this vitriol becomes increasingly acidic when considering thoughts eloquently stated by The Guardian columnist, John Harris that:

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.herts.ac.uk/heritage-hub/oralhistoryarchive/luton-peace-riots-1919> (Accessed 07/03/21)

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.socialhousinghistory.uk/wp/homes-fit-for-heroes/> (Accessed 07/03/21)

<sup>8</sup> The overwhelming majority were male. Recent research by a team working out of Bangor University has concentrated on identifying all women lost in active service including ancillaries such as nurses.

<sup>9</sup> See [www.walesonline.co.uk](http://www.walesonline.co.uk) 'People in Wales are reacting...' 04/05/23

This is a less than romantic time of Brexit, the pandemic, stranded lorries, a shamefully high death toll and with a Government led for the main part by two public schoolboys making some of the greatest peacetime blunders this country has ever made...his (PM Johnson's) shortcomings blur into a much longer story about our longstanding ruling class, and its habit of creating crisis after crisis<sup>10</sup>

All this is included in an article that quotes George Orwell and John le Carré as reference points in a dissection of the disastrous foreign and domestic policies that have blighted the well-being of Britain's citizens since the 1918 Armistice. And this is where the respect for the dignified common soldiers of the Great War comes sharply into focus, it stands as the very opposite of the contempt exhibited by the same 'ruling class'.

The word 'contempt' has its own, particular Great War history, launched by the Kaiser's description of the first British soldiers to see combat as a "contemptible little army" and giving rise to the mythology of these same 'Old Contemptibles' as honoured in a Rhondda Valley church memorial.<sup>11</sup> This is not an expression heard too often in the past 12 months in public and private debate around the Covid-19 virus pandemic but there is a profound relation between those battered soldiers of 1914, those who would later be called 'lions led by donkeys',<sup>12</sup> and the ever increasing numbers of virus victims throughout the world and it is same word *contempt* that provides the key to the link.

'There is an especially British strain of the virus', writes Zadie Smith, 'Class contempt. Technocratic contempt. Philosopher King contempt. When you catch the British strain you believe the people are there to be ruled. They are there to be handled, played, withstood, tolerated – up to a point – ridiculed (behind closed doors), sentimentalized, bowdlerized, nudged, kept under surveillance, directed, used and closely listened to, but only for the purposes of

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<sup>10</sup>J.Harris, 'Throughout history Britain's ruling class has created crisis after crisis – Just like now', *The Guardian* 28/12/20. P.12

<sup>11</sup>[The Old Contemptibles - WW1 | War Imperial War Museums \(iwm.org.uk\)](https://www.iwm.org.uk/education/greatwar/g4/) (Accessed 11/03/21)

<sup>12</sup><https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/greatwar/g4/> (Accessed 11/03/21)

data collection, through which means you harvest the raw material required to manipulate them further'.<sup>13</sup>

Smith continues to carry out a dissection of the notorious May 2020 press conference presided over by the Prime Minister's then Chief Adviser, Dominic Cummings, to justify his alleged breaches of the Government's 'Lockdown' rules. "His eyes", she relates, "spoke volumes: *Why are you bothering me with this nonsense?* Contempt."<sup>14</sup>

The anger and puzzlement of my three quoted authors, Usborne, Harris and Smith at the cowering acceptance of the British people as a whole to doff their proverbial caps to those who govern is nothing born of the age of Covid where contempt has become almost an acceptable idea. One could see it as the same existential force which drew cheering crowds to line the streets in 1914 as their men and boys set off to fight for the retention of a political system that had seen a huge proportion of them carrying out unimaginably dangerous work in mines, factories and on the land for the sake of enriching even more their self-regarded masters. Very often living short lives as a result.

If there is anything at all to be thankful for it is that respect for those who did not return from the killing fields of the Western Front and the other theatres of death is maintained through the permanence, the materiality, of the memorials erected and dedicated to them. The exploration of why these objects continue to hold such an importance in Welsh life and have become irreplaceable as communities discovered and retained identity in the aftermath of the Great War is not a single story that can be told, the complexities around it are too numerous and particular and this study makes no attempt to do that. What is recorded are, as said above, *Itineraries, Narratives and Identities* and a good place to start is with possibly the smallest memorial in the country, a stained-glass window at Trellech Grange Church, eastern Gwent. Although the inscription is in English my contention is that the word 'boys' as seen here is an entirely Welsh construct.

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<sup>13</sup> Z. Smith, *Intimations: Six Essays*, (London, 2020), p.64

<sup>14</sup> Smith, *Intimations: Six Essays*, p.64



THE GREAT WAR 1914-1918. IN LOVING MEMORY OF  
THE TWO GRANGE BOYS WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES,  
JOHN EDWARD DAVIS, PTE M.G.C. 5TH WALES BORDERERS,  
KILLED AT BOSINGHE, FEB. 2ND 1917.  
RALPH MORTIMER WRIGLEY, LIEUT MON.R.E. DIED  
AT ABBEVILLE, NOV. 6TH 1918.

## INTRODUCTION and TECHNICAL EXPLANATION

This submission is not in the form that was originally envisaged, a professionally bound document with pages numbered and defined plus chapters that are recognisable as being of an accepted academic structure.

Instead, guided more by the content than any exterior forces, the submission takes the form of a series of linked travelogues within Wales with visual evidence in support of the literal. If there is one particular reason for this format to be used then it lies within the subject matter itself, namely the permanence and materiality of the Welsh Language through the medium of Great War Memorials.

Consequently, apart from descriptions of landscape and community in written form, there is also inclusion of standard 2-Dimensional photographs and video recordings related to these. This latter feature developed during the submission's course of compilation and has been actively encouraged by persons both academic and lay.

I will argue that the sometimes haphazard and always naive nature of these recordings enhance the findings detailed on the written page by emphasising the sense of place – to use a Welsh expression *cynefin* – that is so important in supporting the overall philosophy of the submission.

Each of the sections comprising the submission is prefaced by a short note of explanation as to their differing genesis. By example, there are both documentary records of particular journeys and a literature review related solely to philosophy. All of these include at least one reference – via the 'YouTube' digital channel – to a video recording. Throughout, non-English words and expressions are in italic form along with printed word titles and themes.

Further compromise of more regular academic submission standards arrived with the Covid-19 crisis and the subsequent restrictions on 'normal' life. How strange it is that in hindsight I regard this as actually strengthening the arguments presented within the submission. It also allowed me time and space to contribute to several journals and a printed book with the reaction to these

proving to be encouraging. Admittedly, this resulted in a delayed completion but the freshness of certain sections and references remains.

31/07/2021

Appendix:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC6QrnoUjjVaSB0kvjG9KOzA>



## WAR MEMORIALS REGISTER DEFINITION OF A WAR MEMORIAL OCTOBER 2015

The following is an agreed working definition of a war memorial. It outlines what is recorded by IWM's War Memorials Archive on its register of war memorials and is a basis for other organisations to outline what can be funded, listed or interpreted by them as a war memorial for their purposes.

### **Definition of a war memorial**

A war memorial is any tangible object which has been erected or dedicated to commemorate war, conflict, victory or peace; or casualties who served in, were affected by or killed as a result of war, conflict or peacekeeping; or those who died as a result of accident or disease whilst engaged in military service.

### **WMA records:**

1. memorials located in the UK, Channel Islands and Isle of Man
2. memorials to conflicts from any point in history to the present day
3. memorials that commemorate the impact or acts of war, conflict or victory
4. memorials that record thanksgiving for the safe return of individuals, the coming of peace or the prevention of war
5. dedications that have been added to other gravestones which commemorate a war casualty buried elsewhere
6. memorials that commemorate the service, return or death of military personnel during war, conflict or peacetime irrespective of the cause of death, as well as deaths after the end of the conflict as a result of wounds or the effects of war
7. memorials that commemorate the wartime service or death of civilians serving in non-combatant organisations
8. memorials that commemorate civilians, including refugees and internees who suffered or died as a result of enemy action or in a war related accident as well as a consequence of war or conflict
9. memorials to the service, suffering and death of animals during wartime

### **WMA does not record:**

1. memorials located outside the UK, Channel island and Isle of Man, even if they commemorate British citizens
2. headstones or grave-markers marking the place of burial of an individual or group of people killed as a result of war or conflict
3. houses, buildings or artefacts (e.g. medals) associated with people who died, served or suffered in war but which have no dedication as a memorial to that wartime experience
4. plaques, badges, medals or symbols recognising the existence of military units solely as units but not representing their active service or a war/conflict role
5. commemorations to those who had once served in the armed forces or in a civilian non-combatant organisation during wartime but whose death occurred subsequently and was not a result of their service
6. dedication plaques marking wartime non-military campaigns or activities
7. memorials, plaques, badges or symbols at the birth place, home or to the life of a well-known individual not dedicated to their wartime service
8. published or mass produced rolls of honour
9. individual horticultural elements within a larger horticulture setting
10. official items such as Next of Kin Memorial Plaques (known as Dead Man's Pennies), scrolls or service medals

11. body art or body parts

12. any intangible items such as events created in memory of conflict such as charity runs

### **What standing does this definition have?**

This definition outlines what is recorded by IWM's War Memorials Archive. The definition was prepared and agreed in 2014 as part of the First World War commemoration activities by members of the War Memorials Action Group. This definition has no legal status but is a working definition to help the public and organisations identify a shared understanding of what is meant by a war memorial. Other organisations may only fund, list or identify certain types or categories of war memorial.

### **What do you mean by 'erected or dedicated'?**

To be considered a memorial the object must have a clearly defined and stated commemorative purpose. This purpose can be expressed in the wording on the memorial itself or in a printed document, or it might be a newspaper announcement. A formal unveiling ceremony need not have taken place, although these are very common.

### **What types of events do you include within the terms 'conflict' or 'war'?**

**Conflict/war** includes formally declared states of war, armed conflict, civil war, rebellion and acts of terrorism. None of those organisations party to this definition neither makes any judgment on conflicts nor promotes any political or other viewpoint associated with either specific conflicts or the general principle of conflict.

### **What do you mean by military service?**

**Military service** refers to service in any of the armed forces during war, conflict or peacetime and the subsequent return home as well as deaths after the end of the conflict as a result of wounds or the effects of war.

### **Do you include civilian commemorations?**

WMA includes commemorations to civilians

- who served in wartime non-combatant services including, but not exclusive to Merchant Marine Service, Red Cross, Home Guard, Air Raid Wardens, Fire Watchers and similar groups involved with a war effort.
- whose death occurred as a result of enemy action or in a war related accident as well as a consequence of war or conflict

### **Why do you include memorials to animals?**

Commemorations of **animals** which were killed, or gave assistance or companionship, in war or conflict are included because they represent the diversity of people's experiences of war and conflict and this includes their wish to commemorate the role of animals.

### **Who do you include within the term 'casualty'?**

A **casualty** includes military personnel, civilians and animals.

### **What do you mean by 'published roll of honour'?**

Unique items such as a handwritten or printed scroll or illustrated book are recorded by WMA. Published rolls of honour where many copies were produced are not recorded.

### **What do you mean by 'individual horticultural elements'?**

Where specific planting of trees, hedging or flowers has taken place to form a memorial garden or arboretum, WMA would record the memorial as a whole. For example an avenue of trees will be recorded as a single memorial even if each tree has a separate dedication. However, if a tree is planted in isolation to any other elements, for example it is a war memorial tree in a council park the individual tree will be recorded.



*'The Alleged Benefit of Forgetting': a section that addresses the concepts of remembering and forgetting by way of on-site (within Wales) visits, distillation of previously written theses and reference to contemporary philosophy. This subject is worthy of a thesis in its own right and my research indicates that it would provide a challenging counterpoint to modern political trends led by authoritarian populism. For example, an off-site visit to Spain is detailed in both prose and pictorially. While standard published work references are included, the number of academic theses referred to are collated in one whole as part of the general bibliography.*

### **An Introductory Literature Review of Philosophical Tracts**

My research has indicated that academic and popular interest in memorials to the Great War only began to escalate and consolidate following the period of widespread 'relief' after the conclusion of World War Two. There is nothing to directly confirm this argument but any examination of the many and varied tracts that have appeared, and continue to do so, will reinforce it. Possibly this is related to the national psychology and perhaps to a whole generation who were born and raised post-1918 and there seems to be a relatively narrow sphere of inquiry into the memorials themselves. Are they architecture, humane, artistic artefacts or symbols of nationality? From the beginning, and I refer to the incident at Bala detailed in the introduction, my main concern has been to place the memorials in a cultural context, with their inscribed language being central to the thesis. As reference to this, the very recent area of study known as 'psycho geography' seems appropriate, enhancing the unique nature that I claim for my study as a whole.<sup>1</sup>

Beginning with Gaffney (Univ. College Cardiff 1996) and her pioneering study of memorials to the casualties of the Great War in Wales, interest in localised physical structures and their cultural significance throughout the British Isles

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<sup>1</sup> See [www.tate.org.uk](http://www.tate.org.uk) for detail of the term psycho geography historically. First defined by Guy Debord (1955) as 'the effect of a geographical location on the emotions and behaviour of individuals' I sense that there is a relationship here with the Welsh word 'cynefin'. Not directly translatable, it relates a profound connection between the individual and the entirety of the domestic environment.

has gradually increased<sup>2</sup>. Stemming largely from the discipline of History, academic treatises on (amongst others) the City of London, North-East England, Huddersfield and Carmarthenshire have emerged either as single units or components of larger pieces. Gaffney's study is in itself a trailblazer as for the first time a single geographical area - albeit in this case a whole country - is considered. Looked at from the perspective of a 20-year time span from the present day and considering the voluminous and provocative tracts from (amongst others) Morgan, Johnes, Williams and Davies that have appeared in the meantime it is appropriate to say that Gaffney perhaps overreached herself in delivery of her ambition. It can be argued that the single most dominant feature of Welsh society since the 1536 Act of Union has been the Welsh Language. This statement is declared by both Janet Davies and Linda Colley in their recent writings on Wales and they are not hesitant in emphasising the complexity of debate around it. Gaffney deals with the language issue in one, contained, chapter stating it to be not of major concern while not substantiating the case by considering one single Welsh Language inscribed memorial in any detail. In hindsight it can be said that Gaffney missed out on discussion of one of the most important and interesting aspects of Welsh memorialisation.

This encyclopaedic approach to war memorial recording and discussion has been later followed by Coss - who included the whole of the North-East of England, in area and population larger than Wales, in her study and Connelly. This latter took a very different approach to geography by concentrating on the City of London and adjacent East End, validating his decision by stating the ethnic and societal profile of this area justified intensive research. A similar approach has later emerged from Barlow in his work on Carmarthenshire and the Great War, including the county's construction of and response to war memorials. Unlike Gaffney, Barlow gives full prominence to the mixture of mono- and bi-lingual memorials and, notably, the political jousting that accompanied many of their unveilings. The historiography of memorials to the fallen of the Great War can be seen as not only being incomplete but also one that is evolving both in style and content. Works have considered inscription, iconography, type and placement but the absence of methodical analysis of a Welsh linguistic identity remains.

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2. Included are: Brook, A.C. Commemoration of the Great War in Huddersfield 1914-1929 (Leeds 2009); Coss, D. First World War Memorials in North-East England (Durham 2012); Gaffney, A. Poppies on the Up-Platform (Cardiff 1996); Walls, S. The Materiality of Remembrance in Devon (Exeter 2010) with further relevant titles included in bibliography.

The phrase, 'The Alleged Benefit of Forgetting' is taken from Gross<sup>3</sup> whose work comments comprehensively on the related notions of both forgetting and remembering under the nebulous title 'Lost Time'. His is one of a scattering of publications around this theme over the last three decades and across a number of disciplines. All seek to answer the question as the nature of remembrance while largely relegating that of its Siamese twin, forgetting, to a minor berth.

Of all their commonality, the most marked in the literature is usage of the words, 'commemoration' and 'remembrance' both in title and script. From this it could be argued that the style and content of research and result becomes compromised as the two words produce universal recognition in meaning and a tacit acceptance of the same. Mental images of wreath-laying, parades and military music act as enveloping clouds to reasoned reaction.

It is interesting, therefore, to remark that amongst the most widely used war memorial inscriptions comes the simple phrase 'Lest We Forget'. This line in fact comes from Rudyard Kipling's 1897 poem 'Recessional'. Written with no reference to any particular war but as tribute for Queen Victoria's Jubilee, its inclusion on numerous memorials is seen alongside the line, 'We Will Remember Them'. This latter written by Laurence Binyon as the concluding line of 'For the Fallen' was penned in September of 1914 and came, as pointed out by Dyer<sup>4</sup> not in direct response to reports of the first multiple casualties of the Great War but, 'before the fallen had actually fell. A work not of remembrance but of anticipation; the anticipation of remembrance: a foreseeing that is also a determining.' With the passage of time resulting in a general acceptance of remembrance protocols the two poetic lines have popularly merged into a single whole, so often are they quoted, as an appropriate means of tribute.

David Rieff<sup>5</sup> utilises Binyon's poem as a recurrent feature and cornerstone in his introductory chapter. By doing so he restricts any later criticism to being within the poem's metaphorical boundary. His claim that it (the poem), 'remains the quasi-official poem of remembrance without which virtually no memorial ceremony for the dead is considered complete' may very well be the case for places where English is the predominant language and 'English' customs prevail

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<sup>3</sup> Gross, D. *Lost Time: On Remembering and Forgetting in Late Modern Culture* (Univ. Mass. 2000)

<sup>4</sup> Dyer, G *The Missing of the Somme* (London 1994)

<sup>5</sup> Rieff, D. *In Praise of Forgetting*. (Yale Univ. 2016)

but to transpose these words, and the sentiments they engender, into a Welsh Language context would be unimaginable. For evidence of this, Barlow details the unveiling ceremony at Carmarthen and reference can also be made to the extant programmes for ceremonies at Caernarfon, Criccieth and Penmachno discovered within Bangor University's collection.

Rieff writes as a social historian and includes much from personal memories of Israel (familial) and Ireland (professional) where he has strong links. It is perhaps odd therefore that his consideration of memorialisation in mainland Britain speaks of an 'England' as being the whole country without reference to either Scotland or Wales where a distinctiveness exists, rooted firmly in the Gaelic and Welsh languages. Consequently, an argument opens up to debate the whole anglicized idea of Great War commemoration including the positive connotations of 'forgetting' as a deliberate act. This, by implication is one that moderates and even negates the ritualised nature of 'remembering'.

The coupled words 'forget' and 'remember' have thus become possibly the two most frequently associated with the Great War, at least in 'English' culture. The confusion over their origin is not uncommon in respect of other markers of the War. Gaffney begins her thesis and the book that resulted from it with the line, "By the time the guns finally fell silent in November 1918", a very contentious statement as conflict continued for the following year and beyond in a number of locations, most notably the Middle East and Russia. This is particularly poignant in Welsh terms as many of the Welsh language memorials and those primarily using English date the War as 1914-1919, the latter year being that of the Versailles Treaty signing on June 28 and the beginning of a formal 'peace'.

A different approach to the idea of 'forgetting' is advanced by Henry Partridge in a 2005 thesis that sets out to examine the subject through modern philosophy. Most pertinently, Partridge considers the extensive works by Martin Heidegger that consider 'forgetting' and within this the writings and thought of Milan Kundera. The latter, best known for his semi-autobiographical novels, *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* and *The Book of Laughing and Forgetting*, left his native Czechoslovakia in the aftermath of the 1968 turmoil known as Prague Spring that saw popular protest against Soviet domination crushed by a military invasion. Kundera became an influential figure in American academic circles championing the culture of his native land and placing it within the context of 'small' nations surviving. There is direct

relevance here to the Welsh experience of the Great War and the linguistic response to it as signified by memorials. The dictatorial imposition of an Eastern European Soviet organisation upon the essentially Western European Czechoslovakia is regarded by Kundera as nothing less than a forced 'forgetting' of a history and a society.<sup>6</sup>

For the purposes of this study it would seem useful to present an argument that the consequences for *smaller nations* of both the Great War and the major economic and ideological conflicts that disrupted European life throughout the Twentieth Century have served to emphasise, rather than diminish their identities. Again, this to my mind illustrates the profound importance of Great War memorials as veritable markers in the sands.

Partridge devotes a section of his thesis to the modern French philosopher Paul Ricoeur. Brought up and educated within Protestantism, Ricoeur stands outside Catholic mainstream France and he elucidates this in *Memory, History and Forgetting*<sup>7</sup> where he discusses the importance of Marcel Ophüls 1969 film *Le Chagrin a La Pitié* in terms of individual and collective memory repression following the Second World War.

Also standing outside the prime conventions of the society he lived among, the modern academic Stuart Hall anchored the bulk of his work from his position as a Black Jamaican immigrant to England and this in turn can be linked to the representation of figures on war memorials. Hall's leading role in the foundation of 'Cultural Studies' in the latter years of the 1950's provided him with a platform that was, and indeed is, widely read and commented on. A direct relationship between Hall's theories on the outsider amongst an overwhelming English identity and that of the Welsh linguistic response to the Great War can be identified and remains to be articulated. Of particular

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<sup>6</sup> A visit to the memorial cemetery in Guernica, Spain is shown via this link. The Franco regime that followed the Spanish Civil War effectively suppressed all thought and action connected with either remembering or forgetting the War for almost 50 years. The Guernica memorials are especially poignant with civilians and servicemen being named together as individuals.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BL8cG9xgsOA>

<sup>7</sup>Ricoeur, P. *Memory, History and Forgetting* (Univ of Chicago 2004)

interest is Hall's final statement prior to his death in 2014 in which he comments on the 'cultural fall-out' from the 2012 London Olympics. Regarding what he describes as the 'rubbish chauvinism around Team GB' as marking a regression away from widespread acceptance of the benefits of a diverse society, he makes further comment that he remains, 'bloody puzzled' (by the Olympics) cataloguing it as, 'part of that ambiguous, ambivalent, transitional moment I tried to describe earlier.' The materiality of Welsh Language War Memorials emphasizes Hall's puzzlement and sees them establishing a presence of permanence, describing their subject's identity as something both Welsh and British in a related fashion to Hall's description of a Black Olympian taking, 'a certain pride, a certain kind of belonging, not to Britain as such but to "where I live", like Hackney or South London'.<sup>8</sup>

Hall's more general writings explore and elaborate a philosophical theory of conjuncture, defined by himself as, "the moment when contradictory social forces come together to produce a radical shift in societal behaviour". Though Hall does not refer to the Great War, its ending can be seen as representing such a moment with the linguistic question in Wales being right at the forefront of further deliberation.

As with the Prague Spring events the reality of history is utilised to support philosophical discourse and this feature is utilised throughout Rebecca Graff-Macrae's consideration of Irish remembrance since 1916. That year's discord between the Easter Rising and the Battle of the Somme that followed on just two months later is discussed and reads as underpinning the entirety of the work:

'The crucial events that simultaneously reflected these discursive divisions and reproduced them, re-shaped and re-appropriated through the process of commemoration. What was to be remembered and what forgotten of those events became entrenched in discursive negotiations between past, present and future; between competing versions of an Ireland, north and south of a constructed border.'<sup>9</sup>

In conclusion, Graff-Macrae raises, with reference to Edkins (1999) the notion of 'not forgetting the tension, the place always disrupting the narrative,

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<sup>8</sup> Jhally, S. *Stuart Hall: The Last Interview* Cultural Studies, 2016 (Vol. 30 [2]) pp.332/345

<sup>9</sup> Graff-MacRae, R. *Remembering and Forgetting 1916: Commemoration and Conflict in Post-Peace Process Ireland* (Dublin 2010)

resisting itself the opposition of remembrance and forgetting.’ In other words an accentuation of the positive nature of the latter.

Graff-Macrae’s work arose from her doctoral studies at Queen’s University, Belfast and contains an extensive bibliography. This includes *The Living Stream*, a collection of essays by Edna Longley that discuss modern Irish literature in the context of culture and politics and can be seen to be literally shot right through with reference to the events of 1916 mentioned above. Most famously, Longley’s title is taken from Yeats’ poem "Easter 1916" in which the metaphor of a stream-bed rock and the fluid flow of water representing the solidity of the past and the uncertain future at its core. Longley’s discourse intimates that this condition has continued, unabated, in Ireland ever since with the formation of remembrance and forgetting in a constant state of flux.<sup>10</sup>

The Irish condition is expanded upon from the direction of Sociology by John Poulter. His 2017 thesis has a geographical concentration upon Belfast and within this the Protestant and Catholic communities of the Shankill and Falls Roads. He does consider, again, the overlying importance of 1916 with the argument that the conflicting ideas of remembrance and forgetting of the year’s events are so entrenched within the communities’ culture it is unlikely they will ever coincide.

Poulter does revert to Longley’s thread, without direct reference, by stating that; ‘the rediscovered story of the Irish in the Great War and the additional story of its forgetting, has provoked the interest of a range of storytellers on the island.’

A further questioning of Remembrance’s identity comes from the archaeological research of Stanley Walls. In his 2010 thesis he investigates war memorials in Devon with an emphasis on their materiality as objects. Walls argues that the discipline of Archaeology is the most suited to war memorial study as it contains aspects of history, sociology, literature and language within it as necessary component parts. He does, importantly, raise the idea of forgetting: ‘as part of the nature of remembrance and as a necessary precondition to enable remembrance’.

The above listed reference points are complemented by a work from the present age of the digital where the nature of forgetting is being questioned

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<sup>10</sup> Longley, E. *The Living Stream: Literature and Revisionism in Ireland* (Bloodaxe 1994)

from an oblique angle alongside the right to be a forgotten individual, inaccessible via computer memory banks, invisible except to the naked eye.

Mayer-Schonberger produced a provocative study of this including:

‘In the digital age, in what is perhaps the most fundamental change for human beings since our humble beginnings, the balance of remembering and forgetting has become inverted. Committing information to digital memory has become the default and forgetting the exception.’<sup>11</sup>

On one level, the pieces referred to in the above paragraphs could be read as a random trawl through library shelves. To my mind they represent a far from complete historiography of the printed material available on the subject of war memorials’ relevance to cultural and historical research. Within my own research the works of Hall and Walls became increasingly more pointed as it developed. Hall showing a unique understanding of culture within minority communities and Walls extending study beyond the more usually separated areas of history, literature and so on that seem to define a great majority of related works. In short, this has led to a conviction that the approach I have taken – the language comes first – is a worthy one and in turn this leads to the primarily psychogeographical section that follows.<sup>12</sup>

An examination of Primary Source material begins with the memorial structures themselves. To cite as an example, the Anglesey settlement of Bryngwran is located very near to a high point on the right-hand side of the main road in the direction of Holyhead. Just over the brow of the hill stands one of the original milestones erected by the builders of this same main road, ‘Telford’s Highway’ which connected London to Holyhead port and then by sea to Dublin. Completed at vast expense and within 25 years of the 1801 Act of Union the road -latterly known as the A5 - arguably marked the first concerted English incursion into the island and it can be said that the erection of Bryngwran’s imposing and entirely Welsh war memorial is a physical manifestation of resistance to this alien culture.

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<sup>11</sup> Mayer-Schonberger, V. *Delete: The Virtue of Forgetting in the Digital Age* (Princeton 2009)

<sup>12</sup> See Ref 1. above





Fig.1 'Telford's Highway' Milestone – Bryngwran

Pointedly, Bryngwran was not alone in declaring its Welshness. Along Telford's Highway similar stands were made at Llanfairpwllgwyngyll, Gaerwen and Gwalchmai. In all cases the memorial abuts right next to the Highway with its language being exclusively the native tongue.

This same 'native tongue' and particularly the psychological and material consequences of its usage is largely ignored by Rieff and Gaffney (above) and plays minimal part in the seminal works of Fussell (1975), Gregory (1994) and King (1998) regarding war memorials. For a more scrupulous examination,

most pertinently because condensed geographical areas are considered, Snell (2016) and Mytum (2003 and 2004) are validated though both take gravestone inscriptions as their focal points. Snell's continuing work is of a particular interest as he questions the changing nature of English gravestone inscriptions from the late Nineteenth Century. Prior to this it was common practice for details of home to be included along with name and age he reports, continuing to say this ceased almost entirely by the time the Great War concluded. His research of a Welsh continuation of the practice is incomplete but localised observations indicate that inscriptions remained as before. There is a pertinent relevance here to Welsh Language war memorials, identity by name, place and age being inscribed much more commonly than elsewhere.

An extreme example of the conflict between 'remembering' and 'forgetting' is provided in the Anglesey coastal village of Aberffraw where local anecdotal evidence, and this alone, confirms a decision by the inhabitants that no public memorial to the nine local men killed in the Great War be erected. It seems that personal memories were all that they required, nothing tangible. A memorial stone has been latterly placed in the churchyard by Ynys Môn Council listing brief details of the men lost in both World Wars giving ages and place of death but with no reference to home.<sup>13</sup>

The Aberffraw example in turn gives further rise to the fundamental question of the nature of Remembrance and, by implication, 'Forgetting'. Does the constant reminder provided by a visible war memorial negate the value of a life that was lost? There is reference here to the work of Billig (1995) on 'Banal Nationalism' where he discusses the reduction of meaning occasioned by regular repetition of inscription and image. Using this work as a starting point, Jones & Merriman (2008/2009) consider the implications for the theory in the context of the 1970's Welsh Language Road Signs campaign. Though they make no mention of war memorials directly, as illustrated above, connection can be made in that for the first time the Welsh Language became evident and prominent in the public landscape.

Literature concerning the erection and unveiling of memorials remains very slight when set against their sheer number. In part this may be due to the

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<sup>13</sup>[Aberffraw Churchyard - YouTube](#) Note: Anglesey is primarily referred to in its English spelling. Ynys Môn is used where there is a legal usage, e.g. as in the name of the island's elected Local Authority. The plaque was erected on the anniversary of the Great War's beginning but is historically incorrect naming 'Israel' a country that did not then exist as a place of death and listing English names for other countries.

temporary lives of the vast committees who raised monies for their erection and the transient nature of meeting minutes and so forth. The most comprehensive existing accounts are found in local newspapers and occasional brochures produced on significant anniversaries. Amongst these, of great relevance are reports carried in the *'South Wales Argus'* during 1923 and concerning the civic memorial in Newport. Though not generally spoken of as a town – latterly city – where the Welsh Language had any prominence or even relevance, the machinations of a public debate largely carried out in the columns of this newspaper revealed a deep and profound connection to the language and its culture and this in turn demanded a formal recognition upon the Great War Memorial.

The pro-Welsh argument, championed by a mixture of aristocrats, churchmen and commoners represented a small but unified community within the overwhelmingly 'anglicised' population. This same community being one for whom 'remembrance' had a particular meaning and 'forgetting' definitely so as the absence of Welsh would, argued Sir Garrod Thomas, honour, "the great majority of the fallen who were attached to Welsh regiments".<sup>14</sup>

Newport's Welsh community provides an example of resistance to anglicisation that can be termed 'micro' and this term will feature throughout the following pages of this study alongside a comprehensive case study of Newport's particular *Welshness*. Ostensibly more relevant to individual, tiny in number, settlements the term is relevant in other instances. War Memorials, structures of permanence with, as Walls elucidates, materiality, are almost perfect examples of this determination.

As a cornerstone work in the study of small Welsh communities and their patterns of embracing the Language, the Doctoral thesis for Swansea University completed by Rees (1947) on 'The Vicissitudes of the Welsh Language in the Marches of Wales, with special reference to its territorial distribution in Modern Times' is invaluable. Rees examined in detail Church Visitation records, Census evidence and earlier researched works such as Col. Bradney's 'History of Monmouthshire' to provide evidence on the Language's state of health in a wide sweep of the country from Prestatyn, along the path of Offa's Dyke southward to rural Gwent and then continuing to Cardiff. With

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<sup>14</sup> Sir Garrod Thomas, a native Welsh speaker originally from Cardigan was founder and first editor of the Newport based 'South Wales Argus'. This newspaper carried extensive coverage of the War Memorial's planning and execution. More detail included in Chap. 8

particular reference to this study Rees fortunately dealt in detail with small, largely neglected academically, villages and parish communities on the uplands above the Lower Wye Valley and the marshlands to the West of Newport. In this latter he discovered an Anglican Church in Wales that in the mid-Nineteenth Century reverted from English Services to Welsh, completely reversing the linguistic scenario of the industrialising towns to its North. For a contemporary expansion of Rees's work, the 2016 study of borderland communities by Bevan makes intriguing reading as it sets notions of national and linguistic identities within the context of football clubs and their supporters. Bevan's conclusion, supported by comprehensive empirical research (pp.209/210), that:

'An official rhetoric of national identity imposed from the centre tends paradoxically to reveal difference, threatening to expose the nation as constructed rather than natural and timeless.'

This approach is very relevant to the main thrust of Rees's work, regarding as it does the abstract borderlands of the Welsh Language as its central theme as well as a micro-level psychogeographical approach to localities.

Rees made much of Bradney's findings and they act as a counterpoint to the more popularly established opinions that Gwent, along with the similar largely industrial areas of Glamorgan, was engulfed with an overwhelming and uniform tide of anglicisation to which resistance was futile. He makes no mention of war memorials but his research does highlight the late Nineteenth Century actions of a particularly forthright vicar in the parish of Llanishen who is alleged to have disposed of the church's Welsh bible by burying it in his garden. A reaction to this by parishioners came years later with the simple word 'boys' included on memorials in their two churches. The Welsh word '*bechgyn*', traditionally translated in this context as 'our little boys who belong to us' can be seen time and time again in places where Welsh predominated, 'men' being almost unheard of though being universally used in England and Anglicised areas. In both languages, the word acts as a signifier of the native Welsh presence and the sense of belonging.<sup>15</sup>

The locally produced booklets and information sheets concerning memorials are many and varied in format. They provide above all listings of war casualties

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<sup>15</sup>See ref.15 Chap.1

and details of memorial costings. Latterly, a number of websites <sup>16</sup>contain this and more information but there is nothing either there or in the printed word that holds the Welsh language as its main focus and starting point for research. 'The Vicissitudes...' is a remarkable work as it does precisely that and perhaps all the more so as it appears to have been primarily researched during the Second World War. Sadly, the volume of maps and illustrations that complemented it have been lost. In written format, 'Aftermath' is the companion to Gaffney's thesis and 'Wales at War' expands that of Barlow. The military historian Ray Westlake produced two volumes on Monmouthshire War Memorials and they stand as comprehensive catalogues though, by his own admission, not complete a record. (See bibliography)

The somewhat scattergun nature of this review is one I consider to mirror its overall content. The guiding theme as stated in its title remains throughout but there were major changes of intention along the way to its completion. The three main areas of primary study came to be western Anglesey, eastern Powys and south-western Monmouthshire with the urban centre of Newport at its heart. This does not reflect the overall weight of literature, industry or population within Wales as a whole but more by accident than design it does emphasise and enhance the invention, artistry and diverse natures of even the smallest of Welsh communities.

From this I believe my unique approach within the historiography of war memorial literature and research, having a starting, continuing and finish point whereby the cultural, social and historical significance of the native language determines its findings is of no small significance.

The study will continue by focusing more upon the distinct geographical areas already mentioned and certain individual memorials within them in some detail. The intention remains undiluted, namely that the Welsh Language is the one key feature in understanding their continuing relevance and relationship to their communities. In relation to their place within the wider worlds I encourage reference back to my opening statement and believe this will be enriched in the concluding paragraphs of the whole study.

23/08/2019 (amended 17/08/2022 and 05/09/22)

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<sup>16</sup> Refer to Bibliography for listing of appropriate websites.



## MICRO-ANGLICISATION: A CONCEPT WITHOUT DEFINITION

*This section is wide-ranging in geographical scope and crosses boundaries of academic disciplines. Several of the findings and observations are repeated in other parts of the study that were completed at differing times. This is without apology as its nature was very much guided by discovery without a pre-determined framework. 'Micro-anglicisation' remains undefined but is evident on a global scale as English has become the predominant language of the digital universe.*

### Introduction:

A search for the term 'micro-anglicisation' (and its alternate spelling with 'z') via Google fires back that there are no results, instead 'Check your spelling or try different keywords' booms out.<sup>1</sup> The more staid but arguably reliable Oxford English Dictionary in both the academically preferred print and digital formats gives no better than, 'To make English in form or character; to English'<sup>2</sup> when searching for 'anglicisation' as again there is no trace of the prefix. Arguably, a blank canvas exists to seek a definition of the term and the proposal here is that it will be explored by way of distinct Welsh communities, united by having populations of less than 500 at the end of the First World War. The purposes for so doing, bearing in mind that copious volumes of literature in both printed and digital form already exist concerning the subject of that war's memorials to the First World War and its effects upon Wales<sup>3</sup>, is that initial research has indicated a particular native Welsh response to the war by way of memorials erected to those who died as a result of it. This in turn is not a uniform reaction but one which differs in both obvious and subtle ways from place to place. Consequently, the proposition is that the encroachment of the English language, morality and authority into the lives of Welsh people was far from that of the metaphorical blanket and one which therefore justifies study.

### Literature Review:

A History Professor at Princeton and Fellow of the British Academy, Linda Colley was commissioned by the BBC towards the end of 2012 to produce a

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.bing.com/search?q=micro-anglicization&form=EDGHPT&q=HS&cvid=c1545165bd254abda5ab6ab0e6517245&cc=GB&setlang=en-US&PC=LCTS>

<sup>2</sup> Simpson J.A. & Weiner E.S.C. (prepared by) The Oxford English Dictionary, Volume 1 (Oxford 1989) p.465

<sup>3</sup><https://www.llgc.org.uk/about-nlw/partnerships/wales-remembers-1914-1918/> This is perhaps the largest single resource containing details of both media links and reference points.

series of talks on acts of union and disunion and their importance in both understanding and questioning the British past. The book that followed, published on the eve of the 2014 Scottish Referendum and with a possible further referendum on remaining in the European Union turning into a probability, became in Colley's words:

'Not just about the past nor exclusively concerned with one specific polity. Some of the themes it explores and the dilemmas it charts possess a broader resonance. In recent decades the United Kingdom has become increasingly exposed to changes and trials that are often lumped together under the term "globalisation". The resurgent angst over identity politics needs to be understood in part in this light.'<sup>4</sup>

Colley's wide-ranging discourse concerning the United Kingdom's relationship with its constituent parts projects the circumstances of Wales into the context of the whole. The historian J.E. Daniel is quoted for his 1942 remark that, 'The outstanding fact about Wales is that she has always been a nation on the defensive'.<sup>5</sup>

It would be convenient at that point to develop the discourse into a consideration of the ill-defined term 'anglicisation' and argue from the negative – 'defensive' – side of the emotional barricade. Colley does nothing of the sort, indeed the term is not even mentioned once, instead emphasis is placed on the hugely important role the translation and publication of the Bible into Welsh played, and continues to play, in the positive health of the Welsh language and its culture. The strength of this argument will be returned to later in this study and the irony that possibly the most politically adept English monarch of all, Elizabeth I, was its champion not forgotten.

By way of contrast, Tim Williams in his study of Pontypridd's Nineteenth Century history makes no excuses for the term 'anglicisation' being its foundation stone.<sup>6</sup> Without definition or explanation, Williams uses the term both in title and no less than three times in the same sentence of his Abstract. As a result, the reader is left with an understanding of the term that is not necessarily the same one intended by the author. With it being such a key element in the work, further clarity of argument is compromised. Williams

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<sup>4</sup> Colley, L. *Acts of Union and Disunion: What has held the U.K. together – and what is dividing it?* (London 2014) p.xi

<sup>5</sup> Ibid: p.76 from Daniel J.E. *Welsh nationalism; what it stands for*(London 1942}

<sup>6</sup> T.Williams: *Patriots and Citizens: Language, Education and Identity in a Liberal State: the Anglicisation of Pontypridd 1818 – 1920* Unpublished Ph.D diss. (Cardiff Univ. 1989)



goes into fine detail regarding educational and social statistics of the Pontypridd area but works from a position defined as recognising that:

‘The long-term erosion of the Welsh language and the approaching linguistic unification of the British state are rooted in the profound Britishness (sic) of the Welsh and the equally real liberalism of British society and State’.<sup>7</sup>

A further problem with the work is that the author develops much of its thread through his home village of Beddau, some 4 miles to the south-west of Pontypridd town centre. It follows that the social characteristics developed there may have not been identical to those of the townspeople, nor indeed to the nearby villages around Pontypridd but he fails to differentiate to any degree. The “cultural life” he claims, ‘was expressed and experienced in the only language which has ever been the means of communication in Beddau: English, the language of those who came to cut coal from the 4-foot (sic) Llantwit Main Seam on the eve of the First World War.’<sup>8</sup>

How different the conclusion may have been should he have mentioned Ynysybwl, a village identical to Beddau in growth and distance from Pontypridd though on its northern edge, where five chapels conducted services through the medium of Welsh on that same ‘eve’.<sup>9</sup>

A criticism of Williams is that his upbringing and continued residence in Pontypridd, more particularly Beddau, constrains objectivity and sustains a defensive attitude to contrary social experiences elsewhere. Especially critical of the Welsh language policies of Gwynedd County Council in relation to education, he produces a number of statistics but minimal evidence of any first-hand research in the county in support of this.<sup>10</sup> He also compares the native language condition in Wales with that of Ireland (Eire) for reasons which are unclear. The political, governmental and legal statuses of the two countries are very different, Wales effectively incorporated into England in 1536; Ireland becoming conjoined to Britain in 1801 and since regaining a geographically muddled independence, the logic of drawing conclusions from the differing conditions of their native languages seems to be somewhat false. Having said that, there is an indication here for this study in that retaining objectivity when discussing a small community is problematical at best. The geographical, social

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<sup>7</sup> Williams: *Patriots and Citizens* p.VIII

<sup>8</sup> Williams: *Patriots and Citizens* p.III

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.genuki.org.uk/big/wal/GLA/Llanwonno/Chapels> (accessed 05/03/2018)

<sup>10</sup> Williams: *Patriots and Citizens* p. 8 ‘The rise in the proportion of fluent 10-year olds conceals the catastrophic decline in such households in Gwynedd by 1988’ instances this tendency.

and human concerns can be highly personalized through feelings of attachment and belonging, much more so than when dealing with what can be called the anonymous ‘giantism’ of cities, large populations and hundreds of square miles in area.



(Road and Reen between St, Brides and Peterstone, Wentloog, Gwent)<sup>11</sup>

Janet Davies<sup>12</sup> provides a concise, authoritative history of population and linguistic changes in Wales relating to the decades on either side of the First World War. Quoting the census statistics that the population grew from 1,771,451 in 1881 to 2,420,921 in 1911 largely due to immigration, ‘at a rate not much less than the United States’.<sup>13</sup> She goes on to claim that, ‘The ability of the industrial areas to attract migrants from England and the *anglicization*

<sup>11</sup> ‘Reen’ is from a very old word, possibly of Celtic origin, for ‘water’. Hando describes there being 500 miles of these drainage channels in south Gwent and relates the word to ‘Rhone’, ‘Rhine’ and the Welsh ‘Rhondda’ – good water. (Hando F.J.: *The Pleasant Land of Gwent*: Newport 1944 p.16}

<sup>12</sup> Davies, Janet: *The Welsh Language – A History* (Cardiff 2014) Chap.7 Welsh in the First Half of the Twentieth Century

<sup>13</sup> Davies: *The Welsh Language* p.88

(my emphasis, note spelling) caused by the rapid inflow gave rise to the belief that the industrialization of Wales was fundamentally harmful to the Welsh language."<sup>14</sup> Again, the term emphasised is left open-ended with the implication that "industrial" Wales was one self-contained unit centring on the coal-mining valleys of the South where the largest population increases took place.<sup>15</sup>

The difficulty with Davies's reasoning lies in her assumption that 'anglicization'(sic) is a commonly understood concept but there can be little quarrel with her statement that, 'the most obvious impact of the First World War upon the Welsh language was the loss of probably, at least, 35,000 young Welsh-speaking Welshmen'.<sup>16</sup> The figure in itself is debateable in a minor way as Welshmen enlisted in English regiments and vice versa, as illustrated by the memorial in the Powys village of Bwlch-y-Cibau (below), though it would not be unreasonable to say that as the situation happened vice versa, the numbers balanced out. This figure marries with the reported decline of Welsh speakers in the whole country between the 1911 Census and that of 1921 as being 57,274 and translates as a huge proportion, in the region of 61%.<sup>17</sup> Having said, there is a counter argument, though without proven foundation, that the major reason for the decline of the Welsh language following the Great War was the assimilation of Welsh speakers into the various strands of English culture and society throughout its length and, indeed, their continuing interpenetration afterwards.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid: p.88

<sup>15</sup> Abertillery at the eastern 'English' end of the coalfield produced census returns recording 21,945; 35,415; and 38,805 in 1891, 1911 and 1921 respectively. *HMSO Census of England and Wales* for those years

<sup>16</sup> Davies: *The Welsh Language* p.90

<sup>17</sup> Davies: Note 16. For figures, my conversion to ratio



Again, the question of ‘anglicisation’ in major and minor forms appears. Accepting the figures quoted above it has to be asked just what were the effects of a loss of ‘Welsh’ and a consequent increase in ‘English’ for this community of barely 100 adult souls?<sup>18</sup> The 15 names with addresses and regiments listed on the memorial shown above are of men whose linguistic capabilities are unknown but 10 of them have recognisably Welsh surnames; Jones, Edwards, Williams, Ellis, Evans, Thomas, Hughes and it would not be unreasonable, given that its parish, Meifod, had a declared Welsh only and bi-lingual population 68% of its total, to assume the majority of these had a working knowledge of the language.

<sup>18</sup> <http://ukcensusdata.com/meifod-w05000332#sthash.PfZ4TfLX.dpbs> (accessed 09/03/2018) quotes figures for the Census of 2011. There is little to suggest that the population of Bwlch-y-Cibau has markedly altered since 1921. Census figures for then are only available for the Civil Parish of Meifod which includes the village and shows a total of 1,159 persons of 3 and over but this is for an area of which the village is compressed into a corner. The parish’s 2011 total was 1,322.

This statistical analysis does possess some uncertainties, not least the non-availability of house-by-house information for 1921 Bwlch-y-Cibau, but it does point to the central issue of this study, an understanding of the concept 'anglicisation'. The memorial itself provides a material representation of the same. It differs from the vast, almost total, majority of memorials in South Wales and England in that it gives details of the men's homes, there is little mention of either 'King' or 'Empire' and rank is not the dominant feature in the list of names. Indeed, their layout seems to indicate chronology of death more than alphabetical order as being the common practice in predominately Welsh-speaking areas.

A very different approach is found by considering Robert Bevan's thesis of, 'the concept of *national identity* and some of its attendant terms such as *nation*, *nationalism*, *nationality* and *ethnicity*.'<sup>19</sup> Bevan's method of exploration is via three football teams, all at different levels of organisation but all united by existing in what he defines, 'the so-called *debatable lands* – where territorial identities are the subject of debate.'<sup>20</sup> Of the three locations Oswestry is of particular interest for this study being situated in England but almost surrounded by villages bearing Welsh names and having strong cultural, linguistic and economic links with communities on the Welsh side of the legislated border. Indeed, the football team subject relocated there from the Powys village of Llansantffraid-ym-Mechain in 2007 having outgrown their facilities there both in playing and economic success.<sup>21</sup> Bevan constructs his study, 'primarily applying a micro-sociological approach to examining identity formation in the borderlands, highlighting principal similarities and differences and creating a natural transition from the empirical analysis of the data to theoretical categorisation and interpretation.'<sup>22</sup> This methodology is in harmony with the subject under investigation here as it alludes to the discipline required to coherently discuss Welsh Language war memorials as indicators of Welsh Linguistic Identity. Whereas Bevan takes much of his evidence directly from the mouths of the fans associated with the three clubs,

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<sup>19</sup> R. Bevan: *Oswestry, Hay-on-Wye and Berwick-upon-Tweed: Football Fandom, Nationalism and National Identity across the Celtic borders*. Unpublished Ph.D (Cardiff Univ. 2016) p.13

<sup>20</sup> Bevan: *Oswestry, Hay-on-Wye and Berwick-upon-Tweed* p.10

<sup>21</sup> Ibid: p.48 (Bevan's refers to [www.tnsfc.co.uk](http://www.tnsfc.co.uk) having a club history page, this has now become defunct) The club were originally known as 'Total Network Solutions' after the sponsoring electronics firm. This is now altered to 'The New Saints' and commonly abbreviated to 'TNS' so creating a linguistic issue in itself. Straw polls conducted among supporters of Cardiff City and Swansea City by this writer indicate that very few people know where the team play, this despite their record of multiple Welsh League and Cup winning performances in the last 15 years.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid: p.10

here the memorials themselves provide the major instruments of evidence, supported by documentary items such as the census figures quoted above.

Perhaps Bevan's most interesting and relevant remark towards a definition of 'anglicisation' and its 'micro' form



Oswestry and surrounds. (Map dates from 1884 but place names are largely unchanged today. Park Hall, the site of a former Army camp to the east of the town, is the base for both TNS football club and the Welsh Guards Museum.)

comes in his discussion of present-day Oswestry and what can be described as its cultural *uncertainty*. (My emphasis)

“In the long run, bilingualism has enabled the town to establish Welsh cultural expressions in areas where it had few historical precedents, which has helped to reinvigorate Welsh traditions. Nonetheless, the influx of ‘outsiders’ to Oswestry who lack an awareness of the unique Welsh language culture of the town has acted to undermine its distinctiveness, especially the everyday use of the Welsh language. Thus, Welsh national identity has been facing the danger of becoming eroded on the one hand, with the emergence of a dual English-Welsh hybrid on the other.”<sup>23</sup>

A further study of a community whose Welshness is taken as unsteady and open to interpretation is provided by Daniel Evans<sup>24</sup>. Writing as a Social Scientist, Evans takes as his starting point the classic Balsom ‘Three Wales’ model, including the focus town of Porthcawl as indicative of the least Welsh, ‘British Wales’ condition. Taking the current state of Wales as nation devolved from full central government control, Evans questions how the townspeople, ‘negotiate a Welsh identity’<sup>25</sup> and asks how his study of everyday Welshness can be viewed in the wider context of sociological analysis to provide a coherent statement of this same ‘identity’. In referring to analyses provided by Gramsci (1971) of the modern state and amplified by theorists who expounded on these in particular Williams (1980) and Hall (1986), Evans makes a remark which can be regarded as crucial to an understanding of both the modern, post-devolution Wales and the country recovering from the trauma of the First World War by stating that:

Subaltern classes are not ‘duped’ into accepting a world-view inimical to their interests but are instead *actively attracted* to the dominant narratives within society. The implicit, underlying *common sense* of society manifest in everyday life and routines<sup>26</sup>

In search of this ‘*common sense*’ notion, Evans includes extensive evidence of interview with both local adults and children regarding their ideas of Welshness. Similar work was carried out by Edwards in the Rhymney Valley with an emphasis on the linguistic elements.<sup>27</sup> Edwards describes a landscape where speech patterns, borrowed words and localised dialect contribute to a

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<sup>23</sup> Bevan: *Oswestry, Hay-on-Wye and Berwick-upon-Tweed*. P.171

<sup>24</sup> D. Evans: *Post-Devolution Identity in Porthcawl: an ethnographic analysis of Class, Place and everyday Nationhood in ‘British Wales’* Unpublished Ph.D diss. (Bangor Univ. 2014)

<sup>25</sup> Ibid: p.3

<sup>26</sup> Footnote 35.

<sup>27</sup> J.H.K. Edwards: *Culture, Language and Education in the Upper Rhymney Valley* Unpublished Ph.D diss. (Cardiff Univ. 1998)

confusion of identity though one where distinctly 'Welsh' events subvert any notions of a British belonging. This mirrors the findings of Evans and perhaps questions the 'Three Wales Model' in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century as it can be claimed more children than ever before leave primary school throughout the country with a basic knowledge of the Welsh language.<sup>28</sup>

With this supposition in mind, it is disappointing that Evans fails to pursue his search for the Porthcawl Welsh into the socially elite strata of the town, namely the Royal Porthcawl Golf Club and the two independent schools. Similarly, he is somewhat dismissive of the town's annual 'Elvis Festival',<sup>29</sup> a weekend event that attracts thousands from the same Valley communities for whom Porthcawl provided holiday respite in the heavy industry times as:

'..the infamous *Elvis Festival* characterized in the local popular imagination as a "working-class Eisteddfod" defined by prodigious alcohol consumption.'<sup>30</sup>

From a distance but with a personal knowledge of Porthcawl, the working-class of South Wales and Eisteddfodau it seems an ideal opportunity to analyse 'Welshness' in the context of this weekend was passed up.

Possibly the first book intended for to explain Welsh politics, literature and society to a primarily English readership, *The Welsh Extremist* first published in 1971 with its author, Ned Thomas explaining in the revised imprint twenty years later that, "I stand by enough of what I then wrote because I know from repeated personal encounters that a new generation has found things in its pages that still touch its life."<sup>31</sup>

Far from the revolutionary polemic that one might expect from such a title, Thomas uses its pages to discourse on Welsh culture and most pertinently with regard to its literature remarking,

'One can speak of the British workman or the British ruling classes but in the true culture of their hearts the English are English and the Welsh are Welsh. One does not speak of British literature.'<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> WalesOnline <https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/numbers-children-speaking-welsh-more-3864527> (accessed 13/03/18)

<sup>29</sup> Porthcawl Elvis Festival <http://www.elvies.co.uk/> (accessed 13/03/2018)

<sup>30</sup> Evans: *Post Devolution Identity in Porthcawl* p.88

<sup>31</sup> Thomas N.: *The Welsh Extremist – Modern Welsh Politics, Literature and Society*. (Talybont 1991. Rev. London 1971) p.5

<sup>32</sup> Thomas: *The Welsh Extremist* p.33



This is very telling phrase, obvious at a superficial level but scratch the surface and the whole menagerie of anglicisation; nationalism; nationhood; identity both linguistic and cultural and ethnicity crawls out.

Thomas attempts to define his notion of the Welsh 'extremist' by making particular reference to writers who would be virtually unknown to an English readership by virtue of their use of Welsh. A signal experience for Thomas came in 'discovering' that far from:

'Welsh literature not coping with the modern world, as if the industrialization which had marked out all our lives had not really been experienced in Wales, there were industrial communities still speaking Welsh in Carmarthenshire. On a visit to a small colliery, I remember my amazement that the language spoken underground was Welsh'.<sup>33</sup>

These remarks relate directly to those opening this study, namely that the nature of 'anglicisation' is ill-defined, it exists in variants as many times as there are communities and that the Welsh language is the major statement of – to paraphrase Thomas – the *Welsh Extremist's* understanding of the native culture.

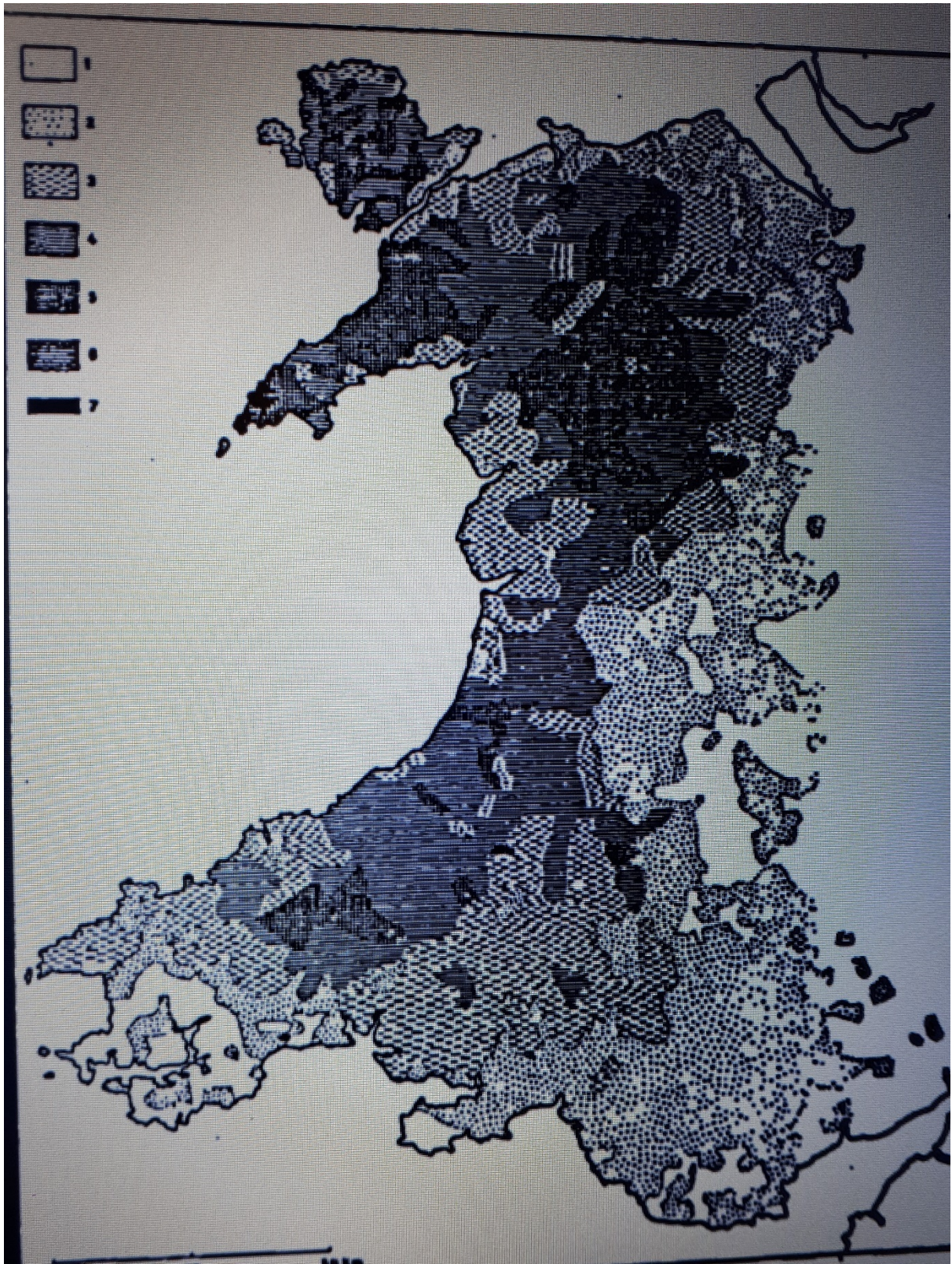
Uniting the writers last quoted above; Thomas, Evans and Bevan are links to the essentially socialist philosophies of the theorists in the British school of cultural studies. Developed in the late 1950's and taking inspiration from Richard Hoggart with Raymond Williams as its *de facto* leader, the 'school' produced a forthright and eloquent voice in the shape of the British domiciled Jamaican, Stuart Hall. In his writings, Hall placed great emphasis on his position as an outsider in British 'Imperial' Society and his theory of conjuncture – moments in time when social and cultural forces collide with uncertain outcome – is arguably key to understanding the hazy, uncertain meaning of 'anglicisation'<sup>34</sup> in the context of the ending of the First World War.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid: p.47. The common language of South Wales miners in their workplace is a subject that remains to be studied. Growing up in the mining village of Waunlwyd, just south of Ebbw Vale the writer has understanding that Welsh words and phrases predominated underground.

<sup>34</sup> Jhally S. *Stuart Hall – The Last Interview* Cultural Studies 2016 Vol 30 (2) pp. 332/345

<sup>35</sup> Further research into the term is found in Evans D. *'How far across the Border do you have to be, to be considered Welsh': National Identification at a Regional Level*; Contemporary Wales (20) pp.124-143. Evans considers mainly the populous areas of the North-East Coast and concludes that "[...Anglicization...] is a loaded vessel carrying different meanings for different people. No clear patterns of relationship were discernible in the meanings given to the concept". So much differing opinion is proffered to Evans in his interviews that one could become cynical and agree with his pointed remark that a true marker of anglicisation is the number of television aerials in Rhyl that are tuned in to Granada TV.



Monoglot Welsh areas as per 1921 Census. Black 100% White 0% (Annales de Géographie Vol. 35)

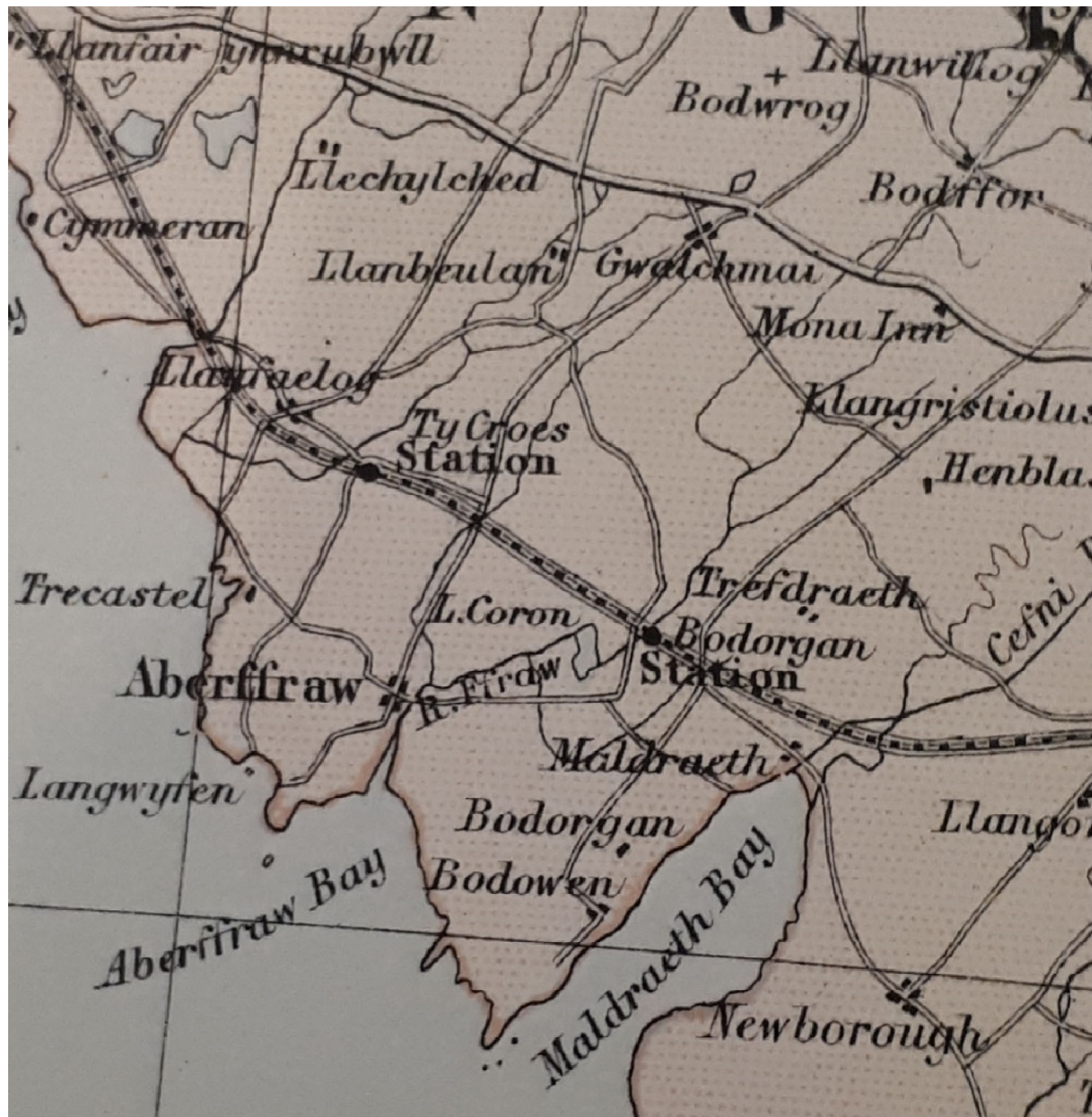
## Case Studies:

Three communities will be described here using statistical data from the 1921 Census, photographic evidence of their WWI memorials and empirical observations from the present day.

Rhosneigr, situated on the Anglesey coast, 7 miles south of Holyhead, provides an example of a community statistically at odds with its neighbours, such as Bryngwran, Aberffraw and Gwalchmai, in that its attraction to English immigrants and holidaymakers by virtue of its seaside location has led to a deviance in census returns and abstract English appearances. The community itself was virtually non-existent as late as 1884 (as shown by the map below) with the established and today much lesser in population, village of Llanfaelog providing a parish name that still exists.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ccCfpOL3lgc&list=PLLpfS84cDKTF2WPUpvSn6UsgPI3YABpl0&index=40>  
Rhosneigr Memorial



Source: *Phillips Atlas of the Counties of England and Wales* (London 1884)

The population of Rhosneigr began to grow after this map's date largely fuelled, it would seem, by wealthy English people who built homes along the coast. The acceleration of this reached a point of purpose in 1907 with the opening of a railway station and culminated two years later with the building of a beach-side mansion by the English millionaire Charles Palethorpe.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>37</sup><http://www.geograph.org.uk/photo/1047323>

The 1921 census figures are only available for the whole parish of Llanfaelog<sup>38</sup> and are compromised by the official report that, 'some holiday movement was, largely due to the abnormally fine weather in progress' adding also that the census was delayed from its planned for date of early April by industrial action, finally being counted on June 19<sup>th</sup>. The result of this for Llanfaelog, and more particularly its seaside 'holiday resort' of Rhosneigr being a total return of 626 males and 898 females with 156 and 307 of these respectively stating to be speakers of 'English Only' leaving 136 of both sexes as declared monoglot 'Welsh'. In the three neighbouring parishes of Aberffraw, Llangaffo and Llanddaniel Fab, a grand total of 14 'English Only' were recorded against 808 Welsh.<sup>39</sup>

The native Welsh were clearly in the minority in Rhosneigr and it can only be construed from this that English culture, the chosen name of the Palethorpe residence being 'Surf Point', had arrived in its full force. There is a comparison here with observations made by Evans in Porthcawl<sup>40</sup> regarding the subtly 'anglicising' effects of signage, newspaper displays, product names and so forth. Pictorial evidence from Rhosneigr in the pre-WWI days is limited and tends to be of seaside panoramas but a striking photograph in a collected volume of these shows the unveiling of the village's WWI memorial. Dame Margaret Lloyd George performed the ceremony on 24 April 1921 with a large crowd watching as the Union Jack shrouded clock tower was made public.<sup>41</sup> This same memorial, and a related one in St. Maelog Church<sup>42</sup> can be interpreted as major statements of the community's response to the English ingress.

There are 27 named men on both the Rhosneigr memorial and that of 30 to be found inside the church. Of these, 18 appear on both and of these 11 appear to be of Welsh origin; Davies, Owen, Jones, Lewis, Pritchard, Roberts, Thomas. Remarkably, and certainly rarely, the inscriptions around this church memorial are entirely in Welsh<sup>43</sup> and are mannered

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<sup>38</sup> Census of England and Wales 1921: *Counties of Carnarvon and Anglesey* (HMSO 1924) p. 70

<sup>39</sup> Ibid: Total populations off the three largely Welsh parishes 744 Male 746 Female.

<sup>40</sup> Footnote 24 refers

<sup>41</sup> Hale, T.M. *Rhosneigr: Now and Then* (Sheffield 1990) p.31

<sup>42</sup> The two are little more than a mile apart. Llanfaelog village has no coastline, the church is of 6<sup>th</sup> Century origin. [www.llanfaelogcommunitycouncil.gov.uk](http://www.llanfaelogcommunitycouncil.gov.uk)

<sup>43</sup> <https://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/item/memorial/74625>

in the 'Welsh' fashion of localised inscription along with alphabetical name listing and lack of reference to Imperialism.

At Rhosneigr, the four-face clock tower – again a feature common to this part of Anglesey – Llanfairpwllgwyngyll, Gwalchmai and Llangefni share it- but virtually unknown elsewhere also contains a Welsh local inscription, this time at its base, translating as “Priceless their sacrifice: and still as boulders set, the breaches they fill.” Information from the Community Council says that the postman/poet Richard Davies, bardic name 'Meirion Fab' supplied the lines.<sup>44</sup>

The lines can, in the light of history since, be seen as an ironic comment upon the defence of Welsh tradition in Rhosneigr. Certainly, the present-day sight of 'Surf Shop', 'Wine and Coffee Deli' and 'Golf Club' do the language no favours at all but the clock tower inscriptions are not of a transitory character and mark out an area which continues to resist the Collins Dictionary statement of:

‘If you anglicis(z)e something you change it so that it resembles, or becomes English in outlook, attitude, form etc.’<sup>45</sup>

Llansilin is a village that gives its name to a parish in the north-eastern part of present-day Powys, literally overlooked by the English Border from the ridge above. By road, Oswestry is little more than 6 miles distant and the whole tenor of the area is that detailed by Bevan in his study of identity in border communities.<sup>46</sup>

The same 1921 Census Record as detailed above (the first one for which Males and Females are counted separately) gives totals for the parish as 565 M./528 F; English only 59/76; Welsh only 74/52; Both 409/307.

There were no reported seasonal fluctuations to report in this part of the country and curiously the M/F imbalance in linguistic abilities more or less balance each other out though the 'Both' figures are inconsistent. There is little to show any English incursion into Llansilin by way of renamed houses and farms at this time. Indeed, a notable, possibly unique, deviance from the norm exists today in that the Welsh name for Oswestry, '*Croesoswallt*' is displayed singly on road signs leading out of Llansilin itself. The conflict over 'anglicisation' in this rural valley, in 1918 part of Denbighshire, appears to have arisen over the form and location

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<sup>44</sup><https://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/item/memorial/17398>

<sup>45</sup> Anderson S. et al: *Collins English Dictionary* (Glasgow) Eighth Edition 2006 p.62

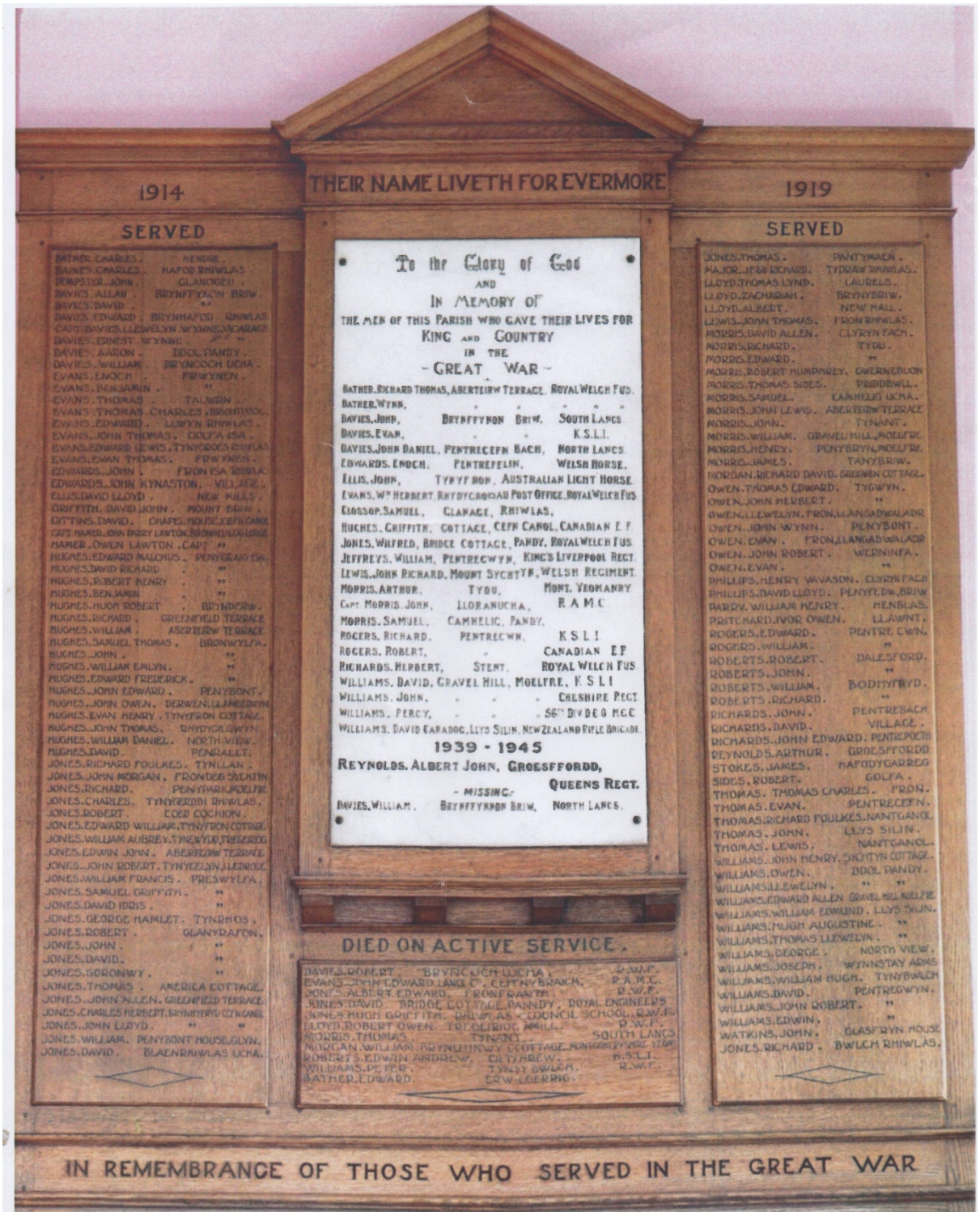
<sup>46</sup> Footnote 19

of the WWI memorial. Gaffney<sup>47</sup> describes the opening ceremony for the nonconformist memorial, an Institute, again carried out by Dame Margaret Lloyd George with, 'local clergy and ministers vieing for the honour of thanking their guest for her efforts'. The need for it to be erected at all, given the fact that a memorial had already been erected in the grounds of St. Silin's Church remains unclear but was probably down to denominational rivalries inflamed by the 1920 passing of the Disestablishment Act that left the parish in a state of limbo as geographically part of it was legally in England. The 'Oswestry and Border Counties Advertiser' reported 'an immense gathering' at the laying of the foundation stone for the Institute<sup>48</sup> so one can infer from this that in this parish where the same report states that from, "the population of 1,278 in 1911, 159 enlisted for work of national importance, in total 1/5 of the parish were prepared to serve King and Country, 31 lost, 20 killed in action, 10 in the army, 1 missing in action." The Institute walls (below) display the names of all the enlisted men, whatever denomination, and can be regarded as a statement of unity in times that seem to have been somewhat divisive. The status of the Welsh language within this turmoil is unclear though the Institute inscriptions and names are resolutely English just yards from a bi-lingual churchyard. As seen above the local cross-border newspaper reported in English with the occasional column in Welsh and had a distribution area that, judging by advertisements and sports news extended from Welshpool to Wrexham with again a literal mixing jar of linguistic identity.

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<sup>47</sup> Gaffney A. *Poppies on the Up-Platform: Commemoration of the Great War in Wales* Published Ph.D diss. Cardiff 1996 p.177

<sup>48</sup> *Oswestry and border Counties Advertiser* 14/11/1923 Digitised version accessed 12/03/2018



In summation, it can be said that WWI acted as an agent for increasing use of English in Llangilini village and parish. There were contributing factors, not least the uncertainty of living in Bevan's 'debateable land' but overall, the conclusion has to be drawn that this small community



was now left to retain their Welsh belonging by private and personal means.<sup>49</sup>

I make little excuse for examining a third area with the eye of someone who has been fascinated by its very remarkable 'apartness' from the rest of my home area over the last fifty years. Nowhere could be so remote in style and fashion from the rest of Gwent, or so it seemed on the surface. My proposed enquiry was to examine the effect of the Great War upon this singular region. It appeared to fit into the emerging study's framework of small community, resistance to change and a distinct remoteness.

(Refer to footnote 59)

Writing in 1981, Alan Roderick says that:

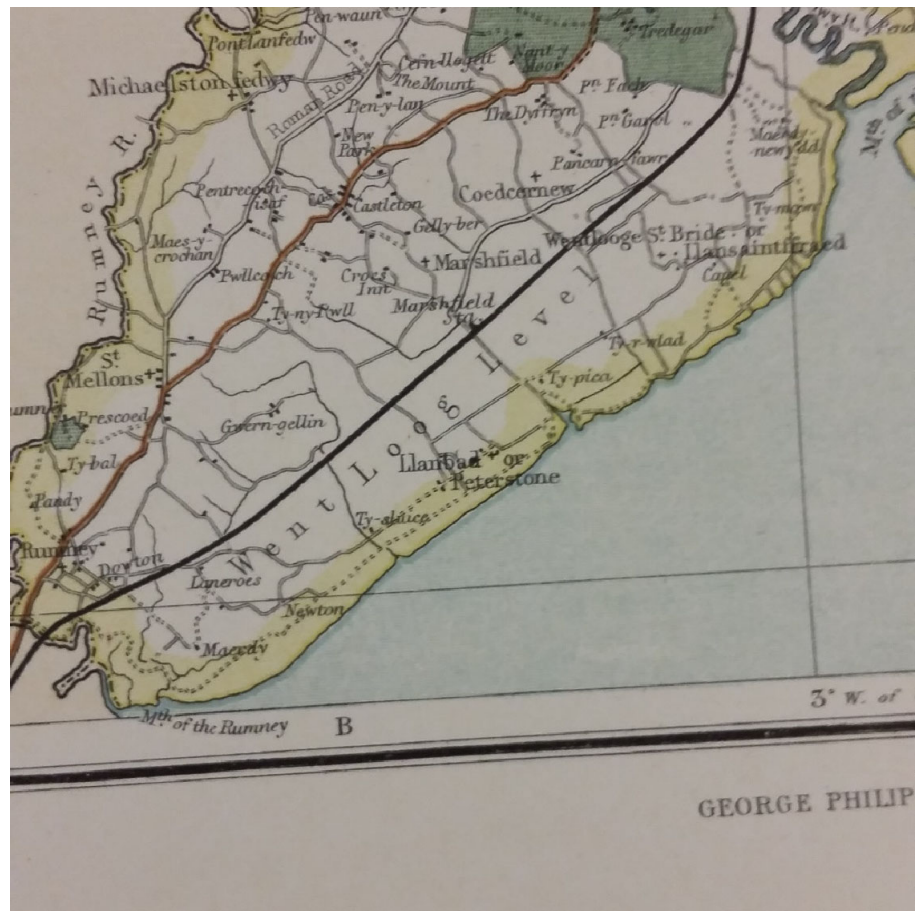
“Monmouthshire in the early 1800’s was certainly not without its *anglicising* influences (my emphasis). But William Coxe’s account of his travels in the county published in 1801 show that Welsh was by no means a spent force in the Monmouthshire of the late eighteenth/early nineteenth century. Industrialisation had not yet begun to bite deeply and Coxe found a comparatively green and pleasant land. Welsh was understood and used by the majority of the people though the rate of English infiltration was being intensified...Coxe also visited the three ‘churches of the Level; St. Bride’s, Peterstone and Marshfield...these marshes, being only inhabited by farmers and labourers, contain very few houses and cottages. The natives are in general Welsh and many of them scarcely understand English; consequently, the churches are served in the Welsh language”.<sup>50</sup>

These ‘churches of the Level’, in particular those of Peterstone and St. Bride’s, are the subject of this penultimate section as their small size in both area and population, plus their seclusion from the rest of Wales may go some way to addressing the question of *micro*-anglicisation. Coxe’s observation above concerning the sparse nature of both settlement and inhabitants is borne out by the map shown below.

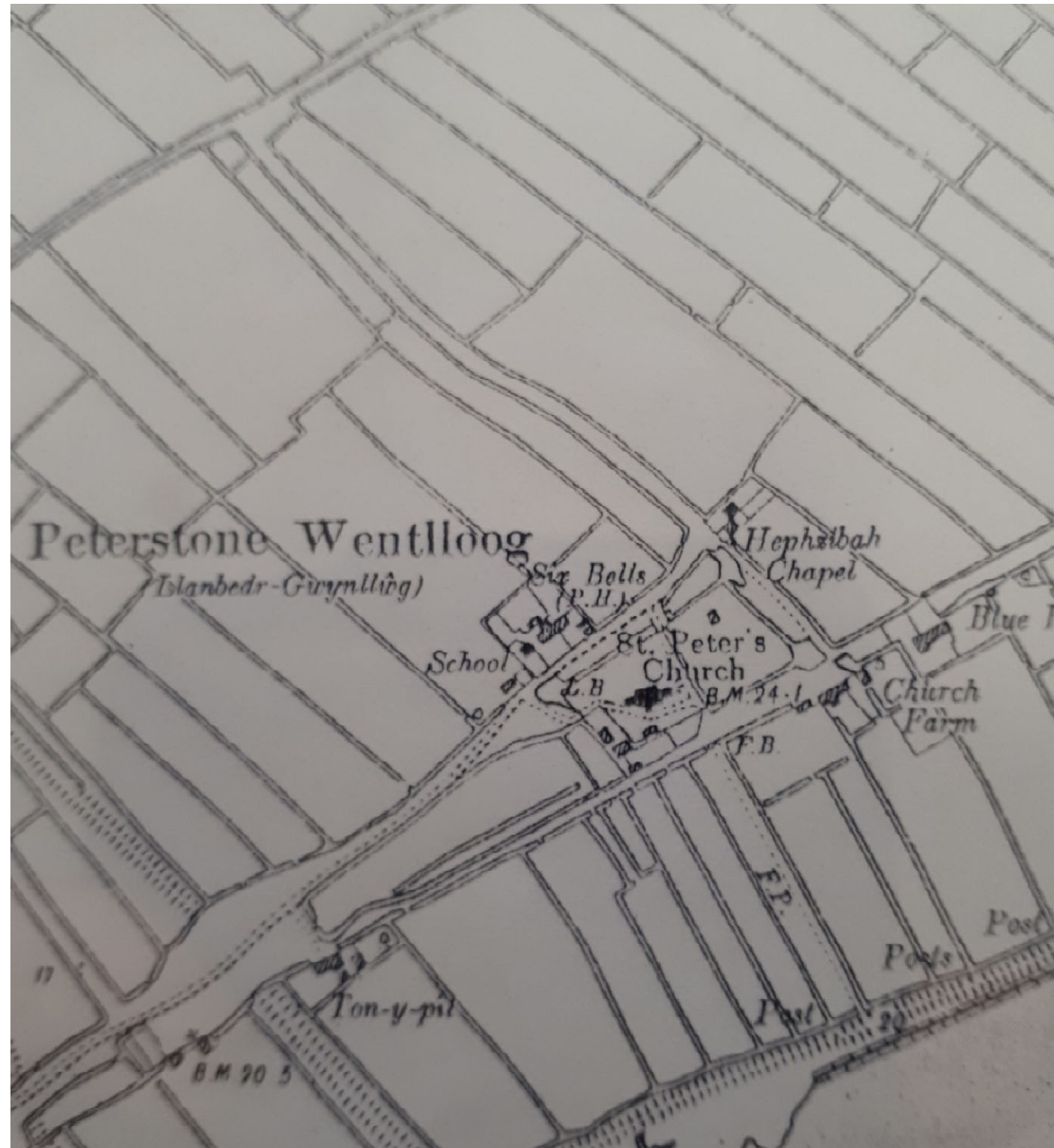
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<sup>49</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KHbrFRSkx38&list=PLLpfS84cDKTF2WPUpvSn6UsgPI3YABpl0&index=17>  
Llansilin Church

<sup>50</sup> Roderick A. *A History of the Welsh language in Gwent Pt. 2* Gwent Local History 51 (Autumn 1981) pp 3-4. Roderick quotes from William Coxe: ‘*A Historical Tour Through Monmouthshire*’ (London 1801). The mention of the ‘Level’ is possibly the first in literature, Gerald of Wales skirted this area on his famous journey taking the higher route of the present-day A.48.



Newport is to the right and Cardiff to the left as shown with the focus area running between the sea and the black line that shows the railway line (opened in 1850). 'Llanbedr or Peterstone' and 'St. Bride or Llansaintfraed' are the villages/parishes and there is very little to note on the three miles that separate them, except the few place names are in Welsh. This 'Phillips' map was produced in 1904 and shows remarkable contrast with the officially produced Ordnance Survey sheets of 1902 where the script is primarily English. For this study's purpose further discussion of the villages below the railway line follows. (Extraction for Peterstone shown below)



The sparsity of this area is described by Thomas:<sup>51</sup>

“The two large, thinly populated coastal parishes remained isolated for much of the year by a damp, unhealthy climate and impassable roads.”<sup>52</sup>

Continuing to examine the minimal evidence of population statistics, Thomas does provide by using a combination of church and tithe records an “indication” that in 1801 Peterstone was home to 85 inhabitants and St. Bride’s to 134. By 1921 the population had virtually doubled; 148 in Peterstone and 230 at St. Bride’s and to restate Roderick’s claim that

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<sup>51</sup> V. Thomas *Communities of the Wentlloog Levels 1650-1800* unpublished M.A. diss. (Cardiff Univ. 1987)

<sup>52</sup> Thomas: *Communities of the Wentlloog Levels* p.134

“Welsh was by no means a spent force” bilingualism was noted for 28 and 21 residents.<sup>53</sup>

The chronicler of life in the rural parts of this county, Fred Hando, visited the ‘Level’ on a number of occasions between 1923 and the early 1960’s recording these via a ‘South Wales Argus’ column. Hando, a Newport teacher and headmaster for most of this time, was not a Welsh-speaker but took great delight in finding the Welsh history of his home region in unlikely places. A recorded conversation with Mr. Harry Rees in 1950’s Peterstone tells how Welsh was spoken openly before WWI but faded afterwards.<sup>54</sup> Examination of the 1911 Electoral Register shows Edward, Phillip, Rees E. and Thomas all with this same surname in the village and with Tan-y-Ffynon and Ty Coch among their addresses.<sup>55</sup> There is no evidence of a memorial to the men of WWI here though a modern one exists at St. Bride’s with just two names inscribed. A plaque recording a WWII casualty inside the church was recorded by Gwent Family History Society but public access is no longer available.<sup>56</sup>

At St. Bride’s, taking note of Thomas’s conclusion that; ‘Although the parishes were neighbours they were dissimilar in many ways and their histories quite different’,<sup>57</sup> this same electoral roll appears much more ‘English’ in nature, both through personal and place name. Strangely a ‘Rees’ appears again at ‘Great House’, ‘Ty-Mawr’ on the Phillips above and observed on a recent visit to now be the Welsh version again. Also noted on this register is David Llewelyn Harding of London whose ownership of ‘land near church’ gave him voting rights. This is the same man spoken of by Hando as being from a Welsh-speaking family who attended the Welsh Congregational Chapel, leaving the village to become a world-renowned film star (after shortening his name to ‘Lew’).<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> HMSO *Census of England and Wales 1921: County of Monmouthshire* (London 1924)

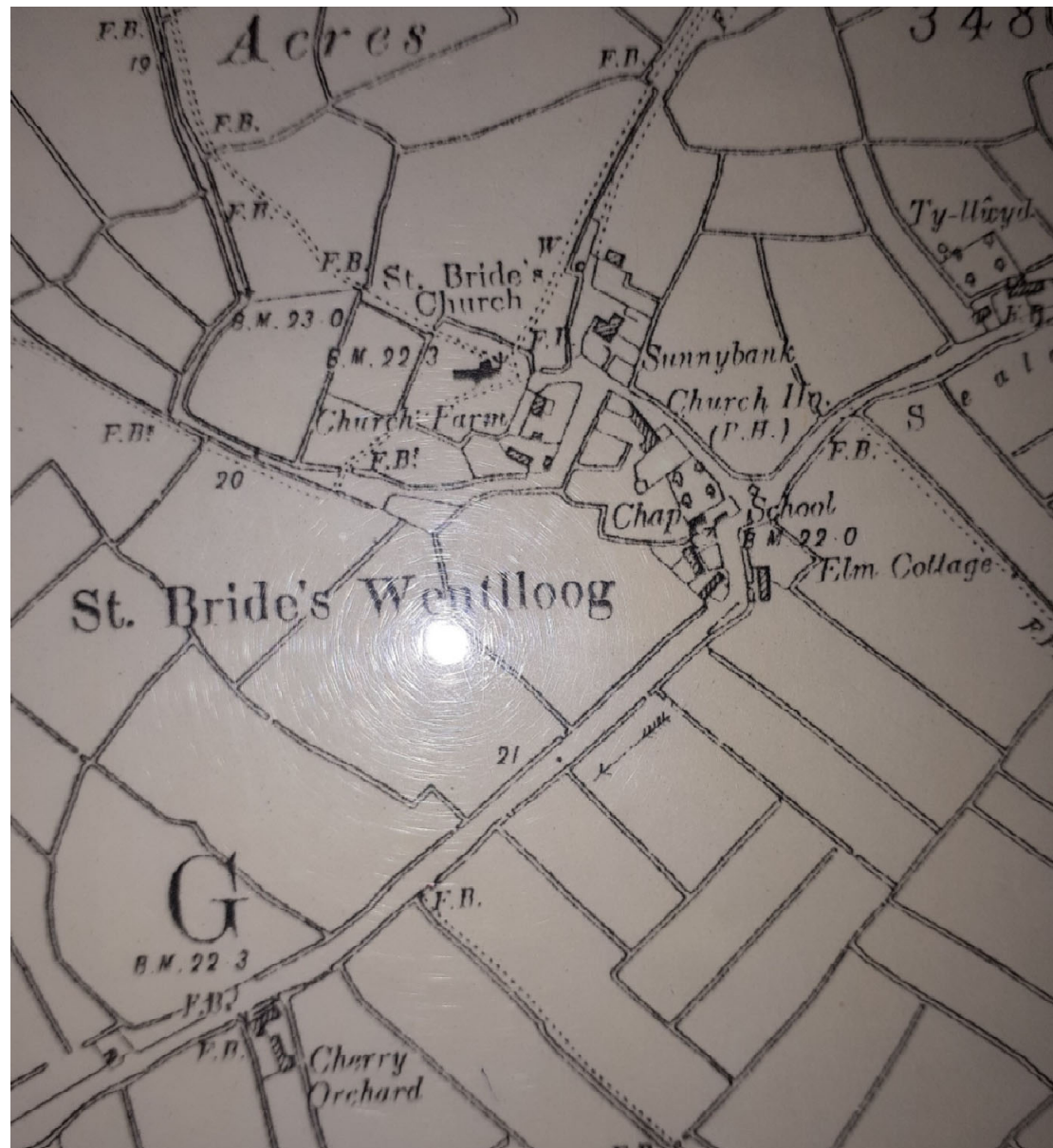
<sup>54</sup> Barber C. ed. *Hando’s Gwent Chapter 7 On the Wentllwg Levels* (Abergavenny 1987) pp127-140

<sup>55</sup> HMSO *Electoral Register 1911 Section 172* (digital access 12/03/18)

<sup>56</sup> Unpublished manuscript *Monumental Inscriptions*: Newport Reference Library 16/03/2018

<sup>57</sup> Thomas: *Communities of the Wentloog Levels* p.134

<sup>58</sup> Hando F.J. *The Pleasant Land of Gwent* (Newport 1944. This edition 1973) pp 37-40



(HMSO Ordnance Survey 1902)<sup>59</sup>

The instances mentioned above; changing of place names, pre-WWI anecdotal evidence, adoption of an acceptable stage name, the peculiar isolation of the area – much of which remains at or below sea-level with no regular public transport services- contribute to a condition for which the term ‘micro-anglicisation’ becomes appropriate. Individuals and families are directly involved in the process to the exclusion of elected

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[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Okhw5e4UA\\_M&list=PLLPfS84cDKTF2WPUvpSn6UsgPI3YABpI0&index=25](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Okhw5e4UA_M&list=PLLPfS84cDKTF2WPUvpSn6UsgPI3YABpI0&index=25) St Brides Village

bodies and external forces. Thomas talks of the influence of the Morgan family as the dominating owners of land in the area and this seems to have been largely benevolent.<sup>60</sup> There is perhaps a resonance with Hall's concept of conjuncture here, physical and social conditions combining to cause dynamic uncertainties. Present day residents speak of a further strain in that the demands of being in Newport administratively are countered by a greater attraction to Cardiff for social purposes.<sup>61</sup>

## Conclusion

Parallels can be drawn between the three localities discussed above, their sizes, relative isolations and emergence from WWI with very particular senses of identity, ranging from renewal in Llansilin to foundation in Rhosneigr and status quo on the Wentloog Level. Overall, the question asked at the start as to what exactly 'anglicisation' is remains unanswered in its wide sense but, I can claim, very much reasoned in its micro form. Perhaps a reason for this can be traced back to the 1536 Act which sought to unify Wales and England.<sup>62</sup> Davies points out here that 'there were about 7,500 words in the Act, of which 150 dealt with the Welsh language. This 2% of the statute has become the subject of more comment than the rest of the legislation.' This very neatly worded summation echoes throughout the pages of this study; the local inscription at the base of the Rhosneigr memorial, dignitaries falling over themselves to embrace Dame Margaret Lloyd George – a passionate advocate for the language – at a largely English unveiling ceremony, Mr. Rees relating to Fred Hando the Welsh pre-war story of 'Betty the Fish' transporting the morning's catch to Castleton and walking all the way with a basket on her head.

What is for certain, and literally written in stone, is that diverse communities throughout Wales found ways of reasserting themselves at the end of the First World War in 'micro' ways which echo large.

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<sup>60</sup> The Morgan family resided at Tredegar House, between Newport and the Levels. They were the main sponsors of the 1897 Newport National Eisteddfod. See Jones G.J. in *Gwent Local History* 67 (Autumn 1989) pp. 19-33

<sup>61</sup> Conversations with parishioners at St. Bride's Church (July 2017) and St. Mary's Church, Marshfield (January 2018). Peterstone church is now a private residence and locals travel to St. Mary's.

<sup>62</sup> [http://www.bbc.co.uk/wales/history/sites/themes/periods/tudors\\_04.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/wales/history/sites/themes/periods/tudors_04.shtml) accessed 20/03/2018

Stuart Stanton

20/03/2018



The Sea Wall, dating back to Roman times, looking east between the 'Level' and the Bristol Channel. (taken 25/02/2018)

Footnote:

<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/localarea?compare=1170222057>

for 2011 census details.

*This was the first geographical area of my study. The account is written in an essay format, prefaced by a specific question. The vast amount of information that came to hand resulted in only an incomplete research account with one particular parish, Llansilin, becoming the focal point. This in turn pointed the way for the concept of 'micro-anglicisation' to feature throughout the submitted work. There will be reference within this section to structures and events that are also to be found elsewhere in the study. The duplication is not deliberately intentional but I argue that it compounds the nature of Welsh identity that is at the study's heart and is personally located in my South Walian tendency to repeat already obvious statements and phrases when speaking English.*

## In Search of Powys War Memorials

1. The Question: War memorials in the northern part of Powys can be seen to indicate a particular linguistic identity. What is this, how and why did it come about and what does it say regarding the contemporary identity of this region?
2. The approach will be by examining specific communities in the area mentioned above. The argument constructed will show that the form of memorial described defines the community.
3. The plan is to, in the first instance take an overview of the geographical area named in respect of its history, economy, population and society. Following from this, detailed observations of the distinct settlements of Guilsfield, Bwlch-y-Cibau, Llanfyllin, Llanrhaeadr-ym-Mochnant and Llansilin will be described alongside observations of those in their vicinity.
4. A review of the known literature concerning local attachment, memorials, anglicisation, linguistic conflict follows to provide an understanding of the conceptual issues raised by the study and their interpretation.
5. The conclusion, relating firmly back to the initial question, will seek to answer this. At the same time, it will locate findings and issues relating to the wider cultural aspects.



## Introduction:

The approach to this question will be by way of examining specific communities within the area named. As a guide, it comprises land to the north of Welshpool with its western edge being Llanfair Caereinion and the Welshpool/Oswestry road to the east. This latter boundary includes incursions into England but this apparent anomaly is explained by the strong historical links of language, religion and economy which render an artificial 'border' redundant in human terms.<sup>1</sup>

Memorials specific to the fallen soldiers, all but a very small proportion male, of the Great War as it was popularly known exist in scores of thousand throughout the British Isles. Keepers of the most authoritative record, in the custody of the Imperial War Museum, currently list 68,000<sup>2</sup> with possibly as many as a third of that number still to come to light. There being no established comprehensive database for Welsh memorials, it is impractical to even hazard a guess as the number of memorials existing here, with the added rider that many of them will be inscribed wholly or partly in Welsh and may or may not have survived the numerous closures of chapels and churches which housed them.

This matter of the Welsh language is fundamental to a constructive argument of the opening question. Welsh is as much the defining feature of the country as anything else. Regarded historians and academics from all sides of the political and economic spectrum would – probably without exception – unite behind this simple proposition. By way of support one can add that political and social argument against the language is somewhat light on the ground. A specific relevant study of two Powys districts, Guilsfield and Castell Caereinion (Davies, 1970) tells us that, 'Welsh has led to the appearance in these dialects of constructions which would to many Englishmen appear strange' and continues to cite specific instances as in *a neighbour to me*. 'English' therefore,

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<sup>1</sup> O'Donnell Lectures: *Angles and Britons* pp. 96-106 (Cardiff 1963)

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/search>

spoken as 'Welsh' and the resultant language defining the Welsh character of the place.<sup>3</sup>

Throughout the whole of the British Isles the construction and finished form of memorials was, on the surface, an unregulated activity reliant on local committees and benefactors for decision and funding where the memorial was dedicated to all the men of a city, town or village. Memorials of this type remain the most well-known but they are outnumbered by the tributes to be found in places of religion, employment and education and it is these latter categories that remain largely unknown or even undiscovered.

In relation to Wales, the civic memorial is normally to be found in a very prominent position and the later discussed examples of Llanfyllin and Bwlch-y-Cibau both illustrate this<sup>4</sup>. Away from these displays and again very much off the radar of common knowledge, memorials most often in the form of wall plaques are to be found in the great majority of chapels throughout the country with similar dedications, sometimes in the form of illuminated books, in churches. It is in churchyards, very often fenced off and slightly apart from the regular graves that many small community memorials appear, Llanymynech being an excellent example though it should be said that the actual Wales/England border also forms a dividing line in this instance<sup>5</sup>. Elsewhere, memorials were dedicated in schools, universities, workplaces and social clubs. Should the latter be a prominent sports club, as was the case with Newport Athletic Club, the memorial would be as prominently displayed as any other, in this case on the main entrance gates.

These few listed examples of style and form provide a base for constructing an argument to show that the nature of each community defined its war memorial. The rider, as stated above, is that the Welsh language provided a unique accentuation and it is here that the strength of this argument will be displayed

#### A Brief History:

The geographical area now known as 'Powys' has been created for modern administrative purposes and can be seen to be a composition of three

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<sup>3</sup> L. Davies: *Linguistic Interference in East Montgomeryshire*. Montgomeryshire Collection 72 Vol.62. pp 189/190

<sup>4</sup> [Bwlch y Cibau - YouTube](#)

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ThGnyylMUE0&t=2s&index=1&list=PLLPfS84cDKTF2WPUpvSn6UsgPI3YA BpI0>

traditional county areas in Brecon, Radnor and Montgomery with the addition of a small section of Denbigh in its northern reaches. Historically, Powys was more or less a self-governing region from Roman to Norman times with a location between the rivers Severn and Dee. Williams<sup>6</sup> describes how the traditional political orders of Wales, including Powys broke down in the Ninth Century leaving a virtual chamber of anarchy before being stabilised a century later by Hywl Dda. Williams further explains how a written literature in both Latin and, for the first time 'Welsh' emerged under Hywel Dda, the result being that, 'these people were giving themselves an identity'.<sup>7</sup>

The identity, in this part of Wales, was to last little over a hundred years before an invading force swept in to what became Montgomery, a Norman name in origin. *Roger de Montgomerie*, a henchman of William the Conqueror, was placed in control of the region centred on present-day Welshpool by his London overlords and very much left to rule as he wanted, as were the lords of the entire border - the Marches. One could argue that it was not until the Tudor dynasty took control 400 years later, sought to completely absorb Wales into England and generally accelerated the process we now call 'anglicisation' that what seems to have been a kind of Wild West atmosphere within these Marches finally settled down. What was left included parish boundaries that straddled the border, place names that took little account of the older Offa's Dyke 'border' and a native population who continued to conduct their lives through the medium of Welsh irrespective of which side of the official border they happened to be living.<sup>8</sup>

The Powys this essay considers is more or less the north-eastern part of the former County of Montgomery with the addition of the section of Denbighshire as mentioned above. The distinct communities range from Guilsfield northwards via Bwlch-y-Cibau, Llanfyllin, Llanrhaeadr-ym-Mochnant to Llansilin. Reference will be made to adjacent settlements and parishes and the varying sizes and demographics of the named places should provide a balanced model for the area. It is awkward to produce definitive pictures of historical population numbers and shifts as there have been a number of administrative changes in the last three centuries. Indeed, the name 'Montgomeryshire' has virtually disappeared from official records and maps

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<sup>6</sup>G.A.Williams: *When Was Wales?* Chap. 3 'The first crisis of identity' (Cardiff 1985)

<sup>7</sup> Williams: Chap.3

<sup>8</sup> Census returns including that of language usage did not begin until 1891 see Parry G. & Williams M.: *The Welsh Language and the 1891 Census* (Cardiff 1999)

these days. Its Welsh equivalent 'Maldwyn' is even harder to locate though it was used for the 2015 National Eisteddfod.

The communities mentioned are almost tiny in a national scale of populations, no more than 100 at Bwlch-y-Cibau to just around 1,700 in the greater Guilsfield area<sup>9</sup>. Montgomeryshire itself has displayed a lesser population density than any of its fellow counties and suffered from a dramatic decrease in the decades leading up to the Great War beginning with a decrease of over 5,500 between the 1881 and 1891 censuses, resulting in only 40,000 or so greeting the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.<sup>10</sup> Bad as it was, the percentage drop of 2.8% is dwarfed by those of Brecon 4.9% and a substantial 6.2% in Radnor. It is reasonable to suppose that virtually all of these emigrées were agricultural labouring families. The effects of their disappearance from home villages and parishes but continuing relationship would later be reflected upon War memorials, if in Welsh, by the simple word 'cynt'.

The Guilsfield memorial is situated in the grounds of St. Aelhaiarn Church, on consecrated ground. The saint's legend dates back to the Seventh Century and he is said to be a son of the 'Powysian dynasty that controlled this area and a disciple of St. Bueno'.<sup>11</sup> The old Welsh name of 'Cegidfa' remains very much alive here and it was remarked to me by a Welshpool shopkeeper (4 miles away) that there has been something of a counter invasion by native Welsh speakers into the village in recent times. For all that, the memorial is inscribed in English and in regular format, though the names are listed alphabetically with no precedence to rank. Simultaneously though, a copy of the Programme for the Memorial's unveiling – Sunday August 8, 1920 –<sup>12</sup> shows that the fallen men's names are listed next to their homes, the latter retaining their largely Welsh names; Maesmawr, Celyn, Geufford.

Six miles due north of Guilsfield on a ridge overlooking the Meifod Valley, the small village of Bwlch-y-Cibau is home to a memorial set apart from the church grounds and here, full honours are given to the servicemen recorded; name, unit and home. Again, the main part of the inscription is in English but there is a major difference between this and the great majority of memorials observed further south and across the border in that the listing of 'home' is uniform,

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<sup>9</sup><https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/2011census/2011censusdata>

<sup>10</sup> HMSO: *British Parliamentary Papers 1881 and 1891 Censuses* p.8 (Shannon 1970)

<sup>11</sup><https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aelhaiarn>

<sup>12</sup> Book No. 01324871

implying that the linguistic identities of these parts of Wales can possibly be separately defined.<sup>13</sup>

The village, its name 'Cibau' not related to St. Cybi but to the husks of acorns – this is an extensively wooded area even today – is central to numerous farms and hamlets in the hills around. A non-conformist chapel held services here until some 40 years ago, in both languages, and Welsh continues in the church on an irregular basis with the annual harvest festival being held separately Welsh and English. This historical detail raises the question of exactly how the linguistic realities of this community are reflected in its memorial and the continuing usage of a solely Welsh place name. A possible method for answering this would be to talk to the people who live there, in this instance a man engaged in trimming the grass and bushes around church and memorial with a ferociously efficient electric strimmer who passed on to me the religious information mentioned above.

It was late springtime when I made that first visit, vegetation bursting forth in every acre of land. I could not help but wonder just how the farming communities of places such as this ever managed without such things as the device mentioned above. Apart from the religious services noted, there is little evidence of living Welsh here today, though the roadside pub flew a large *Faner Ddraig Coch*, just as the village school in Guilsfield displayed the same. Having said that, very few people live here<sup>14</sup>, probably little more or less than the 350 or so that were revealed in my later search of the 1921 Census records. The memorial unveiling, the actual date of which being unclear, as with others in the region this is probably in harmony with that same Census return..

The inscription format on this memorial, as contained in the Guilsfield programme may very well be unique to this area. Ten miles due west, at Llanfair Caereinion similar styling occurs<sup>15</sup> but, as mentioned above, no further examples had, at the time of visit, been traced elsewhere<sup>16</sup>. First thoughts and the argument will be returned to in the concluding section of this work, would indicate that possibly this is an equivalent in literal form of the Welsh/English dialect of the South Wales valleys. Studies of this manner of speaking; ~~academic by Edwards<sup>17</sup>~~ and Williams<sup>18</sup>, entertaining by Edwards J.<sup>19</sup>,

<sup>13</sup> See later note 51. For details of an exception.

<sup>14</sup> [www.ukcensusdata.com/meifod](http://www.ukcensusdata.com/meifod) shows the 2011 population as 354. 67 out of 348 persons over 3 years of age (19.25%) declared ability to speak Welsh. These figures include the nearby settlement of Waen Fach.

<sup>15</sup> Llanfair Caereinion British Legion: *War Memorial*. I. Roberts ed. (privately published 2006)

<sup>16</sup> An example has since come to light at Llancarfan in South Glamorgan. Note 50 gives more detail.

<sup>17</sup> J.H.K. Edwards: *Culture, Language and Education in the Upper Rhymney Valley* unpublished Ph.D diss. (Cardiff Univ. 1988)

biographical by Jones<sup>20</sup> and Stephens<sup>21</sup> together give a varied and powerful indication of the formulation and continuation of an expression of Welsh linguistic identity which is arguably more widely recognised than true *Cymraeg*.<sup>22</sup>

The central memorial at Llanfyllin – for there are others in the town’s church and chapels – reinforces the features described. This memorial, unveiled and dedicated in September 1920, is unconnected to the houses of religion and stands in the main square where an outdoor market continues to be held. The inscription message is fully bi-lingual but again the manner of listing names and addresses features. The memorial also follows the pattern of others noted in the local northern Powys manner. This being physically amplified here in being placed in a prominent position, either at the roadside or in this case at the very centre of the town. Llanfyllin is home to the oldest of all Welsh Independent Chapels – Pendref - and has a history connected with famous people from the Rev. William Morgan to the hymn-writer Anne Griffiths and in modern times the bi-lingual entertainer Ryan Davies<sup>23</sup>. For ‘a small market town in a sparsely-populated area of Powys with a 2011 population of 1,532 of whom 34.1% can speak Welsh’<sup>24</sup>, Llanfyllin could fairly be said to punch above its weight.

There are 17 names listed on the Llanfyllin memorial with the latter ones out of sequence alphabetically. This could indicate late addition deaths as a result of the War (e.g. Spanish ‘Flu) or men who had moved away from the area. It is a feature would arise again over the hill at Llanrhaeadr-ym-Mochnant.

In the centre of this village stands the church from which Rev. Morgan set out to take up residence in Cambridge and carry out the mammoth task of translating the Bible into Welsh under the patronage of Elizabeth 1. Largely on

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<sup>18</sup> S.R. Williams: *The Languages of Monmouthshire in Gwent County History Vol.4* eds. Williams C.& Williams S.R. (Cardiff 2011). Williams has written extensively on this subject with a particular interest in her native Rhymney Valley, home also to J.H.K Edwards and Jones.

<sup>19</sup> J. Edwards; *Talk Tidy and More Talk Tidy* (Pentyrch 2003 & 2004)

<sup>20</sup> T. Jones: *Rhymney Memories* (Newtown 1938)

<sup>21</sup> M. Stephens: *My Shoulder to the Wheel* (Talybont 2015)

<sup>22</sup> This is a complex question and a historiography of it would be a valuable creation. Perhaps it is best elucidated, in addition to the works mentioned, by reference to popular culture. Films such as *A Run for Your Money* (1949) [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A\\_Run\\_for\\_Your\\_Money](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/A_Run_for_Your_Money) and *Twin Town* (1997) [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twin\\_Town](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twin_Town) give a representation of ‘ordinary’ Welsh life with a strong emphasis on speech pattern and dialect. Both of these examples can be said to have serious intent within their comic appearance and perhaps that, in itself, is a statement of Welsh linguistic identity.

<sup>23</sup> The original chapel building dates from 1708. St. Myllin’s church has origins in the Seventh Century.

P. Haslam: *The Buildings of Wales; Powys* (Cardiff 1992) pp.131-136

<sup>24</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Llanfyllin>

account of this a steady trickle of tourists arrives, some combining the visit with a trip to the nearby Pistyll Rhaeadr (waterfall). How many stand and gaze at the memorial which stands on the edge of the churchyard, fenced off from consecrated ground it is impossible to say. What can be said of my initial visit is that the memorial was largely blocked off from public view by a large parked-up bus.

On examination, the inscription pattern follows that of Llanfyllin but there are significantly more names recorded, in the region of 50. Given that the current population is little more than a thousand and this is consistent with the figures from 1921 when the village was split into two with the county boundary of Denbigh and Montgomery running with the river right through the middle, it appears to be way out of proportion to the listings on memorials for similar sized parishes.

At present, there is only the memorial itself to evidence the finding and for a reason I can only surmise that the same rural depopulation mentioned earlier distanced men from their birthplaces, but not from their 'belonging'. It is not uncommon for men to be listed on more than one memorial due to family ties, a feature that has been strongly noted on Anglesey<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> The memorials at Brynsiencyn and Llangefni have been noted in this connection.



Fig 2 Llanrhaeadr-ym-Mochnant War Memorial (detail)

The back roads in this part of Powys are remarkable for how traffic-free they remain and also for their unannounced changes of gradient. The six-mile trip to Llansilin gives the impression of being at least three times that and on reflection says much about the sense of belonging developed over the years by the local people. This stretch of country, typical of the 'Cefn Gwlad'<sup>27</sup> popularised by the S4C television broadcaster Dai Jones, is perhaps reason in itself for the particularity of Welsh War Memorials. There is little sense of a world outside in these meandering byways and, above all a complete absence of the noise and acceleration of modern life. Somewhere along this road there exists a parish boundary, a national border but do not expect notification. The

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CZKiOKbNNwo&index=19&list=PLLpfS84cDKTF2WPUvpSn6UsgPI3YABpI0>

This is the Llanrhaeadr memorial. For the other four sites specifically mentioned, and others, refer to the accompanying playlist.

<sup>27</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cefn\\_Gwlad](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cefn_Gwlad)



people who have existed here succeeded in making their own way of life, their own particular ways of communicating without too much exterior reference.

Arriving in Llansilin, again census records<sup>28</sup> show only a few hundred people living here before and after WWI. The Church of St. Silin, said to date back over a thousand years stands solid and tall, guarded by an elm tree of the same vintage. The dominant feature however is the high ridge above the village, Offa's Dyke country, with the English border only a few miles distant. Pre-1914 Llansilin Parish spread across this border without thought for its artificial nature. Church and chapel attracted worshippers from both sides, and of both languages leading to a chronicled<sup>29</sup> dispute between them on religious grounds when it came to erecting a memorial. The result, a stone and largely English memorial on the consecrated church ground and a non-conformist memorial 'Institute' just 200 yards down the road with its own dedications both inside

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<sup>28</sup> H.M.S.O. *Census of England and Wales 1921* (London 1924) Llansilin Parish showed a total of 1,161. The village was one constituent part. Llanrhaeadr was partly in Llansilin R.D. with its Upper (Denbigh) parish showing as 1,094.

<sup>29</sup> A. Gaffney: *Aftermath. Remembering the Great War in Wales* p.126 (Cardiff 1998). Gaffney deals with the Llansilin dispute in greater detail in her original 1996 Ph.D: *Poppies on the Up-Platform*, stored at Cardiff University. The main hub of the argument that divided the community lay with the siting of the memorial. If in consecrated church ground this was not acceptable to the nonconformist population. A memorial was raised there to be followed by the Institute which was opened, relates Gaffney, by Dame Margaret Lloyd George. The papers relating to this are housed in the National Library, one of the very few Memorial Committee archives to be extant.

and out, in both languages.

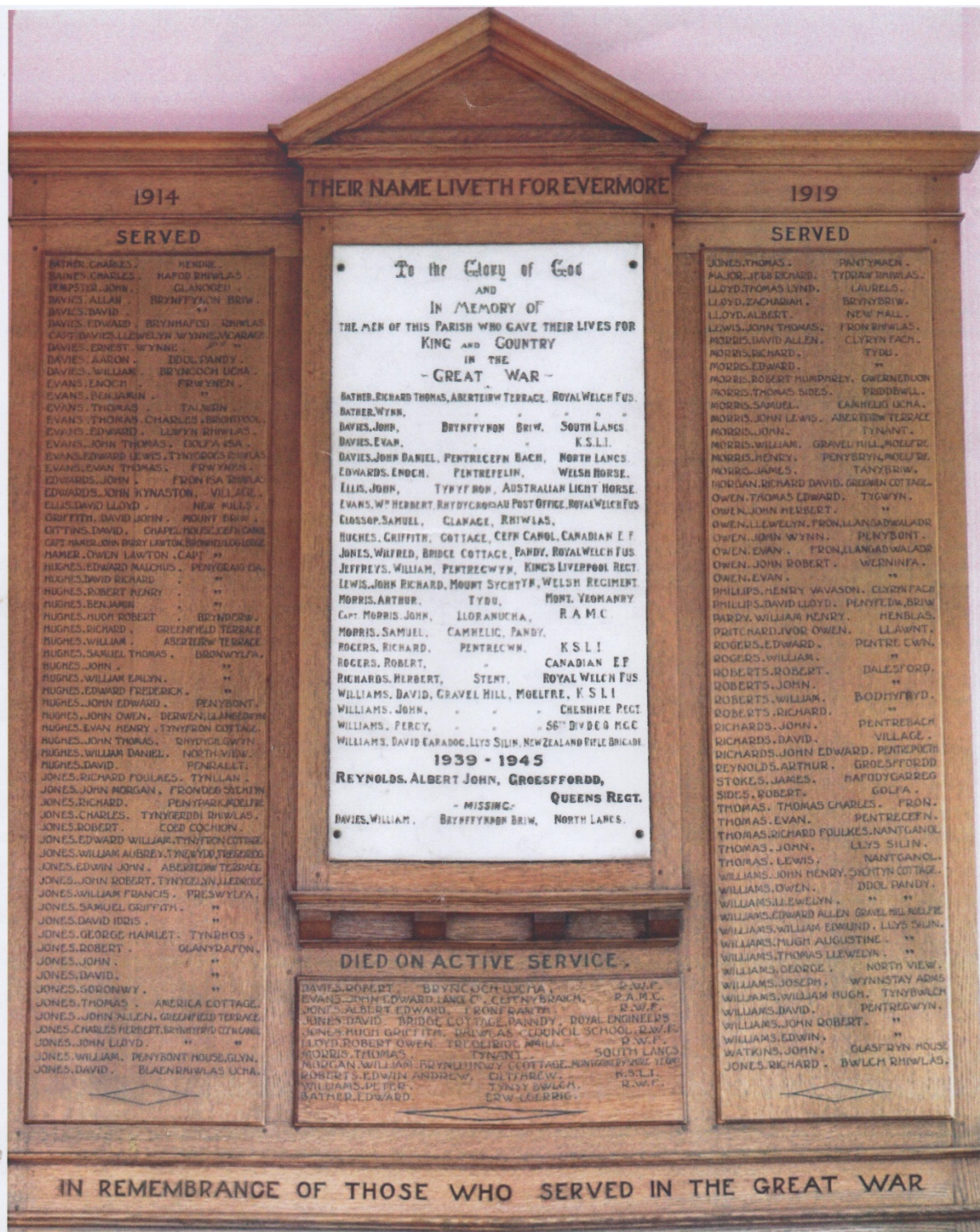


Fig.3 Llansilin Memorial Hall Plaque

On an earlier visit to Llansilin I happened to come across the Harvest Festival Service by the local school. The children learn Welsh as part of the normal curriculum but English is the Church language. Following this, a local lady explained more about the memorial dispute and the bad feeling it engendered.

It would be unrealistic to draw any conclusion from one short conversation as it cannot be supported by statistics such as census returns. There is though little doubt that the local condition was further complicated by the Disestablishment Act being championed by Lloyd George as Prime Minister at that time and which required each parishioner to vote on saying their prayers in Wales or England.

The exhaustion of emotion in Llansilin, coming on top of the loss of lives in places far-distant in both geography and understanding, provides an additional chapter to this essay. Here was a very internal dispute, aside from the confrontation with English values that dominates so much of Welsh life. Indeed, the whole of this corner of Powys and neighbouring Shropshire displays a uniquely mixed culture. An account of the frictions relating to this is given by Jones (1999) under the heading *Little Wales Beyond Wales*,<sup>30</sup> with his discussion centring on this observation, "It is well-known that the border drawn by the first Act of Union in 1536 was in no way coterminous with linguistic boundaries. One parish assigned to an English county was Selattyn, a few miles North-West of Oswestry, which was attached to Shropshire. However, continual immigration of Welsh-speakers from across the border helped Selattyn to *sustain its Welshness* (my italics)."<sup>31</sup> The said *Welshness* continued, says Jones, with some force into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, possibly going into marked decline following the transfer of the parish church from St. Asaph Diocese to Lichfield following the Act mentioned above.

Oswestry, the largest town by far in northern Shropshire is possibly the only English place with its Welsh name displayed on direction signs. 'Croesoswallt'<sup>32</sup> they are proud to call it, alongside 'Cae Glas Park' near the town centre. More evidence of *Welshness* can be seen in the form of an active Welsh chapel, a bookshop and a fully bi-lingual high street branch of the HSBC. Further, and as a final observation, the town's War Memorial Gates contain the name 'Jones' 34 times and 'Davies' 22, without any reference to 'place'.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> M.E. Jones: *Little Wales beyond Wales* National Library of Wales Journal Vol. 31 pt. 2 (1999) pp. 129-134

<sup>31</sup> Jones: p.129 Llansilin, similar to Selattyn with a parish boundary that extended into both England and Wales, chose to remain Welsh. The present-day parish includes Llanrhaeadr-ym-Mochnant.

<sup>32</sup> As witnessed on the B.4580 between Llansilin and Rhyd-y-Croesau

<sup>33</sup><https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P3MXsQIGmeQ>

## PART 2: Community, Memorial and Belonging.

The settlements described above can all be fairly said to be typically Welsh. A Welsh that is in the rural tradition catalogued by Alwyn Rees in his groundbreaking study of Llanfihangel-yng-Ngwynfa<sup>34</sup> and his editorial work on a similar theme.<sup>35</sup> Further works on this subject include those produced from a geographical context by Aitchison & Carter with 'Language, Economy and Society'<sup>36</sup> being of particular interest. On a wider and non-academic field, the poetry and prose of R.S. Thomas have much to say on this subject. Some of Thomas's most appreciated work was produced in the late 1940's and 50's. In those times he held the post of Vicar at Manafon, a parish deep in rural Powys south of Llanfair Caereinion. Thomas ruminated on the theme of what he regarded as a disappearing 'true' Wales and his writings provide an oblique but sometimes very pointed reference point to those from an academic viewpoint.<sup>37</sup>

Away from specifically Welsh writing on this subject, Prof. Keith Snell of Leicester University has researched and written extensively on the subjects of both parish and belonging. His book from 2006 includes these ideas as a title<sup>38</sup> and a section from his introduction serves to illuminate:

'I use and stress the term *parish* in this book, as in its title. Yet as an Anglo-Welsh historian, baptised in a Welsh Presbyterian Methodist chapel in Llanrhidian, Gower, I do so with a slight sense of concern. For the Welsh were familiar historically with a greater sense of scattered settlement and a much stronger Nonconformist religious culture than existed in many regions of England, and for them words like *cymuned* (community – a word having its roots in 'communion' in the religious sense) or *cymdogaeth* (neighbourhood) might be preferred to *plwyf* (parish).<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> A.D. Rees: *Life in a Welsh Countryside* (Cardiff 1975 -reprint)

<sup>35</sup> D.Jenkins et al. *Welsh Rural Communities* Davies E. & Rees A.D. ed. (Cardiff 1962)

<sup>36</sup> J. Aitchison & H. Carter: *Language, Economy and Society: The changing fortunes of the Welsh Language in the Twentieth Century* (Cardiff 2000)

<sup>37</sup> Thomas's fictional character of Iago Prytherch, a metaphorical Welsh country 'everyman' is well-known. For an academic description make reference to J. Wintle: *Furious Interiors: Wales, R.S. Thomas and God* (London 1988) pp. 163/255. Curiously, the small war memorial at Manafon cuts against the trend for anglicisation in that the entirely English WWI inscription has been added to by a WWII model that includes "Dros rhyddid gollasant eu gweud" as a coda. Whether Thomas had any influence on this is unknown. The phrase itself, from the opening verse of the National Anthem, seems to be unique in its usage.

<sup>38</sup> K.D.M. Snell: *Parish and Belonging; Community, Identity and Welfare in England and Wales 1700-1950* (Cambridge 2006)

<sup>39</sup> Snell: introduction pt. II

Snell's personal history, he was largely raised in South Africa and spent childhood holidays at his mother's family farm in Cardiganshire, enables him to take a widely objective view of Welsh society and his comments have a refreshing lucidity, making no apology but retaining a sense of wonder. The book, in later chapters considers the idea of English gravestone inscriptions marking out a similar sense of belonging as those discussed earlier in this essay. Snell carried out extensive research throughout Leicestershire and beyond enabling him to both catalogue and classify personal and place names on gravestones with a conclusion that:

'One will find mention of place following many deceased people's names in most areas (of England) in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries...In many regions, such as Leicestershire and its adjoining counties, Cumbria, Yorkshire and north Devon – these statements are very prevalent indeed...As one moves into the 20<sup>th</sup> century such recording becomes less frequent in all regions. Indeed, from about the end of the First World War it ends as a widespread phenomenon'<sup>40</sup>

These findings are highly relevant to the execution of this particular essay and its overall study. They go some way to making up for the concerning absence of directly relevant secondary source material with Snell's work offering a point of contact. This in turn emphasized by his footnote remarks to the same quoted section that; "I can find nothing in any of the extensive British or American historiography on death, *memorials* (my italics) and gravestones that mentions the subject of place association." He further comments that; "This is a completely untouched historical subject, both as a commemorative practice and as something subject to remarkable change."<sup>41</sup>

Acknowledging that the above statements were written over ten years ago, it can still be claimed that little has altered to any degree to the present. First World War research and writing appears to be permanently shackled in phrases such as "At the going down of the sun"; "When the guns fell silent"; "For God, King and Country" and so forth and it is for these reasons that this essay is proceeding along an irregular route. Perhaps it can be fairly argued that the usage of Welsh on WWI memorials was itself a political act, deliberately standing against the Imperial agendas of Parliament and Military. At the very least, the use of Welsh is a statement that anchors the names of the men - bechgyn - in their community. A declaration, no less, that these are our bechgyn..

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Welsh Language inscriptions in public places (apart from churches and chapels) were largely unknown at the time of the Great War. 'Dolgellau' being changed to Dolgelly in one notable case<sup>42</sup> with the Welsh form of the same Llanrhaeadr mentioned above becoming *Llanrhaiadr*, mutating further south in Powys to 'Rhayader'.<sup>43</sup>

Further inquiry into the particular function and meaning of Welsh 'community' as defined by Snell has led to writings by a columnist for the 'Guardian' newspaper, Giles Fraser. Himself a parish priest, inner-city London, Fraser considers the work of an evolutionary psychologist, Robin Dunbar who argues that the human brain is not capable of maintaining more than 150 or so stable relationships at any one time. Fraser goes on to relate this to the optimal parish size, as far back as the Domesday Book and that parish '*parochial*' size "is precisely the optimal for maintaining strong moral commitments"<sup>44</sup>

There may very well be a linkage between Dunbar and Fraser's assertions and the expressions of community displayed on the war memorials of Llansilin, Bwlch-y-Cibau and similar sized places in other parts of the country; Llancarfan, St. Bride's, Aberffraw and Llanofor all coming to mind. Fraser goes on to relevantly, in harmony with the opening chapter of this study, discuss the modern day, expressing that: "Brexit was partly motivated by a fear of outrunning older, deeper versions of social solidarity"<sup>45</sup>. He may very well be correct and just maybe the statement of *cymuned* referred to by Snell is of crucial importance in understanding the linguistic nationalism that Welsh language inscriptions on war memorials strives to entrench.

The Welsh Language Society's campaign for bi-lingual road signs in Wales extended from 1967-1980. In their article 'Symbols of Justice', Merriman and Jones<sup>46</sup> examined how; "The Society came to see English language road signs as mundane, ubiquitous and oppressive symbols of anglicization and of British/  
~~English government authority in Wales".~~<sup>47</sup> Though parallels can possibly be

gaid station plate was featured in the French 1971 Francois Truffaut film 'Anne et Muriel' – 'Two English Girls' as released in the UK. Other latterly restored mutations include 'Llanelly' and 'Carnarvon'. It would seem, by way of comparison between private and official mapping of the Newport area in the pre-WWI years that Government map production played a large part in this process. Catalogued evidence is not available on any scale.

<sup>43</sup> Jones R. & Merriman P.: *Network Nation* Environment and Planning A 2012. Vol. 44 p. 945. Discussion of actions by bi-lingual road sign campaigners in this town

<sup>44</sup> G. Fraser: The parish is the perfect scale for moral community *Guardian* 27 May 2017

<sup>45</sup> As Note 27.

<sup>46</sup> P. Merriman & R. Jones: '*Symbols of Justice*' *Journal of Historical Geography* 35 (2009) 350-375. See also note 40.

<sup>47</sup> As Note 29 p.350

communities in erecting Welsh language memorials, it would be unrealistic to generalise with the sole exception that both actions succeeded in establishing the language in a solid form – into its landscape. Welsh -*Cymraeg* - no less could now be seen as well as heard.

In conclusion of this section the work of the black Jamaican writer Stuart Hall can be added. Hall, an outsider observing England and England's relationship with his home in the similar ways that so many Welsh writers from Geraldus Cambresis to Harri Webb have wrestled with for centuries.

Hall, the son of prosperous Jamaican parents, remained an English resident after taking up a Rhodes Scholarship in 1951 becoming a major figure in the development of cultural studies, elevating the same into genuine university research status. He presented a unique slant on the wider scope of anglicisation, referring to its nature as essentially one of control. Control by whatever means. Speaking of linguistic and cultural identity, Hall opined that:

'The more we know and see of the struggles of the societies of the periphery to make something of the slender resources available to them, the more important it is that we understand the questions and problems of cultural identity...identity is always a question of producing in the future an account of the past. That is to say it is always about narrative, the stories cultures tell themselves about who they are and where they came from.'<sup>48</sup>

Hall's writings present a challenging support from his particular standpoint to the main thrust of this essay - the definition of linguistic identity through war memorial inscription –and one which has to be embraced as it provides a pathway for coherent understanding of minority culture to be realised. Though there is very little in Hall's writings directly concerning either of the two World Wars, he does maintain a comprehensive critique of the Imperial nature of British society and the ways by which this both influences and seeks to control popular, cultural expression. The "*narrative*" mentioned above is generally regarded to be a fundamental component of native Welsh life, pre-dating any written expression of the language with transmission of the past via story, song, poem and an everyday pattern of existence reinforcing the continuation of tradition.

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<sup>48</sup> S. Hall: *Negotiating Caribbean Identities* New Left Review 1/209 Jan-Feb 1995 p.3

### Part 3: In Conclusion:

The experience of travelling through this area of Powys has proved to be most rewarding. Personally, I knew very little, in fact -nothing - of the locality prior to the 2015 National Eisteddfod, the base of which was an area of farmland in the Meifod valley some miles from a settlement of any size, Llanfair Caereinion. My purpose in relating this anecdote is to add particular perspective. 'Particular' in the sense that all the places named are within 15 miles of the English border but all of them would cause a scratching of the head when naming to a third-party.

I will claim at this stage of investigation that the very singular way of inscribing memorials here has arisen largely on account of the people's wish – and it is possibly in the subconscious – to retain their essential 'Welshness' while not being able to communicate fully through the language. (By 'fully' I mean the ability of every person to speak and understand everyone else) This sensibility does seem to correspond with the idioms and syntax of speech in the valleys of the South and confuses any fundamental definition of being 'Welsh'.

Snell, mentioned above<sup>49</sup>, discusses a Suffolk novelist of the 1930's, Adrian Bell and in particular his book '*By-Road*'<sup>50</sup> where, when considering the things that really matter to a community, he speaks of, "a lessening of the power of the spirit of place". This brief phrase holds a terrific amount of meaning and to my mind is directly relevant to the names and locations so carefully incised on the roadside memorial at Bwlch-y-Cibau, for example.

There is a further possibility, one of a wider nature, to be considered here. Namely, that the manner and effects of 'anglicisation' have a far from a universal pattern. It is reasonable to say that a combination of English legality, education, religion and population movement all played a part in diluting largely Welsh-speaking communities. At the same time, it may not be appropriate to equate the experience of say, Bangor with that of Llanfyllin, or indeed Bwlch-y-Cibau. There is, I would argue, a case to be made for a kind of micro-anglicisation, one in which the Welsh language continued to play a vital part in small communities long after it had faded away in more populated neighbouring places.

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<sup>49</sup> Note 23.

<sup>50</sup> A. Bell: *By-Road* (London 1936) p.206



In extension of this and allowing for licence in utilising a place far beyond the borders of Powys as it provides a healthy mixture of history, linguistic culture and geography the village and parish of Llancarfan can be promoted.

Llancarfan, a settlement of some 200 people<sup>51</sup>, exists in a virtually hidden valley, three miles from the perimeter of Cardiff/Wales International Airport and twelve miles in a straight line from the centre of Cardiff itself. There is a very long history of religious settlement here, possibly dating back to the last days of Roman occupation, and a strong link with neighbouring parishes. The 'Llancarfan Society' have produced an extensive series of pamphlets on the village, more than one of which details its Welsh language history<sup>52</sup>. For the direct purpose here, the war memorial, one for three adjoining parishes, is inscribed in precisely the same format as those in Northern Powys:- name and home together.<sup>53</sup>

This may very well be the only one of its type south of the River Severn. Given the history, geography and strong sense of belonging that signifies Llancarfan it still comes as a surprise but perhaps indicates there is much more in the Welsh subconscious than can be quantified.

The final point to be made concerns the relevance of Welsh language war memorial inscriptions in the present day. On a purely physical level, they stand as signposts, way markers for a point in time when people were able to express their identities in a tangible fashion. The existential issues raised above, Bell's "power of the spirit of place" remains to be investigated. For this development of the 'micro-anglicisation' concept may very well become a leading idea.

That the memorials discussed have an identity linked to particularities of place and community there seems to be little doubt. The patterns of inscription alter along the roads into other parts of the country but the sense of that identity continues.

17/06/23

(Revised from original 01/08/2017)

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<sup>51</sup><http://ukcensusdata.com/rhoose-w00005900#sthash.kEA8diHA.dpbs> 371 total population for Llancarfan village and surrounding farms etc.

<sup>52</sup>[www.llancarfansociety.org.uk/html/newsletters.html](http://www.llancarfansociety.org.uk/html/newsletters.html) G.Jenkins: *Bethlehem Welsh Baptist Chapel* Issue 134 August 2007 (pages not numbered)

<sup>53</sup><https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P-qLJlozgB8&t=10s>



# ANGLESEY: WAR MEMORIALS AND LINGUISTIC IDENTITY

## A STUDY OF COMMUNITY AND CHARACTER

*After just 12 months of engaging with this study I began to realise that the wealth of material being unearthed both on the ground and in related library research was overbalancing my stated objectives. I called a halt therefore by compiling the loosely structured piece below. Neither in the format of a conventional essay nor as a means to an end it enabled me to concentrate more and more upon communities in and around the small salient of Anglesey described. It reached a conclusion with engagement at Brynsiencyn, both in the village school and with local people. A lengthy video clip following this episode and best looked at after reading, of this can be found here:*

[https://www.youtube.com/brynsiencyn neuadd cof](https://www.youtube.com/brynsiencyn%20neuadd%20cof)

This work is intended to describe how the continuing native cultures of three villages in western Anglesey can be identified by way of the memorials erected to the dead of the First World War. It is not a comprehensive record of current or past daily life but rather a framework within which structures of personal, family and community exist. The one feature that separates it from all other related works is that the Welsh language is both the starting and defining point and consequently the parameters of enquiry are shifted from what has previously applied. In relation to the war memorials themselves, their significance as concrete statements of the Welsh language will be proposed as being of a differing, but no less important, nature than the names of the persons listed on each one.

By utilising the traditional structure of a 'Literature Review', ideas from areas outside of existing works on the themes of *Commemoration* and *Remembrance* will be included. The problems encountered in constructing this study include a dearth of primary source material; the tendency of existing academic studies of the themes mentioned in named geographical areas to become catalogue in nature<sup>1</sup> and the absence of contemporary published material concerned with the continuing evolution of Welsh culture in forms other than the novel<sup>2</sup> and biography.<sup>3</sup> The solutions offered are to regard the memorials themselves as primary source and to offer physical representations of these in both still photograph and moving image formats; to concentrate on closely defined localities based

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1. Coss (Durham 2012), Brooke (Leeds 2009) and Gaffney (Cardiff 1996) have produced Doctoral studies dealing with North-East England, Huddersfield and Wales respectively.

<sup>2</sup> The starting point for this being Kate Roberts 'Traed mewn Cyffion' first published 1936.

<sup>3</sup> Meic Stephens 'My Shoulder to the Wheel' (Talybont) 2015 as a benchmark. In terms of works by younger people Jude Rogers: *Cool Cymru* (Guardian newspaper June 22, 2006) deals with the interest created by both Welsh and English language rock bands. For new media the band 'Candelas' are exemplar.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EqKE63iimi0> *Rhedeg I Paris* accessed 20/11/17

on parish boundaries and to use resource material from the fields of archaeology and cultural studies of events since the First World War.

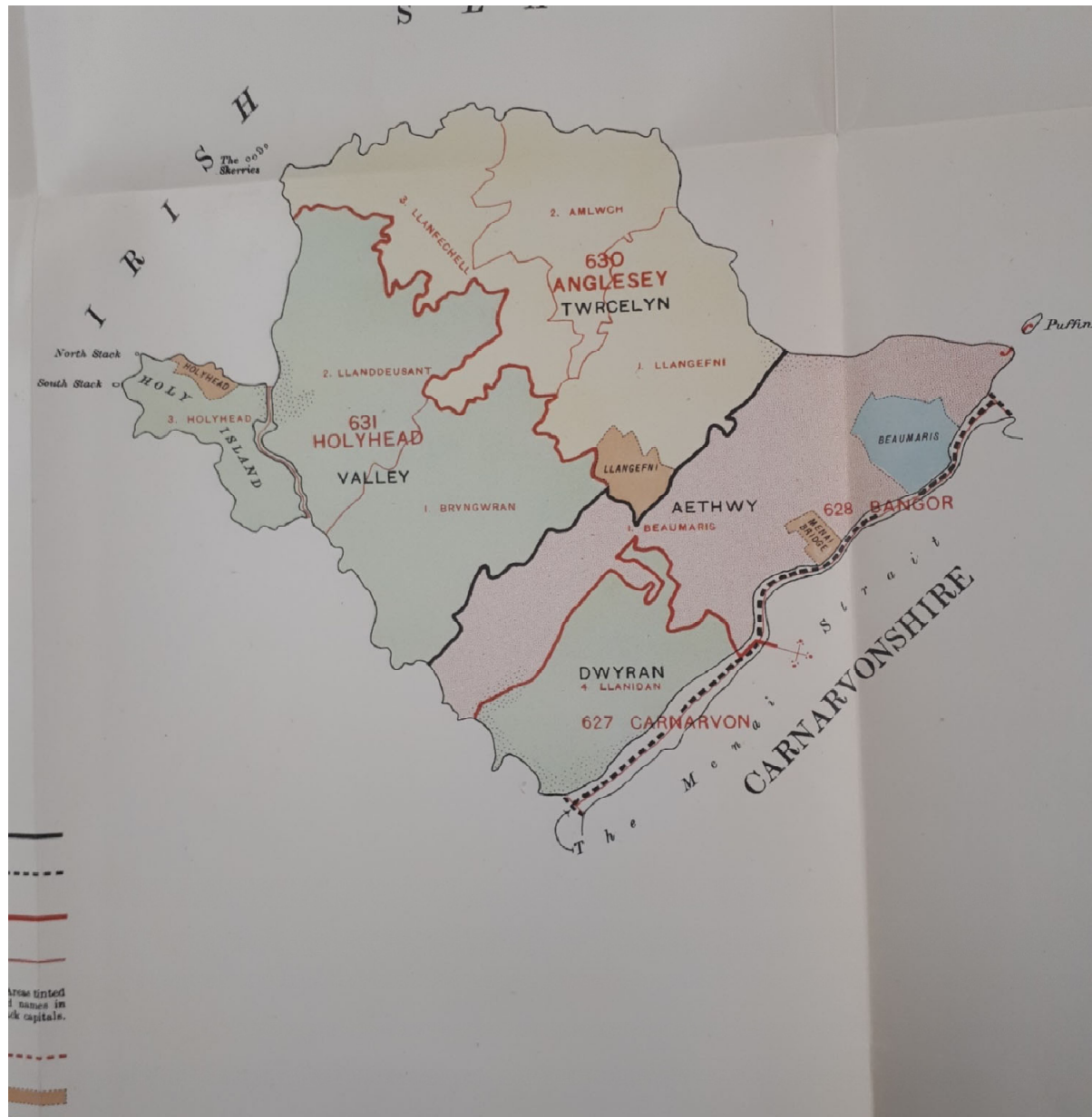


Figure1 Official Map 1904

#### Anglesey: history notes

Catrin Stevens in her introduction to 'Anglesey: The Concise History'<sup>4</sup> indicates a clear timeline of events that:

<sup>4</sup> Pretty, David A. *Anglesey: The Concise History* (Cardiff 2005)

‘trace the island’s rich history as the last stronghold of the Druids; through its strategic significance during the Edwardian conquest in medieval times; Telford’s major achievement in building the Menai Suspension Bridge (1826), to the cultural and linguistic challenges of the late twentieth century’<sup>5</sup>

This summation, spanning 2,000 years in one sentence gives a strong indication of the island’s function as meeting place for opposing cultures and a conduit for the flow of ideas. Arguably the ‘cultural and linguistic challenges’ began much earlier than mentioned with Pretty detailing relevant events in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Centuries.<sup>6</sup>

The Menai Suspension Bridge is but a part of the highway constructed to connect London to Holyhead and then by sea to Dublin. The Anglesey section, 21 miles, helped reduce coach travel to 27 hours between the two points but by 1850 the Britannia railway bridge and completion of the line along the west coast of the island cut the journey time to less than ten hours<sup>7</sup>. One outcome for this was the connection of Holyhead, and the whole island, to London and the English influence of trade, culture and language in ways that were almost revolutionary in their immediacy by comparison with everything that had gone before. This is perhaps the point where Pretty’s ‘challenges’ begin to take on a serious face as, ‘the road’s impact is evident in more subtle ways also. It became something of a symbol of the union (1800) of Britain and Ireland. At Llanfairpwllgwyngyll the road passes between the Marquess of Anglesey’s column and the statue of Lord Nelson by the banks of the Menai Strait’.<sup>8</sup> Together, the two images make a statement that concisely promotes the very idea of British Imperial power as the Anglesey countryside lays beneath their feet.

#### Anglesey: *Linguistic identity*

The parish of Trewalchmai straddles the road to Holyhead, ‘Telford’s Highway’, the A5 in more prosaic terms at more or less its middle point with the village of Gwalchmai at its own centre. Census returns for 1921 show that from a population of 610, just nine were stated to speak English only, 356 Welsh only and the remaining 227 both languages.<sup>9</sup> These figures can be interpreted as showing the Welsh language to be in a very numerical strong position with any presumed negative effects of anglicisation to be slight. The figures quoted are mirrored by those of Llechylched – where the village of Bryngwran was split down the middle by Telford’s Highway<sup>10</sup> and Aberffraw – extending from sea to Highway adjacent to Trewalchmai, parishes.

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<sup>5</sup> C. Stevens: *ibid* introduction p. x

<sup>6</sup> Pretty; *Anglesey: The Concise History* Chap. II

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*: pp. 78-79

<sup>8</sup> D. Gwyn: Gwynedd; *Inheriting a Revolution* (Chichester 2006) pp. 148-152

<sup>9</sup> *Census of England and Wales 1921. Counties of Carnarvon (sic.) and Anglesey*. HMSO (London 1924). The figures quoted are for people aged 3 and over. A further 42 infants are recorded, a high figure in proportion but consistent with record birth figures nationally in 1920.

<sup>10</sup> This name will be used throughout the study. It is more dynamic than ‘A5’ and conveys the stated importance of the road as a bringer of foreign influence.



rural England. The milestones along the way bore the same inscriptions of 'Bangor' 'Mona' and 'Holyhead' with distances in uniform script, completely understandable. Linguistic identity in a visual sense could be said to be bland or, in the language of Billig, "banal".<sup>13</sup> That was not the case with the private and personal manifestations of this identity, the outstanding and still existing example being found on the gravestones of each parish. The Leicester University Professor of Rural Studies, Keith Snell has considered what he calls a 'phenomenon' in his writings on the ideas of *belonging* and *identity*.<sup>14</sup> Snell notes that until the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century it was common practice for the homes or home areas of the deceased to be inscribed on their headstones but in England this practice had all but ceased by the outbreak of WWI. He believes, in the absence of research, that this was not the case in the predominately Welsh-speaking parts of Wales and bemoans the lack of any compiled historiography on the subject. It would seem, from localised and spasmodic investigation of graveyards in the Anglesey communities of Bododern, Carmel, and Bryn Du<sup>15</sup> that Snell's notion is a correct one.

Further evidence in support of Snell comes from Mytum<sup>16</sup> whose study deals with the northern districts of Pembrokeshire, an area with a distinct linguistic split along an imaginary east-west line.<sup>17</sup> Mytum states that:

'The choice of a particular language for a memorial indicates a commitment to that language, a statement of affiliation and confidence that the language will continue and so the inscription will continue to function.' Further that: 'The choice of Welsh, a language for various reasons on the defensive against the spread of English – that is the more critical cultural indicator.'<sup>18</sup>

Should Snell and Mytum be found to be correct in their assertions, the postulation is raised that possibly the connection between the naming of place on both Welsh language gravestones and war memorials is coherent with that culture's particular depiction of its deceased. In other words, a direct statement of linguistic identity is displayed.

### Bryngwran: Memorial Inscription

The Bryngwran memorial lists 9 men who died in battle and a further 2 men who died in the years following – of wounds sustained regarding Thomas Jones for one. The listing also mentions (in a mix of the two languages and French place names) 'Rank' (all Private), 'Home' (High St. and Blue Bell being the only English words), 'Regiment' (Royal Welsh Fusiliers for 9 men), 'Place of Death' (4 of the men at the Battle of the Somme in the space of 2 days, for 4 others Ypres the following year) and finally 'Age' (for this between 18 and 34). From this visual statement, at the roadside on Telford's

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<sup>12</sup> June 19. The Census (referenced 9. above) was delayed from its more usual dates of March/April due to industrial action. As a consequence, some returns are abnormal due 'to holiday movement in abnormally fine weather'. This is noted in Llanfaelog Parish, adjacent to Aberffraw and Llechylched, where the seaside resort of Rhosneigr helped return totals of 463 English speakers to 272 Welsh.

<sup>13</sup> Billig M. *Banal Nationalism* (London, 1995)

<sup>14</sup> Snell K.D.M. *Parish and Belonging. Community, Identity and Welfare in England & Wales 1700-1950* (Cambridge 2006). Of particular interest is Chap. 8.

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H13V-kf5qy0&t=2s&index=38&list=PLlpfS84cDKTF2WPUvpvSn6UsgPI3YABpIO> Bryn Du graveyard, Llanfaelog parish, 3 miles from Gwalchmai towards Aberffraw.

<sup>16</sup> H. Mytum, 'Language as Symbol in Churchyard Inscriptions' *World Archaeology* Vol. 26 (2) pp. 252/267

<sup>17</sup> The 'Landsker' as it is known, is ill-defined but Mytum's illustration has it more or less following parish boundaries from Solva to the Carmarthenshire border at Llandissilio.

<sup>18</sup> Mytum, 'Language as Symbol in Churchyard Inscriptions' p. 260

Highway and furthermore at the summit of the hill from which the village takes its name a sense of the community is plain to see. The memorial's dedication message translates as, 'This memorial was raised to our brave souls that gave their lives for their country in the Great War'. A simple statement at first sight but it should be noted that these Welsh words neither mention 'King' nor 'Empire' nor even which 'country' is meant. Similarly, commonly used phrases from English literature used elsewhere on both sides of the border (Lest We Forget etc.) are not present.

This analysis of the Primary Source function of the Bryngwran Memorial has a reference point from Katie Trumpener who describes how, 'During World War I the British State had taken monopoly control of all bodies, all monuments and all cemeteries, deciding that all soldiers who died in battle should be buried abroad, in individual but identical graves. In Britain itself national monuments and rituals developed to commemorate the Great War were abstract, disembodied.'<sup>19</sup> Trumpener uses as the centre-point for her argument the 1989 Bertrand Tavernier film '*La vie et rien d'autre*'<sup>20</sup> which deals with the French war memorial commission in the aftermath of the War and the "falsification of memory" resulting from bureaucracy and institutionalization. With reference to events in Britain, Trumpener considers the works of 'post-1918 texts, mostly written by women, to trace a more muted tradition of critique.' Virginia Woolf for 'Mrs. Dalloway' and May Sinclair are cited, the latter being of pointed interest for her comment in 'The Rector of Wyck' – "Who owns the memory of the War? Will British Class divides, already replicated in army command structure, be perpetuated in the war memorial?"<sup>21</sup> The contrast with the Bryngwran Memorial can be said to be self-evident, a localised structure with very little resemblance to institution.

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<sup>19</sup> K. Trumpener: Memories Carved in Granite: Great War Memorials and Everyday Life *PMLA* Vol. 115 (5) Oct. 2000 pp. 1096-1103

<sup>20</sup> 'The Lives of Others'

<sup>21</sup> Trumpener; Memories Carved in Granite... p. 1097





Figure 2: Bryngwran Memorial Inscriptions

Gwalchmai: Nationalism 'Hot' or 'Cold'?

This title is a deliberate pun on the earlier mentioned work of Billig, later explored in a Welsh context by Jones & Merriman<sup>22</sup>. By way of a crude explanation, 'banal' equates everyday life while 'hot' involves manning the barricades, either physically or mentally, in spirit of protest. Within the context of the Gwalchmai War Memorial, both these concepts apply though in a shifting ratio, perhaps at their 'hottest' on the annual day of remembrance. The equation with 'nationalism' in the localised context of Gwalchmai is much more problematical, the Welsh language being possibly the controlling feature. Jones & Merriman refer to ways in which, 'hot national identities – namely Welsh-speaking identity and its relation to more Anglicized forms of identity – can actually be played out in *mundane bodily practices of individuals*.'<sup>23</sup> This is an important concept in understanding how the memorial continues to function within its community, its declaration of Welsh linguistic identity being a consistent nudge to those who look at it. In the case of Gwalchmai it is more probably an exaggerated looking as the memorial takes the form of a clock tower.

Pretty<sup>24</sup> discusses the General Election of 1918 and Anglesey's election of Sir Owen Thomas who; 'had close links with both the farming community and farm-labourer's movement. In addition, countless families admired his wartime role and personal sacrifice. Undeb Gweithwyr Môn organization played a pivotal role and, fittingly, now that women over thirty had the vote, they included Mrs J. Eames, wife of a Gwalchmai activist.'<sup>25</sup>

Thomas created a stir when taking up the Labour whip at Westminster, 'Alone of all the Welsh rural constituencies, Anglesey had a Labour M.P. to join those from the mining seats in South Wales.'<sup>26</sup> From this it can be deduced that Gwalchmai at the heart of Telford's Highway, was also very much at the heart of 'Hot' nationalism.

Obliquely, but with great relation, in his 1971 address to the Anthropology Section of the British Association, George Ewart Evans declared that:

'Having discovered in East Anglia that language is the expression of an underlying social structure, it followed that if this organic theory is valid, a people that loses its language is not merely dropping an appendage or changing into a new garment, it is losing its very soul, the entity that alone ensures it will remain a nation.'<sup>27</sup>

Evans was well-qualified to make this statement having been brought up between the Wars in a bi-lingual Abercynon (mid-Glamorgan) home, taken a degree in Greek at Cardiff University and later lived his life through as a teacher and writer in East Anglia, including playing a leading role in the development of Oral History as an academic discipline. His remarks on language and nation are very particular, given this background but there is a discernible link between them and the Gwalchmai memorial, erected as it was on the path of the road that threatened to open all doors to anglicizing effects. In the context of this it becomes pertinent to pick up on the remarks of Kenneth O. Morgan, again from 1971:

'A much more significant feature of Welsh nationalism since 1918 has been the cultural campaign. In practice this has meant quite specifically a struggle to protect and encourage the Welsh language.

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<sup>22</sup>R.Jones, P.Merriman: Hot, banal and everyday nationalism: Bilingual road signs in Wales *Political Geography*28 (2009) pp.164-173

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. p. 166

<sup>24</sup> Pretty, *Anglesey* pp. 127-129

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. p. 127

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. p. 128

<sup>27</sup> G. Williams: *Writers of Wales, George Ewart Evans* (Cardiff 1991) p. 70

Curiously enough, the language issue played only a minor part in the national movement before 1914.<sup>28</sup>

If the after effects of the Great War on this 'cultural campaign' remain undefined, Bryngwran and Gwalchmai memorials stand as signposts to it.



Figure 3: Gwalchmai War Memorial

### Aberffraw: Remembrance as Forgetting

Though not dissected by Telford's Highway, Aberffraw parish is party to the route of the railway to Holyhead with the station at Bodorgan within its boundaries. This 'isolated rural backwater' is further described by Pretty as being, 'Once the proud seat of the princes of Gwynedd but long reduced to being dominated by the landowning Meyrick family of Bodorgan and a few wealthy

<sup>28</sup>K.O.Morgan: Culture, Community, Nation *Cultural Studies* 7 Vol. 6 (1) 1971 p.169

farmers.<sup>29</sup> Pretty continues to describe the area as being the centre of political dissent among Anglesey farm workers in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century with a de facto leader emerging in the form of, 'John Owen Jones, a native of Trefdraeth (within the parish), better known by his journalistic pseudonym *Ap Ffarmwr*.'<sup>30</sup> It is not inconceivable that *ap Ffarmwr*'s legacy (he died in 1902), gave stimulation to the formation of Undeb Gweithwyr Môn at Aberffraw in 1909 and by extension the election of Sir Owen Thomas (as detailed above). This political chain of events was to be disturbed and dominated by the Great War with the enlistment of men from Pretty's 'isolated rural backwater'. At its conclusion and contrary to communities on other parts of the island, Aberffraw decided that that no physical memorial would be raised. The men who were lost would be remembered privately and forgotten in public.<sup>31</sup> How much this decision was influenced by the politically challenging recent history of the parish and if there are links much further back to its time as 'a proud seat of the princes' is a matter of conjecture. What can be claimed is that its Welsh linguistic identity can be proven by the quoted census returns and the distinct 'Môn' nature of the *ap Ffarmwr* activities.

The concept of *forgetting* in relation to *remembrance* is considered by Samuel Walls<sup>32</sup>, concluding that, 'Any study of social memory should equally include that which is forgotten, as that which is remembered', and that 'forgetting is an important part of the nature of remembrance and as such a necessary precondition to enable remembrance.' Though rich with his source material both primary and secondary, Walls constructs his study from an archaeological basis stating that this allows him to apply investigation from, 'memory theory; identity theory; landscape studies; object biographies and other monumental studies.'<sup>33</sup> The study itself is possibly unique amongst War Memorial studies but it fails to supply an answer to the question of Aberffraw and its existential memorial as the Welsh linguistic identity it represents stands alone as subject material. Further thought on the subject of *forgetting* is provided by Simon Jenkins in a contemporary newspaper article, "We should not be remembering but forgetting. Almost all the conflicts in the world are caused by too much remembering; refreshing religious divisions, tribal feuds, border conflicts, humiliations and expulsions."<sup>34</sup>

An alternative position to address this from is provided by Stuart Hall. Coming from a minority culture within the British Empire tradition, Jamaica, Hall was qualified to claim that:

'The more we know and see of the struggles of the *societies of the periphery* (my italics) to make something of the slender resources available to them, the more important we understand the questions and problems of cultural identity to be in that process. Identity is always a question of producing in the future an account of the past; that is to say it is always about narrative, the stories which cultures tell themselves about who they are and where they come from.'<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Pretty: *Anglesey, The Concise History* p.86

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* p.86

<sup>31</sup> Evidence for this exists only in oral format. The shopkeeper at Aberffraw's post office possesses a private file detailing the village's War experience. Ynys Môn County Council placed a memorial slab in the churchyard five years ago bearing the names and regiments – but not 'homes' of men lost in both World Wars (fig. 4).

<sup>32</sup> S. Walls, *The Materiality of Remembrance: Twentieth Century Memorials in Devon* (Ph.D diss. Exeter University 2010) pp.54-56

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* p. 47

<sup>34</sup> S. Jenkins: 'Too much remembering causes wars; it's time to forget the Twentieth Century' *The Guardian* 12 November 2017.

<sup>35</sup> S. Hall: *Negotiating Caribbean Identities* *New Left Review* 1/209 Feb. 1995 p.33

In understanding the decision of the Aberffraw inhabitants, one not formally recorded anywhere, that they wished to have no public reminder of the Great War, the outline of history and geography given above provides a link with Hall's thoughts on the binding tradition of narrative, the intrinsic 'cydymdreiddiad – interpenetration of land and language'<sup>36</sup> perhaps providing a vehicle for understanding as to why. As stated earlier, my introduction to the Aberffraw 'decision' was via the local postmaster. This gentleman has collected anecdote from the existing populace and this in turn has emphasized the need of their forebears to commemorate and memorialize their missing relations in private and personal ways.

There was no indication from my source that any of the village's 'bechgyn were remembered in churches local to Aberffraw. Perhaps most surprisingly of all, as work on this study concluded I discovered via connections in the Museum of the Great War, Meaux, France that a similar sort of privacy existed and remains to this day in rural areas of that country.

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<sup>36</sup> P. Merriman, R. Jones: Symbols of Justice; The Welsh Language Society's campaign for bilingual road signs 1967-1980 *Journal of Historical Geography* 35 (2009) pp. 350-375

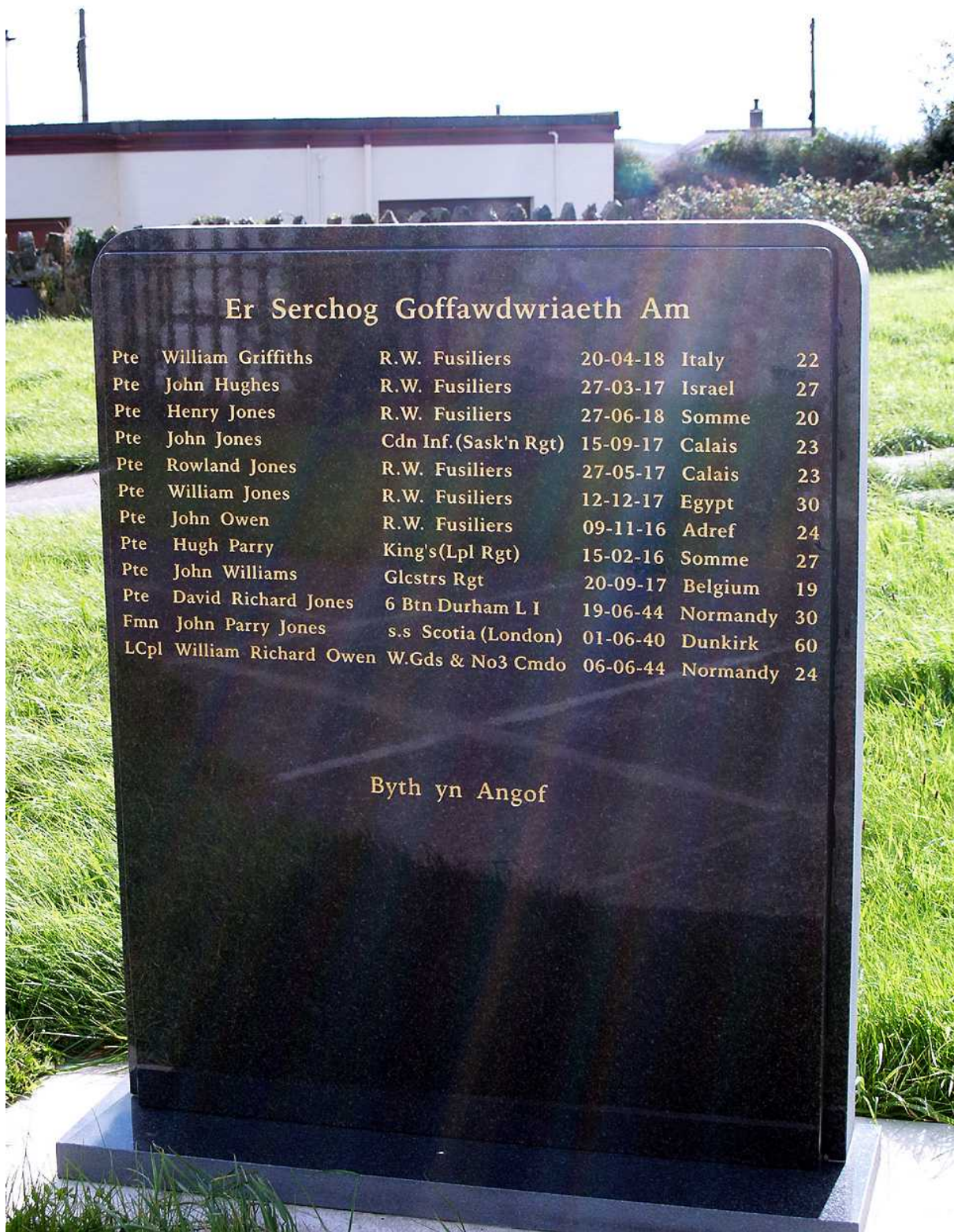


Figure 4: Aberffraw War Memorial (Unveiled 2014 Funded by Ynys Môn Council)

Illustrations:

1. Courtesy Anglesey Archives, Llangefni
2. <http://cynefin.archiveswales.org.uk/en/category/uncategorized/>
3. The Author, 23 September 2017

4. The Author, 23 September 2017
5. <http://www.anglesey.info/anglesey-war-memorials.htm>

Illustrations in order but marked 1, 1a,2,3,4 in text.

Stuart Stanton

26/11/2017

## The Once and Only Story of Newport. A Case Study

*There follows a lengthy (almost 6,000 words) section that embraces all of the themes discussed in the other sections of this study through the history and cultural values of Newport, Gwent (or Monmouthshire). I make no excuse for beginning at the very start of records or for including elements that superficially appear to have little relevance to the linguistic importance of war memorials that is my overall theme. Instead, I will argue that the cosmopolitan latter-day influences on Newport serve to heighten its importance in Welsh culture and, very much within the present-day 'nationalism' that is becoming dangerously virulent throughout the world, Newport's values cannot be understated.*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hkphQPOGIHM&list=PLLpfS84cDKTF2WPUpvSn6UsgPI3YABpIO&index=12>

### INTRODUCTION:

In constructing this thesis, the original intention was to include communities that could represent Wales by virtue of their differences. Those considered were a traditionally Welsh-speaking village, a mixed economy and mixed language rural area and an industrialized large town with a recognised Welsh-speaking history. The Welsh Language was always intended to be central to the study's findings and, as much as possible, be an unexplored theme of previous academic work concerning the chosen places.

It soon became apparent that these initial proposals were not meeting the criteria, in the large town particularly, as there was already a body of work on its 'lost' Welshness. It is important therefore, to acknowledge again an earlier study by Angela Gaffney (Cardiff Univ. 1996) of Welsh War Memorials in pointing to a 1923 public controversy regarding the proposed memorial in Newport, Gwent. Reading this, and with extensive knowledge of the now 'City' of Newport, was sufficient inspiration to start an examination of what perhaps was a story of the Welsh Language's survival against the overwhelming odds of English ingression by people, language and custom. The Language's permanence in the shape of the inscription on the memorial and description of events over many centuries that colluded to produce this symbol provide the narrative of this case study.



An early inspiration came from a noted academic, Linda Colley. A short sentence in *Acts of Union and Disunion - what has held the UK together – and what is dividing it?* (London 2014) simply reads:

*'Wales – or so it can appear – succumbed to London's control earlier and more thoroughly than either Scotland or Ireland, while also being less inclined to struggle.'* (italics original) <sup>1</sup>.

Taking that phrase, *or so it can appear*, as a first touchstone, research began with a walk from one edge of the City's limits to the other. Two full days were taken for a crossing from North to South, beginning at Caerleon, passing the Memorial, and concluding at the Transporter Bridge on the shore of the Bristol Channel at the far limit of Pillgwenlly. In straight distance no more than six miles but nearer to a dozen with deviations. A walk intending to search for present-day manifestations of Newport's connection with the Welsh language, unscripted and without prompt. Its findings are inclusive within and appended to this study.



Fig 1: Caerleon, Usk Bridge

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<sup>1</sup> Colley, L. as per text p.76



Fig. 2: Pillgwenlly, Transporter Bridge



Fig. 3: The War Memorial, Clarence Place

## PREFACE

The columns of *South Wales Argus* carried, during the latter weeks of the Great War, an extraordinary series of editorial comments and letters from its readers on the subject of Newport belonging to Wales or England. Running concurrently, and every bit as emotionally charged, there came a public debate on the place of Welsh Language classes in the town's schools. For such matters should be raised at all with the War that had touched the being of almost every adult and child in the whole of the British Isles lurching towards a conclusion is remarkable in itself. Even more incredulously, while November 11 signaled an armistice on the Western Front, the domestic battle for Newport's soul was far from resolved, reaching its apex during the Summer of 1923 with a raging public argument over

the inclusion of a Welsh Language inscription on the pure white stone surfaces of the town's Cenotaph war memorial.

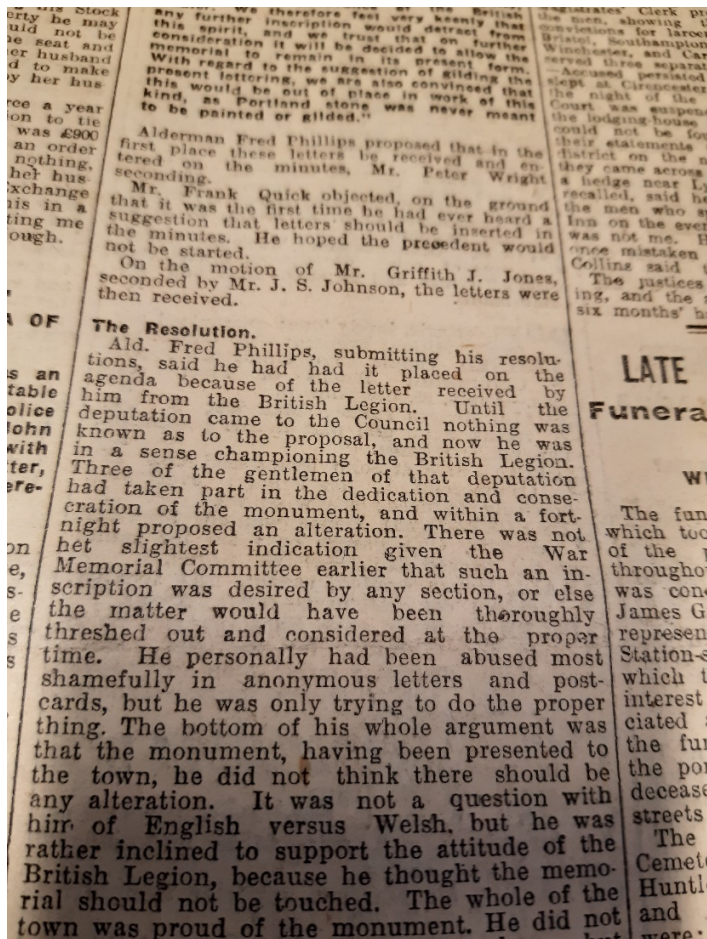


Fig. 4: South Wales Argus, 1923

It is the three decades of Newport's history culminating in this debate about the War Memorial's form that are examined in depth here following a broader temporal resumé. The intention is show that the influence and importance of the Welsh Language was paramount to the town's particular sense of being and that the final form of its War Memorial emphasized and underlined this, in permanence.

The study begins at the dawn of recorded time prior to the Roman occupation of Gwent and I present this as being at the formation of the language now known as

‘Cymraeg’ or ‘Welsh’ and that part of southern Gwent with present-day Newport at its geographical hub as laying claim to being its birthplace.

## WHY HERE?

The anonymous author writing as *A Member of the Caerleon and Monmouthshire Antiquarian Society*, produced in 1880 what appears to be the first comprehensive history of Newport and its hinterland. Stating that two extensive tracks of the Celtic, pre-Roman centuries made juncture in the area, he names and describes them as:

‘...Ryknield-street and Akeman-street. The former extended from the Tyne to Birmingham and Gloucester and thence to Caerleon. Akeman-street ran from the eastern coast to Cirencester and thence to Aust, where was the ancient passage across the Severn. From the western side of the river the road ran by Chepstow to Caerwent, Caerleon, Newport, Cardiff and thence to St. David’s.’

**Welcome to Thurnscoe**  
Formerly a mining village in the heart of the Dearne Valley, Thurnscoe was also a long established farming community. The earliest known name for the town was Turnesc and this changed to Terusc in the Domesday Book. It is believed that the name is derived from the Old Norse word for Thorn Tree Wood.

**What to see**  
The picturesque Thurnscoe Park includes Thurnscoe War Memorial, which was unveiled in October 1920, commemorating 76 local servicemen who died during the First World War. For nature lovers, Thurnscoe Reservoir is a peaceful haven for local wildlife or for something more bracing, take a walk around Phoenix Park for spectacular panoramic views of the area.

**Town History**  
Thurnscoe's history can be traced back to Roman times and the village was originally situated on a Roman road known as Ryknild Street. Roman coins have been found in the area and are now held by Doncaster Museum. During a renovation of St-Helen's Church in 1860 a Roman mosaic was uncovered and there is a suggestion that the church itself may have a connection to the Roman figures of Constantine and Augusta. The church, situated on the High Street, was built in 1087 though only the tower of the original structure remains. If you are interested in the history of the area, the Thurnscoe Local History Group meets every Thursday morning at the Rainbow Centre and has extensive resources and images about the area.

**Thurnscoe Big Local**  
Thurnscoe Big Local was formed to help support residents to make a lasting positive difference to their communities and make the area an even better place to live. For information about the work that they do go to [biglocalthurnscoe.org.uk](http://biglocalthurnscoe.org.uk) or call in at the library.

**Station History**  
Thurnscoe station is located on the Wakefield Line 15 miles (24 km) north of Sheffield railway station and was opened on 16 May 1988. The Station Hotel was built before the station and its hotel sign was used by the Post Office on its commemorative pub sign series of stamps.

Fig. 5: Thurnscoe, S. Yorkshire, information board on present-day railway station naming Rykneld Street.

The author continues to claim that a document from the time of Henry VI mentions an ‘Akeman-street’ in Newport and that:

‘...We may reasonably conclude then, that the district now known as the levels of Caldicot and Wentloog, extending from Chepstow on the Wye, in the east to Cardiff on the Taff, in the west, and of which Newport on the Usk is the centre, must have formed a magnificent hunting and fishing ground for the ancient Britons; and bearing in mind that the great highway of communication passed through Caerleon adjacent to the spot where Newport now stands it requires but little exercise of the imagination to picture on the banks of the Usk the erection of many a primitive hut.’<sup>2</sup>

If we are to understand how the long and at times erratically recorded history of Newport led to a definite acceptance of the Welsh Language as an integral part of the town in the form of a memorial to the dead soldiers of the Great War then it becomes necessary to consider this author’s musings for there is little obvious in archaeological research by way of contradiction. The matters of language and communication between these ancient people follow. The author continues with reference to an antique Welsh word - *syllt*.

‘...The most ancient name by which this district is supposed to have been known and distinguished is *Syllwyg*; *Essyllwyg*, *TirEssyllt*, *Bro Essyllt* and *Gwlad Essyllt* are all strictly synonymous. The inhabitants were accordingly called *Syllwyr* or *Essyllwyr*...The name is thought to have been derived from *Syllt* – look, view or object and therefore signifies a country abounding in beautiful views.’ (my italics)<sup>3</sup>

The author continues to claim that the Roman names for this area -*Silure* - and its inhabitants were directly derived from those existing (as stated above) and it is then simple to conjecture how and why their name for what became Caerleon, *IscaSilurum*, followed through.<sup>4</sup> Already, and with the rider that this author’s source material is largely undefined, a rough and ready pathway can be traced showing the fundamental importance of the native language – whether it be the

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<sup>2</sup>‘Anon’ writing as ‘A Member’ *Historical Traditions and Facts Relating to Newport and Caerleon* (Newport 1880) p.14

<sup>3</sup>As note (1)

<sup>4</sup> Further reference is taken from *Ancient Monuments – South Wales and Monmouthshire* (sic.) compiled by Sir Cyril Fox (Sometime Director of the National Museum of Wales) for the Ministry of Works (London 1938) with: ‘The tribe known to the Romans as the Silures offered strenuous resistance and it was not until about A.D. 75 that their power was broken. This was the date of the establishment of the fortress of *Isca* on the tidal Usk two miles N.E. of Newport.’

It has also been argued that the correct name is *Isca Augusta*, following the name of the occupying Augustan Legion but this is not in common usage today

pre-Welsh Brythonic or something even earlier – in moulding the identity of present-day Newport.

Source material is not quoted in the present-day academic format by the quoted, unnamed, author but pointers as to its whereabouts are found in Matthews (1910). He names, Mr. W.N. Johns, first editor of *Star of Gwent* and *Historical Facts and Traditions...*<sup>5</sup> as advising him that an answer to a historical question is to, ‘make a deduction of the crumbs of truth from all the various writers on the subject, together with one’s own observations, put them together and form your own conclusions.’<sup>6</sup>

Matthews, Chief Librarian of the town for over 25 years, seems here to name Johns as being the anonymous ‘A Member...’ Using the advice quoted above it would not be unreasonable to state that the literary output in the town during the latter decades of the Nineteenth Century was little short of remarkable and perhaps thrived on the social and public turmoil of the times. This theme will be returned to, in detail, later in this study.

For an authoritative and modern description of Caerleon in its Roman heyday, Michael G. Fulford’s (1996) written version of his Ninth Annual Caerleon Lecture considers the importance of the Second Augustan Legion – for whom Caerleon was headquarters – throughout Britain and the consequent centrality of the town (more often called a ‘city’) during the Roman occupation.<sup>7</sup> Remarks by both Johns as ‘A Member...’ and Matthews to the end that Caerleon was to all intents and purposes the capital city of Roman Britain stand enhanced by way of Fulford’s description of her prestigious and impressive buildings. Further, he also assures us that the boundaries of this Roman city were no less than nine miles in circumference, embracing present-day Christchurch to the south and Llantarnam at the opposite point of the compass. The present-day observer may also note that an electoral ward retains the Roman name *Ultra Pontem* and this is also inscribed upon Caerleon’s War Memorial.

The three works referred to above are united by having very little reference to the native language at the time of or indeed during the four full centuries of Roman

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<sup>5</sup> *Star of Gwent* a weekly newspaper, *Historical Facts* as recorded in pt.1

<sup>6</sup> Matthews, J *Historic Newport* (Newport 1910) pp.23/24

<sup>7</sup> Fulford M.G. *The Second Augustan Legion in the West of Britain* (Cardiff 1996)

occupation. Indeed, to go further and examine the comprehensive website [www.caerleon.net](http://www.caerleon.net) there is again a dearth of linguistic material. If we take Johns above quoted supposition regarding opinion forming as a benchmark, it is not unreasonable to take some of the Romano/Latin words for material objects and marry them to present-day Welsh equivalents. The examples of 'window', 'school' and 'church' are cited here, in old Latin translated as 'fenestram', 'scholae' and 'ecclesia' and in today's Welsh '*fffenestr*', '*ysgol*' and '*eglwys*'.<sup>8</sup> The phonetic nature of both Latin and Welsh enables these words to run one into the other. It follows that the two languages surely blended and borrowed word and expression from one another, the enhanced Welsh remaining, in common talk at least, as the last of the legionnaires departed. An expansion of this thought is made by Roderick (1981) writing in *Gwent Local History* where he gives more examples of Welsh 'borrowing' from Latin and quotes Rhys & Jones (1900):

'The number of Latin words, however, in the vocabulary of the Celtic language of Wales shows that the latter began to give way to Latin: and this would have continued to go on had not the Latin firmly rooted in the east and south of Britain been submerged. Strange as it might appear, had it not been for the English language, by which the existence of Welsh is now threatened, the Welsh language would have long ago given way to a Latin idiom resembling French.'<sup>9</sup>

This, albeit slight, supposition is central to this particular section's thesis that the Welsh Language played a vital part in the life of Newport at the time of the War Memorial Dedication but that its history dates back almost two full millennia to a time when it was central to the life of the whole area surrounding. There is also firm evidence, quoted by Fox in note (3), that a road system laid down to the west and north of the Roman capital existed and indeed is still used in part today.<sup>10</sup> In development from the ancient streets mentioned earlier it can be fairly deduced that Caerleon/Newport now became an even stronger crossing point for those travelling on economic, warmongering or religious business. It is by way of this

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<sup>8</sup> via [www.google.com/search](http://www.google.com/search) accessed 11/02/2020

<sup>9</sup> Roderick, A: *A History of the Welsh Language in Gwent*, *Gwent Local History* Vol. 50 (Spring 1981) pp.13/14

<sup>10</sup> Fox mentions (p.17) the ridge road between the Rhymni and Taff Valleys, excavated in 1899/1901 northwards to Gelligaer. Local knowledge can say that this was later found to extend much further, becoming the track known as 'Sarn Elen' 25 miles across the Brecon Beacons to that town, where the Romans had an established camp. There is still local argument on the route westward but little doubt that a sea wall and field system were built on the area now known as 'Wentloog' between Newport and Cardiff. (Appendix 1.)



conjuncture that an enriched Welsh Language may very well have spread wide in both usage and understanding.<sup>11</sup>

The first proven historical figure of any note to take prominence in this area – arguments surrounding the true ‘King’ Arthur exclude him by implication – was the late Fifth Century warlord Prince, later Saint, Gwynllyw. The uncertainty surrounding the lives of figures from this era – Arthur being the prime example – is perhaps moderated best by Hywel David Emanuel in *Dictionary of Welsh Biography* including, ‘Gwynllyw inherited the principal seat of his father’s kingdom, namely the territory between the rivers Usk and Rhymney, which was called ‘Gwynllywg’ (Wentloog) after him.’<sup>12</sup> Emanuel continues to state that, ‘the church of S. Woolos and the parish of Pillgwenlly in Newport still bear his name’, and it is this linguistic reference that becomes important to an understanding of Newport in 1923 and indeed the present day.

For a more contemporary description of the vitality injected into the Newport landscape by the Welsh Language place names, it is appropriate to reference the works of Fred Hando, a Newport school and head teacher who compiled a regular diary of local life in the *South Wales Argus* newspaper for almost a half-century only concluding on his death in February 1970. Hando was himself not a native Welsh speaker and his writings were entirely in English but he made no excuse for praising the native names found throughout the place he called ‘The Pleasant Land of Gwent’ and within the area of the Roman ‘City of Caerleon’ as mentioned above, this in turn being the epicentre of his unique diary record.

In a collection of his writings, Hando is quoted as:

‘South of the Cardiff Road (in Newport) we have *Pillgwenlly*, *Cwrt-y-Bella*, *Mendalgief*, *Maesglas* and many other Welsh puzzles. *Pillgwenlly* is the tidal ditch of Gwynllyw, where our pirate prince kept his long fast boat before he became a convert to Christianity. *Cwrt-y-Bella* was the court of the wolf. *Mendalgief* has floored every Welsh authority to whom I have submitted it. *Maesglas* is just

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<sup>11</sup> Roderick (note 9) adds further examples of the Latin borrowing including related words for numbers and that for a bridge ‘pont’ found unchanged today in both Wales and France. Most examples given relate to material objects, windows may not have existed in Wales prior to the Romans arrival. An exception is ‘gwynt’ -wind, ‘vent’ in modern French.

<sup>12</sup> <https://biography.wales/article/s-GWYN-FAR-0466?query=Gwynllyw&field=content>

‘Greenfield’ but should not be pronounced “maze glace”, make it rhyme with “buys glass”.<sup>13</sup>

Hando may very well have continued with names now corrupted from one language to another that include *Allt-yr-yn*, *Maindee*, *Bassaleg*, *Baneswell* and *Allt-Gwynllyw*. This latter, most famously known as ‘Stow Hill’, being the route westwards since earliest recorded time. Together these names act as signposts into Newport’s past.



Fig. 6 Newport 1794, showing place names in Welsh and English (Courtesy: Newport Reference Library)

There is little of consequence save the construction of a small Norman castle and adjacent stone bridge across the Usk from the time of St. Gwynllyw to report regarding the Welsh Language’s impact on the slowly growing town, still with only 6,657 residents at the time of the 1801 Census<sup>14</sup> until the events of 1839 that climaxed in the Chartist Uprising. The after-effects of this have been examined in great detail elsewhere<sup>15</sup> but for the purpose of this study it is relevant to note

<sup>13</sup> Barber, C. (ed.) *Hando's Gwent Vol. II* (Abergavenny, 1989) p.158

<sup>14</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Newport,\\_Wales#Key\\_dates\\_in\\_Newport's\\_history](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Newport,_Wales#Key_dates_in_Newport's_history) accessed 07/04/2020

<sup>15</sup> Comprehensive accounts can be found in Jones, D.V.J. *The Last Rising: the Newport Chartist Insurrection of 1839* (Cardiff, 1999) and Gwent Local History *Chartist Anniversary Edition* Vol 116 Spring 2014. The current editor of the

how little attention has been paid to the influential part the Welsh language played in its occurrence. A recent print and on-line publication compiled by Gwent County Archives does contain a specific section detailing this and begins with a quote from a leading figure in the Chartist movement, Henry Vincent, “I regret my ignorance of the Welch (sic). It appears to be a powerfully impressive language, and the people are passionately fond of their mother tongue.”<sup>16</sup>

In continuing, the *Morning Chronicle* (7/11/1839) is reported as saying, ‘the lower orders speak a language unknown to the educated classes’ and by implication this use of Welsh made it easier for the Chartists to plan in secret. There is firm evidence that two of the main figures in the Uprising, Zephaniah Williams and Dr. William Price were fluent in Welsh and that this was the prime language at many of their mass meetings. On the establishment side things were not entirely English for Thomas Phillips, Mayor of Newport in 1838: ‘was a Welsh speaker and in the late 1840’s became a leading defender of the language and culture of Wales’.<sup>17</sup>

The short span of eighteen months from January 1896 to August 1897 contained three events, divorced in style and structure one from another that together did as much to define Newport’s condition as any that came before them. In brief, there occurred a political meeting, a rugby match and a festival of traditional culture, all set in a town where the population expanded from around 35,000 in 1881 to almost double that figure, 67,000 in the space of twenty years.<sup>18</sup>

On January 16, 1896 the first of these took place. In brief, as succinctly described by Jones (1996) the Lloyd George led *Cymru Fydd* (trans. ‘Wales Will Be’) movement, inspired by Welsh Liberal MPs who had formed their own political, nationalistic grouping at Westminster, “came to ignominious grief as a result of the intransigent hostility of the South Wales Liberal Federation. The bitter conflict

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latter, Tony Hopkins has written to me in connection with the publication referred to in Note 16 that ‘There are some (other) things about the Welsh Language but nothing immediately comes to mind’. Also to be referred to is a work by W.N.Johns: *The Chartist Riots at Newport*, (Newport, 1889)

<sup>16</sup><http://chartist.cynefin.wales/sedition> accessed 07/04/2020. The printed version *Voices for the Vote* (Newport 2015)

<sup>17</sup><http://chartist.cynefin.wales/establishment> (note 15) The Cast for the Establishment

<sup>18</sup><http://www.localhistories.org/Newport.html> figures from subsequent census returns all show large increases though not as dramatic as that quoted. A high percentage of newcomers came from the West Midlands and West of England, something that is reflected today in street names and the links discovered by researchers for the Orb Steelworks Memorial. <http://www.steelremembered.org/> It is relevant to note that of the 121 men named on the memorial, the vast majority served in Welsh Regiments, particularly the South Wales Borderers.

came to a head at the Newport meeting which dealt *Cymru Fydd* a devastating blow from which it never recovered.”<sup>19</sup> In brief, while accepting that alternative versions of the meeting have been proposed, Jones reports that the meeting was packed with English biased businessmen and civic leaders from both Newport and Cardiff and they were intent on forcing their particular agenda. Particularly outspoken among this number, Robert Bird an alderman of Cardiff declared that, “the not altogether Welsh population would not submit to the domination of Welsh ideas”.<sup>20</sup> There is a resonance in the arguments described here to that which would occur in 1923 surrounding the War Memorial. The cast of those in favour of Welsh tradition passionately defending against the economic and United Kingdom dominance of the promoters. At the centre, was and would be, two English-speaking aldermen.

Just under one year later, on January 9, 1897 Wales played England in a Rugby Union game at Rodney Parade, Newport and defeated them by 11pts to Nil. The events during and surrounding this encounter are remarkable in sporting and wider cultural terms. The occasion also marked the first time a Welsh team included a number of working-class players, mostly colliers, in defeating their opponents. They are recorded in *Fields of Praise*, the Official Centenary History of the Welsh Rugby Union, in detail and hinge upon the elevation of the Newport and Wales captain Arthur Gould into fact and folklore as both the greatest player of his era and the man who, “undoubtedly put rugby in Wales onto a different plane of expectation. Once more it was Newport who provided the platform.”<sup>21</sup> The authors further refer to Sewell (1921) who analyses the success of Gould’s Newport years when their playing record was superior to that of any club side in Britain as containing, “the secret then, as it is today was the absence of class

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<sup>19</sup> Jones, G.J. *Lloyd George, Cymru Fydd and the Newport Meeting of January 1896* National Library of Wales Journal (Vol 29 Pt.4 Winter 1996) pp. 435 - 453

<sup>20</sup> Note 19. P.446

<sup>21</sup> Smith, D. & Williams, G. *Fields of Praise* Cardiff 1980 (Chap. 4 Monkey Business p.71) The authors catalogue the dispute between the Welsh and the other Home Unions, the latter claiming that the presentation made to Gould rendered him a professional. An initial breaking of ties and cancellation of fixtures was gradually eroded as the others realised that Wales and her club sides were major sources of income for them. In historical hindsight the 1897 game can be regarded as being every bit as important to the establishment of a modern ‘Wales’ as the more widely known 1905 victory over New Zealand.

distinction. It mattered little whether you were a Public-School man or a dock labourer, so long as you played the game in the right spirit.”<sup>22</sup>

‘The Gould Affair’ as it has become known was indeed about much more than a rugby match. On the surface it was about the presentation of a house to the retiring Gould and the animosity that caused within Rugby but it was more profoundly about the establishment of a modern, confident Wales and the fact it happened in Newport is itself both astonishing and not surprising. The town was again, as it had been throughout its history, displaying the heart and soul of the Welsh nation with Gould being described by Richards (1980) as ‘the very symbol of the new sense of identity, for it was he who aroused the most heat when the question of his amateur status at the end of his career.’<sup>23</sup>

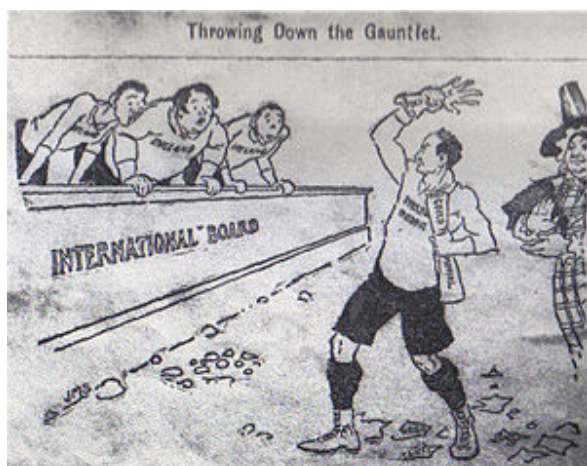


Fig 7 The Gould Affair as seen by the *Western Mail* at the time

Arthur Gould is not named among Newport’s casualties of the Great War. He saw no active Service but suffered the fate of many thousands of others in being struck down during the Spanish ‘Flu pandemic that followed. His death happened

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<sup>22</sup> Sewell, E.D.H. *Rugby Football – Up To Date*(London 1921) p.189. Gould himself was employed as a boilermaker before embarking on a sporting career that involved professional running. The decision by the Newport club to make him an award on his retirement in 1897 sparked controversy regarding professionalism that culminated with the Welsh Rugby Union refusing to give way to demands from the other Home Unions, an event yet to be put into full context.

<sup>23</sup> Richards, A. *A Touch of Glory: 100 Years of Welsh Rugby* (London 1980) p.71. Richards deals in great detail with the on- and off-field impact of both Gould and Newport. He discusses the roles of Gould, as selector and a player, George Travers, ‘a coal trimmer from the Pill District of Newport whose working life was spent on the docks and whose loyalty to the dockyard club, Pill Harriers, was to last his lifetime’, in the legendary 1905 Welsh match against the New Zealand All Blacks, placing the pair at the very heart of the victorious outcome.

very swiftly on January 2, 1919 and reported in the Stop Press column of *South Wales Argus* for he was taken ill and passed away on that same day.<sup>24</sup> In St.Woolos cemetery, Gould's gravestone was for many years the only memorial to his existence. An awakening to his importance to both city and country has taken place over the last decade largely fired by members of Newport Rugby Club. The question arises as to who exactly should be 'remembered' by war memorials. An answer is complex in both structure and scale but there would appear to be a particularly Welsh response to it. In locations around North Wales there can be found the inscription *Hefyd trwy effeithau y Rhyfel* (trans: Also through effects of the War) on memorials followed by names of the deceased. Whether these relate to deaths through long-term injuries or Spanish 'Flu is not certain but the probability of it being either remains. This feature appears to be particularly Welsh, in the same way that the word *Cynt* following a name relates to someone originally from that location, *belonging to* in other words. The Memorial at Brynsiencyn, YnysMôn perfectly illustrates this (below):

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<sup>24</sup>*South Wales Argus* 2 January 1919: Death of Famous Footballer (Stop Press)



Fig 8. Brynsiencyn Memorial (detail)

The area of Newport on the west bank of the river Usk and to the south of what is now the junction of Cardiff Road and George Street was for many years a cattle market. In the first week of August 1897 the site was transformed into the temporary home of the Welsh National Eisteddfod, the annual celebration of traditional Welsh culture that moves between locations each year. Given the huge increase in the largely English-speaking population of Newport over the previous fifty years, the hosting of a predominately Welsh festival does not seem to be entirely logical. The circumstances surrounding the Eisteddfod's presence have been examined in detail by J. Gwynfor Jones (1989) for *Gwent Local History*. For the purposes of this study Jones is referred to regarding the actual status of Welsh in this eisteddfod and for the role of the aristocratic class of Gwent within

it.<sup>25</sup> The location of the Newport Eisteddfod is notable in itself for it was placed on land at the invisible boundary of the modern centre of the town and the older, still partly marshland, Pillgwenlly. On this borderland Jones reports that, ‘the main events were held in a large wooden pavilion which, it was estimated, seated 15,000.’<sup>26</sup> Lord Tredegar as landowner of the site had, he continues, underwritten the Eisteddfod’s costs and played a large part in its organisation. The restoration of Welsh in a physical form to Newport’s psychology was not however without its critics. Jones further commenting on the anglicized nature of many of the proceedings. Indeed, it seems that only the main competitions were held through the medium of Welsh and English was more commonly spoken from the main stagewith the illustration below showing the English influence at its height.



INSIDE THE EISTEDDFOD PAVILION  
Photographs Courtesy of Newport Museum

Fig 9. Courtesy: Newport Museum

This English ‘influence’ was not unique to the Newport Eisteddfod and had indeed been present since the eisteddfod tradition was made ‘National’ almost fifty years

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<sup>25</sup> Jones, G.J. *The National Eisteddfod of Wales at Newport (1897) and Welsh cultural life in Gwent*, Gwent Local History No. 67 (Autumn 1989) pp. 19-33

<sup>26</sup> Note 24 p.24



earlier. Miles (1978) presents a comprehensive history of the modern Eisteddfod stressing that throughout the Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries, English was acceptable, approved even, as part of its profile.<sup>27</sup> There does however appear to be a point of conflict, conjuncture even<sup>28</sup>, at Newport arising perhaps because of the apparently highly anglicized constitution of the town or perhaps because the demise of *Cymru Fydd* had in turn inspired a greater feeling of national identity among the native Welsh speakers who attended. Further, the after-effects of the Gould Affair would have been recognised outside industrial South Wales – the main rugby playing area – with Wales regarded as being more than the equal of England on the field of play, by implication and the score board.

In summation, Jones draws on the positive reports carried by the English language newspapers, *Western Mail* and *South Wales Daily News*, of the Eisteddfod's success in promoting the native culture, stating:

“Whatever its impact may have been on Welsh consciousness it is clear that attention was drawn in the closing stages of the Victorian era, far more than in the past perhaps, to that remarkable phenomenon, namely the survival of the Welsh spirit and language even in the more anglicized parts of Wales,”<sup>29</sup>

The three events described above can, in hindsight, be interpreted as era-defining. The climax of a century that brought enormous change to Wales as a country and more pertinently to Newport as a particular part of it, retained a legal identity that was primarily English and a Welsh linguistic one that refused to wither away. It is remarkable that ‘The Gould Affair’, central to the trilogy, has not been previously linked to the two companion parts as its cultural effects are strongly represented in the present-day. The Wales/England rugby rivalry becomes an annual celebration of Welsh identity, dominating media and public attention for weeks at a time before and after it takes place. The implications of this are explained in part at least – for it is a multi-faceted puzzle like no other – by Richards (2009) whose introduction to its history includes: ‘It (Rugby Union) is

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<sup>27</sup> Miles, D. *The Royal National Eisteddfod of Wales* (Swansea 1978)

<sup>28</sup> ‘Conjuncture’ is a philosophical term that largely interprets as, *a moment of opportunity presented by differing economic and social forces colliding*. It is elucidated for contemporary life by Stuart Hall see:

<https://epress.lib.uts.edu.au/journals/index.php/csrj/article/view/4917>

<sup>29</sup> Note 25 p.33

almost the only field in which Wales has not merely to ask for recognition and respect, but to demand it'.<sup>30</sup>

Arthur Gould's invisible influence continued with his untimely death as a question it raises, as mentioned above, asks who exactly should Great War Memorials be 'remembering'? There is a partial answer to this in considering Lord Rhondda's name on the memorial at the village of Magor, six miles to the east of Newport. Rhondda, before his peerage, was D.A. Thomas the wealthy owner of many of the Rhondda Valleys' coal mines and M.P. for Merthyr Tydfil and later Cardiff. Thomas was also part of the main organising body for the Newport Eisteddfod as listed by Jones.<sup>31</sup> As a private individual he was drafted into Lloyd George's Government as Minister of Food Control in 1916 and it is this citation that accompanies his name on the Magor memorial, unusual indeed as the names of very few non-military personnel are to be found on memorials anywhere in the United Kingdom.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Richards, H. *The Red & The White* (London 2009) p.6

<sup>31</sup> Note 24. P.24. Rhondda, as Thomas, is also noted by Richards (note 23 p.84) as proposing the toast to Gould during the 1897 banquet held in his honour where he identified him as 'very much the symbol of modern Wales'.

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.southwalesargus.co.uk/news/17648494.monmouthshire-council-approves-plans-to-repair-and-protect-unique-magor-war-memorial/> accessed 22/04/2020. There are no statistics available on the numbers and locations of civilians on war memorials. At Benllech, Ynys Môn, three civilians are named, one of whom, Mrs J. Howdle died when the *Lusitania* was torpedoed in 1915. <http://www.lostancestors.eu/memwar/memorials/B/Benllech/gesamt02kl.jpg>



Fig. 10 Magor War Memorial (Detail)

### Memorial Planning, Unveiling and Aftermath

While memorials to the Great War were constructed, unveiled and dedicated in many small communities throughout Wales within months of the Armistice, those of the larger communities took, by and large, several more years to be completed. Examples are here from elsewhere in Wales at Llynfaes, YnysMôn where a memorial hall was completed in 1920 and Guilsfield, Powys whose churchyard memorial dates from the same year illustrate the former.



Fig. 11: Llynfaes Memorial Hall (Detail)

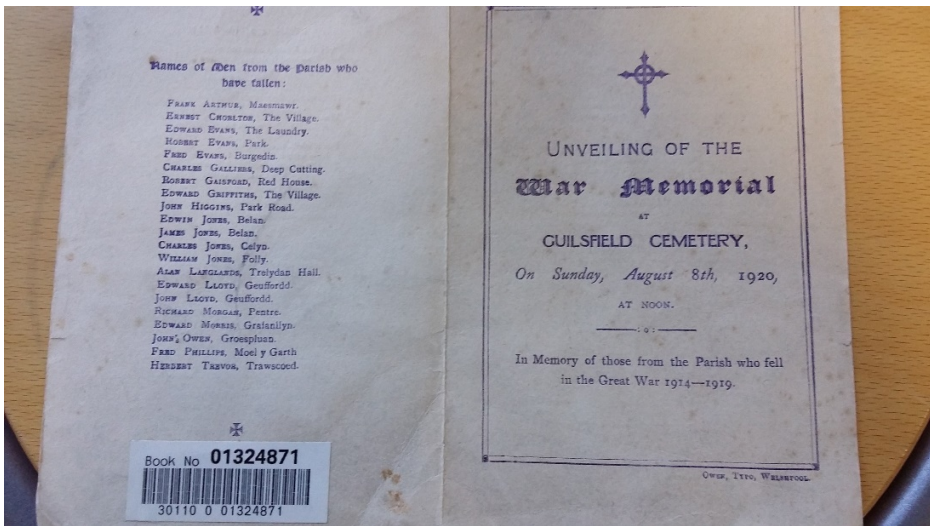


Fig.12: Guilfield Unveiling Ceremony (courtesy Bangor University Library)

Particularly in industrial South Wales, a tendency as detailed by Gaffney (1998) was for protracted debate and occasional argument prior to any decision being confirmed. An extreme, though not unique, example of this can be found at Abertillery where the Memorial was unveiled on December 1, 1926 after what the *South Wales Gazette* described as 'circumstances which had militated against the speedy success of the project'.<sup>33</sup> There was even more delay at Merthyr Tydfil, the town with arguably the longest tradition of civil unrest in South Wales (see Williams, 1978 et al.) where it took until 11th November 1931 for the Memorial to be dedicated and unveiled.<sup>34</sup>

It was perhaps not surprising that to conduct the unveiling ceremonies in both of these towns the services of high-ranking military men were made available. In the case of Abertillery no less than Field-Marshal Viscount Allenby along with a battalion of troops. A presence that was to be repeated in Merthyr, ironically on the anniversary year of the 1831 Merthyr Rising.<sup>35</sup>



Fig. 13 Allenby at Abertillery (Courtesy Imperial War Museum)

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<sup>33</sup> *South Wales Gazette* 03 December 1926 'Abertillery War Memorial' P.10 The 'circumstances' were described in the *London Times* and on the floor of the House of Commons as including the alleged burning down of the town's police station, destruction of collieries and a plot to demolish the Memorial itself. The *Gazette* earlier detailed civil disturbances in the town resulting from the extended miners' strike that followed the short-lived general stoppage.

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/item/memorial/2009> accessed 12/05/2020

<sup>35</sup> [Merthyr Rising - Wikipedia](#)



Fig. 14 Abertillery War Memorial, Unveiling (Courtesy Imperial War Museum)

Movement towards the erection of a civic memorial to honour the Newport servicemen and women was also of a protracted manner. As stated above, around the time of the 1918 Armistice, townspeople witnessed continuing debates regarding Welsh Language teaching and Newport's future as a Welsh or English town played out through the columns of the *South Wales Argus*.<sup>36</sup> The *Argus* laid out its columns in a very orderly fashion. None of the loudly printed and illustrated headlines common today were produced and the force of argument and feeling can be said to be most apparent and understandable within the sober pages. Above all the overriding issue of the vitality Welsh culture brings

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<sup>36</sup>*South Wales Argus*: Wales or England (04/11/1918); Welsh Teaching (11/11/1918 et seq.)

to the life of the town runs through the editorials and correspondence of the time.

Alderman Fred Phillips appears to have become an influential figure in the life of the town at this time. No known relation to the Thomas Phillips (mentioned above as Mayor in 1838), he was a member of a Northampton family who bought themselves into the Newport brewing industry in 1874 and through that into the town's social life by way of the cricket club.<sup>37</sup> Fred Phillips is recorded as both playing and captaining the club and from there it seems to have been a smooth progression to the town council as a prominent, respectable citizen. It is likely that the same man is reported to have become Chairman of the War Memorial Committee in his role as Alderman<sup>38</sup> and would surely have been party to the employment of Arthur Gould in the company's office as the cricket and rugby clubs shared the Rodney Parade premises under the banner of, 'Newport Athletic Club'.<sup>39</sup>



Fig 15. Advertising placard circa 1900 (Courtesy Newport Museum)

<sup>37</sup>[http://breweryhistory.com/wiki/index.php?title=Phillips %26 Sons Ltd](http://breweryhistory.com/wiki/index.php?title=Phillips_%26_Sons_Ltd) (accessed 19/05/2020)

<sup>38</sup>*South Wales Argus*: 'Our Heroic Dead': 2 June 1923 Tony Hopkins, retired Director of Gwent County Archives and Editor of Gwent Local History journal believes, in the absence of concrete evidence, it reasonable to assume Fred Phillips cricketer and Alderman was one and the same person.

<sup>39</sup>[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rodney Parade](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rodney_Parade) accessed 19/05/2012



Fig. 16 Memorial Gates, Rodney Parade. Unveiled by Lord Tredegar September 6 1923. *Eightyfive Service members of Newport Athletic Club are listed on the column tablets as a Roll of Honour, not as being lost in action. The Gates were until recent times the main public entrance but have since fallen into disuse and neglect. Rodney Parade now hosts two rugby teams and Newport County AFC. Examination of the names listed shows very few directly Welsh surnames and perhaps comments on the overall composition of the Club itself. There is little reference to the details of death, one name that is mentioned is 'Phillips, L.A.' listed as a Sergeant in the London Royal Fusiliers, killed at Cambrai, March 14, 1916.* <https://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/name/466784>.

Footnote 35 (above) highlights in part the Wales or England debate of the time. The Athletic Club Memorial Gates can, by oblique reference, be considered as part of this with consideration to a similar construction in Oswestry, Shropshire. This latter town, just three miles from the present-day Welsh border, has a history of uncertain belonging that goes back to the immediate post-Roman times and was possibly made physical by the Medieval construction known as Offa's



Dyke high on the hill to its immediate West. This feature is regarded and detailed concisely by Rees (1947) in his study of the Welsh Language's historical fortunes - 'vicissitudes' - in the border regions of the land.<sup>40</sup> There is still, today, a lasting impression of Wales and her culture within this now officially consolidated English town, not least by street names and a monoglot Welsh chapel. Of interest for this study however are the Memorial Gates to the town's main public space - 'Cae Glas Park' - and the inscribed names: -



Fig. 17 Oswestry War Memorial Gates (Detail)

The number of names with a Welsh root, there being no less than thirty-nine 'Jones' to be counted, are evidence in themselves of the town's population at the time of the Great War and they bear witness to the central proposition of this study regarding the importance of Welsh War Memorials as measures of linguistic

<sup>40</sup> Rees, W.H. The Vicissitudes of the Welsh Language in the Marches of Wales, with special reference to its territorial distribution in Modern Times. (Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, Univ. Of Swansea ,1947) pp.8/10; 194/258

identity. Of course, Oswestry and its outlying villages were then legally and almost certainly culturally more 'English' than 'Welsh' but, as it was in Newport, the perceived minor partner was surely much more than just an adjunct.

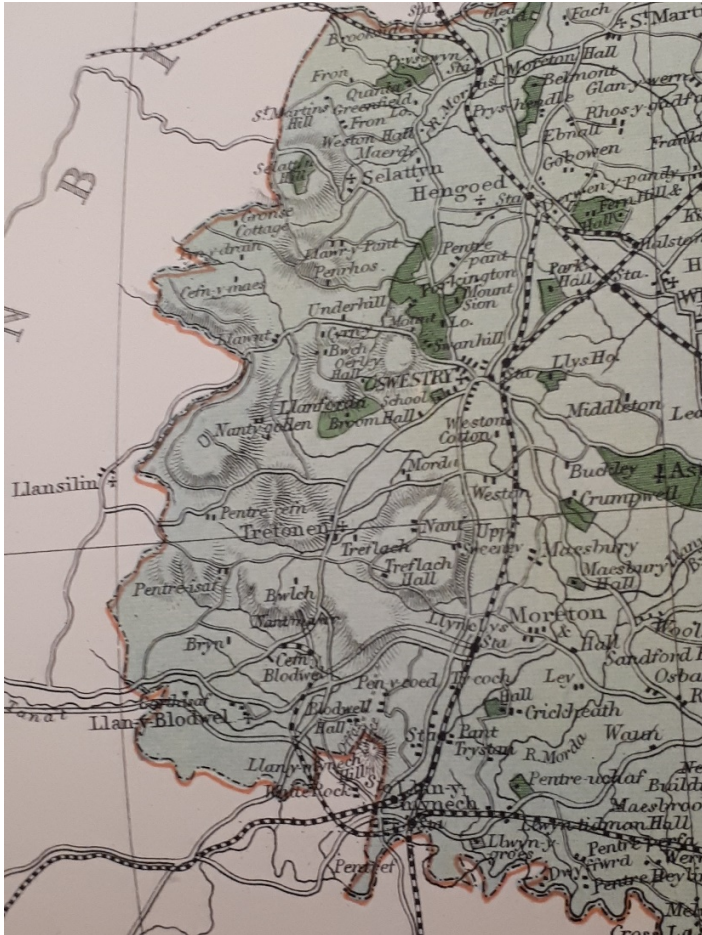


Fig 18, Oswestry and Shropshire district (1918)

This reference to Oswestry and its environs does have direct relevance to Newport at the end of the Great War and the shaping of identity there in the decades that followed. One of the *Argus* letters referred to above makes the case for all Gwent/Monmouthshire east of the River Usk reverting to being fully English with the rest staying in Wales. There is no apparent malice in the letter, though the correspondent does end by saying, *'The people who live in Chepstow and Abergavenny differ from the colliers of Pontypool as much as Scotchmen differ from Irishmen –Yours sincerely, H. Johnston'*<sup>41</sup> Where Newport, with the

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<sup>41</sup> See Note 35 'England or Wales'.

river Usk flowing right through the town, fits in with this the correspondent does not say but is not unreasonable to surmise that, as suggested by the Athletic Club Roll of Honour, there did exist a differing set of loyalties between the two national interests, with Alderman Phillips about to emerge as the outspoken proponent of an 'English' Newport.

The chapters of events detailed so far detailing; conquests, martyrdoms, a continuum of skirmishes, rebellions, bombastic political meetings and massive public acclaim of the day's hero leaves the narrative surrounding the construction and dedication of Newport's Civic War Memorial to the officially recognised figure of 1512 men and 4 women service personnel somewhat lacking in comparative drama.<sup>42</sup> The pages of *South Wales Argus* again provide a trustworthy record of the timeline involved, with controversy only coming to the fore in the latter days. Following the (uncertain date) formation of a War Memorial Committee, the newspaper carried reports of the fundraising efforts towards a total cost of around £4,000 and mention on 24 March 1923 of Alderman Phillips presiding over the laying of the memorial's foundation stone.<sup>43</sup>

Apart from a brief argument at a Council meeting in late March relating to who the memorial should be commemorating (it was decided that only soldiers and sailors would be honoured), an *Argus* report that on Friday 1 June funding for the memorial, scheduled to be unveiled and dedicated the next day had all but reached its target figure was no doubt of great relief to all concerned.<sup>44</sup>

The Memorial was finally unveiled on Saturday June 2, 1923 and reported fully by the *South Wales Argus* under the headline 'Our Glorious Dead' the following Monday<sup>45</sup>. The report includes a public attendance in excess of 30,000 people, the ceremony being presided over by Lord Treowen, an address by Viscount Tredegar, guests including the Lord Mayors of Cardiff and Bristol with 'the singing of *Hen Wlad fy Nhadau* and the National Anthem (sic.) closing the proceedings'.

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<sup>42</sup><https://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/item/memorial/60833> accessed 31/05/2020

<sup>43</sup>*Mayor Lays the Foundation Stone*: *South Wales Argus* 24/03/1923 p.5

<sup>44</sup>*Newport War Memorial: The Final Appeal* *South Wales Argus* 1 June 1923 p.6

<sup>45</sup>*Our Glorious Dead: Impressive Scenes* *South Wales Argus*, June 4, 1923 p.2

Treowen's address is itself mentioned within this report as describing the fitting siting of the Memorial, 'on historic ground (where) in former centuries Roman legions and Normans had marched and where the monument would stand for subsequent centuries as a reminder to generations of what the sons (of Newport) had done to maintain the Empire of which they were citizens.' Doubtless, Treowen had fresh memory of his own son, Elidyr, who had been killed in action on 8 November 1917 in Palestine and for whom an entire small village near his Llanover Hall home was erected as a memorial tribute both to Elidyr and the fallen men of the Llanover district. After hearing of his loss, Treowen resigned as M.P. for the then constituency of South Monmouthshire which included Newport.



Fig.19 Memorial Plaque,Llanover (Rhyd-y-Meirch) Village. The detailed bi-lingual inscription believed to match in length any other to be found in Wales.

Included within its report of the unveiling ceremony, the *Argus* opened a three-column listing of the floral tributes laid by the Newport public the following day. Among these, where a curious preponderance of the phrase "In Loving memory of" threaded through can be found two distinctly Welsh tributes, both of which are quoted in full and the second in the Welsh Language. Quoted below, the first remains anonymous and the *Argus* presents it in English alone, the second (below) is from a Welsh chapel that remains active in the town to this day, translating as 'A tear in commemoration... Mount Zion...Their sacrifice not forgotten'

'This tribute to the Newport Welshmen, placed here during the singing of the Welsh National Anthem, faces the East according to the ancient laws of the Gorsedd that the first rays of the sun may fall on it and honour the dead of the Cymry. Languages and Inscriptions which are but things of man. 'The sun is of God and God endureth for ever'.

*'Deigrryn Coffa, Mynydd Seion. Eu haberth nid a heibio.'*

These numerically small in number but extraordinary in execution tributes again serve to reinforce the Welsh culture of the town as being very much alive. The shame is that they did not become permanent though perhaps their sentiments did so as the debate over a full Welsh inscription on the memorial itself arrived at its climax.

Doubtless, feelings of melancholia dominated the town in the weeks that followed the memorial's unveiling. It is impossible to project into the modern consciousness what it must have felt like, especially for those who had lost a relative, friend or neighbour but now had, at least, a permanent, tangible object that truly belonged to themselves and their memories. An event on this scale affecting in some way virtually every inhabitant of the town could surely never happen again. At the very least, if there was to be a next time the boys, their boys, would most certainly be brought home.

There would be an interval of two months before the inscription debate reached settlement. On July 11, a regular meeting of the Town Council chaired again by Ald. Fred Phillips received a delegation headed by Sir Garrod Thomas<sup>46</sup> and including Churchmen from various denominations. These were led by the Archdeacon of Monmouth with representatives of the English, Irish and Scottish communities in the town. In full, the *Argus* report names Father Hickey (Ireland), Rev. D. Llewelyn Jones (Rural Dean), Rev. T. Richards, Mr. T.E. Heard (England), Leslie Millar (Scotland). They carried with them letters from Lords Tredegar and Treowen with the result that their protestations in favor of a Welsh Language inscription carried the vote handsomely<sup>47</sup>. Two further *Argus* reports conclude the narrative. The first, an Editorial, is concise in tone with perhaps its most direct statement being, 'the actual result of that (July 11 Council) vote indicated what

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<sup>46</sup> Founder and first editor of the *South Wales Argus*

<sup>47</sup> *South Wales Argus* 11.07.1923

we believe is the general desire - that tribute should be paid in Welsh to our fallen heroes. Questions of expense or whether Newport is in Wales or England do not arise.<sup>48</sup>

The editorial carried hope that a further Council meeting scheduled for the following Tuesday, August 14<sup>th</sup> would formally pass resolution to allow the Welsh inscription of *I'n Dewrion. Eu heuwau'n perarogli sydd* to take its rightful place. This was duly reported by the *Argus* though there were strong words of dissent from councilors claiming that the small number of regular Welsh speakers in the town was not enough to justify the work, a strongly worded letter from the memorial's architects to the end that their work would be compromised by the addition of the inscription and, in favour, a letter from the local British Legion branch welcoming the recognition it would give to its Welsh members.<sup>49</sup>

There does not appear to have been an official ceremony to mark the completion of the Welsh Language inscription upon the memorial. The extent to which it cemented Newport's popular recognition as a 'Welsh' town is impossible to quantify but, as with all memorials to the dead of the Great War throughout the British Isles the materiality of their existence in perpetuity makes for an unanswerable statement. There are many memorials in Wales, particularly in the south of the country that carry no recognition of the native language at all, but it would be churlish and disrespectful to claim that their importance locally is in any way diminished as a result. Memorial inscriptions carry, as intimated in the *Argus* editorial quoted above the desire of the community that their dead be remembered in ways commensurate with their wishes. This, in Newport's case, a desire that can be traced back for two millennia and contains vibrant, passionate themes that have never been abandoned, merely subdued for periods of time.

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<sup>48</sup> *Argus* 11/08/23

<sup>49</sup> *Argus* 14/08/1923 The inscription translates: To our Heroes. Their names are ever fragrant.

Such is the continuing importance of two short phrases.



## AFTERWORD

*In July 2018 I set out to journey through most of the parts of Newport mentioned in this study. As if to deny a popular image of South Wales where rainfall rarely ceased and the sun shone at best intermittently, the journey took place under clear blue skies over a landscape warmed through by temperatures of 80 F. An account of the expedition follows, written in the form of a journal with observation predominating over research. My conclusion, that obvious signs of the Welsh Language's presence were not omnipresent, proves little but it does I believe describe a landscape that was moulded by that language and is slowly being reclaimed by this originator. The War Memorial and the powerful debate that surrounded its completion stands as a fundamental part of this proposition.*





# A Buried Bible: The Bottom and the Top of Wales

## 9a. Gwynllwg or Wentloog

*As the first part of a village 'trilogy' dealing with three isolated parts of Gwent the themes raised earlier in this study are all included. I had no intention of going down this research pathway when I started out, primarily because it is the part of Wales not too far from where I was born and grew up. It would have been a little too close to home and subjective but...things come to pass and, for one, was keen report on and study the Welsh 'mysteries' of the moors.*

*This section considers the linguistic tradition of a part of Wales that has been largely neglected by historians and social commentators. My interest in this location goes back many decades to a time in the late 1960's when I began cycle racing at junior level. The 'flats' as we called it was the setting for local time-trial races and its topography gave it an alien feeling to us valley boys who mostly lived above the 800' contour. In all this time, very little has changed as I will report. A paper based on this research was presented, with some astonishment in reaction, to an academic heritage conference in Cardiff, 2018. Connection with the only war memorial publicly visible is shown as a footnote. The Great War, as in so many other places, undoubtedly marked a major change in the psychology of the Wentloog people but, the ebbing of a particular Welsh consciousness was not either a marked or definable process. I acknowledge the work of Ray Westlake in adding substance to this and the following two sections by way of his two-volume series on 'First World War Graves and Memorials in Gwent' (Barnsley 2002/2003)*

### INTRODUCTION

The low-lying area between the mouths of the rivers Rumney and Ebbw alongside the Bristol Channel has been occupied since Celtic times with evidence of continued habitation by way of a Roman sea wall and religious settlement at Llansantfraed/St. Bride's at its eastern edge.

It is unlikely that population levels ever exceeded the present numbers of no more than 1,000. This, in part is due to the instability of the land, much of which is at or below sea-level and its isolation from the main routeways between Gwent and Glamorgan. This scenario accentuated following the opening of the railway from England to South Wales in 1850 which effectively isolated the settlements on its southern side from the rest of the country.

The continuation of Welsh linguistic and social identity in this location will be shown to be one which has defied popular conception.

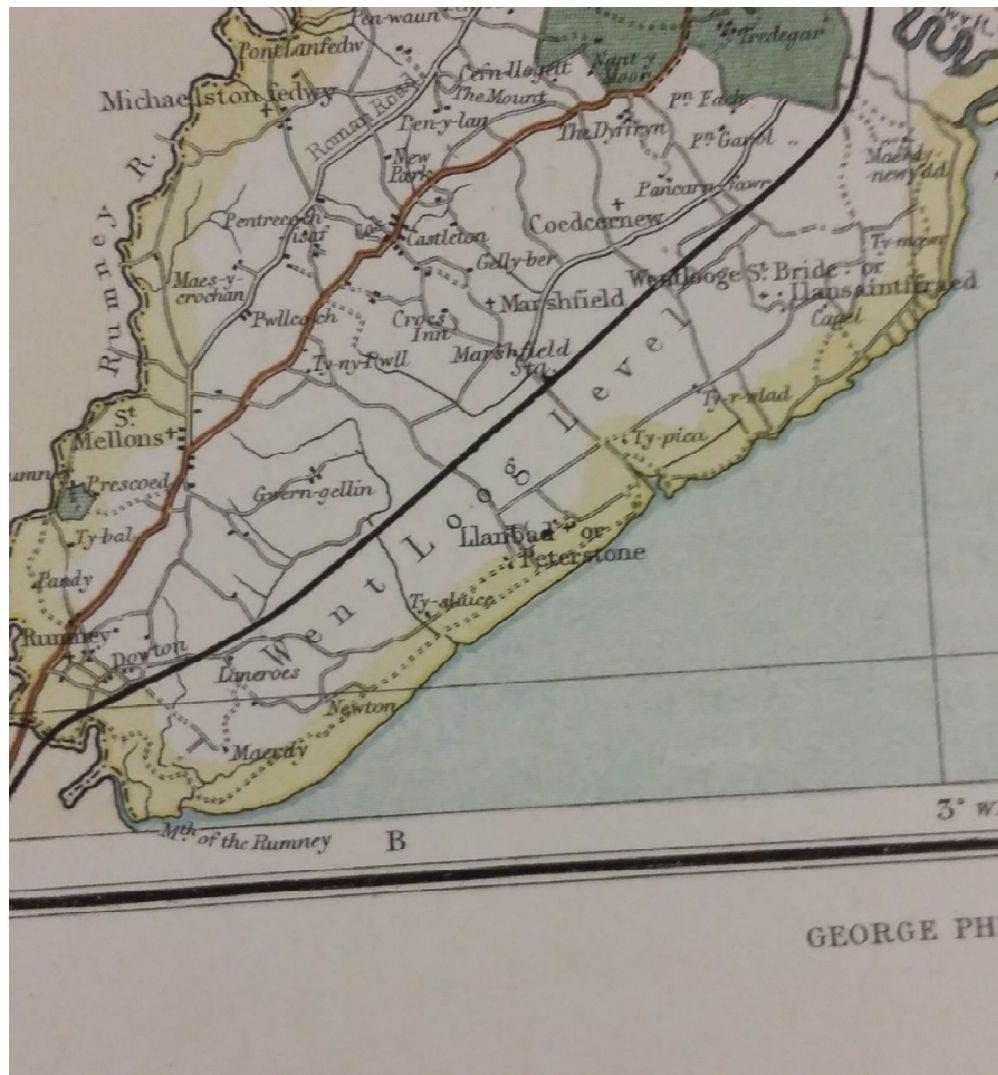


Fig.1 'The Wentloog Level' (study area defined as that between railway line and seashore)

## DRAFT OF PRESENTATION PAPER (As presented to Conference. Detail of 1904 map shown above)

This presentation will take you on a guided tour – virtual – of a part of Wales which is largely unknown to the vast majority of our population but is passed within eyeshot by tens of thousands of people each day as they travel along the main railway line into South Wales and the M4 motorway. A prime purpose is to detail how this conference's theme of 'divergence' also includes its negative aspect, namely that there are places where very little has changed in

recorded history and the communities who live there have found their unique ways of establishing a cultural identity. On a wider canvas, it includes the concept of 'anglicisation', a term that I have found to be hazy and unclear at best and anti-academic at worst for it implies an ill-defined communal understanding.

This geographically strange area is described by Vera Thomas in a 1987 Cardiff University M.A. thesis as containing at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century:

'Two large, thinly populated coastal parishes, isolated for much of the year by a damp, unhealthy climate and impassable roads'

is as shown on the above map from 1904 [graphic presented, Geo. Phillips Atlas].

To give a brief historical summary, the area's eastern boundary, the mouth of the Ebbw, is mentioned by Gerald of Wales who almost drowned in crossing it, there is evidence of a minor monastic settlement on the site of the church at St. Bride's; the Romans were probably responsible for the building of a retaining wall to hold back the waters of the Bristol Channel and, perhaps most interesting of all, the myriad drainage ditches in this area, which is largely at or below sea-level, are locally known as 'Reens' an ancient word that relates to 'Water' and is present in the Rhine, Rhone and Rhon-dda (good water).

[Film of the sea-wall, 1min 33secs, with original commentary  
via:<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GkXevXgH2b4&list=PLLPfS84cDKTF2WPUpvSn6UsgPI3YABpIO&index=27> ]

Thomas provides an "indication", from available church and tithe records, of the Peterstone – *Llanbedr Gwynllwg* – population as being: 'some 85 persons in 1801, rising to 148 recorded in the 1921 census.' Alan Roderick chronicles this in his articles for Gwent Local History where he claims there to have been 28 speakers of both Welsh and English at that time.

I can argue that statistics for this tiny community are as prone to distortion as for the largest cities. Obviously, the 1801 "indication" provided by Thomas is difficult to dispute though it is noted that Sir Joseph Bradney in his first '*History of Monmouthshire*' showed the church services to gravitate back to Welsh at round about this same time. This observation was to be later amplified by William Rees in a 1947 doctoral thesis where he tabulates the church visitation records for the period to show Peterstone's bucking of the becoming English

trend. My disquiet arises from studying the returned 1911 Census forms for Peterstone, as much house by house as possible, and finding that almost without exception the head of household at the very least declared to be a Welsh or even monoglot speaker –James Baker, Orchard farm; Daniel David, Pengam farm; Lewis Jones, Bryn Glas; Edward Thomas, Ton-y-pwll; Evan Williams, Milditch House etc. *eto*.

We now move along the companion village of St. Brides, almost 3 miles, very flat miles, to the east.

Looking here, the scattered houses *en route* show Welsh names. Of real interest is 'Ty Pica' (Puck's House) but sadly it no longer exists, in either language.

My initial intention, to demonstrate how little has changed in this area, is now due for a punch as there has been, over the last 25 years, a minor *tsunami* of incursion by bricks and mortar into this village. It was here, recorded the Gwent diarist of the last Century, Fred Hando, that one of the three great men of Newport, David Llewelyn Harding, was born 1867 and raised in a Welsh-speaking family before leaving for international stage and screen fame at the turn of the Victorian era. Hando's work, catalogued for 40 years in editions of the 'South Wales Argus' provides a unique observation of this area, and in the absence of a body of academic enquiry stands as a 'true' record inasmuch as the great majority of the features he details are there for all to see today. Harding's Welsh Congregational chapel is here as is the church Hando describes as, "In spite of its buttresses, the tower is not upright, but the 'pull of the sea' cannot be blamed as the leaning is towards the land."

Thomas's 1801 "indication" of 134 residents rose to 230 by 1921 and examination of that census record shows significant differences from Peterstone with the number of Welsh speakers very much in the minority and a repeated declaration of English farm labourers, whereas any extra labour three miles west would almost invariably mean family members drafted in as in:

Daniel Baker, Mardy Farm, St.Brides. Widower aged 64 speaks both English and Welsh; b. Peterstone. Four adult children all b. St. Bride's plus Wm. Sillett age 42 'Cowman' b. London; Phillip H. Herridge age 18 'Waggoner' b. Cardiff (all English) and;Elizabeth Ann Harding, Pheasant Cottage, St. Bride's. Single, aged

42, b. St. Bride's Dressmaker speaks both English and Welsh. Susan Amelia David, Widow aged 40, Schoolmistress b. St. Brides, English only.

In Peterstone, where the 1911 population numbered 125, four different men named 'Rees' are declared heads of house at Tyn-y-Ffynon; Six Bells Inn; Ty Coch and Newhouse farms with a multiplicity of family, servants and linguistic abilities between them.

To conclude, and to illustrate with my record of the war memorial at St. Bride's<sup>1</sup>, the recent building of the Nellive Park estate and consequent exaggeration of the population (422 as per 2011 census) occurred only at St. Bride's partly, I suspect, because Peterstone's land is uninsurable being below sea-level. Further increase has come about with the permanent occupation of a caravan park where the lighthouse stands but the commercial activity at present in St. Brides consists of one B/B property, a restaurant, no retail units and no public house while in Peterstone the Six Bells Inn exists in glorious isolation. Something here has probably changed for the worse as there were at least five drinking establishments named in 1911 and five places of worship, four of which are now domestic residences.

Looked at in context, these communities 'on the edge', in 'debateable land' or what you will, seem of little significance. They did however in 1911 bear relation to rural communities in other parts of the country by virtue of the overwhelming number of residents born where they still live. The 2011 Census return, on the other hand, shows the percentage of Welsh speakers for what is now the 'Parish of Wentlooge' as 7.8%, slightly below that of both Newport as a whole and rather different from 1921 which, combining the twin villages would show a figure of 13.2%. but for Peterstone alone 18.9%; with 9.1% for St. Brides. At the same time, the percentage of residents born in Wales stood at 79.3%, higher than the national average of 72.7%. How much of this degradation of Welsh is due to the post-1995 population *tsunami* is difficult to tell but the incursion of Welsh Language signage, both public and private perhaps tells a truer story.

I would submit that 'diversity' here has happened in the negative, things are still, despite all – *erg waeth a pawb a phopeth*– as they were, people in a

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<sup>1</sup> [St. Brides Wentloog / Bridget Sant - YouTube](#)

debateable land swept along by the force Rees describes as, 'The vicissitudes of the Welsh language.'<sup>2</sup>

27/03/2018

Footnote:

Visiting the area again on 18/07/21 I was delighted to see that there were no obvious examples of material change, except: the Six Bells Inn at Peterstone (below) was now derelict and abandoned. Covid-19 had succeeded where two world wars had failed.



*Extract from Fred Hando's visit to the 'Six Bells' (South Wales Argus)*

<sup>2</sup> See Part 1 in following section for ref. detail



## 9b. An Adventure in 'Cynefin'<sup>1</sup>

*This section details a journey to another remote Gwent village and continues the thread of 'Itineraries, Narrative and Identities' that has wandered throughout the study as a whole. It was written as a contribution to the well-established and regarded 'Gwent Local History' and took the editorial staff there unaware of its content as well as stimulating a local reaction. Without my unstructured inquiry into the village's war memorial, the detailed 'Legend' would probably remain undisturbed. The factual story it contains brings up, again, the elements of micro-anglicisation, remembrance and cultural continuity that repeat themselves throughout my work.*

### Part 1. The legend of a buried bible

Writing in 1947, William Henry Rees includes in his thesis on 'The Vicissitudes of the Welsh Language in the Marches of Wales...' <sup>2</sup> a remarkable reference from Bradney <sup>3</sup> to the extent that around about 1870, the Vicar of Llanishen, "not knowing what to do with it (a 1620 Welsh bible in the church) buried it in his garden". Both authors moved on from this incident without enlightenment and it seems to have hung in space ever since, there being no further knowledge readily accessible elsewhere. Though factually unreliable as a primary source, an internet search did show the name 'James Oakeley' as being the vicar in question with intimation that he served for some years before progressing to Hereford Cathedral. Though from an oblique angle, English being the main spring for further research, the incident seemed to be well worth taking the proverbial 'punt' on. Llanishen, though midway between Chepstow and Monmouth lies in arguably the most spectacularly remote part of Gwent, and high on the Wentwood ridge, some 500' and more above sea-level. This then surely a place where *cynefin* would have profound meaning?

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<sup>1</sup> The National Trust's specialist on nature, Matthew Oates wrote in *The Guardian* (09/04/2017) '(Edward) Thomas understood the concept of heartland as only a Welshman could for the Welsh have an apt word, *cynefin*, which refers to a person's cultural, ecological, geographic and spiritual habitat. The English language is worryingly deficient here.'

<sup>2</sup> Rees WH: *The vicissitudes of the Welsh Language in the Marches of Wales* unpublished Ph.D thesis (Univ. of Wales 1947)

<sup>3</sup> Bradney JHA: *History of Monmouthshire Vol 2* p.244 (London 1911)



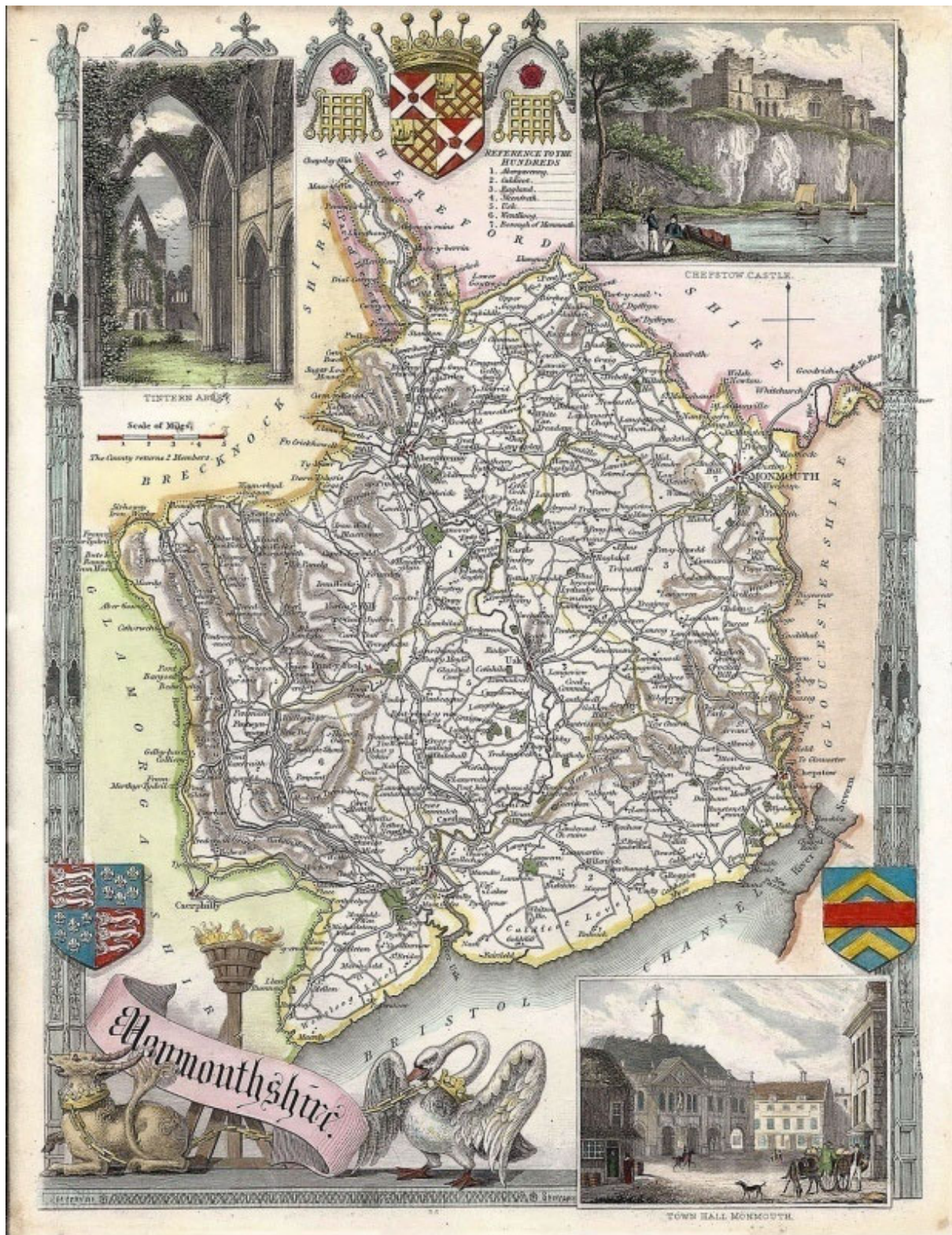


Fig. 1 18<sup>th</sup> Century Map. (Llanishen is to the west of Tintern)

## Part 2. Uncharted territory

Leaving Chepstow to go anywhere other than towards the M4 is not too straightforward. For a start, the railway station is divorced from the town by the access road to a supermarket and a scrap yard. Heaven knows how many souls have simply abandoned hope and returned to the westbound platform by way of one of the potentially hazardous narrow footbridges that seem to be unique to Gwent and greet visitors to Abergavenny with the opposite of *Croeso*. By dint of unusual and not to be recommended navigation I somehow made it to a signpost marked 'Devauden' and was cycling on my way, already perspiring with forced pedal revolutions.

Devauden it was three, or was it four? miles further on, all but a few hundred yards uphill and some of it severely so. Not a soul to be seen but on the neatly kept village green a bust and marker post to John Wesley who preached his first sermon on Welsh – or was it 'and Monmouthshire' – soil here in October 1739, "to three or hundred plain people on, 'Christ our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption...'"<sup>4</sup> Redemption in a heat that had risen *pro rata* for each pedal stroke I had squeezed out on this so far solitary journey came in the form of a beautifully bespoke village shop, right opposite the green and next to a miniature petrol station.<sup>5</sup>

I had arrived at the right time for the young lady shopkeeper been brought up in Llanishen, was well familiar with the surrounding countryside and, mercifully, had a tap running with cold, pure water. Further, she presented me with an off-the-cuff sketch map of Llanishen and, no, had not heard of the bible burying either in fact or fiction.

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<sup>4</sup><https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Devauden>

<sup>5</sup><http://www.devauden.org.uk/living-in-devauden/shop.html>



Fig 2. 21<sup>st</sup> Century vernacular diagram of Llanishen relics (Courtesy of Devauden Village Store)

### Part 3. Into the Promised Land

Just two more miles along the ridgeway the road traverses remained. Looking to the left where trees and hedgerows permitted, the Vale of Usk spread out for what seemed the next step to infinity. To the right and invisible beyond a stretch of fields, the Wye Valley would open out in similar precipitous fashion. For the moment I imagined myself in another 'Wild Wales', one not traversed

by Gerald of Wales, Archdeacon Coxe, George Borrow or any of their fellow intrepid adventurers. Indeed, for all his longing to converse with a true Wales, the nearest Borrow came to here was that same near-existential railway station of Chepstow where at the conclusion of his pedestrian journey across the country he reported having bought a first-class ticket to London and rubbing his hands together with thought of a job well done. No, here was a place beyond. One of which the Gwent diarist Fred Hando had waxed lyrical about in a series of *South Wales Argus* articles through the mid-1950's<sup>6</sup> though, disappointingly, there was no mention of either bible or garden in his enlightened writings.

There were just under two miles to go now, steadily uphill, a short and surprisingly stiff descent and then the most annoying false flat that all cyclists invariably come across. Needless to say, there was no signpost to mark entry into Llanishen. 'Village Hall' appeared with a bold arrow, but which village? Such it was for a couple of hundred yards more before the 'Carpenter's Arms' appeared on the left-hand side and Llanishen made itself obvious.

## Part 4. 'With my little pick and shovel...'<sup>7</sup>

Should the Rev. Oakeley's garden become apparent, gardening tools of a high quality would themselves be required. There was hardly a sign of life apart from the surreal one of patrons at the Carpenter's huddling over plates of hot food while escaping from the sun in corners of the hostelry. More bizarre in memory really, it brought back visions of cycling in Provence and arriving to find a raging hearth ablaze inside the Chalet Reynard high up – almost 2000' - on the baking slopes of Mt.Ventoux, from where the Mediterranean is visible. That day was a proverbial roaster as well, coincidence knows no borders.

Clutching the precious sketch-map I returned to the 'Village Hall' sign and freewheeled down a corkscrew narrow lane to see that building in clear view. A couple emerged from a car with puzzled expressions, quizzical as to why no-

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<sup>6</sup> South Wales Argus 04/09/1954 *Penarth Mill at Llanishen, Mon.* et al

<sup>7</sup> Boyce, Max 'I Was There' pp.24/25 'The North Enclosure Song' (adapted) London 1979

one else had arrived for a planned meeting. They had no recollection of a memorial plaque inside the Hall and pointed on the Church at the top of a small rise. Otherwise, the environment exhibited no signs of active life and certainly no possibility of borrowing garden implements.

Entry to the Church grounds came by way of a partially rusted gate with a vernacular fastening mechanism. Examples of this can be found and wrestled with in many, many gateways throughout the country. It is, in hindsight, with regret that I have made no visual record of them for they provide a counterpoint to the usually well maintained and manicured houses of religion. Here a piece of twisted wire, there the same but in frayed string and there again a bolt that requires the shoulders of a rugby prop forward to release it. A miracle it is that in certain localities parishioners manage to get inside their church at all.

Relief it is to have found inside the Church a clutch of remarkable objects. Amongst these, laminated texts giving details of both Rev. Oakeley and Rev. Thomas Arthur Davies. The latter's tenure of a full half-century from 1898 seems to have produced a complete revision of that of his predecessor.<sup>8</sup>

A memorial window and a single plaque are present in the church. Whether the church itself is correctly St. Dennis (Denis?) of St. Isian is undefined. The latter holds true with the Cardiff suburban village bearing the same name, the former is most probably a derivation of St. Denis – the Patron Saint of Paris no less, but the confusion seems to arise from the rebuilding of the edifice in the 1850's. At first sight there was little extraordinary about the window and its inscription but it was on reviewing my film of the church<sup>9</sup> that things took a turn. It was the one simple word 'boys'.

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<sup>8</sup> Later reference to 'Llanishen Parishes' ed. Joyce Edmonds (Chepstow 1991) and the notes present in the Church combine to describe the autocratic, domineering nature of Oakeley alongside the gentle character of Davies. Oakeley and his wife combined to consistently interfere with the lessons of Mrs. Parnell, the first certified local schoolteacher, going to the lengths of demanding that girls and boys should curtsy and bow in their presence. Davies, for his part, gave Welsh language lessons to all in the Vicarage, wrote articles on local traditions and addressed the Newport Welsh Society on occasion, most notably Armistice Day, 1918 when the question of continuing Welsh lessons in Newport schools was the dominant local issue. (see South Wales Argus 12/11/1918).

<sup>9</sup>[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8\\_qOzIOrZiI&t=10s&list=PLlPfs84cDKTF2WPUpvSn6UsgPI3YABpI0&index=57](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8_qOzIOrZiI&t=10s&list=PLlPfs84cDKTF2WPUpvSn6UsgPI3YABpI0&index=57)

“To the glory of God and in memory of Llanishen boys” jolted my memory to the memorials of the North and the saying, “*Cer heibio bechgyn sy’n cysgu*”<sup>10</sup> passed on to me in Cardiff University Library two years ago. Maybe, just maybe, it is that one simple word – boys/*bechgyn* – that succinctly defines Welsh Linguistic Identity following the First World War and this was the first occasion I could recollect having seen it south of the River Severn.



Fig. 3 Memorial Window, Llanishen Church

## Part 5: ‘My shoulder to the wheel’

The untimely death in early July this same year of Meic Stephens was a great loss to his family, friends and the wider spectrum of those who support the Welsh Language by whatever means.<sup>11</sup> The English language version of his autobiography, from which this section is titled and dedicated gives an account of his search for his maternal family roots in deepest rural Radnorshire. I felt a

<sup>10</sup> Translates as ‘go past where the boys are sleeping’, informed that the memorial in question is in the environs of Bala.

<sup>11</sup><https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/jul/05/meic-stephens-obituary>

spiritual collision with this journal as I filmed the church graveyard and the astonishing vista of lowland Gwent spread out below. The folds of the land serve to hide away the blemishes of the *de facto* motorway connecting south to north and keeps absent sight of the growing urban sprawl around Newport. It would not have been too different in the age of Rev. Oakeley and one has to wonder if the sound of a shovel breaking the earth prior to the entombment of a bible might have occasioned a small crowd to gather?

This is just playful speculation though, what the inscribed gravestones told was that all services and ceremonies would have been conducted through English. Nothing too unusual about this, it was the usual practice in Anglican Church of Wales ministries and one that the Rev. Davies possibly did not do too much to disturb. Having said that, there were hints that perhaps Welsh was somewhat more visible than it seems.

Stephens went to all the lengths humanly possible to track down records of births, deaths and marriages, visiting hamlets and isolated farmhouses in his search. Having made the challenging effort to arrive in Llanishen and discover the memorial inscription detailed above, my next move was far, far simpler. It involved going through the 1911 Census returns for the village as indication of the population who could speak and understand Welsh, the source for this being my regular research base of The British Library, Boston Spa.

I have previously found transcription of Welsh language words on Census returns to result in very questionable interpretations. From this I will say that the then declared 'Official' figures for Welsh speakers are debatable at best. Within the Llanishen returns, the most glaring error was the naming of Rev. Davies's place of birth as 'S. Kerven' as compared the actuality of 'Skewen'.<sup>12</sup> Standing out among the other returns, where a sprinkling of persons declaring to speak both languages was found, including that for the Carpenter's Arms. For this establishment the sisters Martha and Adelina Jones are registered as innkeepers, both with knowledge of English and Welsh. This community of little more than 100 souls therefore can be fairly seen as one where the Welsh language is familiar and usable by three of its most influential people. For a fourth, Jane Hawkins (Schoolmistress), a Staffordshire upbringing

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<sup>12</sup> Taken from details exhibited in the Church. Davies's previous home is there given as Glynneath, a few miles north of Skewen in the Neath Valley.

left her off the equation though it would not be inconceivable that the Rev. Davies's community Welsh lessons would have reached out in her direction.

Conjecture completed, I was still left with the problem of which garden – for there is an old and new vicarage – and a shortage of excavation tools. In the absence of present-day vicar and indeed anyone else at all it looked as though this would remain a task unfinished.



Fig 5. *Garden at the Old Vicarage*

## Part 6: 'Feet in Chains'

The buried bible of Llanishen was to have its revenge on my temerity for probing its legend. Pushing hard on the pedals to ascend the short and very steep slope back to the Chepstow road I felt a shudder in the bike as its chain snapped in two. And there was me without a fixing tool or the number of a taxi firm to hand. At least the miles back to Chepstow and the surreal railway



station were largely downhill. In this dreamy netherland, time was not of any consequence, so with a combination of scooting and freewheeling I reached Devauden where a chance conversation with a local resulted in a car journey downhill.

Boy oh boy, was it hot and today all the fun of the fair began at *Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Bae Caerdydd*.<sup>13</sup> The chain could wait until tomorrow – which it did – and the buried bible fated to stay in the ground for a few months longer at least.

The chapter title above is the English translation of Kate Roberts' '*Traed mewn Cyffion*'.<sup>14</sup> This novel has at its central theme the conflict to retain their identity that became central to the lives of many native Welsh families in the years around the First World War. There are echoes of this redolent in the events described above. It all seems rather jovial and inconsequential, the possible actions of a vicar in late 19<sup>th</sup> Century rural Wales (and Monmouthshire?) but the balance presented by the personality of a Welsh-speaking successor and the materiality of a church memorial throws a very different light. It perhaps comes back to the concept of '*cynefin*', the linkage of physical and spiritual habitats in non-definable ways, a linkage which in turn gives meaning to what may be a redundant term in need of fresh definition, one that I have attempted to define earlier – *microanglicisation*.

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<sup>13</sup>Trans: Cardiff Bay National Eisteddfod

<sup>14</sup> Roberts, Kate *Traed Mewn Cyffion (Feet in Chains)* Llandysul 1936

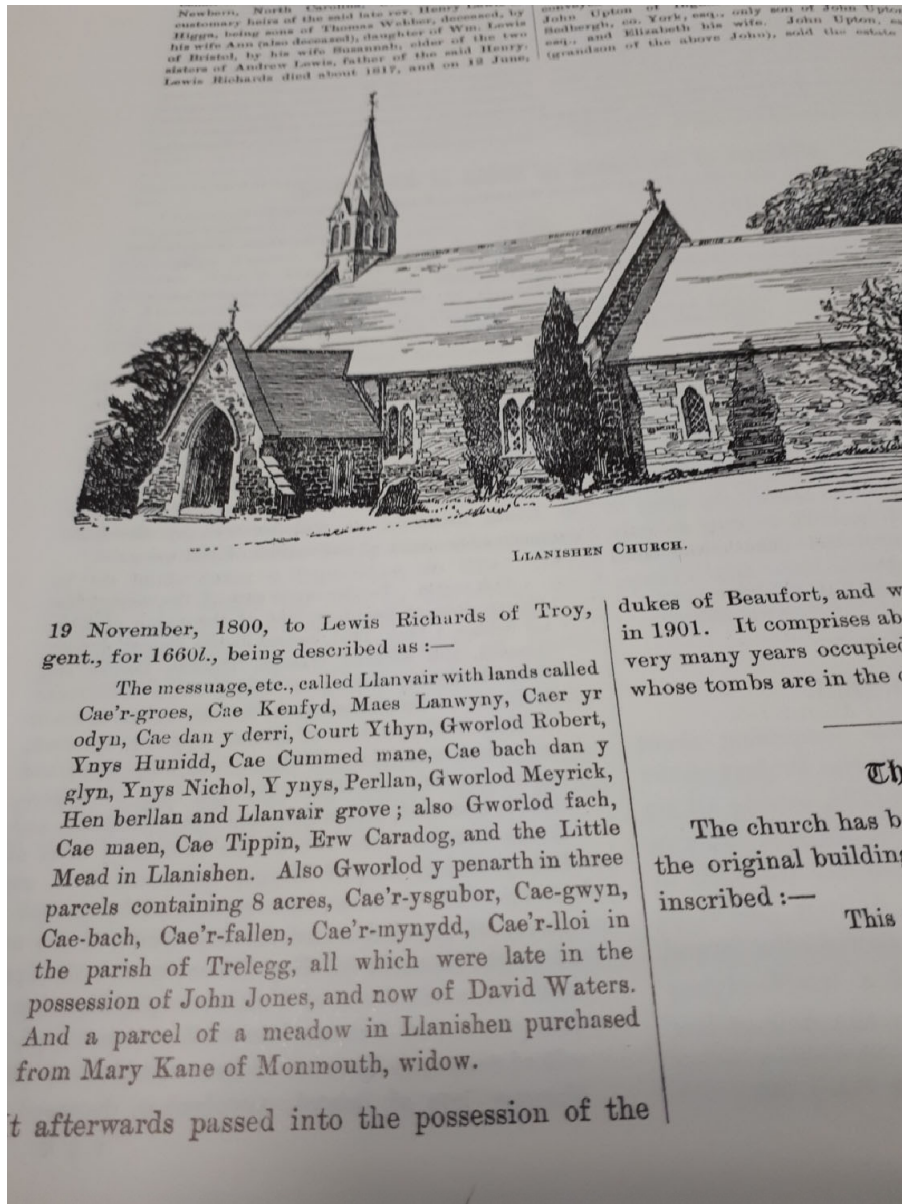


Fig. 6 Llanishen Church described by Bradney. Welsh place names are myriad

Stuart Stanton 03/09/2018

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<sup>i</sup> Since completing the above journal further research into the works of Fred Hando has resulted in a find of some importance. He writes (South Wales Argus *ibid.*) that the north wall of Trellech Grange Church – just a mile from Llanishen and ministered by the same Thomas Arthur Davies mentioned above – “has a beautiful modern window inserted in loving memory of *the two Grange boys* who gave their lives in the Great War.” Davies was mentioned at length in the earlier referenced ‘Llanishen Parishes’ as providing afternoon services at Trellech throughout his ministry. ‘Boys’ / ‘Bechgyn’ - gyda’i gilydd.

[Examination of the tabulated 1921 Census \(HMSO London 1923\) reveals just 3 Llanishen persons declaring both languages, males. In total 95 males and 100 females declared. At next door Llanfihangel-tor-y-Mynydd a monoglot male Welsh speaker is recorded, 2 males having both languages and in total 66 males and 53 females declared. For Trellech Grange a solitary female confirmed knowledge of Welsh from a population of 62](#)

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and 55 respectively. As has been pointed out above and by others (see Willam M.A. et al *The Welsh Language Census 1881*) census returns relating to the Welsh Language are highly questionable. Perhaps the salient point here is that 'Monmouthshire' is included in the 'England' volumes of *Census of England and Wales 1921* with the anglicised 'v' appearing at Llanofar, Llanfair Discoed *ad nauseum*.

## 9c. All the people who lived in Trefil, 1911 Census

*Trefil is the final community included in this study and, arguably the most isolated of all in local and public knowledge. It is interesting to note that most, if not all, of the occasional media reportage concerning the village have concentrated on its unverified role in Nineteenth Century Chartism and jocular comments on the use of its quarry workings as film sets and sites for illegal 'raves'. The continuing existence of the Welsh Language and its cultural importance has been largely ignored. The document that follows relies extensively on material from the British Library including the census returns.*

Everyone declared to speak both Welsh + English except where marked:-

Shop Row:

3. Morgan Evans; Alice Emily Evans + 7 children (2 Adult)

5. John Williams (55); Thomas Williams (52); Martha Jane Price (56)  
'Servant'

6. William Evans (43) -Welsh only- (widower) + 3 children (1 Adult) +  
Housekeeper

2. John Williams; Rebecca Williams + 4 children

7. Theophilus Evans; Jane Evans + 3 children (1 Adult)

10. Thomas Perrotte; Sophia Perrotte + 5 children; George Russell  
(boarder) English only

4. William Prosser; Mary Prosser; Joseph Evans (boarder); Tom Lewis  
(boarder) English only

Rhymney Row:

1. (Transcript says 6.) John Lloyd (widower) + 6 children aged 7-23

3. William Newton; Elizabeth Newton; + 1 grandchild (Iorwerth Evans).

Trefil 1911 (2)

Giles Row:

(No. not stated) Morgan Evans; Margaret Evans + 2 infants.

1.? John Davies; Mary Davies + children

1. William Evans; Mary Ann Evans + 1 child, 3 g/children named 'Jones'.

1. James Evans; Jane Evans + 1 child

2. William Richard Evans; Mary Evans + 1 child

2. George Evans (34); Mary Ann Evans (32) + 6 children; Thomas (?) 74 (boarder); John Jones (62) boarder.

4. Samuel Evans (58); Martha Ann Evans (48) + 4 Adult children.

3. Joseph Evans (57); Mary Evans (53); Ann Phillips (L/Mother) 78 + 3 Adult children; Thomas Stephens (boarder).

Footnote: 'Adult' is from aged 13 and above where employment taken up.

10/10/2019



Fig.1 Placed inside Trefil RFC Clubhouse. Creator, Lewis John Jenkins, resident of the village. (South Wales Borderers were a Brecon-based regiment, Monmouthshire Regiment HQ located at Abergavenny) Tracing the identities inscribed proved to be near impossible. There are two potential reasons; that many of them were workers at the quarry with homes elsewhere coupled with the loss of management records and that the 1911 Census failed to be fully inclusive, most pertinently by the use of English by enumerators and Welsh by residents. (see below)

Further Investigations: 15/10/2019. At first sight the returns for 1901 seemed every bit as ragged as those ten years on. The returns were collated on multiple sheets, a number of addresses on each and it is apparent, from this hand writing, that the completion was done by one person – probably the enumerator. Shop Row is named, along with individual dwellings with difficult to decipher names. The main interest though is again the declared ability of the populace to speak Welsh, only 4 persons out of more than 50 stating ‘English Only’ and they declared to be servants and/or boarders. There is little relation between those named on the two records, no evidence that a family lived at the same address for the 10-year time span. It is odd, considering that work in the quarry was particular to Trefil within the larger area. It also seems that both records are incomplete with further research being compromised by a lack of street/house names.

For a final search the official Imperial War Museum records were consulted but again there was little to indicate the home and family of those listed at Trefil (by example Septimus Evans).  
[www.livesofthefirstworldwar.iwm.org.uk/lifestory/1171010](http://www.livesofthefirstworldwar.iwm.org.uk/lifestory/1171010)

It can be said, without fear, that Trefil does present a challenge to the existing printed work on the Welsh language in this area.<sup>1</sup> A challenge moreover of unique nature as it claims cultural allegiance and formal administration with conflicting authorities.

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<sup>1</sup> Notably Williams, Roderick and Davies. These authors dealt with the town of Rhymney, Gwent (Monmouthshire) and Wales respectively from the perspective of being born and brought up within these areas. Davies belonged to another Welsh Language ‘enclave’ in the shape of Clydach in the gorge of that name on the Usk valley side of Brynmawr, very much within Breconshire.

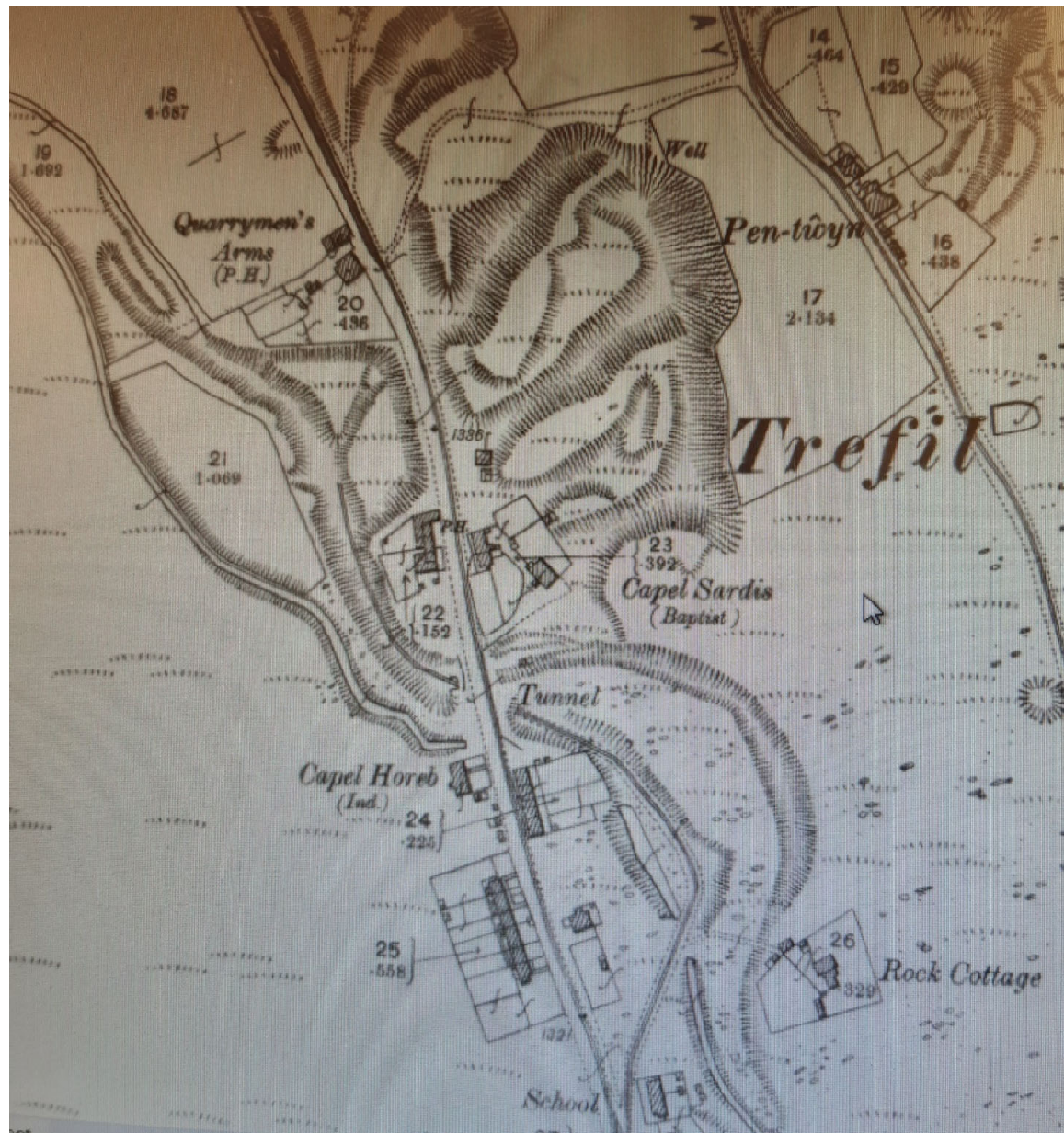


Fig 2. 1911 OS Map – note Welsh spellings.

Investigation on a visit of 24/10 revealed that Giles Row included basement level dwellings facing to rear of top level and with no back entrance. There is a construction term for this, 'under-dwelling' and it is not uncommon in other 19<sup>th</sup> Century towns and villages being a variation on the more widely known 'back-to-back' and 'through-by-light' descriptions. What it does explain is the large number of occupants at each address. Explanation of exactly who 'Giles' was remains to be found.





Fig. 3 'Marker Stone', northern edge of village.

The tram road had been constructed by the ironmaster, Benjamin Hall (father of the son who became Lord Llanover) to connect his works at Rhymney with the Brecon Canal at Llangynidr via Trefil. Owing to legislation of the time a limit on the mileage covered by one tram road was in place. Trefil became a junction point for two separate roads, cargo in both directions being transferred there.

It is locally believed, without any written evidence, that the quarrying of limestone from the mountain ridges surrounding Trefil began at roughly the same time indicated on the stone,

1815. Habitation prior to this date would have most likely been restricted to a few farmhouses though the sometime bleak conditions presented by the area's altitude and remoteness may have seriously limited even that. The settlement of Nant-y-Bwch, two miles to the south was the outlier of the nascent industrial towns of the Gwent valleys, in particular Tredegar. To the north, Llangynidr, no more than a medium-sized village lay six, sometimes precipitous, miles distant.

The confusion that exists over the origin of the word 'Trefil'<sup>2</sup> – believed to be unique in the Welsh landscape - is mirrored by the village's legal connections. Along with other neighbouring communities along the northern edge of the coalfield, Breconshire remained its home county until 1974 when formal transference to the Borough of Blaenau Gwent within Monmouth occurred. This historical situation was further complicated by Trefil's religious parish being Llangynidr, Brecon and the civil one Dukestown, Monmouth.<sup>3</sup> There were an additional pointers to confusion also with the 1911 Census forms whereby the 'Administrative County' appears to written as 'Brecknock' but this then crossed out and 'Monmouthshire' entered; and the Parliamentary Division was, again, 'County of Brecknock'. How much relevance this latter had to the 1911 occupants of Trefil is uncertain as male voting rights were still restricted to property owners and female emancipation had yet to happen.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> A note discovered in Tredegar town library claims the likely origin of the name to be from a Welsh version of 'Town of the Mule', this on the basis that mules were reputed to be part of the original hauling teams for the limestone trams. There does not seem to be an approximation for this. Reference to Spurrell's dictionary of 1883 gives only 'mul' as translation. Local thought that it relates to the tramroad is again without apparent foundation, 'drem' is used in modern dictionaries, Spurrell quotes 'cart glo' and 'math o reilffordd, neu gledrffordd'.

<sup>3</sup> From official 1911 Census returns via British Library 'Find my Past' database. Access dates during October/November 2019 at Boston Spa site.

<sup>4</sup>[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parliamentary\\_franchise\\_in\\_the\\_United\\_Kingdom\\_1885-1918](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parliamentary_franchise_in_the_United_Kingdom_1885-1918)

This scenario is illustrated on examination of the 1911 Census records. Leaving aside until below the questionable nature of their completion it is noticeable that the vast majority of returns included the declared ability to speak and understand Welsh as integral parts. Further, addresses are seen to include 'Trevil Quarries'<sup>5</sup> and a good percentage add 'Nr. Tredegar, Mon.'

Relying on the evidence provided by the map illustrated above and the returns from the 1911 Census, it is unlikely that Trefil's population at the outbreak of the Great War exceeded a few hundred. The quarrying operation was doubtless in full swing but lists of its employees are nowhere to be traced. Reference to the Roll of Honour shown above shows an imbalance in this projected population and the number of servicemen listed, a total of forty-five names appear on the Roll of Honour, the accepted median for Welsh servicemen being 10% of the total population. By reference to other parts of Wales, for example Llanrhaeadr-ym-Mochnant, Powys and Brynsiencyn, Ynys Môn it can be seen that it was a practice to include names of non-resident persons who either 'belonged' to the locality or were working there at the time.<sup>6</sup> Scrutiny of the Census utilising a trawl of the names listed and a much greater geographical range – namely the whole of Brecon and Monmouth shires – largely draws a blank, most worryingly in the search for the four men listed as killed in action.<sup>7</sup>

The Census can also be criticised for its accuracy by way of its format. Following the 1881 version, the first time that language ability had been included, subsequent versions (at ten-year

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<sup>5</sup> Spelling in this 'anglicised' way is universal on those census forms scrutinised. The 1911 Map illustrated above is an official Ordnance Survey issue utilising the Welsh form 'Trefil'. The appendage 'Quarries' on Census returns does not appear in any other official record examined.

<sup>6</sup> The Welsh word 'cynt' is key to this and is found inscribed on the memorials named as examples, meaning 'formerly' or 'before'.

<sup>7</sup><https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/welsh-history-month-recruits-who-1837400>

intervals) included as standard entire streets listed on one sheet until that of 1911 utilised separate records for each dwelling. This one, therefore, can be taken as the first opportunity householders could take to list everyone who lived at their address. As regards Trefil there was a further complication and it lay with the issue of English only census forms. Examination of records from other areas of Wales reveal that many parish districts – Llanfaelog (Ynys Môn) can be quoted – saw the issue of forms printed in Welsh and being completed accordingly. Given the 1901 returns for Trefil and the overwhelming predominance of Welsh-speakers indicated it seems both unusual and strange that a similar procedure was not followed. Further, the abilities of residents to answer written questions in English can be questioned and from this the possibility arises that the forms were completed by the enumerator, for whom only the signed initials ‘E.E.’ appear.

#### *The Roll of Honour Memorial*

A similar confusion exists within this document. ‘Trevil’ is clearly stated and the men named are listed by regiment or service corps without alphabet or rank determining the order. Again, they are all mentioned as ‘volunteers’ despite conscription being the more common method of enlistment during the final two years of conflict.<sup>8</sup> From the language perspective, the interest comes with the phrase ‘boys of the village’ and the linkage of those words to ‘*bechgyn*’ as found throughout the north and west of the country along with its appearance on village memorials where the Welsh language remained a potent force both in Gwent and isolated spots of Glamorgan.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup><https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/private-lives/yourcountry/overview/conscription/>

<sup>9</sup>Llanishen, dealt with otherwise in this study is an example along with Llancarfan in the Vale of Glamorgan where the order of inscription on its Memorial follows almost exactly the pattern most prevalent in the North and West. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P-qLJlozgB8>



Fig.4 Looking West, Giles Row (rear) with Horeb Chapel opposite

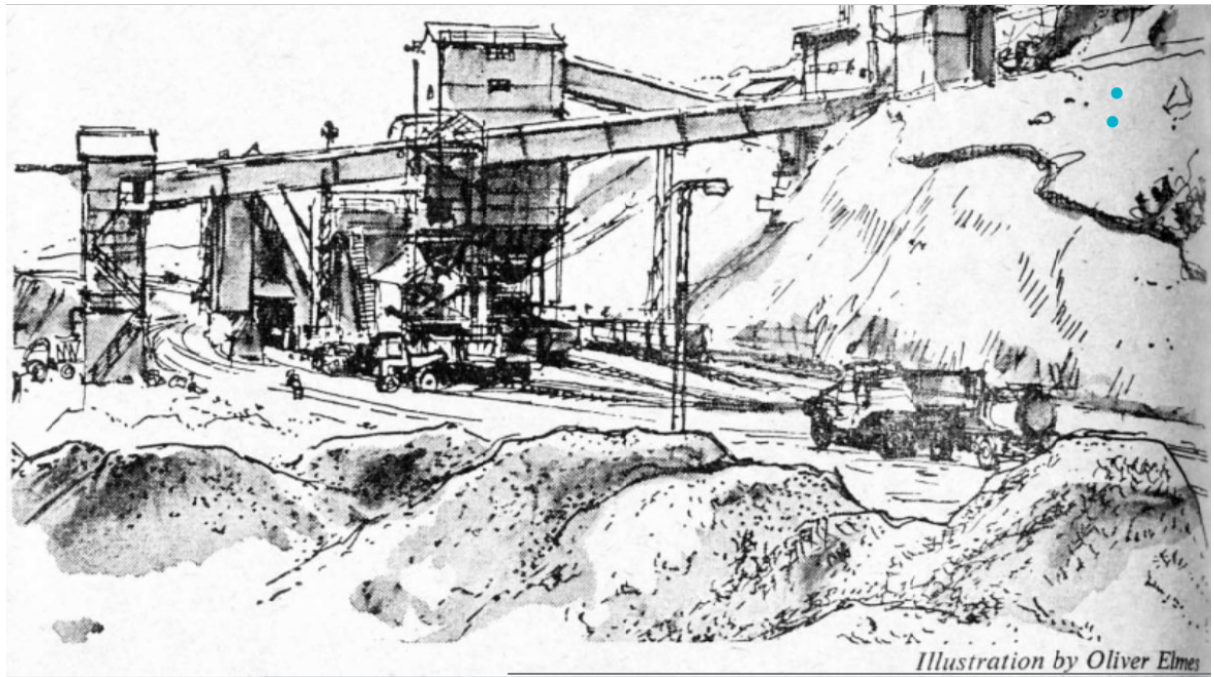
Given the apparently incomplete nature of the 1911 Census records for Trefil and the lack of information for workers in the quarry during the Great War, it is reasonable to assume that the majority of those named on the Roll of Honour were 'of the village' in the sense of being attached to, by work or family. The Welsh word '*perthyn*' is appropriate to be used to describe this linkage, it conveys the sense of belonging to, being related, known of and is used today in these inadequate translated form 'belonging to' by residents both of Trefil and the communities of Northern Gwent. Further searches of the British Library newspaper archive, Regimental databases and the authoritative Imperial War Museum website [www.livesofthefirstworldwar.iwm.org.uk](http://www.livesofthefirstworldwar.iwm.org.uk) have proved to be only sketchy in identifying those named (e.g. Septimus Evans found under /lifestory/1171010 with only his regimental no. given) so the assumption stated above has to stand.

The central thesis of this study considers the matter of Welsh War Memorials representing a continuing linguistic and cultural identity. There is little written academically to support the contention generally and much primary source material consists of the memorials themselves plus isolated newspaper reports. In considering Trefil, the difficulties of producing a coherent statement are exacerbated by the almost complete absence of material. Two reports from 'Ingot News' the in-house magazine of 'RTB', Richard, Thomas and Baldwin's iron and steel manufacturing conglomerate do however serve to give an insight into Trefil's way of life during the 1950's. Reporter Sean Fielding visited twice during 1957, a time when the quarry worked at maximum capacity to supply the Ebbw Vale RTB works. An illustration from his report on the quarry itself is reproduced below but of more pointed interest is his observation of the village's social life, including:

*"One night I stood unobserved in the bar of the Top House and heard a group of the quarrymen talking about the necessity of teaching the Welsh language in schools – with such persuasion, let me add, that their eloquence amazed me. But then, of course, I was only just getting to know these people. I was only just beginning to realise the importance they attach to culture, not only for themselves, but for Wales as a whole."*<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Ingot News (Welsh Edition) June 1957 'Top House' is now 'Quarryman's Arms'.



*Fig. 5 Ingot News: Trevil (sic) Quarry August 1957 Further research, connected to an article self penned for 'Gwent Local History' (pub. Sept. 2021) has revealed the illustrator, Oliver Elmes, developing a career that included the prestigious work of Head Graphic Designer for BBC TV, 'Dr. Who' being among his credits.*

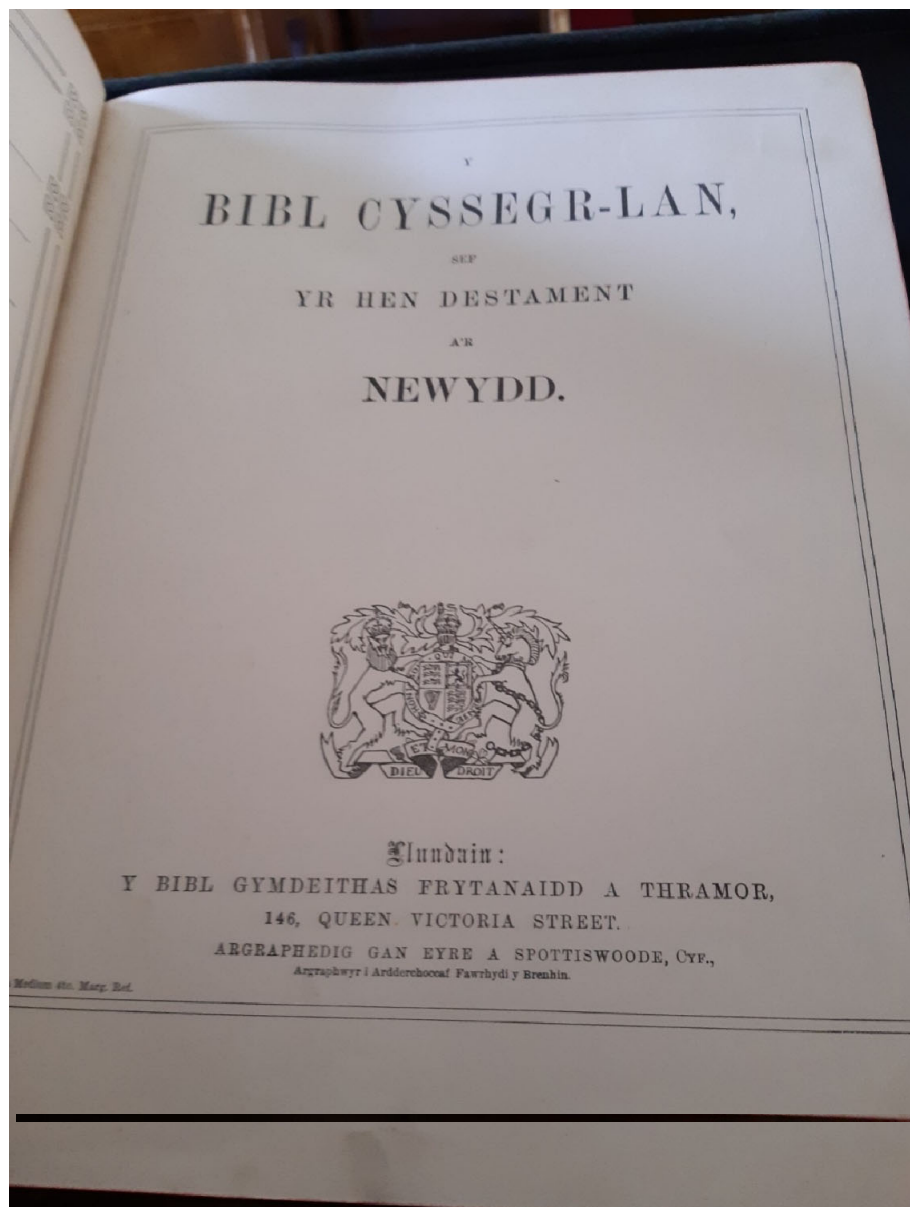
### The Present Day

Quarrying operations, following stoppage of work on the highest point of the ridge overlooking the Usk Valley, two miles north of the village, have recently resumed on the original site, within walking distance of the village itself. Very little house building has taken place in the last half-century and the former school is unused. The two chapels however, Sardis and Horeb, remain in use and in good repair with Sunday Services being shared.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> [A walk around Trefil pt 1 - YouTube](#)

On the lectern of Horeb, the original home of the War Memorial, is a Welsh Bible with an accompanying note of dedication. There can be little more profoundly symbolic of the Welsh Language's



continuing relevance to this idiosyncratic, caring Welsh community.



Dedicated to the Service of Holy Church Trevel  
in memory of Brother and Deacon William Williams  
as a Token of Love and Devotion and  
Long Service in the Lord's Work  
and Vine-yard.

And Presented to the above church by His Ch

O Dyma Bible gwerthfawr  
Oddiollan, mae yn hardd  
O, fewn yn wledd o fwynt  
I gerddos, ac i fardd  
Mae'n gat i'r sawl a'i caro,  
A'i hwn a'i cadwo'n lan,  
Efe fydd iddo'n gysur  
Mewn stormydd dwt a than,  
Gwna droi ei dudalenau  
A'u chwilio yn dai-ble  
And paid ei dein a'u crimpo  
hau flygu hwy s'u lle

Stuart Stanton: 10/12/2019

hip81b@bangor.ac.uk



## By Way of a Conclusion

It became apparent to me in the early stages of compiling this study, that the subject matter was not going to lend itself to an easy-form version, that step by step analysis and comment and conclusion was not going to be a definable result. The unique memorial at Benllech described in my opening foreword is a signal pointer towards this complexity and it must be said that nowhere at all in the concrete and virtual journeys that followed did any deflection of the chosen route occur. Through it all, the Welsh Language remained of prime importance as the central focus of the study.

This premise is perhaps best realised within the pages of the detailed narrative describing the fundamental participation of the Welsh Language as a cornerstone in the material and moral construction of modern-day Newport. There was, as can be read, a sequence of events over two full millenia that founded, developed and challenged the Language's presence and eventually has produced a community where Welsh and English coexist in an environment positive to both. That the dedication of a civic memorial to the service personnel who gave their lives included, following a heated public debate, both languages occurred at all is remarkable. That its materiality ensures its perpetuity is a triumph.

There being no discernible ending to the Newport, or any other, memorial's existence an answer to my original query as to the part these memorials play in the definition of Welsh linguistic identity does appear unsatisfied. Admittedly, it was in part by accident that Great War memorials from both ends of the country, Ynys Môn and Gwent feature prominently within the study and it must be said that the wafer-thin printed research on the Language immediately following that time and memorials in particular left very much of an open book. I can claim to have filled at least some of its pages in a singular fashion and believe there is a continuity of thread. Regarding my third stopover point of northern Powys, the stimulus initially came from Gaffney (1998) but once there, the countryside took my spirits over. The end results were not disappointing following such an abundant journey but here still remains one intellectual and moral difficulty that I have found impossible to

resolve and that is the matter of relationship between remembrance and forgetting.

As this same imponderable argument has provided (as earlier quoted) a great deal of quandry to the most sophisticated minds of modern Western philosophy I can hardly hoist a proverbial white flag but instead will state that this study adds to the continuing debate over the values of memorials and the morality of respecting the persons they commemorate. Indeed, the current international rumpus centred around the removal (or otherwise) of public statues to individuals with allegedly dubious moral standards and actions - in particular connections with human slavery - has brought this firmly back to centre stage. Perhaps fortunately, statues of Great War military leaders do not feature in the public sphere and the anonymous representation of the 'Unknown Warrior' is the sole human image in statue form to be seen on memorial structures. This debate was latterly joined by *Guardian* contributor Gary Younge who questions the worth and value of statues by reference to:

'the Uruguayan writer Eduardo Galeano, who confesses his greatest fear being, "the system of power that is always deciding in the name of humanity who deserves to be remembered and who deserves to be forgotten...We are much more than we are told. We are much more beautiful." Statues cast a long shadow over that beauty and shroud the complexity even of the people they honour.'<sup>1</sup>

A consequence of the study's development became possible by comparisons with other countries where a minority language has made its own fundamental statement via war memorial inscription. An immediate answer came via trawling the Imperial War Museum records to find that Scots Gaelic had been used on memorials in the Western Isles. Following from this, a Gaelic speaker at the 'Sporting Heritage 2019' Cardiff conference assured me that several of the Welsh words and phrases used in connection with time and place, in particular - *Cynefin* and *Perthyn* - both untranslatable into English do have equivalents in his language.

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<sup>1</sup> Younge G. *What Covid taught us about racism...* (The Guardian 16/12/2021)

Consideration of Irish memorialisation proved awkward with published material again being sparse but an albeit slight, though appropriate compromise with that of other European countries was reached with Robb (2007) whose episodic work *'The Discovery of France'* contains much on the similarly fragmented history of linguistic cultural identities within that land. This author, again working to an unplanned itinerary, discovered in the Haute-Alpes, where the differing tongues of French and Occitan mixed to degree impenetrable to outsiders:

'...the roads from the Col d'Izoard come spiralling down to join to the rest of France, a monument erected after the First World War lists the names of the dead by villages: Abries, Aiguilles...Ristolas, Saint-Vêran. It was here that men and boys from different valleys gathered together like the herds returning to their winter quarters. The inscription on the monument says nothing of glory and honour. It evokes the sadness of men whose home was their village, then their *pays* (sic.) and last of all France:

"From the col that lies close to this mound...THEY (sic.) cast a final farewell glance at their homes...It was here that they consented to the sacrifice..."<sup>2</sup>

This sentiment I found to be directly echoed at Brynsiencyn on Ynys Môn where the final poignant line of the memorial's inscription reads:

*'Pwy wŷr werth eich aberth chwi?'*<sup>3</sup>

If there is one defining factor of the memorials cited here it is that of *materiality*, a concept examined in great detail by Walls (2010) and one that unites these objects with a binding permanence. It is indeed a very rare occurrence for a public memorial to be damaged or defaced, let alone removed and the cultural significance of this is impossible to underestimate.<sup>4</sup>

Prior to the erection of Great War memorials, I can claim that the Welsh Language only featured visually very rarely in the landscape of the country, the

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<sup>2</sup> Robb, G, *The Discovery of France*, (London, 2007) p.351, (trans. Robb)

Robb does not offer the original French/Occitan version though I suspect this would have been a local mix of the two tongues. The Col d'Izoard (2,2360m) is among the highest road passes in Europe.

<sup>3</sup> Translates: Who can say the value of your sacrifice?

<sup>4</sup> The only known recorded instance of a threat to deface a memorial in Wales came at Abertillery, 1926, this in a town riven by a series of industrial disputes. *South Wales Gazette*, 03/12/1926 pp.11/12

exceptions being the naming of chapels and gravestones. Both of these features are somewhat hidden away from the roadside and public scrutiny in most cases and so the Language's invisibility became, in itself, a pronounced feature. War memorial erection fundamentally changed this, here was the Language, full-faced and proud to declare itself in memory of its subjects and here it was, a permanent, undeniable feature.

There did not, it would seem, a rush of building activity to enlarge this presence. Shops for the most part continued to put their owner's name on the prime signage while ignoring 'cigydd', 'pobydd' and what have you<sup>5</sup>. Most of the 'Old (of whatever town)' picture books display photographic evidence of this while the other English signage in Welsh towns were the monoglot, and sometimes phonetic, road and direction signs. Perhaps the most bizarre example of this occurs in the French Language film, *Les Deux Anglaises et le Continent* (1971) where a train station sign of 'Dolgelly' (sic.) marks the Welsh location favoured by its director, Francois Truffaut— though the film itself was shot in Normandy.

Indeed, it was not until the campaign to legalise bi-lingual road signs in Wales reached its successful conclusion in the year following Truffaut's 'Welsh' adventure that the language was to be formally reintroduced into the country's landscape, as it remains to be today.<sup>6</sup> When considered in this context, with a span of fifty years, it is somewhat staggering that the materiality of the Language remained dormant for so long but it is perhaps because of this temporal disjoint that its inner strengths become even more pronounced.

In conclusion, it is opportune to refer again to contemporary thinking and in particular a brief volume of lectures/essays by Michael Burleigh, Senior Fellow at LSE IDEAS, an institution regarded as a leading university 'think-tank'. Burleigh combines four lectures under the theme of '*Populism: Before and After the Pandemic*' and is particularly relevant to this study when discussing how when acting as an advisor to the Cameron government's official body he found that:

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<sup>5</sup> trans: 'butcher', 'baker'.

<sup>6</sup> See: Jones & Merriman, *Hot, Banal and everyday Nationalism*, Political Geography Vol 28 (3), March 2009 pp.164/173 for a comprehensive account of the road signs campaign.

‘What our panel of the great and good did not commemorate was revealing. We omitted the causes of the war, how commanders fought it and then the question of whether it was a strategic defeat as it had to be refought twenty years later.’<sup>7</sup>

This quote rounds off this study neatly as the question of the Great War’s termination point has been raised in the opening section and it is in itself a partial answer to that of the War’s continuing relevance with the stark, beloved memorials as a constant reminder. Burleigh concludes his thoughts on ‘History, Populism and Nationalism’ with a simple plea for an ‘exploration of the incredible depth and richness of the human past which has many lessons to guide us with, if one can cut out the deafening surface noise of the time we live in.’<sup>8</sup>

## IN CONCLUSION



Fig 1. *Abercarn, Gwent on a 1920’s Remembrance Day.* (The memorial is solely and simply inscribed ‘*Gwell Angau Na Chywilydd*’ ).

20/05/21

Stuart Stanton

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<sup>7</sup> Burleigh, M. *Populism: Before and After the Pandemic*, (London, 2021) P.82

<sup>8</sup> Burleigh, *Populism...* p.85

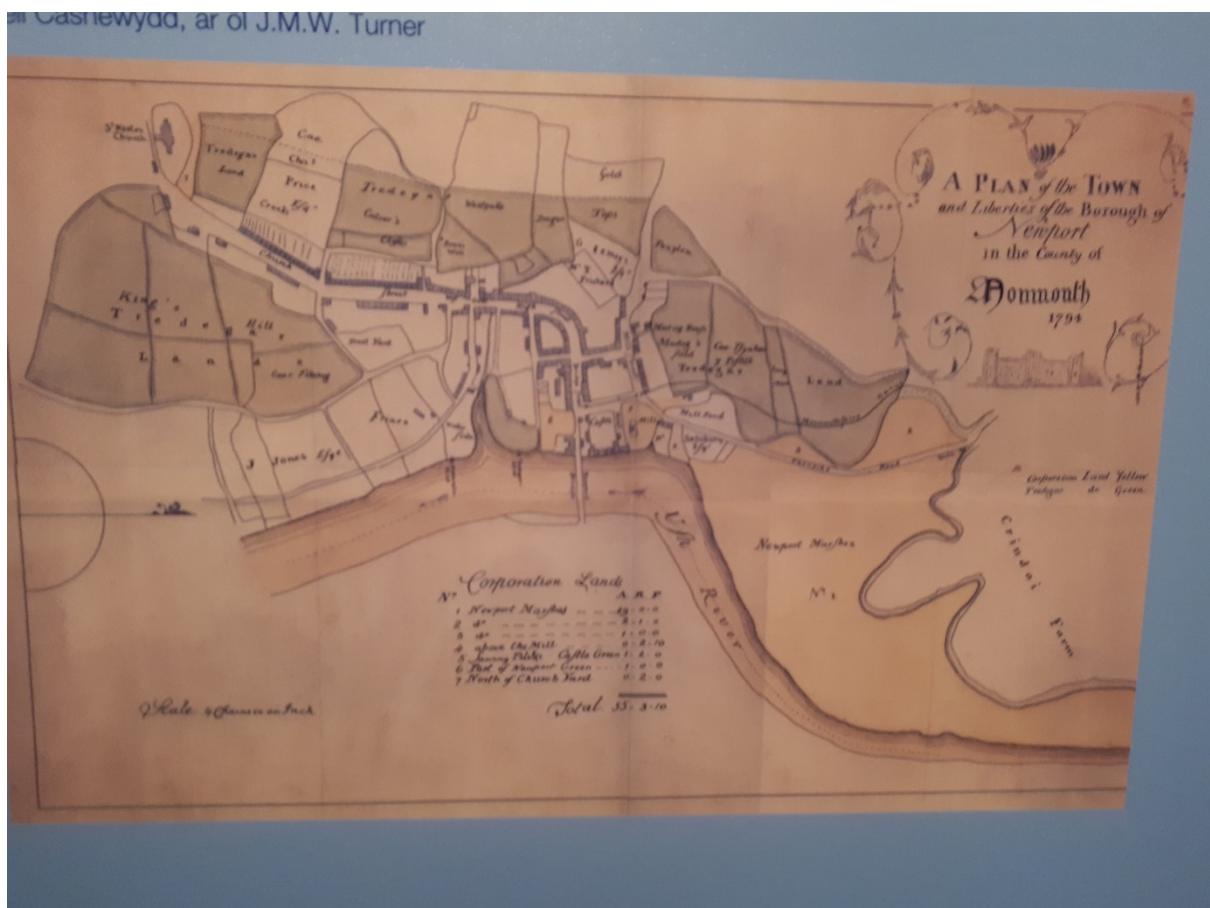
# Taith Penwythnos dros Cas-Newydd

(Weekend tour across Newport)

*Written as a journal entry, without any academic reference points*

## DECHRAU:

Began in the middle of the city with a visit to the Museum and St. Woolos Cathedral. It just had to be like this, museum closed on Mondays and today was Saturday. Discovered no objects of Welsh linguistic interest at all save a map from 1794 and this is a gem.



Several stones inscribed in Latin were seen, including one from a grave. Everything relating to history of Morgan family kept at Tredegar House.

St. Woolos contains a triptych stained glass image of Gwynllyw, Gwladys and Cattwg. No evidence of Welsh inscription otherwise in the building or graveyard. For all that a breathtaking interior contains enormous memorial



panels for WW  
would expect



The stand of trees around the cathedral were in full leaf and so it was difficult to make out any of the other high points around the city, exception being Twm Barlan. No doubt though as to its focal point and why this led to occupation from the earliest recorded times.

DDYDD NESA: Y BORE

The road to Caerleon via the St. Julian's area of Newport is remarkable for nothing at all, even first sight of the settlement Matthews<sup>1</sup> claims to be the true capital of Roman Britain is a little flat. Little wonder that this was the very

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<sup>1</sup> Matthews, James *Historic Newport* (Newport, 1904)

last connecting artery to be built. Caerleon itself, with its multitude of Roman remains and traces disappointed as regards obvious signs of Welshness. The church of St. Cadoc is, as can be expected for an Anglican Church in Wales edifice, entirely English in notification though Gwynllyw and Cattwg - though not Gwladys – St. Julian and St. Aaron are all on a window together (below) flanking Jesus Christ. This church, I was told by its exterior custodian, Dave Russell stands on the very spot as the Roman garrison HQ did before it, slightly unnerving to think of firmly standing in the footprints of a predecessor from 2000 years ago.



The most rewarding 'find' of this trip turned to be in an unexpected place – the war memorial. Unusually, the constituent parts of Caerleon are named and the men lost from them follow. There are shades of this in the memorial at

Llancarfan which I had previously thought to be unique in the South Wales coastal area in mirroring the 'belonging' sense that the memorials further north display so strongly. 'Caerleon', 'Llanhennock', 'Ponthir' are all named along with 'Ultra Pontem' – trans: 'Beyond the bridge'. Staggering, this is Latin in a locality's name and, so I was told, a phrase still in use today. Welsh it is not but, if my thesis claiming that here is the place where Welsh and Latin combined to make modern Welsh has any substance, I was standing right in the middle of it.



## 'Ultra Pontem' chwith: 'Caerllion' dde

Leaving via the bridge and swinging left to the foot of Belmont Hill – at the top is the Celtic Manor Resort where a government sponsored 'event' was taking place to rename the Severn Crossing as the 'Prince of Wales Bridge – it is appropriate to take a right turn into a narrow lane 'Old Hill' to complete the climb to Christchurch. This is the original track, connecting with an east/west 'highway' from the mouth of the Severn to Llandaff, Llantwit Major and beyond, all sites of pre-Roman activity and the route by which the Romans arrived. Centuries later, Oliver Cromwell and his foot weary troops arrived here and made their mark by smashing almost every window in the Christ Church itself and defacing images. There was no obvious Welsh trace to be seen though a chance meeting with the

vicar did supply the knowledge that the parish included most of what is now urban east Newport and foreign sailors were brought here for sacrament and burial. Looking down from this high elevation the coastal plain spreads out with Somerset in the far distance. Fred Hando, the celebrated *South Wales Argus* diarist, referred to and praised this spot in his writings, pointing out that a variety of Newport's originally Welsh place names could be seen – Maen-ty; Pillgwenlly; Cwrt y Bella; Allt yr Yn and more – with St. Woolos standing out. I was left to muse that the staunchly Welsh and devoutly Catholic, Lord Treowen was perhaps wreaking revenge on Cromwell when he petitioned Parliament to remove the



puritan's statue from Westminster Hall and maybe had the final word with his part in the campaign to include a Welsh inscription on Newport's civic war memorial.

## Caerleon from Christchurch

(from here, Hando writes, Alfred Lord Tennyson would gaze, smoke a long pipe and retire to his lodgings in the Hanbury Arms, Caerleon with thoughts of 'Idylls of the King' in his mind)

### PRYNHAWN:

Downhill follows, on the whole a much shallower gradient than just experienced, flowing along past well-appointed semi and fully detached houses along Christchurch Road. Something though, was not quite making sense. There it was, a house name, the only one

seen for several minutes. A house name, a symbol of identity for those with pillars and gates on which to display yet this was the first one to come into view, 'Avalon'.

'Avalon'; could the old Welsh word 'afallon' meaning 'apple trees'<sup>22</sup> be an appropriate starting point for this title? Possibly hard to dispute but whatever fanciful connection between the same and 'Glastonbury' can be promoted would have been incontrovertible. Arguably, the panorama from Christchurch of green, lush, sweeping fields provides a coherent case in itself for accepting Evans' definition.

The house name stood out, everywhere else it was just numbers in the high 170's and above and the question of identity occurred again asking if the residents openly wanted themselves to be identified as Welsh -or English – in this city of split personality.

The road itself falls away quite steeply past Beechwood (ffawyddog?) Park with a striking view across the basin of the city to the cathedral of St. Gwynllyw (Woolos). Though partly obscured by a particularly brutish piece of 20<sup>th</sup> Century building (below), the sight line between the two monuments of religion and keys to Hando's episodic description of Newport and hinterland is unmistakable.



St. Woolos is at top left in a grove of trees, the Civic Centre clock tower top right. Christchurch runs on to the junction of Chepstow and Caerleon roads at Clarence Place – site of the War Memorial.

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<sup>22</sup> D.S. Evans: *English and Welsh Dictionary Vol. I* (Denbigh 1858) p.51

## YN MHEN YR FFORD

The city centre of Newport has suffered a similar fate to that of so many throughout the country, the car rather than the foot becoming the main means of transportation. Among the pound shops and party arcades, the lower slopes of Stow Hill remain as a material reminder of the city's past. For over 2,000 years people have trudged upwards and downwards for cause and conviction with the base of the original wayside cross, remarked upon by Gerald of Wales, now to be found in the cathedral's grounds. 'Stow' Hill, a Saxon name for market in origin, is marked as 'Church Road' on the map above and has become very much part of Welsh social history due to its part in the Chartist march on the city. For traces of 'Welshness', the window triptych (above) is invaluable.

Leaving this scene of dispute, the direction became due south along the waterfront to the edge of Pillgwenlly and the Bristol Channel. As elsewhere, many of the original dockland streets have been demolished and replaced. At one time in the late Nineteenth Century, three separate Welsh language chapels functioned here all clustered around Commercial Road. No signage exists to mark this and the language only functions religiously today at Mynydd Seion in the city centre. Pillgwenlly seems to have resisted official usage of the more common 'Pill' and as a further statement of identity the sight of Faner Ddraig Goch flying on the distant struts of the Transporter Bridge set the seal on the day.



## TERFYNOL

In the most concrete terms, this day provided very little hard and fast evidence that Newport had a Welsh linguistic past at all. The traces on the hillside above Caerleon, the disputed territory of Christchurch Road, the defiant flag on the very edge of Wales are, when considered individually, of little consequence. Of much more intriguing significance however can be named the triptych window at St. Woolos; Caerleon 'Ultra Pontem'; Cromwell's Christchurch vandalism; the "snowstorm" of letters to the Editor of the South Wales Argus on the subject of Newport belonging to England or Wales during Armistice Week of 1918 and bi-lingual personalized announcements to desperate passengers on Newport Rail Station on this day in the form of :- '*Bwsio ar y chwith, diolch*'.

09/07/18

Leeds University Library

An Addendum, illustration of research procedures

In Journal format, without complete reference points

FIELDWORK FEBRUARY 2018

For most of January it has been a matter of regrouping mentally. The effort of concentration around completing the Anglesey study and focussing on developing future work around the agreed themes of ‘forgetting’ -i.e. Aberffraw, and ‘micro-anglicisation’ i.e. Bryn Du, Llansilin, St. Bride’s took a lot out of me. Grateful for the weekend escapes to football matches, or perhaps more particularly the *towns of* football matches. So, thank you to Newcastle (x 2), Bradford, York, Nottingham, Gateshead and suburban Leeds (Guiseley) where on a freezing cold afternoon Wrexham ended up top of the league, the pub and train was full of singing and er, er, er.....oh yes Wales ran riot in the Six Nations opener. Near the end of all this I took part in an induction day at the British Library and thought it was a birthday. Everything is there as regards newspapers, journals, audio and visual recordings and it is on a direct bus route. So, there should be little need to take the long, long journey to the National Library – pleasant though Aberystwyth may be, or the local libraries in Anglesey, Powys and Gwent, most everything written is at the end of 35 minutes on the half-hourly 70/71 service. Diolch Byth.

This notion of ‘forgetting’, raised by Walls in his Exeter thesis has a great deal to explore within it. Not just a matter of reading the threadbare historiography either, I sense that the visual representations of war memorials I have naively compiled will play an increasingly important role towards the study’s completion. The notion of memorials as some kind of – if not *extra-terrestrial*- then surely *existential* presence in the landscape is a strong one. Personally, the classic image of the slab from Kubrick’s ‘2001’ keeps nudging away. By way of comment I refer to Rieff (2016) p. 21:

“As the philosopher and sociologist Theodor Adorno puts it in *Minima Moralia*, ‘Just as voluntary memory and utter oblivion always belonged together, organized fame and remembrance lead ineluctably to nothingness’.”<sup>1</sup>

Walls approached the ‘forgetting’ concept from the standpoint of an archaeologist and asks consideration of the proposal that:

“Forgetting is an important part of the nature of remembrance and is a necessary condition to enable remembrance...Forgetting is not always a violent

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<sup>1</sup>Rieff, D. *In Praise of Forgetting: Historical Memory and its Ironies* (New Haven and London 2016)



process of suppression, time and perhaps more importantly *cultural value* (my italics) leads to the majority of forgetting. What matters is the present and whole social memory systems can seem irrelevant in relation to a new present, thus having no cultural value and being forgotten.”<sup>2</sup>

Walls lists a significant amount of academic support to his postulation, his study is one I shall return to, written from his archaeological background, it strikes very different notes to those from the history corner.

Leeds University Library 05/02/2018

NEXT DAY...

The other discovery has been a Bangor Ph.D thesis, from Sociology, Daniel J. Evans study of ‘Post-devolution Welsh Identity in Porthcawl: an ethnographic analysis of class, place and everyday nationhood in *British Wales*. (2014)

Well, ‘there you are then’, as they say in Maesteg. A cursory browse through this is very stimulating, analyses of current culture in a changing linguistic landscape. So now, on top of the study concerning nationalism and the ‘border’, more to refer to and ponder over. The one thing that does strike me though is that these studies are both built upon metaphysical notions; ‘culture’, ‘identity’, ‘Welshness’ and these together contribute to my fundamental reality, the existence of a physical symbol, the war memorial.

Porthcawl is not unknown to me, superficially at least and I am stirred by the examination of what Evans calls a contribution to ‘the understanding of this overlooked region (‘British Wales’ in Balsom’s *Three Wales Model*) by exploring Welsh identity.’<sup>3</sup> Using my best Valley’s sarcasm I could comment that he would have been better off examining the goings-on during the town’s annual ‘Elvis Festival’<sup>4</sup> to gain an understanding of present-day Welshness. But that is for another time – and one I, myself, might just pick up on....

At this moment, I point to the Wentloog Levels being another “overlooked region” with similar apparent “British Welshness” and note that it is not quite as simple as that under the surface.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Walls, S. *The Materiality of Remembrance: Twentieth Century War Memorials in Devon* Unpublished Ph.D thesis Exeter University, 2010 pp.55/56

<sup>3</sup> Evans, D.J. *Post-Devolution Welsh Identity in Porthcawl...nationhood in ‘British Wales’* Unpublished Ph.D thesis Bangor University 2014 (p.3)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.elvies.co.uk/> (Evans p.88 refers to it as ‘infamous’, in the words of local poet Robert Minhinnick a working-class eisteddfod defined by prodigious alcohol consumption.)

<sup>5</sup> Note also [www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk](http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk)

Evans relating to Gramsci (the thinker who underpins his study's theory):

“Gramsci illuminates nationalism as the supreme ‘mechanism of class accommodation’; an ideology which relegates class divisions to an irrelevance and stresses the unity of all classes. Gramsci states that the national popular will becomes ‘feeling passion’ amongst all social groups, subaltern and leading classes. Nationalism and patriotism therefore constitutes the ‘collective will’ of the nation and is an absolutely critical tool for the leading classes to secure stability of the state by anchoring the subaltern classes to the historic bloc”<sup>6</sup>

Well now, so that explains ‘Allenby at Abertillery’ and ‘Pwy Wyr Werth Eich Aberth Chwi?’ at Brynsiencyn. Classic notions of hegemony from two angles amongst the war memorials of Wales. And, by way of passing, a concise description of the present-day ‘Brexit’ farrago.

Leeds University Library...06/02/2018



Afternoon...

Evans photographs of ‘Welshness’. Note p.186 for Remembrance Day, “As Althusser notes, the ideological nature of these state rituals is obfuscated by their familiarity and our unreflexive participation in them. As I took these photos I reflected that similar ceremonies would be going on throughout ‘The Three Wales’ and wondered whether there would be any difference at all in *how* they were observed locally.”

07/02/2018

‘Localities and the reproduction of Welsh nationalism’<sup>7</sup> quotes extensively from Billig (1995) on the idea of *banal nationalism* and is similarly referenced by Evans. I like this:

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<sup>6</sup> Evans *ibid.* pp104/105

<sup>7</sup> Jones & Desforges *Political Geography* 22 (2003 pp 271 - 292

“the concept of *habitus* – involving the structuring of principles, practices and representations which are objectively regulated without obedience to rules, adapted to goals without consciously aiming and collectively orchestrated without being the product of conscious direction.”

In other words, anarchism at grass roots level. Ostensibly and for the purpose of this study local communities deciding the form of war memorial for *themselves*, in their locality.<sup>8</sup>



Dedication of Llanymynech Memorial, 1921

(not a flag in sight, some of the gathering stand in Wales near the road, the others in England)

Regarding the Welsh language Evans, despite his repeated mis-spelling of ‘laith’ (lath?) leans towards positive sympathy when discussing ‘Choosing the nation’ saying it must be understood, “in terms of the national narrative and the value placed on certain markers. In post-devolution Wales, the Welsh language, even in Porthcawl – an Anglophone town – emerged as a central pillar of Welshness.”<sup>9</sup>

Also today, I have ordered newspapers, ‘South Wales Argus’ and ‘Oswestry and Border Express’ for first reader/member visit to British Library. Can’t wait until next Tuesday.

Final thought for today, why didn’t Evans make more of the fact that the Royal Porthcawl Golf Club and the two private schools in the area denied access for his enquiries? Seems to be a massive statement regarding the status of Welsh in the town.

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p272

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. pp210/211

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### PROJECTION OF 'MICRO-ANGLICIZATION' SUBMISSION.

Reading around I get the impression that there is a scarcity of primary source material in this area. Perhaps I could begin, quite simply, with a photograph and take it from there. A possibility is this detail from the tomb of Sir Benjamin Hall, 'Lord Llanover', in the churchyard of a so-called 'anglicised' area, eastern Monmouthshire.



In addition, there could be added the oldest bi-lingual sign in the whole country, still there on the main Abergavenny-Pontypool road.



As a further signifier of the way, the very singular way, Llanover/Rhyd-y-Meirch responded to our theme, detail from the War Memorial in the village itself.



The choice of this sequence is harmonic with the whole study as it was to Abercarn, the town less well-known than Llanover as a crucible of the Welsh cultural revolution instigated by Augusta 'Lady Llanover' Hall that I travelled to begin field investigations. The Hall's were both several decades passed away by the time of the First World War but the Welsh they encouraged and re-established in both communities was very much alive.

Stop there now for even this short burst has opened a door. Following on, Llansilin, the Wentloog Levels, Newport and Rhosneigr will all be examined. Wales, top to toe.

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Footnote



Street Party, Six Bells, Abertillery. Date uncertain, possibly VE or Coronation. Display of Union Jacks complements much of Evans's findings on 'British Wales', namely the subsuming of Welsh notifications in the 'national' interest.

In conjunction with this, there is an emotional correspondence going on through the 'Abertillery Past' Facebook page regarding – 'How often have you heard Welsh being used in the town'. Make a note, will come in very useful for this study's development.

From Sarah Hill:<sup>10</sup>

"For 'Culture' see Williams's book *Keywords*, while 'Culturalism' is a theory which stresses production over consumption and which offers tools for the deeper understanding of a culture through its artefacts, or documented practices. It is in the work of Hoggart, Hall and Williams that mass or *popular* culture is treated without the hierarchical language employed by their predecessors.<sup>11</sup> The stress in the work of culturalists on *human agency* values cultural production as expression of a particular society's way of life."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Hill S. *Blerwytirhwng? Welsh Popular Music, Language and the Politics of Identity* Unpublished Ph.D thesis (Cardiff Univ. 2002)

<sup>11</sup> On this I would enter a criticism of Evans, primarily for the 'hierarchical' sociological jargon used within his study. Language is ridden with 'class' values. Emphases within quotation are mine.

<sup>12</sup> Hill: p.70

Hill continues to emphasise that the work of Raymond Williams – and my question says: ‘did his upbringing along the borderlands of Gwent and Hereford<sup>13</sup> provide him with a particular view of the ‘vicissitudes’ of the language culture?’ – “will be of primary importance to the understanding of Welsh popular music as a symbolic expression of an evolving culture.”<sup>14</sup>

ALYS WILLIAMS  
OSIAN WILLIAMS

Gigs  
Bach  
YFro

CLWB Y CYN-FILWYR  
(EX SERVICEMEN'S CLUB)  
PENARTH

8 O'R GLOCH  
NOS WENER  
19 MAI 2017

TOCYN £10. Archebwch drwy:  
ffion@menterbromorgannwg.cymru  
neu 029 2068 9888

MENTER IAITH  
BRO MORGANNWG

Twitter

Instagram

Facebook

Noson Allan  
Night Out

Penarth, on the surface as anglicised as anywhere in Wales but poster only uses English in name of venue. Note also usage of digital media pointers.

“The relationships between the Welsh and British models (of communication networks) determine our understanding of Wales as a separate culture and inform discussions of the *micro* level in terms of dominant and subordinate cultures, hegemony and counter-hegemony.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Ref: ‘Archenfield’, particularly relating to the parishes in Herefordshire where the Welsh language was spoken, albeit intermittently, well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century and still retain a high proportion of Welsh place names. For comprehensive description - Rees W.H. *The Vicissitudes of the Welsh Language in the Marches of Wales* unpublished Ph.D thesis (Univ. of Wales, Swansea 1947) pp.371-462

<sup>14</sup> Hill, p.71

<sup>15</sup> Ibid: p.72 (Note indirect reference to Hall interpreting Gramsci on ‘hegemony’. Also a feature of Evans.



One place I need to visit is Llanishen, east of Raglan on the Chepstow/Monmouth road where it is reported in 'Vicissitudes' p.391/2: "Hence his (Bradney) regret must have been profound when he wrote the following concerning Llanishen Church, 'The 1620 (Welsh) bible was in the church until 1870 when the vicar, not knowing what to do with it, buried it in his garden'."

Well, that's one way to deal with a language...

Home 11/02/2018

Further, and according to the same, in 1771 church services at Peterstone (Wentloog) were bilingual but they are recorded as Welsh only in 1848. If this is correct, and it should be, it completely reverses the trend elsewhere in the County, St. Brides going from Welsh to English in the same period and Marshfield remaining Bilingual. This noted also in his 'Medium of Visitation' survey, the change to Welsh occurring between 1771 and 1784. Again, a unique circumstance, which beggars the question 'Why?' and brings me back to the present tenant of the now de-consecrated church who was so adamant – and he was an architect, so he must be right – that the church had only ever been 'English'. (From visit early May 2017 – Welsh Election Day).

11/02/2018

More from 'Vicissitudes': 'In 1855 in a letter to the Rev. Henry Thompson, the historian E. A. Freeman, then a resident of the Monmouthshire parish of St. Mellon's situated between Cardiff and Newport, wrote as follows:

"Welsh is much more the language here than I had expected, but the people are thoroughly bi-lingual. My children and servants seem to be picking up a little; Margaret saluting me without unintelligible greetings." <sup>16</sup>

Further: "As late as 1895 the Bishop of Llandaff refused to institute a monoglot Englishman, Mr. Craig to the benefice of Llanhilleth, 'where a knowledge of Welsh is unquestionably required'." <sup>17</sup>

Further Ref: A.G.Bradley *In the March and Borderland of Wales*. 19<sup>th</sup> century book.

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<sup>16</sup> Vicissitudes p.411

<sup>17</sup> Ibid. p.415 Llanhilleth village is now part of Abertillery, Blaenau Gwent

## Introduction to 'Micro-anglicization' (a primer)

A search for the term by means of 'Google' draws a complete blank with the rider 'check your spelling or try different keywords'.<sup>18</sup> Not the best of starts towards the purpose of this study which is to describe, via the material presence of War memorials, the differing ways by which parish communities came to terms with the 'Anglicization'. This term itself is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as "see Anglicize" which in turn defines as "make English in form or character."<sup>19</sup>

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Following; actual printed dictionary definition: 'To make English in form or character; to English.'<sup>20</sup>

So that gives us a pretty sound foundation, at least we have a firm guideline as to the nature of this so-called "anglicization", a term used and re-used in print, word and innuendo *ad nauseum*.

Bearing in mind that there had never been such a solid iron construction in Wales before and that the uniting by road of Anglesey with the mainland was primarily to speed the journey from *London* to Dublin.<sup>21</sup> Could the Menai Bridge itself be classified as an anglicizing agent? If so, how can we quantify the effect of the bridge and the state-of-the-art highway that spewed forth from it to bring Llanfairpwllgwyngyll, Gaerwen, Gwalchmai and Bryngwran all within two full days travelling distance of the same *London*?

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Ref: 'Folk Life' 55 (2) G.M. Awbery on Welsh language inscriptions. Direct download via library, e-mail to [g.m.awbery@googlemail.com](mailto:g.m.awbery@googlemail.com)

Lieberman M. *Anglicization in High Medieval Wales: The Case of Glamorgan* Welsh History Review 23 (1) June 2006 pp. 1-26

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<sup>18</sup><https://www.bing.com/search?q=micro-anglicization&form=EDGTCT&q=HS&cvid=6153517a902043ea8b2789220d8ecf7e&cc=GB&setlang=en-US&PC=LCTS>

<sup>19</sup><https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/anglicize> (accessed 15/02/2018)

<sup>20</sup> Simpson J.A & Weiner E.S.C. (prepared by) *The Oxford English Dictionary; Volume 1* (Oxford 1989) p.465

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Griffith W.\* *Saving the Soul of the Nation: Essential Nationalism and Interwar Rural Wales* Rural History Vol. 21 (2) Oct. 2010 pp. 177-194

- Bangor Staff  
Notes taken 19/02/2018 showing how sparse material is regarding 'Anglicization', let alone the 'Micro' version.



Oswestry Memorial Gates: English or Welsh?

DIRECT NOTES FROM 'SOUTH WALES RECORD SOCIETY' No.8

(via Welsh Journals on line, access best through 'Saint Bride's Wentloog')

Peterstone is called in Welsh *Llanbedr yn Gwenllwch*. The population has been as follows: 1801 – 85; 1811 – 111; 1821 – 122; 1831 – 110; 1841 - 137; 1881 – 156; 1891 – 135.

The present church was built in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century (founded in early Norman times) and has not been altered since. It was built on piles to raise it above sea level; there are no graves because of the floods and therefore no monumental inscriptions. A mark on the east end shows the height of the floods in 1606, 5ft 11in.<sup>22</sup>

Marshfield is called Marshfeud in a charter of 1295 and takes its name from the marshy land of which the parish is composed. In Welsh it is called *Meiryn*, the meaning of which is somewhat doubtful. Meirion ap Tybiawn ap Cunedda, a chieftain in the 5<sup>th</sup> Century, slain while fighting the Irish, may have been the founder of the church here. The population has been: 1801 – 395; 1831 – 455; 1891 – 564. Capel Meiryn, the original church of this parish, stood in the village of Castleton but nothing is left of it now except a barn that appears to be formed out of it.<sup>23</sup> Shown below the memorial plaques in Marshfield Church. Note that the Great

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<sup>22</sup> As detailed above pp85/86.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. pp.89

War names are listed alphabetically, the more common Welsh practice.



In St. Bride's Church; against the South Wall at the West End  
*'O ddyntrotholwgyma...Nessau ma eth amserdithau...Y doed o bath y  
 byworbed...Ynwaeldyweddfelninnau'*<sup>24</sup>  
 -----end of quotation-----

So, with reference to above, and the surname 'Rees' appears time and time again at St. Brides and Peterstone,<sup>25</sup> there is nothing shouting and obvious regarding the anglicization of these communities, more subtle than that instance can be made of the inscription above, so rare in an Anglican church; the origin of the word 'Marshfield' with no mention of the modern 'Y Faerun' and those consistent population figures for Peterstone along with the important boldness of its Welsh name.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.p.84 Translates as: O man look here...I am afraid of time...He was born from the grave...Poor of face like us...

<sup>25</sup> Both in the volume mentioned above and in Hando's collected work. Further mention made in 'Kelly's Directory (see below).

<sup>26</sup>Bradney Sir J.A. A History of Monmouthshire (Publications of the South Wales Record Society No.8) Cardiff 1993

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Trip to the Moors.

I was wrong about Marshfield...the road sign reads 'Y Faerun' which fits in with 'Meiryn' and the pub follows on:



The pub was originally the 'Railway Inn' and then 'Port 'O' Call'. All its other signage advertising quiz nights and the like were resolutely *Saesneg*.

I really didn't know where to start on this trip, so I arbitrarily caught the bus from Newport, got off at Castleton to inspect the small Baptist graveyard Ray Westlake<sup>27</sup> talked about and took it from there.

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<sup>27</sup> Westlake R. *First World War Graves and Memorials in Gwent Vol.1* (Barnsley 2001)

The overgrown grass in the graveyard had deterred me from trudging about before...soaking wet. Not this time and I did enough to locate two Welsh inscriptions. This proves nothing though it does indicate a presence and, as I was to discover the following day, there was far more to the Welshness of Castleton than first realised, for one thing a thriving late 19<sup>th</sup> century Welsh Calvinist Methodist chapel – Capel Sion.

From there I walked down to Marshfield – the bilingual sign is actually ‘Y Faerun’ though the word ‘Rhun’ translates as ‘what is grand or aw(e)ful to roar or talk loudly’<sup>28</sup>. So we will give it to Bradney – for the moment.

Arriving at St.Mary’s church, Marshfield the pleasant surprise came in the form of a congregation several dozen strong. On inspection of the interior following the Service, no fewer than 5 memorial plaques were noted, ranging from the Boer to Second World Wars. This in addition to the Remembrance Cross erected in the churchyard. Will take half a day to log them all in...

Interested to hear the heated conversation from parishioners regarding the location and belonging of Marshfield, village with a Newport jurisdiction, a Cardiff postcode and a virtually non-existent public transport system. Surely it would not be beyond imagination to rebuild and reopen the station on the main line just down the road? Connections can be drawn here with the wider picture of Welsh, English and national loyalties. Here, in this by modern standards tiny society, isolated by geography and the metaphysical border of public administration is a microcosm of the whole battle of ‘national identity’ and I relate this to the academic studies ranging from post-war ‘Vicissitudes’ to the football clubs of the Border with stopping points at Porthcawl, Welsh Rock Music and Angela Gaffney’s unearthing of the war memorial conflict at nearby Newport.

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<sup>28</sup>Pughe, W.O. *National Dictionary of the Welsh Language Vol II*. (Denbigh 1883) p.454





Blacktown ve



Taken 25/02/2018 Marshfield Centre.

Moving on the 2 miles to Peterstone, I found the road to be almost deserted of traffic, more cyclists than anything and the village itself the same, as regards people. There is, in fact, very little Welsh signage to be seen and my hopes were particularly dashed to find – as I had half noted previously – that the site of ‘Ty Pica’, on the seaward side of the road junction before Peterstone is no more.

By way of the old sea wall I eventually arrived at St. Bride’s. The following day I was to discover that the surname ‘Rees’ as mentioned by Fred Hando in connection with Welsh speaking is mentioned a number

of times in connection with Peterston by way of farmers, masons and the Six Bells Inn.<sup>29</sup> Hando was himself given a guided tour of this hostelry by his Welsh speaking 'Mr.Rees' and I can only conjecture that the language was understandable and welcome at the Inn by virtue of this connection. Certainly, in proportion, the ability to speak Welsh declarants outweigh those of Marshfield; Total 1921 population 148, able to speak Welsh 28.<sup>30</sup>

At St. Bride's, a similar signage pattern was noted. The previously Welsh Congregational Chapel, mentioned in writings about Llewelyn 'Lyn' Harding is now painted over and a private residence. The second chapel of this tiny village, pop. 230 in 1921,<sup>31</sup> was that of Beulah at the junction of the lane leading to St. Bride's church itself. Now in private hands also the pocket handkerchief of a graveyard remains and within it there are examples of the name/place inscription still common in Wales but lost over the border. The one shown below is also a memorial to one lost son and names 'Willow Tree Farm' as the home of another. In addition, the small obelisk memorial to the lost men of both world wars is here.

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<sup>29</sup> Documents obtained from Cathays Branch and Heritage Library, Cardiff CF24 4PW

<sup>30</sup> 1921 Census-Monmouthshire. (London 1921) Taken night of 19/20 June, persons over 3 years of age.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid: population 230, Welsh ability 21.



Apart from all this, a few small clumps of emerging daffodils in the churchyard rounded off the day.

Written in Leeds University Library 02/03/2018

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time and effort into this study worthwhile. My final gratitude is made to Richard and Anne Porter of Llanishen for their hospitality and extra-mural research into the village's history along with a glorious tour of the lower Usk Valley.

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