

THE TRANSACTIONS  
OF THE  
RADNORSHIRE SOCIETY

VOL. LXXXII

2012

ISSN 0306-848X

Edited by Professor Peter J Conradi and Ms Daphne Turner.

© The contents of this volume are copyright and may not be reproduced in any form or by any means without the consent of the copyright holders. Enquiries should be addressed to the Radnorshire Society.

Set in 10pt Monotype Times New Roman and printed by the Gomer Press, Llandysul, Ceredigion.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Committee and Officers 2012–2013	5
The Eighty-second Annual Reports	7
Statement of Accounts	25
Sadie Cole: An Appreciation	27

## ARTICLES

Frank Edwards (1852–1927): ‘The debonair and popular member for Radnorshire’: Part One <i>Gerard Charmley</i>	29
From Flint to Shale <i>Michael Berkeley</i>	43
Thomas Jones the Artist by Ffransis G Payne: Part Two <i>Ifan Payne</i>	51
A Note on the Bell in Holy Trinity Church, Betws Clyro <i>Margaret AV Gill</i>	73
The Virtues of Unheroic Government: The counterfactual case for Sir George Cornwall Lewis: Part Two <i>Richard Shannon</i>	79
Hatfield’s Mystery Source for the Battle of Bryn Glas <i>Michael Livingston</i>	91
The London Dams that Never Came to Wales <i>Richard Rhys Rees</i>	95
Kilvert’s ‘Tree on which the Devil Hung his Mother’ <i>Andrew Breeze</i>	111
Walter Meredith (c.1558–1607): Scrivener of Radnorshire and London <i>Hilary Yewlett</i>	113

The History of a Radnorshire Border Town ( <i>review</i> ) <i>Colin PF Hughes</i>	133
A Dragon with Two Tongues ( <i>review</i> ) <i>Dai Hawkins</i>	137



# THE RADNORSHIRE SOCIETY

FOUNDED 1930

## COMMITTEE AND OFFICERS

### PRESIDENT

Mr R Gibson-Watt

### VICE-PRESIDENTS

Miss J Ashton	Mrs N Baird-Murray
Mr J Barker	Mr A Batley
Mrs S Cole	Mrs A Goodwin
Mrs R Jones	Mr K Parker
Mr G Ridyard	Mr M Statham

### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Ms G Guy	Mr D Hawkins
Mrs J Kenyon	Mr E Kinsey-Pugh
Mr L Lewis	Mrs H Pegg
Mrs M Oakley	Mr J Powis

### HONORARY SECRETARY

Dr Colin Hughes  
49 Holcombe Drive, Llandrindod Wells. LD1 6DN  
Telephone: 01597 823142

### HONORARY TREASURER

Mr R Davies  
Haulfryn, Penybont, Llandrindod Wells. LD1 5UA

### MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

Mrs J Lewis  
Grove Villa, Cross Gates, Llandrindod Wells. LD1 6RE  
grovevilla100@hotmail.com

## HONORARY EXCURSION ORGANISERS

Mrs Norma Baird-Murray  
Nant-y-Groes, Llanyre, Llandrindod Wells, Powys, LD1 5DY  
Telephone: 01597 822937  
and  
Mrs M Oakley

## HONORARY LIBRARIANS

Mr John Barker  
6 Court Meadow, Pembridge, Herefordshire, HR6 9EW  
Telephone: 01544 388708  
and  
Mr G Ridyard  
14 Pentrosfa Road, Llandrindod Wells, Powys, LD1 5NL  
Telephone: 01597 825324

## HONORARY EDITORS

Professor Peter Conradi FRSL  
The Old School, Cascob, nr. Presteigne, Powys, LD8 2NT  
[peter.conradi@cascob.eclipse.co.uk](mailto:peter.conradi@cascob.eclipse.co.uk)  
and  
Ms Daphne Turner

## ASSISTANT SECRETARY

Mrs RL Jones

## HONORARY AUDITOR

Mr H Lewis

# THE EIGHTY-SECOND ANNUAL REPORT

## THE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

IT IS WITH GREAT PLEASURE that I give the President's Address for 2012 to the Radnorshire Society. It is with pleasure because I can once again say that the Society is in good health. We have money in the bank, a thriving Field Section, good attendance at the lectures, and we have had an excellent outing which was well attended. The Field Section has had excursions to various parts of the county and, in spite of the weather, there have been as many as sixty members who have turned out.

There is, however, one blot on the landscape. That is the possible closure of Coleg Powys and the need for the Society to find another location to store the records and books. One good thing to come out of this would be a greater awareness of our excellent Library, which is totally underused. The details of any intended move I will leave to the Treasurer to deal with when we come to his report.

But before I go any further I must mention the death of Dr Hilary Yewlett, who has been a valued member of the Society and a contributor to our 2010 edition of the *Transactions*. The eulogy was given at Dr Yewlett's funeral by Mr Lloyd Lewis, a member of our Executive Committee. The Society has also lost Dr Robert Hetherington, who recently passed away; he was an active member in the 1980s and 1990s.

Your Executive Committee has met on four occasions this year: in January, April, July and October. The meetings have all been excellent and the Minutes of the meeting, produced by Mrs Ruth Jones, have as always been 'first class'. Dr Colin Hughes, in his first year as Secretary, with help and advice from the previous Secretary, Mrs Sadie Cole, has ensured that things have gone smoothly.

On Sunday 8 July, Alwyn Batley, Colin Hughes, Anne Goodwin and others attended a Dedication of Memorial Gates at Glaschw m Church in memory of Dr Roy Fenn. I can only say that Dr Fenn would have been delighted at the large congregation that turned out in his memory. The Bishop of Brecon, the Right Reverend Dr John Davies, and the former Bishop of Hereford, the Right Reverend John Oliver, led the devotions. The choir sang harmoniously and it was an event that Dr Fenn would have been proud of. Well done, Roy. I can call him that now. May he rest in peace.

Mr David Peter has resigned as Membership Secretary of the Society. Mrs Jennifer Lewis has agreed to take his place, assuming that she will be elected. We must record our appreciation of the IT work of Mr Peter in keeping the membership list up-to-date and we wish him well in the future.

Ms Gwyneth Guy has retired from the Editorship of the Field Section Newsletter and steps are under way to fill that post. Thank you, Gwyneth, for your efforts; the Newsletter has been transformed under your guidance.

I do not wish to say too much about the various items which will come under the Reports.

Now to something which I think has needed to be addressed. For some time now I have felt that the Society has sailed along in choppy waters and has needed more Vice-Presidents in order to maintain an even keel. At present the Vice-Presidents are Miss J Ashton, Mrs A Goodwin, Mr A Batley, Mr K Parker and Mr M Statham. I therefore propose that the following be nominated to be Vice-Presidents of the Society: Mrs Sadie Cole, Mrs Ruth Jones, Mrs Norma Baird-Murray, Mr Geoffrey Ridyard, Mr John Barker.

The election of these serving officers with their wide experience will put the Society in a better position to deal with any emergencies that may arise in the future. This proposal will come when we elect the Executive Committee and the Officers for the coming year.

Finally, I will end on a positive note. The Society will produce in September 2013 a book entitled, *Radnorshire from the Air*. I will not say any more on the subject now but look forward to what will be an exciting occasion for the Radnorshire Society.

Enough said. Let us now get on with the main business of this, the eighty-second Annual General Meeting of the Radnorshire Society.

Robin Gibson-Watt

## THE SECRETARY'S REPORT

This is, of course, my first report as Secretary. Hopefully, matters have run smoothly and this is largely due to the continued support and guidance that I have received from Sadie. I have also benefited from the fact that Ruth is a hard-working Assistant Secretary who always produces first class minutes, as the President's report stated. The Society maintains its links with Powys Archives, the Radnorshire Museum and with the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust.

At her last Executive Committee as Secretary, Sadie had shown members a copy of a book entitled *Montgomeryshire from the Air*. She then contacted the author, Mr Chris Musson, with the idea of a companion volume for Radnorshire. I took the idea forward and a meeting was held

on 24 January with some members of the Executive Committee and Chris Musson and Mr Bill Britnell of CPAT. There was a fruitful discussion and Messrs Musson and Britnell explained that they have the pictorial resources available for such a publication.

The results of the meeting were taken to the next Executive Committee meeting in April; costings were presented, and members agreed that a book entitled *Radnorshire from the Air* (or similar) should be published. I have been in contact with the two authors since and the agreed aim is to produce the book by September 2013, as already noted, so that it will be ready for the 2013 AGM and the 'Christmas market'. As the President's report stated, this will be 'an exciting time for the Society'.

The Executive Committee lost one member during the year when Ms Liz Fleming-Williams resigned due to pressure of work. She was replaced by Mr Lloyd Lewis of Cwmdeuddwr and he has already proved to be a valuable member of the Society.

The 2012 lecture programme went well and all three lectures were well attended. On 20 April at the New Radnor Community Centre, Mr Richard Rees of Llanwrda gave an illustrated talk on 'The London Dams that never came to Wales'. It was shown that London County Council had wanted to create many new reservoirs in Mid Wales. If the proposals had been accepted, much of Radnorshire would have been flooded! On 18 May at Llanddewi Village Hall, Sadie gave a talk on 'The Postal History of Radnorshire'. This was a fascinating talk on a different aspect of Radnorshire's social history and was much enjoyed by all in attendance. On 12 October at the Old School, Cwmdeuddwr, Mr Chris Andrews gave a well-delivered talk entitled 'Glimmer in the Earth: bringing the bling back home'. This talk provided an excellent follow-up to the exhibition that had been held previously at Rhayader Museum.

My thanks are due to everyone who helped out at these lectures, including those who provided the refreshments after the lectures. This helps to make the evening an enjoyable social affair, as well as an informative one.

The editors of the *Transactions* contacted Sadie and myself during the year, seeking our opinion about some proposed changes to the journal. It was suggested that the volume should be no more than 50,000 words in length and that each article should be no more than 5,000 words. The changes would help to reduce postage costs and encourage more contributions to the *Transactions*. The changes were agreed and Volume 81 of the *Transactions of the Radnorshire Society* for 2011 was duly packed and distributed in August. I am most grateful to the editors for their outstanding work and to those members of the Society who helped

to pack the volumes and to distribute as many as possible by hand. This has saved the Society some expense.

I have enjoyed my first year as Secretary. I hope to carry on serving the Society for some time yet and help to preserve the features of our wonderful county – Radnorshire.

Colin PF Hughes

## THE EDITORS' REPORT

Around eight years ago Sadie Cole telephoned Peter Conradi – whom she had never met and knew only through an article in *Transactions of the Radnorshire Society* 2005 – and then and there invited him over tea to help edit the *Transactions*. Mrs Anne Goodwin has elsewhere in this volume written an appreciation of Sadie Cole; the editors would also like to express their sense of sadness at her loss and gratitude for the honour of her friendship. She was a fount of knowledge and good will, a great, stable support, and she will be sadly missed.

Both editors have bases elsewhere – in England – and count themselves lucky when they can get up to Radnorshire, where neither lives full-time. In these circumstances it is difficult for them to attend the Society's lectures or to network effectively in the locality. And thus commissioning articles for the *Transactions* is also a very real and continuing challenge. The editors would like to thank Dr Colin Hughes for his offer of support in this regard. They would also like to extend an invitation to *all* readers: please feel free to offer help in suggesting topics and writers for future *Transactions*. And if you have yourself an idea about something you would like to write for the *Transactions* and have maybe been hesitating, please get in touch with one of us. We have some experience in helping first-time writers and would welcome their contributions, even at drawing-board stage. If such help is forthcoming, the editors may be able to see their way to continuing for a little while longer.

The National Library of Wales [NLW] has approached the editors to ask our permission to archive our website. [NB: This refers *ONLY* to the website and has nothing to do with the *Transactions* or with their already agreed digitisation.] The chief advantage would be that they will catalogue our website through both the NLW and also the UK Web archive and thus, as technology changes, ensure that there is increased awareness among researchers of our society and our *Transactions*. We have now on the Society's advice acceded to their demand.

## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

**Michael Berkeley** was born in 1948, the eldest son of Sir Lennox Berkeley and a godson of Benjamin Britten. He was a chorister at Westminster Cathedral, and then studied at the Royal Academy of Music and later with Richard Rodney Bennett. In 1977 he was awarded the Guinness Prize for Composition; two years later he was appointed Associate Composer to the Scottish Chamber Orchestra.

From 2006 to 2009 Berkeley was Composer in Association to the BBC National Orchestra of Wales, a partnership which resulted in three new works for the orchestra. In 2008 Berkeley's third opera, *For You*, to a libretto by Ian McEwan, was premiered at the Linbury Theatre, Royal Opera House.

Recent works include *Three Rilke Sonnets*, premiered by the Nash Ensemble and soprano Claire Booth at the Wigmore Hall in 2011, and *Into the Ravine*, written for Nicholas Daniel and the Carducci Quartet, which was premiered at the Presteigne Festival in 2012.

Berkeley was chosen to compose the new anthem for the service of enthronement of Archbishop of Canterbury-elect, Justin Welby, which took place on 21 March 2013 at Canterbury Cathedral.

In addition to composing, Berkeley presents BBC Radio 3's 'Private Passions', and was appointed a CBE for services to music in the Queen's Birthday Honours published on 16 June 2012. He was elevated to Lord Berkeley of Knighton in February 2013.

Reproduced by permission of Oxford University Press

**Andrew Breeze** FSA, FRHistS, was educated at Sir Roger Manwood's Grammar School, Sandwich, and at the universities of Oxford and Cambridge. Married with six children, he has taught since 1987 at the University of Navarre, Pamplona. He has published many research papers on Celtic philology, as well as the controversial study *Medieval Welsh Literature* (Four Courts, 1997). His most recent books are *The Mary of the Celts* (Gracewing, 2008) and *The Origins of the 'Four Branches of the Mabinogi'* (Gracewing, 2009).

**Gerard Charmley** is a freelance writer and researcher who has published widely on Welsh and Free Church history in the late Victorian and Edwardian periods. He is currently working on an in-depth study of DA Thomas, Viscount Rhondda. Dr Charmley has worked in education and financial services. He lives in Leeds.

**Margaret Gill** PhD, after taking a degree in Ancient History and Archaeology, became an authority on the Mediterranean Bronze Age, writing papers on Minoan/Mycenaean glyptic art, and published the small finds of the Byzantine excavations at Sarachane and Armorium. While serving as Deputy Director of the City Museums of Newcastle-upon-Tyne and Keeper of Applied Art at the Laing Art Gallery, she produced articles on Newcastle and York silver, Tyneside pottery and the Beilby/Bewick engraving workshop. She was then appointed Curator of Tunbridge Wells Museum and Art Gallery. Since her retirement to Glasbury-on-Wye, she has interested herself in local church history and botany. Her most recent publications include *A History of the Parish Churches of the Wye Valley Group* (2011) and *Music in the Churches of Radnorshire* (2013); and illustrations for *A Welsh Marches Pomona* (2010) and *Pheasantry and other Feathered Poems* (2012).

**Dai Hawkins**, *alias Dafydd y Garth*, was brought up on Merseyside, was educated at Merchant Taylors' School, Crosby; St Chad's College, Durham, and Trinity College Carmarthen, and is a graduate of the Open University and the University of Wales, Aberystwyth. He has lived in Radnorshire for over forty years, and is passionately fond, as was his wife Siân (1947–2004), of the historic county of Radnorshire, its history, culture and people. The focus of his research is the Welsh dialect and toponymy of Radnorshire. Following his translation of Ffrancis Payne's *Crwydro Sir Faesyfed* for the *Transactions of the Radnorshire Society*, he was invited to give an illustrated talk in the National Library of Wales in December, 2011. Since then he has taken what he fancifully calls his 'magic-lantern show', *Radnorshire, the Unknown Country (sic)*, out on the road to a variety of venues, including our 2012 AGM; as we go to press, the number of shows presented or planned is approaching double figures.

**Dr Colin PF Hughes** is a graduate of Aberystwyth and Swansea universities and has a doctorate in the history of education. He was the long-serving Head of History and Humanities at Builth Wells High School and he also lectured in the Education Department at Aberystwyth University. The cattle drovers in Radnorshire and the Rebecca Riots in Radnorshire are among his special local interests. He was a Chief Examiner for GCSE History from 2003 to 2012 with the Welsh Examination Board, the WJEC. He is an author, and co-author, of several GCSE History textbooks and he is currently Secretary of the Radnorshire Society.



**Michael Livingston** is an Associate Professor of English and Associate Director of the Honors Program at The Citadel in Charleston, SC. Though he specialises in Medieval Studies, he has published on a range of subjects from the first to the twenty-first centuries. He is the general editor of (and contributor to) *The Battle of Brunanburh: A Casebook* (Exeter, 2011) and (with John K Bollard) *Owain Glyndwr: A Casebook* (Exeter, 2013).

**Dr Ifan Payne** was born in Rhiwbina, Cardiff, and trained as architect at the Welsh School of architecture. He received his PhD in architectural psychology from the University of London and has worked as an architect, lecturer, and project manager in the UK, continental Europe and the United States. He has held the post of Head of Department and Professor of Environmental Design at Kansas State University.

Dr Payne is a prolific writer; professional papers have covered a wide field, from architecture and environmental psychology to telescope enclosure design and the imaging of geosynchronous satellites. He has written well over a thousand articles on music and performance criticism which have been published in both the UK and the USA. Fluent in Welsh and German, as well as English, Dr Payne has had a lifelong interest in translating poetry into English from Welsh, German and Spanish, as well as from English into Welsh. His translations from the Spanish of five love poems by Gustavo Adolfo B  quer were set to music by composer Alun Hoddinott and to date these songs have been performed in concerts around the world more than fifty times. Dr Payne is currently Director of the Magdalena Ridge Observatory in New Mexico, USA.

**Richard Rees** is an advanced automotive engineer, an incorporated automotive engineer and a Fellow of the Institute of Motor Industry. When time permits during a busy family and working life he has much pleasure in researching, mainly local history, railway construction and water supply schemes in Wales. He has also walked over 600 miles on Welsh railways which have been closed, which has brought home to him the devastation caused by the Beeching closures.

**Richard Shannon** is Emeritus Professor of Modern History at the University of Wales Swansea, and the author of a highly acclaimed two-volume biography of Gladstone. His most recent books include *A Press Free and Responsible* (2001) and *Gladstone, God and Politics* (2007). He lives in London and in Radnorshire, where he first put down roots in 1975. Professor Shannon is grateful to Mr W Lawrence Banks for pointing out – vis-a-vis his *Sir George Cornwall Lewis: Part*

*One* – that Harpton Court did not burn down but was demolished in 1956; and that John Nash – one of the Prince Regent’s favoured architects – did indeed contribute designs for both interior and exterior of the house. See Michael Mansbridge, *John Nash: a Complete Catalogue* (1991).

**Dr Hilary Yewlett**’s article on Walter Meredith is, sadly, posthumous, as she died in March 2012. She was taken by her university career from her birthplace in Bargoed to Swansea, France, Sweden, North America, Cardiff, Mexico and Chile. Her main professional field was the role of English, and especially Drama, in education, which she taught in the universities of Cardiff and Swansea. She was enormously productive, involved in teaching – including drama productions – publishing, conferences, and working for the Open University. Then, in early retirement, she discovered her family’s history: her Meredith ancestors first emigrated from Radnorshire to Pennsylvania in 1683. Several made significant contributions to colonial life, but they have been largely overlooked by British historians. Seeking to reverse this neglect of an important aspect of Radnorshire’s history, she studied first for Oxford University’s Advanced Diploma in Local History and then continued to Cambridge, where she wrote a Master’s thesis on migration from early modern Radnorshire. Alas, her plans to return to Oxford to write a DPhil on Reese Meredith of Llandegley and Philadelphia were foiled by her final illness. We offer our sympathy to her husband and family.

Peter J Conradi  
Daphne Turner

## THE JOINT LIBRARIANS’ REPORT

Eight additions to the Library were made in the course of the year. Five of these were gifts, which are gratefully acknowledged. All are listed below and details are now available in the card catalogue maintained in the Library Room and *via* the on-line catalogue.

A brief note on two particular items might be of interest. The new edition of Pevsner’s *Herefordshire* has been comprehensively revised and expanded, notably the archaeological section. Of special relevance to members will be coverage of Border areas, such as Kington, which, in the words of our late President, ‘Janus-like are facing both ways’. Worth mentioning too is the detailed study of the poetry of Ruth Bidgood, a

long-standing contributor to the *Transactions*. Her inclusion in the series 'Writers of Wales' is an indication of the appreciation of her work.

A list of additions to the Library is appended:

BROOKS, Alan & PEVSNER, Nikolaus, *Herefordshire: The Buildings of England*, New Haven & London, Yale University Press (2012).

DAVIES, Brian W, *A Hundred Years of the Conservative Club Llandrindod Wells, 1912–2012*, Llandrindod Wells, The Conservative Club (2012).

HODGES, Geoffrey, *Owain Glyn Dwr: the War of Independence in the Welsh Borders*, Woonton Almeley, Logaston Press (1995).

JARVIS, Matthew, *Ruth Bidgood*, Cardiff, University of Wales Press (2012).

McCORMICK, Tim, *The Cathedrals, Abbeys and Priories of Wales*, Woonton Almeley, Logaston Press (2010).

MILLS, AD, *A Dictionary of English Place-names*, Oxford, Oxford University Press (1998).

PROTHERO, Taffy, *Dear Pamela – Letters from a Radnorshire Farm*, Woonton Almeley, Logaston Press (1997).

WILLIAMS, Joel, *Greetings from Llandrindod Wells*, Vol. 1, compiled by Joel Williams, Llandrindod Wells, Joel Williams (2011).

John Barker

I have to report very little of great interest this year, with one exception, otherwise just routine maintenance. I will deal with the exception now. For several years I have appealed for local photographs to add to our excellent collection. I have been rewarded by a gift from Mr Geoffrey Micah. Mr Micah's gift covered the display boards at the AGM.

Mr Micah's mother was a Lewis and her father kept the Llanerch Hotel in Llandrindod. There is a photograph of the family in 1910 together with a number of photographs of hunt meetings at the hotel in the 1920s. There is a photograph of young men dressed up for the local carnival at that time. There are also photographs of the big Paxman diesel which drove the generator for the Llandrindod Electric Light Company, where Mr Micah's uncle was a senior engineer and foreman.

There is a generous collection displayed of the Elan Valley in the 1890s when the great dams were being constructed and two of the important houses were destroyed and covered by water. Finally, I displayed a small picture, taken by a box Brownie camera in 1930, of two horses struck dead by lightning while they were ploughing. There must be thousands of old pictures taken by box Brownie cameras in the 1920s and '30s. The Kodak Brownie camera was a simple fixed focus camera which took remarkably good pictures in the hands of complete amateurs and many families had one.

Geoffrey Ridyard

## THE EXCURSIONS ORGANISER'S REPORT

I decided to do something special this year, to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee.

### **Tuesday 27 March 2012**

It was a wonderful sunny day with twenty-nine members travelling by coach from Llandrindod to Windsor.

On arriving at Windsor, some of the group split off to do their own exploring of Windsor Castle. Those remaining were met by one of the Castle staff and we walked leisurely up the Castle hill, past all the marvellous buildings to the Winchester Tower, where we were served coffee and biscuits in the Rampart Room.

Here we met our guide, who was to take us on the tour of the Great Kitchen. First, we were given a talk about the history of the Castle from the time of William the Conqueror, and a slide show of pictures of the royal apartments, which we were to see later. We then had an introduction to royal dining, past and present, with a short video presentation showing how the kitchens worked when they were in use for special occasions.

We set off on this very special tour through the medieval undercroft to the Great Kitchen. The Great Kitchen is the oldest, substantially unchanged and still working kitchen in the country. It has remained in constant use for nearly 750 years. Here the chefs prepare food for state banquets and whenever the Queen is in residence.

At the end of a fascinating two hours, we were given an audio guide and a very attractive guidebook as a souvenir. We were then left on our own to visit the magnificent State Apartments and to be amazed at the rebuilding and refurbishment of these wonderful rooms after the

disastrous fire of 1992. We gazed at all the splendid works of art from the Royal Collection, which included works by Rembrandt, Rubens, Canaletto, Gainsborough and many other famous artists.

The exhibition – The Queen: Sixty Photographs for Sixty Years – presented a portrait of the Queen's reign as captured in fleeting moments on official occasions as well as at relaxed family gatherings. It was an excellent exhibition, but I could find only one photograph of the Queen visiting Wales!

Time went so quickly, but some members managed to fit in the magnificent St George's Chapel. This was a thoroughly enjoyable visit to a special place on a special occasion.

Norma Baird-Murray

## THE FIELD SECTION REPORT

Thanks to all the leaders – and most of all to our indefatigable secretary, Anne Goodwin, who had to guide a very inexperienced chairman through the year – 2012 has been a full and successful year of varied excursions.

The Field Section's programme for 2012 concentrated on the second part of Ffrancis Payne's *Exploring Radnorshire*, with thanks to Dai Hawkins's translation. It started with a most enjoyable lunch at the Burton Hotel, Kington, followed by an entertaining talk from Marged Haycock of the University of Aberystwyth, translator of early Welsh literature. She had assisted Dai Hawkins with the translation of Ffrancis Payne's *Exploring Radnorshire* by combing through his translations of poems and so, according to Dai Hawkins, stopped him 'getting egg on his face'.

Marged's talk, entitled 'Exploring Radnorshire', emphasised her love of her native county. She knew Ffrancis Payne and played us a tape of a fascinating interview she made with him. An excellent start to our programme of excursions.

The first of these, on Sunday 15 August, attracted a large turnout to visit Pilleth Court, near Whitton. Mr and Mrs Pitts, the present owners of the Court, very generously allowed us to tour the house they have lovingly refurbished. We were also lucky that Peter Hood, whose family had been the Green-Prices' tenant farmers during the twentieth century, guided us round, explaining the history of the house, which was built in the sixteenth century by Stephen Price. From the house we made a brief visit to Pilleth Church, where Peter Hood explained how the church had been restored in the last decades.

Mike Reynolds then took over to explore Bleddfa, including the church, which is now used as a community centre, and a police station with a prison attached. The police station and prison, now hidden in farm buildings, were used to deal with the navvies employed on digging and laying the Elan Valley pipe. This was a fascinating, secret aspect of Radnorshire. Then we walked to the Hundred House Inn, Bleddfa for tea and cakes.

The next excursion, to 'The Foot of Radnor Forest', was led by Anne Goodwin. In a wide-ranging exploration we visited the ruined Corn Hill Methodist Chapel, Llanevan Farm (now in the process of renovation), where Anne gave us a fascinating insight into the Owen family who farmed there in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and then on to the motte and bailey, Castell Crugarybb. There Dai Hawkins explained the historical context and importance of the castle.

Tea and home-made cakes were served at the Radnor Arms, New Radnor, where Anne Goodwin recited a poem describing in detail one of the local hunts over the landscape we had just explored.

The next meeting was billed as a picnic at Water-Break-Its-Neck. The hardy group who braved the rain were rewarded with a spectacular cascade in the atmospheric narrow gorge. We tried to find the cave where Llewellyn ap Gruffydd was rumoured to have hidden on his dash to support the forces in Deubarth (now Carmarthenshire).

The party decided it was too cold and wet for a picnic so we made our way to the Fforest Inn, where we were welcome to eat our sandwiches, or, more popular, choose a meal from the menu.

On Sunday 15 July, a lovely day, about thirty-five members of the Field Section, under the guidance of Dai Hawkins and Richard Davies, met at the Sun Inn, St Harmon (now closed). Then we moved on to the church, dedicated to St Garmon. Kilvert, rather reluctantly, became the vicar of this church in 1878, but only for a year. The church was 'improved' in 1908.

We drove on to the Nature Reserve at Gilfach, where Dai Hawkins told us something about the history of the farmhouse. Then we drove on to Dai's home at Nantmel for tea and a variety of delicious cakes provided by members of the Field Section. We were all amazed by the vista – and by the renovation of Dai's house.

On Sunday 19 August (another lovely day!) the Field Section, led by Jenny Lewis and Ray Thomas, explored the commote of Buddugre, according to Ffrancis Payne the heart of Maelienydd. About thirty members met at the Village Hall, Felindre and then drove on to St Mary's Church, Bettws-y-Crwyn (strictly speaking in Shropshire!). There the poet Roger Garfitt read some of his work about the attractions of the area and

then Alan Wilson talked about the history of the church and the area. We moved on, over the watershed, to the common and the site of Moelfre City, a vanished village. Jenny provided us with an early twentieth-century map showing the site of the lost habitations and Ray filled us in about how the growth and collapse of the township was linked to the use of the drovers' road that crosses the common. We were stunned by the amazing views across this part of Radnorshire and into Brecknock!

Tea and home-made Welsh cakes and Bara Brith were provided at the Lion Hotel, Llanbister by Ray's wife.

On Sunday 16 September about thirty members of the Field Section met in Cwmdeuddwr to explore the Elan Valley, under the enthusiastic and knowledgeable leadership of Brian Lawrence. Unfortunately, our luck with the weather ran out as we drove further up the valley – but, as the locals say, there would be no reservoirs if there were less rain! We drove up to the dam of the first reservoir, Caban Coch. Ffrancis Payne did not write a great deal about the Elan Valley dams but Brian made up for this by giving us a summary of the history of Birmingham Corporation's purchase of the area. We then continued up to the Penygareg dam, where we visited Nantygwyllt Chapel, a small Victorian chapel built by Birmingham Corporation to replace the chapel of ease at Nantygwyllt that was inundated when the dams were built.

From there we drove to the top Elan Valley reservoir, Craig Goch. There Brian told us about the plans outlined after the Second World War for enlarging Craig Goch Reservoir from an area of five square miles to twenty-five square miles. We were astounded at the size that was contemplated – and that the plan was only shelved in the 1970s when the fuel crisis made the cost of pumping the water uneconomical. But the plan has never been officially withdrawn. The wind and the rain finally forced us to find welcome shelter and sustenance at the Elan Valley Visitor Centre.

The Field Section AGM was held on the evening of Friday 19 October, at the Severn Arms. The officers agreed to serve for another year but Gwyneth Guy indicated that she wished to stand down as Editor of the Newsletter. The meeting expressed their gratitude to Gwyneth for her work in producing three excellent newsletters – and agreed that it would be very difficult to replace her.

The business of the meeting having been dealt with, we settled down to listen to our speaker, Canon Geraint Hughes. He used his deep understanding of Radnorshire life and his knowledge of church matters in his entertaining and thought-provoking speech on 'The Rise and Decline of Clergy in Maelienyd Deanery – 1700 to 2000'.

Our final date was the Social Evening at Bleddfa Barn Centre on Friday 23 November at 7 pm, when a small but select group enjoyed cheese and wine – and a variety of quizzes and entertainment, including a sing-along of Welsh folk songs!

Again, I must thank all the leaders for giving up their time to plan and head the excursions – and Anne Goodwin, who is unflagging in her work for the Field Society.

### **Postscript:**

We in the Field Section would like to welcome more Radnorshire Society members to our excursions and social events. Please contact myself (Tel: 01544 267455) or Anne Goodwin (Tel: 01544 350266) for more details.

Judith Kenyon

## **POWYS ARCHIVES**

A wide variety of researchers continues to use the archives service and this year our visitor numbers have reached 1,828. Social and family historians, officers and members of the council, professional bodies such as CADW, solicitors, and school and university researchers are recorded as regular users. Many visitors use the archives to view original documents, but a large amount of reference material is also available in the searchroom, including historical publications and periodicals, trade directories, reference works for family and local history, and indexes and transcripts of archive material. Through our public access computer we offer free access to the websites Ancestry and Findmypast, which have also been extremely well utilised.

Powys Archives currently has approximately 90% of catalogues available online as pdf files, as well as a vast amount of other information for researchers. Our webpages have been accessed around 73,000 times in 2012/13 and the archives service continues to be one of the council's most popular online services.

At the end of April Rhian James, Assistant Archivist, left Powys Archives to undertake further studies at Aberystwyth University, and then, at the end of June, Stacey Kennedy, Archives Assistant, left Powys Archives to relocate to London with her husband and young son, to take up a post with the archives service at the University of the Arts in London. Two new staff have taken up post. Roz Williamson, Assistant Archivist, started with the



service in June. Roz is originally from Shropshire and has worked at Shropshire and Exeter archive services. Kerry Jones, originally from Llanidloes, is our new Archives Assistant. Kerry has worked in Newtown library and has recently completed a history degree at Cardiff University.

Powys Archives has been awarded a grant by the NMCT and CyMAL (Museums Archives Libraries Wales) to conserve a Rhayader police charge book from the late nineteenth century. This volume is very rare for Mid Wales, and only three others survive. A number of entries in the volume date from the time of the building of the Elan Valley dams near Rhayader between 1893 and 1904. The huge dams and lakes were built by Birmingham City Council to provide a source of clean, safe water for the growing population of the city and its manufacturing industries. The dam building scheme provided jobs for thousands of construction workers and ‘navvies’, and changed the local landscape of Mid Wales for ever. The workers also kept the local police force busy!

Also around the end of the nineteenth century the local population in Rhayader was involved in political protests through salmon poaching, and the entries in the charge book reflect the police response to this. The dissent was centred on the fact that fishing rights belonged to rich landowners, and those who rebelled called themselves Rebeccaite as the original Rebecca rioters had done. In 1843, forty years earlier, Rhayader town had suffered violent attacks on toll gates, following the wave of riots in South Wales, Carmarthenshire and Cardiganshire. The volume, which shows excessive damage from damp, will be conserved, allowing it to be made available for the first time to researchers. Pages will be repaired and the volume re-bound in a style appropriate to the original.

Powys Archives has also been awarded £4000 by CyMAL to purchase a microfilm scanner which converts micro images into a digital format. Rather than supply paper copy printouts by post, archives staff will now be able to provide high quality digital images by e-mail.

Powys Archives continues to issue a quarterly electronic newsletter which goes to a large mailing list of individuals, societies and organisations who regularly use or deposit material with the archives. It is also sent electronically to council members, libraries, high schools and primary schools in Powys, and to all community and town councils. The newsletter appears in a bilingual format on our website. It contains news items about the work undertaken by staff, local history articles and a full list of accessions received by the service.

Last year Powys Archives staff created a Facebook page and a Twitter account. Over the course of the last twelve months we have seen a steady increase in friends and followers, who now total around 294. Social media

have proved to be a useful way of sending quick messages to our users. In particular we have highlighted new accessions, and interesting documents from our collections,

Ann Roberts, a volunteer with the archives service for around five years, moved to Hereford in late March and so is no longer able to come into the archives. During the time she was with us, Ann completed an enormous amount of work: indexing projects, digitisation of records, transcription work, and small cataloguing projects. Beth Williams continues to come to the archives on a weekly basis and is currently indexing nineteenth-century school logbooks.

Dawn Gill, a former member of staff, also comes into the archives once a week, and over the past twelve months has indexed a number of parish registers. She is now working on indexing the Welshpool Dispensary collection dating from 1827. Welshpool dispensary opened in an old woollen warehouse in New Street in 1827. It was a building in which poor people could visit a doctor. In 1849 the upper rooms were used as an emergency hospital during the cholera epidemic. Dawn also used the Quarter Sessions records from the 1840s and Breconshire County Council minutes from the 1890s to research the history of the building of the Old Shire Hall in Brecon (now Brecknock Museum). This was to assist with the Heritage Lottery Application made by Powys County Council to refurbish Brecknock Museum and re-locate Brecon library on the same site.

In June we received a deposit of terrier maps from the Elan Valley Trust dating 1893–1902. These maps show farms, tenements and sheepwalks purchased by the Corporation of Birmingham for the construction of the Elan Valley reservoirs in the late nineteenth century. There are twenty-seven maps in total covering properties mainly in the parish of Llansantffraid Cwmdeuddwr, Radnorshire but also some in Llanwrthwl in Breconshire, Llangurig in Montgomeryshire and Gwnnws, Caron-Uwch-Clawdd and Ysptyty Ystwyth in Cardiganshire. In addition to the original maps we have also received high-resolution digital copies of the maps which are available to view in our searchroom.

Details of accessions received during 2012/13 with particular reference to Radnorshire are as follows:

#### PUBLIC AND OFFICIAL RECORDS

Radnorshire Constabulary general order book, 1895–1915 & the diary of Mr Bufton, 1935–1943 [Acc 2130]

Ffynnon Gynydd School records: admission register, 1937–2012;

logbooks, 1876–2002 (6 items); governors' minute book, 1903–1926; various photographs of school pupils and buildings, 1990–2012 (6 items); scrapbooks, 2007–2009 (6 items); pupils' exercise books, 1855–1978 (10 items); book of Welsh songs, 1897 [Acc 2137]

Abbey Cwm-Hir parochial records (additional): communicants roll, 1911–1930; volume of church expenses, 1879–1892. Tregynon parochial records (additional): two photographs of open-air service at church to mark 270th anniversary of the birth of Thomas Oliver, 1995 [Acc 2148]

### NON-OFFICIAL RECORDS

Various records relating to Radnorshire, including plans and a draft agreement relating to building work at Rhayader Church, 1886–1898; and correspondence relating to the guarding of the Elan Valley waterworks. Book given to the Revd W Gabe on his retirement in 1927 after thirty years as Vicar of Cwmdeuddwr (contains a list of parishioners); and Elan Valley Sick Club minute book, 1895–1905 [Acc 2099]

Llanbadarn Fynydd Women's Institute: Minute books, 1958–2010; expenses book, 1987–2001; annual reports, 1958–1986; V.C.O. annual reports, 1962–1965; annual programmes, 1983–2009; various correspondence, 1990–2011 [Acc 2101]

Postcards of Knighton, C20 [Acc 2110]

Elan Estate Terrier Maps and CD with digital images of maps, C19 [Acc 2114]

Records relating to Grosvenor Women's Institute: minute books, 2002–2010; account books, 2003–2008; financial statements, 2005–2009; and folder containing inventory of war memorials; National Needlework Archives project; A&E units in Powys; public meeting & petition and My Place Project, 2002–2007 [Acc 2119]

Various circulars from Old Association of Baptist churches (Radnorshire & Montgomeryshire Baptist Association), 1863–1954 (38 items, some in Welsh); The Montgomery and Radnor Baptist Visitor, 1903–1928 (22 items); *The Crusader*, the monthly organ of the English Assembly of the Baptist Union of Wales and Monmouthshire, 1930–1961 (20 items with gaps) [Acc 2120]

Bound volumes of handbills from Great Western Railway (GWR), 1932–1938 (7 items); bound volume of printed notices to the Central

Wales Division GWR staff entitled 'Notice of Extra Trains', 1937 [Acc 2125]

Radnorshire & Montgomeryshire Baptist Association Annual Report, 2012 [Acc 2128]

Records of the Royal British Legion, Crossgates & District Branch: minute books, 1958–2001 (2 items); photograph album, 1962–2012 [Acc 2132]

Schedule of deeds relating to Maes Gwyn and The Vron estate in the parishes of Disserth and Llansaintfraid in Elvel, Radnorshire, 1865; list of books donated to Somerville College, Oxford with notes on inscriptions relevant to the Powell, Price, Thomas and Moore families, 2012 [Acc 2134]

Llanelwedd Women's Institute: minute book, 2001–2007 [Acc 2135]

The Radnorshire, Montgomeryshire and Breconshire Adult Baptist Choral Festival programmes, 1909–2012 (43 items) & The Radnorshire, Montgomeryshire and Breconshire Baptist Children's Choral Festival programmes, 1925–2007 (22 items) [Acc 2141]

Customer account books, 1935–1939; The Ithonian, 1928–1940 (3 items); inventories of properties in Llandrindod Wells, Radnorshire, 1915–1940 (7 items); sales catalogues for contents of properties in Llandrindod Wells, 1922–1978 (9 items) [Acc 2142]

350 colour slides showing the construction of Clywedog Dam, Radnorshire, c1960s [Acc 2144]

Crossgates Golden Age Club, Radnorshire: committee minutes, 1972–1998, A.G.M. minutes, 1973–2003; photograph album & scrapbook, 1972–2013 [Acc 2150]

Catherine Richards  
Principal Officer Museums and Archives

RADNORSHIRE SOCIETY BALANCE SHEET  
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 SEPTEMBER 2012

<b>INCOME</b>	<b>(2010–11)</b>	
Membership subscriptions		
Society	4,605.14	5,379
Field Section	<u>350.00</u>	<u>4,955.14</u> 330
<i>Transaction Sales</i>	187.00	302
Refund of booking fees	0.00	60
Donations	30.41	45
Building Society Interest (Gross)	133.08	151
Excursion Costs Recovered	<u>1,616.00</u>	<u>1,765</u>
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b><u>6,921.63</u></b>	<b><u>8,032</u></b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>		
Production and distribution of <i>Transactions</i> 2011	2,944.05	7,333
Computer purchase	0.00	400
Purchase of books for Library	100.45	213
Hire Charges – meeting rooms/equipment	168.73	160
Lecture fees/expenses	109.50	163
Rent – Library (Coleg Powys)	75.00	150
Donations – Friends of Radnorshire Museum	200.00	200
Membership of Other Societies		
C.B.A. Wales	22.50	
Br. Association for Local History	58.00	
Cambrian Archaeological Association	<u>26.00</u>	<u>106.50</u> 98
R.W.D. Fenn Award	0.00	250
Field Section Newsletter 2012	283.84	250
Excursion Costs	1,620.00	1,760
Insurance	280.00	280
Administration		
– Stationery, post + printing	494.58	557
– AGM	435.22	455
– Website update/software	<u>0.00</u>	<u>929.80</u> 198
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b><u>6,817.87</u></b>	<b><u>12,467</u></b>
<b>SURPLUS INCOME/EXPENDITURE FOR THE YEAR</b>	<b>£103.76</b>	<b>–(£4,435)</b>
<b>Bank and Building Society balances – 30/09/11</b>	<b>£20,945.20</b>	
	<b>£21,048.96</b>	
<b>End of Year Balances</b>		
<b>MONETARY ASSETS</b>		
As at 30.09.12 Bank	87.44	
Building Society	<u>20,961.52</u>	
	<b>£21,048.96</b>	

Audited and found correct  
Haydn Lewis

Richard C Davies  
Honorary Treasurer  
November 2012



## SADIE COLE: AN APPRECIATION



‘Mourners pay tribute to the remarkable life of Sadie Cole . . .’ Thus begins a local newspaper article on the death of Sadie Cole, our Secretary for almost twenty years. Her death on 4 December 2012 was a sad loss, not only for our Radnorshire Society but for many other organisations and individuals. She was indeed a very special person and her passing has left a gap in our lives.

Sadie was born in Birmingham and, at the age of five, was diagnosed with osteomyelitis in her right leg, a condition which necessitated many long spells in hospital and caused her much pain throughout her life. However, she met the challenges of her health problems with enormous courage. In fact, they made her more determined to succeed in her many interests, which included running Girl Guides and Cubs. She also loved cycling and after work on Friday

afternoons would cycle with friends from Birmingham to spend the weekend in Knighton.

She married Mike in 1956 and whilst still living in Birmingham they became foster parents to many children, at one stage having five children under the age of five. It was at this time that Sadie chose to do a correspondence course which enabled her to go to a teacher training college and become a primary school teacher. They loved to visit Radnorshire on holiday, eventually moving permanently to their niche in the hamlet of Discoed with their two sons in 1976. Teaching children to read was always her speciality and it gave her enormous pleasure, especially when she later taught at Gladestry School. It was said that not a single pupil left her class without being able to read and write.

She loved the area and her Sunday excursions with the Radnorshire Society Field Section led to her becoming its Chairman in 1992. She often said that, as a Birmingham baby, she was weaned on Radnorshire water from the Elan valley and had a special affinity with the county. She frequently organised Field Section activities and played an important part in its success, inspiring members with her enthusiasm.

In 1995 Sadie became the Secretary of the main Radnorshire Society, a post which she held until a year before her death. In appreciation of her

contribution, on her retirement as Secretary Sadie was made a Vice-President. She gave so much time and energy to the smooth running of the Society, always reliable, conscientious and prepared to go the extra mile. She often said that she felt that it was a privilege to serve the Society and to meet so many interesting people. Perhaps one could say that her greatest strength was her sincerity and love of people: she treated everyone the same and was always true to herself and her beliefs.

We were indeed privileged to have had her so long as our Secretary and as a very dear friend.

Anne Goodwin



# FRANK EDWARDS (1852–1927): ‘THE DEBONAIR AND POPULAR MEMBER FOR RADNORSHIRE’<sup>1</sup>

## PART ONE

Gerard Charmley

The latter years of the nineteenth century saw a new generation of Welsh politicians emerge. Young, radical and nationalist, impatient with the ‘respectable dummyism’<sup>2</sup> of their elderly and quiescent predecessors, these men viewed politics as a career in itself, rather than an adjunct to commercial or legal success. They have been called ‘the most brilliant group that ever represented Wales in Parliament’.<sup>3</sup> The most notable were David Lloyd George and Tom Ellis, described by one writer as ‘the national leaders of Wales’,<sup>4</sup> but alongside them served other men of political courage and ability, who would contribute in their own ways to the forging of modern Wales. One of these was Francis Edwards, MP for Radnorshire between 1892 and 1918. Known to his contemporaries as Frank, Edwards played an important role in the counsels of Welsh Liberalism during its late Victorian and Edwardian heyday. Described as ‘one of the most faithful of the Welsh Nationalists’,<sup>5</sup> Edwards, in company with Lloyd George, resigned the Liberal whip in 1894 in protest against the Government’s tardiness in bringing forward a Bill to disestablish the Church in Wales. Despite his Anglicanism, Edwards led Radnorshire’s protests against the 1902 Education Act’s funding of denominational schools, wresting control of the County Council from the Conservatives. After the 1906 Liberal landslide, Edwards was appointed to the Royal Commission created to examine the Church in Wales prior to Disestablishment. Behind the scenes Frank Edwards, personal friend (and frequent golf partner) of Lloyd George, and cousin of Bishop Alfred George Edwards of St Asaph, played a key role in facilitating meetings aimed at reaching a compromise solution to the religious question in Wales. Despite his closeness to Lloyd George, however, Edwards never attained ministerial office, a contemporary accusing Lloyd George of ‘callous treatment’ of Edwards in passing him over.<sup>6</sup> Today, Frank Edwards is remembered only as a relatively insignificant member of the supporting cast of the drama Lloyd George,<sup>7</sup> proof positive that a politician does not always choose his companions in recreation as his associates in power, however loyal and able they may be. What was it that

prevented Frank Edwards from enjoying the reward of loyalty to one of the most powerful men of his age?

Francis Edwards was born at Aberdovey, Merionethshire, on 28 April 1852, fourth son of Edward Edwards, proprietor of the Hand Hotel, Llangollen. The family was steeped in the traditions of Anglicanism, acquiring the title 'the Levitical family of Wales' on account of the number of priests it produced.<sup>8</sup> Frank's uncle was Vicar of Llangollen, officiating in the church which stood behind Edwards's substantial hotel, and among the cousins he played with as a boy were a future Dean of Bangor and Bishop of St Asaph.<sup>9</sup> Frank was educated locally, studying briefly at Shrewsbury School from 1867–8.<sup>10</sup> He went up to Jesus College, Oxford, in 1872, graduating BA in 1875. Although he qualified as a solicitor in 1879 Edwards never practised.<sup>11</sup> In 1880, he married Katherine, daughter of coal-owner David Davis of Maesffynon, Aberdare, renewing a former connection between the families.<sup>12</sup> Frank Edwards put his legal training to use in support of his father-in-law's business, joining the Board of Directors following Davis's death in 1884.<sup>13</sup> This brought him into the public life of the South Wales valleys, where he established himself as a social leader, giving generously to good causes and representing the Davis family at public occasions.<sup>14</sup>

Edwards made his maiden political speech in Dolgellau, Merionethshire, where the Davis family possessed a holiday home. The candidate to whom Edwards lent his support was Tom Ellis, newly selected Liberal candidate for Merionethshire.<sup>15</sup> Son of a tenant farmer, Ellis boasted neither rolling acres nor fortune, but gloried in his humble parentage and Welsh nationality. Frank Edwards, a fluent Welsh speaker and lover of Welsh poetry, was attracted by Ellis's nationalist programme, and the two men became firm friends. Edwards was an early member of the *Cymru Fydd* (Young Wales) Societies, formed under Ellis's tutelage in April 1887, and committed to the creation of 'a National Legislature for Wales'.<sup>16</sup> With the Liberals in Opposition following the schism over Gladstone's plan to grant Home Rule for Ireland, it seemed the time had come to transform the party into the champion of self-government for the Celtic nations. Such plans appealed to Edwards, a member of the Cardiff Cymmrodorion Society and organiser of a similar society in Aberdare.<sup>17</sup>

Frank Edwards's rise to prominence in Liberal circles was swift. In 1887, he was elected to the executive of the South Wales Liberal Federation. In 1890 the Federation appointed him to a committee established to investigate the rural distress attending the Welsh 'Tithe War' of 1889–91, in which Nonconformist tenant farmers refused to pay for the support of the Anglican Church unless the amount asked for was

reduced.<sup>18</sup> The committee accused tithe owners of seizing goods worth more than the arrears of tithe, leading to the establishment of a fund to alleviate distress in the affected areas.<sup>19</sup> It was an indication of the prominence Edwards had attained in the counsels of Welsh Liberalism that he was asked to second a resolution calling for the disestablishment of the Anglican Church in Wales at the 1890 conference of the National Liberal Federation.<sup>20</sup>

In 1887 Edwards unsuccessfully sought nomination for West Denbighshire, a safe Liberal seat represented by an MP who had split from Gladstone over Ireland, losing out to Calvinistic Methodist timber merchant Herbert Roberts.<sup>21</sup> Less than a year later, he was rejected by Carnarvon Boroughs in favour of Baptist solicitor David Lloyd George.<sup>22</sup> When in August 1888 a vacancy occurred in the two-member Merthyr Boroughs seat, of which Aberdare was part, Frank Edwards threw his hat into the ring, and it is to this contest that we owe the first lengthy assessment of Edwards the politician:

Mr. Frank Edwards is regarded as a coming Welsh member, whether he is chosen for Merthyr or not.... He is in appearance, manner of speech and force of language, almost a duplicate of Mr. T. E. Ellis, the member for Merionethshire with whom he is and has been for many years, an intimate friend and co-worker.... He is an advanced Radical, and is a supporter of the Welsh National Programme, believing that the time has arrived for the formation of a Welsh National Party in the House [of Commons] acting on the lines of the Irish party.<sup>23</sup>

Edwards made the shortlist, but was ultimately unsuccessful, the seat going to a former Baptist minister. The part Edwards played in the ill-fated Liberal campaign, however, caused many to wonder whether the Merthyr Boroughs Liberals had chosen the right man.<sup>24</sup> On the strength of this, Edwards and his supporters entertained great hopes when Mid Glamorgan fell vacant in 1890, but he was passed over in favour of Congregationalist lawyer Samuel T Evans.<sup>25</sup> Shortly after this, Edwards was selected for Radnorshire.

One of the few Conservative seats in Wales, Radnorshire had been represented by three generations of the Walsh family since 1840, disturbed by a brief Liberal interlude from 1880 to 1885. Even the local Liberal Association were doubtful; having seen two candidates resign in as many years, they insisted that the successful candidate would have to bear most of the cost of the campaign.<sup>26</sup> Edwards was certain, however, that the seat could be won. Moving to the constituency in March 1890, he purchased

a small estate, taking a long lease on The Cottage, a large house in a commanding position on the outskirts of Knighton. Writing to a friend, Edwards outlined his tactics and prospects:

I keep pegging away at the enemy's stronghold & have held 8 meetings since the 19<sup>th</sup> Jan[uar]y last. They were all well attended & heartily in tune. If meetings were any criterion our chances would be decidedly good. But unhappily the landed interest is against us & the Tories don't scruple to frighten the tenant farmers by saying that the ballot is not secret & they are sure to find out how they voted.<sup>27</sup>

Edwards worked the constituency thoroughly, prominent Liberal MPs speaking regularly on his behalf.<sup>28</sup> By September 1891, the Conservative *Western Mail* reported that the prospects of Arthur Walsh, the sitting member, were not good:

Mr. Edwardes (*sic*), the Radical candidate has considerably strengthened his position in the constituency of late. He works hard to gain the confidence and goodwill of the electors, and is fairly well liked amongst the gentry and landed proprietors of the county. He has taken the most important house in Knighton... and he is ready to attend any number of bazaars, fetes, &c. Not one, but several of the leading Conservatives of Knighton and its districts are beginning to talk of Radnorshire as lost.<sup>29</sup>

The pressure told on Walsh, and on 21 November, he announced his retirement at the next election, citing medical advice.<sup>30</sup> Privately, Walsh confessed that the cost of a contest was more than his strained finances could bear.<sup>31</sup>

Walsh's retirement threw the Radnorshire Conservatives into disorder. Initially Herbert Frankland Lewis, nephew of former MP Sir George Cornwall Lewis, was chosen.<sup>32</sup> Within days he also withdrew on health grounds, Monmouthshire landowner Colonel JA Bradney stepping into the breach.<sup>33</sup> Edwards expressed quiet optimism, observing 'a general feeling' that time was against Bradney.<sup>34</sup> At the General Election of July 1892, Edwards was returned by the healthy majority of 233 votes.<sup>35</sup> Addressing jubilant supporters from the balcony of the Norton Arms Hotel, Knighton, Edwards announced 'Toryism is dead, and yesterday it died a natural death in Radnorshire'.<sup>36</sup>

In common with most Welsh Liberal candidates, Edwards had given the disestablishment of the Anglican Church in Wales a high place in his

programme. The Liberals had placed this second to Irish Home Rule in the Newcastle Programme, on which they had fought the election.<sup>37</sup> At their first meeting after the election, the Welsh Liberal MPs, collectively known as the Welsh party, passed a resolution expressing their determination to ensure Disestablishment was a Government priority.<sup>38</sup>

The resolution was necessitated by mixed signals expressed by those close to the Liberal leadership. During the election, an article in the *Nineteenth Century* had described the Newcastle Programme as a ‘confession of faith’, likely to be altered or abandoned in the face of the realities of Government. In a letter to TE Ellis, Edwards had deplored these sentiments, calling for determined action on the part of Welsh MPs:

We ought to contend that the placing of Disest[ablishment] immediately after [Irish] Home Rule is something more than a mere formal programme, for if it is this only then we have been wilfully misled by the party leaders.... Beware of the leaders. The old man [Gladstone] is resolute as you know & he is astute. We must be the same & obtain definite & real pledges before we consent to you tying your hands.<sup>39</sup>

The fear of Ellis’s hands being tied came to the fore after the election, when the Member for Merionethshire was offered a junior Government post, with the accompanying limitations imposed by collective responsibility.<sup>40</sup> Lloyd George and Herbert Lewis, the newly elected MP for Flintshire, joined Edwards in cautioning Ellis against accepting office without first securing guarantees that Gladstone would treat Welsh Disestablishment as a priority.<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless Ellis accepted the post of Second Whip without setting definite conditions, in the belief that he could ‘...be more serviceable to Wales and the Welsh party’ in the Government than outside.<sup>42</sup>

Early indications were promising; Stuart Rendel, Chairman of the Welsh party, secured a promise of legislation to pave the way for Disestablishment, and a Royal Commission to investigate land tenure in Wales.<sup>43</sup> By February 1893, however, it was clear that the Royal Commission’s report would be slow in coming and the bill to prevent the creation of new interests in the Church in Wales pending Disestablishment had failed for lack of time. In an attempt to clarify the situation, Rendel approached Frank Edwards for help in drafting a letter to the Prime Minister, reminding him of the position Disestablishment had occupied in the Liberal programme.<sup>44</sup>

Gladstone’s reply, that the Newcastle Programme did not dictate the order of the Government’s legislative agenda, seemed to confirm

Edwards's worst fears.<sup>45</sup> At the 15 August meeting of the Welsh party David Randell, MP for Gower, proposed secession from the Liberal Party.<sup>46</sup> Although not present, Edwards subsequently expressed support for the proposal, joining, among others, the Senior Member for Merthyr Boroughs and Welsh party Whip, coalowner DA Thomas.<sup>47</sup> Rivalry between Lloyd George and DA Thomas over who was to be the leading spokesman for the Welsh nationalist agenda led to the defeat of this proposal, only five MPs, including Edwards, ultimately voting for secession.<sup>48</sup> The majority of Welsh Members agreed to postpone the question until the Government announced its 1894 programme.<sup>49</sup>

Seismic changes had occurred in the Government by the time Parliament re-assembled for the 1894 session. Gladstone had retired, and the Earl of Rosebery ascended to the premiership. Ellis became Chief Whip, while Rendel was elevated to the Lords, his place as Welsh party Chairman being taken by Sir George Osborne Morgan, a former Law Officer. Edwards was chosen as one of the Welsh party's Whips, replacing DA Thomas, for whom he had deputised during the 1893 session.<sup>50</sup> In his new role, Frank Edwards took a leading part in the effort to secure assurances from senior Government figures that Disestablishment would be given a prominent place in the new Government's programme.<sup>51</sup> The lack of enthusiasm displayed by senior Government figures raised fears of an imminent breach between the Liberal Party and the Welsh Members.<sup>52</sup> When the Government programme was announced, Disestablishment was placed behind several other bills. Frank Edwards, with DA Thomas and Lloyd George, at once resigned the Liberal Whip, announcing their intention to obstruct Government business unless Disestablishment was given priority.<sup>53</sup> While other Welsh MPs expressed dissatisfaction, they refused to follow suit.<sup>54</sup>

Lacking support from their colleagues, the rebels returned to their constituencies to gauge support for their actions. The Chairman of the Radnorshire Liberal Association assured Edwards of the support of his constituents, but added, somewhat to Edwards's bemusement, that a meeting to ascertain this was unnecessary.<sup>55</sup> In contrast, DA Thomas and Lloyd George addressed meetings within days of the revolt's outbreak.<sup>56</sup> These meetings overwhelmingly approved the action of the MPs, Lloyd George confidently predicting others would join them.<sup>57</sup>

Frank Edwards took a prominent role in justifying the revolt to his fellow Welsh MPs (perhaps because, in contrast to DA Thomas and Lloyd George, he was not suspected of wanting to lead them), being chosen Whip to the rebel group.<sup>58</sup> His clashes with Major Evan Rowland Jones, MP for Carmarthen Boroughs, one of the leading opponents of the revolt,<sup>59</sup> drew praise from Lloyd George:

Frank is a 'stickler' .... He is fully satisfied with the situation & feels that we are standing on a rock.... The Major is quite miserable about his attitude, He is thoroughly ashamed of himself – that is my opinion. Frank made him look very foolish this afternoon in a talk with them.<sup>60</sup>

At the Welsh party meeting on 23 April, Edwards acted as spokesman for the rebels, challenging the party to condemn the revolt.<sup>61</sup> Significantly, they failed to do so.<sup>62</sup>

The Government's introduction of a Disestablishment Bill on 26 April, buttressed by assurances that it would be carried through all its stages, tempted Edwards to abandon the revolt. It was only with 'the greatest difficulty' that Lloyd George convinced him the revolt should continue until the Bill had passed the Commons.<sup>63</sup> Having bolstered Frank Edwards's courage, Lloyd George accompanied him to Knighton, addressing the first revolt meeting in Radnorshire.<sup>64</sup> The audience's reaction encouraged Lloyd George to dream of 'an independent party at the next election'.<sup>65</sup>

This was little more than pious hope. Vigorous lobbying of sympathetic MPs brought only one further accession to the revolt, John Herbert Lewis.<sup>66</sup> At Edwards's suggestion Evan Spicer, brother of Monmouth Boroughs MP Albert Spicer, was asked to contest Tory-held Montgomery Boroughs as a Revolt candidate. However, he declined the invitation, pleading lack of time.<sup>67</sup> Nevertheless, the enthusiastic reception accorded the rebel MPs throughout the Principality indicated that their attitude had struck a chord with the Welsh public.<sup>68</sup>

The floundering parliamentary opposition to the revolt ended in farce, when a meeting of the Welsh party convened to condemn the rebels collapsed after Major Jones got blind drunk the day before and so was unable to appear.<sup>69</sup> This meeting proved the rebellion's high point. Although the Disestablishment Bill failed to complete its progress through the Commons before the summer recess, the Government's promise that Disestablishment would be the first measure of the 1895 session removed the revolvers' ability to accuse the Government of breaking faith with Wales.<sup>70</sup> The best the rebels could do was claim credit for the promise.<sup>71</sup>

Although the rebellion did not give birth to an independent Welsh Party on Irish lines, it breathed fresh life into the near-moribund Cymru Fydd movement. The chief movers were Lloyd George and Herbert Lewis, but Edwards took part in the initial stages, asking Barry-based journalist (and future MP) W Llewelyn Williams to become Cymru Fydd organiser for South Wales.<sup>72</sup> Edwards's involvement was not of long duration, and by October 1894 Lloyd George was lamenting Edwards's failure to join the



movement, a circumstance which he attributed to '...the very malign influence of D. A. T[homas]'.<sup>73</sup> President of the South Wales Liberal Federation, Thomas saw Cymru Fydd as a threat to his own powerbase.<sup>74</sup> Edwards, possessing a foot in both camps, stood aloof from the conflict between Thomas and Lloyd George over Welsh Liberal organisation.

The early months of 1895 were largely occupied with the Second Welsh Disestablishment Bill.<sup>75</sup> Edwards, one of the tellers for the Welsh party,<sup>76</sup> delivered a strong critique of the Anglican Church in Wales, despite his denominational affiliation:

...the Church only ministered to a minority of the people in Wales...and did not comprise the mass of the people who had the future of the Principality in their hands.<sup>77</sup>

Edwards added that the Church had declined to a minority position in Radnorshire within the past thirty years.<sup>78</sup> Using his adherence to the Anglican Church as a defence against charges of sectarian bigotry, Edwards blamed the Church's decline on state control, asserting that disestablishment would benefit it. He consciously echoed Gladstone's prediction that, while disestablishment would mean death for the Church in Wales, this would be followed by triumphant resurrection.<sup>79</sup>

Whilst allowing Welsh MPs to deliver eloquent addresses on the superiority of Voluntary over the Established churches, the Bill became mired in disputes over the allocation of the Church in Wales's assets following disestablishment. Edwards strenuously opposed DA Thomas's proposal to allocate secularised Church endowments on a population basis, preferring a county allocation, which would operate to Radnorshire's advantage.<sup>80</sup> Despite this, local Conservatives accused Edwards of wishing to divert Radnorshire money to Aberdare.<sup>81</sup> Edwards's stance brought about reconciliation with Lloyd George, like Edwards MP for a county which would lose out under Thomas's proposals; by May, Lloyd George believed that he and Edwards were '...now fast friends'.<sup>82</sup>

The slender Government majority, coupled with adamant Conservative opposition and the decision of Liberal rebels to pursue their own agendas guaranteed the Bill a stormy passage through the Commons.<sup>83</sup> By 14 June 1895, however, Frank Edwards was able to describe the outlook as 'more relieved than it has been lately'.<sup>84</sup> Seven days later, the Government was defeated on a snap vote of censure over an alleged shortage of ammunition. A few days later, weary of office, they resigned.<sup>85</sup>

The Government's unexpected fall left Edwards to face the electors of Radnorshire without the Disestablishment Bill he had fought so hard to



obtain. Opposing him was William Powlett Milbank of Norton Manor. Nephew of the Duke of Cleveland, Milbank had purchased the estate from the trustees of his late father-in-law in 1892.<sup>86</sup> He had assiduously courted the constituency, and his supporters entertained high hopes that the Radnorshire farmers would revert to their old allegiance.

The campaign was a hard one, Edwards informing one well-wisher ‘...I have been too busy almost to breathe. I am at it all day & every day’.<sup>87</sup> Frank Edwards was acutely conscious of his vulnerability, confessing in a letter to Lloyd George written in the wake of results indicating a Conservative landslide:

We are having a hard struggle here: the utter collapse of Harcourt & Roe<sup>88</sup> at Derby & Roscoe in M’chester<sup>89</sup> discourages us tremendously.<sup>90</sup>

Lloyd George and Herbert Lewis travelled to Knighton to shore up Edwards’s support, the former cutting short his victory celebrations to do so.<sup>91</sup> Edwards attempted to contact every Liberal with a vote in the constituency, including Radnorshire émigrés in London.<sup>92</sup> These efforts proved insufficient to stem the Conservative tide, however, and Edwards was defeated by eighty-one votes.<sup>93</sup>

Edwards felt cheated, writing to Herbert Lewis:

We have succumbed to beer, bribery, Parish Councils, landlord pressure & the asylum. It is disappointing I admit, but we must take our correction mildly, kiss the rod.

My chief regret is losing you & George’s company. My public life is at an end. I could not take any other seat.... In Presteigne we have no sort of capable leaders: consequently I was beaten there by 2 to 1. And the present leaders are so self-satisfied that a change is impossible.<sup>94</sup>

A number of influential Liberal gentry had retired from politics, to the detriment of the Liberal Association.<sup>95</sup> This caused Edwards to conclude gloomily:

...Radnorshire is lost for good to the Liberals. I am awfully sorry for my friends who have done so much for us. They take the defeat much more to heart than I do.<sup>96</sup>

Others were less sure of the permanency of Edwards’s eclipse, one of Tom Ellis’s friends predicting ‘he will sweep the 80 adverse vote in no time at

the next election'.<sup>97</sup> Certainly, Edwards remained prominent in the county, serving as High Sheriff in 1898.<sup>98</sup>

Parliament was not forgotten either. When Sir George Osborne Morgan died in August 1897, Frank Edwards was among those nominated to fill the vacancy.<sup>99</sup> He lost out to Samuel Moss, a Congregationalist and leader of the Denbighshire County Council.<sup>100</sup> On the tragically early death of Tom Ellis in April 1899, Edwards was seen as his most likely successor.<sup>101</sup> He declined, however, citing his desire to regain Radnorshire as motivation.<sup>102</sup>

Edwards remained prominently before the Radnorshire electors, in August 1900 laying the foundation stones of the new Bwlch-y-Sarnau Baptist Chapel with DA Thomas, whose father-in-law lived at nearby Pen Ithon.<sup>103</sup> Lloyd George paid Edwards a visit, addressing a public meeting at Knighton by way of part fulfilment of the debt he felt to Edwards for having 'stuck like a brick during the revolt'.<sup>104</sup> The outbreak of the Boer War in October 1899 brought the two men closer, Edwards, like Lloyd George, criticising the Government's conduct leading up to the war. Like DA Thomas Edwards insisted that 'all must stand shoulder to shoulder' behind the troops after war was declared.<sup>105</sup> Nevertheless, Kenneth O Morgan has identified Edwards as among those candidates at the 'Khaki Election' of October 1900 '...so consistently scathing in their criticisms of the conduct of the war by the British Government that they might be held to be very close to the "pro-Boer" position'.<sup>106</sup>

Events conspired to favour Edwards's chances. In April 1900 Milbank announced his intention to retire at the next election on grounds of ill-health.<sup>107</sup> In his place the Conservatives chose Captain Charles Leyshon Venables Llewelyn, son of Swansea MP Sir John Llewelyn, and son-in-law of the Revd Richard Lister Venables of Llysddinam Hall. Liberal commentators saw an echo of 1892 in Milbank's retirement, the *Brecon and Radnor Express* predicting that Llewelyn would '...meet with the same fate as befell Col. Bradney, and that Mr. Frank Edwards will again be MP for Radnorshire'.<sup>108</sup>

The contest was fierce, Edwards concentrating on land reform, disestablishment and 'the deplorable war in South Africa', warning that the embrace of militarism would be the first step on the road to disaster for the British Empire.<sup>109</sup> Llewelyn concentrated his fire on Edwards's 'unpatriotic' attitude to the war, and hinted that Edwards was not being wholly honest about the Liberal attitude to Irish Home Rule.<sup>110</sup> Llewelyn's uncle, Cabinet Minister Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, appeared with Milbank on Conservative platforms, while Lloyd George spoke for Edwards, confidently informing his wife: 'Looks as if Frank is going to win'.<sup>111</sup>

Lloyd George was correct, although Edwards's majority of 166 over Llewelyn fell short of his 1892 winning margin.<sup>112</sup> Nevertheless, Radnorshire Liberals enthusiastically celebrated Edwards's victory, holding a torchlight procession through Llandrindod Wells in his honour.<sup>113</sup> The celebrations were marred by violence: a Conservative heckler, raising a Union Flag in the midst of the Liberal throng, had it snatched from his grasp and burned, prompting a free fight between Liberals and Conservatives. '[E]ggs and tomatoes', the *Radnorshire Standard* reported, 'were flying in all directions, and fists were freely used'.<sup>114</sup> In the United Kingdom as a whole, the Conservatives were once more returned to power with a large majority. However, Wales registered a noticeable swing back towards the Liberals, who made a net gain of three seats, including Sir John Llewelyn's in Swansea.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Alfred T Davies, *The Lloyd George I Knew* (London, 1948), p. 122.

<sup>2</sup> This term was used by Lloyd George to describe the previous generation of Welsh MPs in a letter to Ellis before the latter was selected Parliamentary candidate for Merionethshire. (N[ational] L[ibrary of] W[ales]: TE Ellis Papers 678: David Lloyd George to TE Ellis, 12 June 1886).

<sup>3</sup> NLW: Sir John Herbert Lewis Papers B80: Typescript reminiscences of political life, 1892–5.

<sup>4</sup> W Hughes Jones, *Wales Drops the Pilots* (London, no date), p. 7.

<sup>5</sup> Harold Spender, *The Prime Minister* (New York, 1920), p. 132.

<sup>6</sup> Davies, Lloyd George, p. 122.

<sup>7</sup> John Grigg, *The Young Lloyd George* (London, 1973), pp. 118–9; Roy Hattersley, *The Great Outsider: David Lloyd George* (London, 2011), p. 155.

<sup>8</sup> George Letty, *Alfred George Edwards* (Oswestry, no date), p. 11.

<sup>9</sup> Politics may also have run in the blood; William Edwards, another clerical cousin, was grandfather to Nicholas Edwards (Lord Crickhowell), Mrs. Thatcher's first Secretary of State for Wales. (Nicholas Crickhowell, *Westminster, Wales and Water* (Cardiff, 1999), p. 3.)

<sup>10</sup> I am indebted to Mike Morrogh, Archivist at Shrewsbury School, for this information.

<sup>11</sup> *Brecon & Radnor Express*, 12 May 1927.

<sup>12</sup> Henry T Edwards, future Dean of Bangor, had married Mary, eldest daughter of David Davis in 1867. She died after a prolonged illness in 1871. (David Jones (ed.), *Wales and the Welsh Church: Papers by Henry T. Edwards*, MA (London, 1889), p. 22.)

<sup>13</sup> *The Times*, 17 October 1900.

<sup>14</sup> *Western Mail*, 1 October 1888.

<sup>15</sup> NLW: E Vincent Evans Papers N30: Frank Edwards Autobiographical fragment, c.1907.

<sup>16</sup> Edgar L Chappell, *Wake Up, Wales! A Survey of Welsh Home Rule Activities* (London, 1943), pp. 21–2.

<sup>17</sup> Cardiff Central Library: Cochfarf Papers: Frank Edwards to Cochfarf, 13 December 1888.

<sup>18</sup> NLW: E Vincent Evans Papers N30.

<sup>19</sup> *Wrexham Advertiser and North Wales News*, 11 January 1890; *Western Mail*, 29 July 1890.

<sup>20</sup> *Western Mail*, 18 July 1890.

<sup>21</sup> *Wrexham Advertiser and North Wales News*, 17 December 1887.

<sup>22</sup> T Marchant Williams, *The Welsh Members of Parliament 1894* (Cardiff, 1894), p. 15.

<sup>23</sup> *South Wales Daily News*, 25 September 1888.

<sup>24</sup> *South Wales Daily News*, 6 October 1888; *Western Mail*, 17 October 1888.

<sup>25</sup> NLW: TE Ellis Papers 371: John Duncan to TE Ellis, 20 January 1890; *Western Mail*, 25 January 1890.

<sup>26</sup> NLW: Rendel Papers IX 346: Leif Jones to Stuart Rendel, 7 June 1889.

<sup>27</sup> NLW: E Vincent Evans Papers A 186: Francis Edwards to Vincent Evans, 26 March 1890.

<sup>28</sup> NLW: Rendel Papers IX 389: Francis Edwards to Stuart Rendel, 26 April 1892.

<sup>29</sup> *Western Mail*, 30 September 1891.

<sup>30</sup> *Liverpool Mercury*, 21 November 1891.

<sup>31</sup> NLW: Llysdyham Papers B940: Arthur Walsh to George Lister Venables, 3 November 1891.

<sup>32</sup> *The Times*, 11 February 1892; *Morning Post*, 30 March 1892.

<sup>33</sup> *Liverpool Mercury*, 13 April 1892; *Western Mail*, 22 April 1892.

<sup>34</sup> NLW: Rendel Papers IX 389: Frank Edwards to Stuart Rendel, 30 April 1892.

<sup>35</sup> *Pall Mall Gazette*, 13 July 1892.

<sup>36</sup> *Brecon and Radnor Express*, 15 July 1892.

<sup>37</sup> *Brecon and Radnor Express*, 1 July 1892.

<sup>38</sup> NLW: Sir John Herbert Lewis Papers C1: Welsh party minutes, 8 August 1892.

<sup>39</sup> NLW: TE Ellis Papers 478: Frank Edwards to TE Ellis, 22 May 1892.

<sup>40</sup> NLW: E Morgan Humphries Papers A/2264a: Biographical Sketch of TE Ellis by Herbert Lewis, p. 6.

<sup>41</sup> NLW: Sir John Herbert Lewis Papers D27/2: notes of a conversation between Herbert Lewis and Lloyd George, July 1892.

<sup>42</sup> NLW MS 5849B: TE Ellis to Thomas Jones, Brynmelyn, 17 August 1892.

<sup>43</sup> NLW: Gee Papers 8308D 274: Stuart Rendel to Thomas Gee, 30 October 1892.

<sup>44</sup> NLW: Rendel Papers IX 67: Frank Edwards to Stuart Rendel, 21 March 1893.

<sup>45</sup> NLW: Sir John Herbert Lewis Papers C1: WE Gladstone to Stuart Rendel, 5 July 1893.

<sup>46</sup> NLW: Sir John Herbert Lewis Papers C1: Welsh party minutes, 15 August 1893.

<sup>47</sup> W Llewelyn Williams, 'Political Life' in Margaret Rhondda (ed.), *D. A. Thomas: Viscount Rhondda* (London, 1921), p. 64.

<sup>48</sup> NLW: William George Papers 194: David Lloyd George to William George, 31 August 1893.

<sup>49</sup> NLW: Sir John Herbert Lewis Papers C1: Welsh party minutes, 1 September 1893.

<sup>50</sup> NLW: Rendel Papers IX 68: John Herbert Lewis to Stuart Rendel, 24 March 1893; Sir John Herbert Lewis Papers C1: Welsh party minutes, 12 March 1894.

<sup>51</sup> *South Wales Daily News*, 9 March; *Western Mail*, 16 March 1894.

<sup>52</sup> NLW: William George Papers 245: David Lloyd George to William George, 3 March 1894.

<sup>53</sup> *South Wales Daily News*, 14 April 1894.

<sup>54</sup> *Pall Mall Gazette*, 14 April 1894.

<sup>55</sup> NLW: E Vincent Evans Papers A187: Frank Edwards to Vincent Evans, 21 April 1894.

<sup>56</sup> *Western Mail*, 18 April 1894.

<sup>57</sup> Glamorgan Archives: Pontypridd Papers IV.i.78: David Lloyd George to Alfred Thomas, 22 April 1894.

<sup>58</sup> Herbert Du Parcq, *Life of David Lloyd George* (London, 1912), vol. 1, p. 160.

<sup>59</sup> A descendant of eighteenth-century Methodist leader Daniel Rowland, Evan Rowland Jones owed his rank to service in the Union armies during the American Civil War. (See Evan Rowland Jones, *Four Years in the Army of the Potomac: A Soldier's Recollections* (London, c.1890)).

<sup>60</sup> NLW MS 204NLW MS 2041C 419: David Lloyd George to Margaret Lloyd George, 23 April 1894.

<sup>61</sup> NLW MS 204NLW MS 2041C 420: David Lloyd George to Margaret Lloyd George, 24 April 1894.

<sup>62</sup> NLW: William George Papers 256: David Lloyd George to William George, 24 April 1894.

<sup>63</sup> NLW: William George Papers 257: David Lloyd George to William George, 28 April 1894.

<sup>64</sup> NLW: William George Papers 257: David Lloyd George to William George, 28 April 1894.

<sup>65</sup> NLW MS 20412C: David Lloyd George to Margaret Lloyd George, 3 May 1894.

<sup>66</sup> *Western Mail*, 5 May 1894.

<sup>67</sup> NLW MS 23666: Evan Spicer to David Lloyd George, 1 June 1894.

<sup>68</sup> *Morning Post*, 17, 18, 28 May, 5 June 1894; *Liverpool Mercury*, 21, 22 May 1894; *Western Mail*, 5 June 1894.

<sup>69</sup> NLW: William George Papers 260: David Lloyd George to William George, 25 May 1894. Alfred Thomas, a moderate nationalist, was to have moved the censure motion, and Major Jones was to second it. Without Jones present, Lloyd George was able to persuade Alfred Thomas to remove any reference to the rebellion from the resolution, effectively neutering it.

<sup>70</sup> *North Wales Chronicle*, 26 May 1894; *Western Mail*, 2 June 1894; *Dundee Courier & Argus*, 13 July 1894.

<sup>71</sup> Williams, 'Political Life', *D.A. Thomas*, pp. 65–6.

<sup>72</sup> NLW: Sir John Herbert Lewis Papers A2/9: John Herbert Lewis to W Llewelyn Williams, July 1894.

<sup>73</sup> NLW: Sir John Herbert Lewis Papers D30/19: Lloyd George to Herbert Lewis, 13 October 1894.

<sup>74</sup> Margaret Rhondda, *This Was My World* (London, 1933), p. 186.

<sup>75</sup> NLW: W Llewelyn Williams Papers A1/1: diary entry, 25 February 1895.

<sup>76</sup> NLW: Sir John Herbert Lewis Papers A1/72: Sir George Osborne Morgan to John Herbert Lewis, 1 February 1895.

<sup>77</sup> *Western Mail*, 26 February 1895.

<sup>78</sup> *Liverpool Mercury*, 27 February 1895.

<sup>79</sup> *Wrexham Advertiser and North Wales News*, 2 March 1895.

- <sup>80</sup> *Western Mail*, 26 February 1895.
- <sup>81</sup> *Brecon & Radnor Express*, 12 July 1895.
- <sup>82</sup> NLW: William George Papers 305: David Lloyd George to William George, 4 May 1895.
- <sup>83</sup> AST Griffith-Boscawen, *Fourteen Years in Parliament* (London, 1907), pp. 71–2.
- <sup>84</sup> NLW: Sir John Herbert Lewis Papers A1/85: Frank Edwards to John Herbert Lewis, 14 June 1895.
- <sup>85</sup> *Western Mail*, 24 June 1895.
- <sup>86</sup> *Morning Post*, 26 June 1895; Michael Tree & Mark Baker, *Forgotten Welsh Houses* (Aberystwyth, 2008), p. 115.
- <sup>87</sup> NLW: DR Daniel Papers 2809: Frank Edwards to DR Daniel, 11 July 1895.
- <sup>88</sup> Sir William Harcourt and Thomas Roe, MPs for the two-Member Derby constituency.
- <sup>89</sup> Sir Henry Roscoe, MP for Manchester South.
- <sup>90</sup> NLW: William George Papers 4941: Frank Edwards to David Lloyd George, 15 July 1895.
- <sup>91</sup> *Wrexham Advertiser and North Wales Daily News*, 27 July 1895; *North Wales Chronicle*, 27 July 1895.
- <sup>92</sup> NLW: E Vincent Evans A189: Frank Edwards to Vincent Evans, 22 July 1895.
- <sup>93</sup> *Bristol Mercury & Daily Post*, 26 July 1895.
- <sup>94</sup> NLW: Sir John Herbert Lewis Papers A1/88: Frank Edwards to John Herbert Lewis, 27 July 1895.
- <sup>95</sup> Parker, *Parties, Polls and Riots*, p. 97.
- <sup>96</sup> NLW: Sir John Herbert Lewis Papers A1/88: Frank Edwards to John Herbert Lewis, 27 July 1895.
- <sup>97</sup> NLW: TE Ellis Papers 3680: Andreas Roberts to TE Ellis, 27 July 1895.
- <sup>98</sup> NLW: Sir John Herbert Lewis Papers A1/96: Frank Edwards to John Herbert Lewis, 3 April 1898.
- <sup>99</sup> *Pall Mall Gazette*, 4 September 1897.
- <sup>100</sup> David W Bebbington, *Congregational Members of Parliament in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 2007), p. 57.
- <sup>101</sup> *Western Mail*, 11 April 1899.
- <sup>102</sup> *Western Mail*, 15 April 1899.
- <sup>103</sup> Foundation stones, Bwlch-y-Sarnau Baptist Chapel.
- <sup>104</sup> NLW: William George Papers 863: David Lloyd George to William George, no date.
- <sup>105</sup> *Western Mail*, 20 October 1899.
- <sup>106</sup> Kenneth O Morgan, 'Wales and the Boer War', *Modern Wales: Politics, Places and People* (Cardiff, 1995), p. 50.
- <sup>107</sup> *Western Mail*, 4 April 1900.
- <sup>108</sup> *Brecon and Radnor Express*, 14 April 1900.
- <sup>109</sup> *Brecon & Radnor Express*, 29 September, 4 October 1900.
- <sup>110</sup> *Western Mail*, 4 October 1900.
- <sup>111</sup> NLW MS 20423C 1033: David Lloyd George to Margaret Lloyd George, 11 October 1900.
- <sup>112</sup> *Western Mail*, 12 October 1900.
- <sup>113</sup> *Western Mail*, 16 October 1900.
- <sup>114</sup> *Radnorshire Standard*, 17 October 1900.

## FROM FLINT TO SHALE

Michael Berkeley

I wrote the following essay in 1984 for Richard Mabey's Common Ground book, *Second Nature*. Now, getting on for thirty years later, I have just re-trodden my journey from north Norfolk to the Welsh Marches.

So many of the sensations and sensibilities remain similar: my delight in the contrasting landscapes and in the people that work both sea and soil.

Since the National Trust has taken over guardianship of Blakeney Point and its access creeks, marshes and harbour, the landscape there is safeguarded.

So the changes are nature's own – the creek to Blakeney Quay is completely silted up and all boat trips now go from Morston, my home port, as it were, from where I worked with Jimbo Temple on Temple's Boats for several happy years. Jimbo still runs a thriving business but, where he used to land you on the point for walks and picnics, these days he more frequently provides seal-watching trips.

That north Norfolk coast, with its salt marshes, is beautiful thanks to a coastal strip, whereas the Welsh Marches have a much wider area to boast, since going west you are soon climbing the Cambrian Mountains, and going to the Welsh coast you skirt the southern perimeter of Snowdonia National Park. But for all its unspoilt, unpopulated, lyrical wildness this area seems more under threat than its Norfolk sister. Wind turbines, pylons and cables threaten a landscape that has remained largely unadulterated for centuries.

In the intervening years since 1984 our farm has grown exponentially; Jimbo (and the ferries) have been replaced by Steven Morgan (and tractors) as my partners in crime, and we run sheep and cattle over nearly 500 acres. We grow our own winter feed so we have 90 acres of arable land. My involvement with the land, and particularly this land and landscape in mid Wales, is a potent force in colouring the palette of inspiration that allows, indeed forces, me to commit notes to paper. Many hours of solitary walking and hill-climbing sort out my ideas and, away from my desk and piano, I am nourished by the quiet, wild and, for now, largely undisturbed lyricism of these 'blue remembered hills'.

In winter, the only visible inhabitants of the bleak salt marshes of the north Norfolk coast are sea birds, scuttling gillies (small, evil-looking crabs) and, when the tide is out, the occasional fisherman stooped over a fork and bucket. He works his way across the mud flats leaving little heaps of mud like the droppings of a large animal. He is digging for lugworms which he will need on the next tide when he puts to sea in search of elusive shoals of mackerel. Frequently he will fish for several hours and return with only a handful of dabs and black gillies. The good days are becoming increasingly rare, though when he does hit a shoal there is still the old excitement. For a few moments the world seems to go mad with a dozen flashing streaks of silver to every line. Then, as swiftly as it began, the turmoil will cease apart of course from the thrashing haul on the rough deck.

Now the sea returns to its usual leaden black, an eerie mirror for the chilled, magnificent light so essential to this landscape and its sounds – the lonely cries of gulls, peewits, curlew and, inevitably, the wailing wind. And what a wind it can be as it swipes across the punished flats; for the land is all too vulnerable to a merciless sea which fingers its way across the mud in a series of creeks. Occasionally the wind, moon and sea join forces and then the menace of a flood is born. Not content with the sodden marsh the sea gallops up the lane and rushes through the already salt-encrusted gardens.

One year it came at night, dismissed the dyke as though it were some childish seaside dam and plucked whole families from their beds. Even houses quite far inland had water up to the mantelpiece and to this day the salt has played havoc with the mortar, bricks and plaster.

The fishermen view the prospect of drowning at sea with a ‘fair play’ philosophy; hardly any of them know how to swim and they treat any suggestion of learning with derision. Maybe the centuries of hardship have washed away the notion of the sea as a source of pleasure, or perhaps they feel that to fight against death by drowning only makes that death more terrible. However, they do not extend this stoicism to their families and on that terrible night the sea violated the rules and in drowning their wives and children seemed to tear the heart out of the land. But life here has always been fairly hard and led from hand to mouth. It produces a people not given to great generosity but of fierce spirit and courage. These are the inhabitants of Crabbe’s *The Borough* and it is not uncommon to see a tortured, shunned character, a ‘lost, lone man, so harass’d and undone’. If productions of Britten’s *Peter Grimes* sometimes disguise the mad violence it is nevertheless there in the score. Indeed, the turbulence of the storm-tossed sea is the mirror image of the tormented Grimes, and Britten recognised in his schizophrenic character the duplicity of the ocean. Could



the full force of a North Sea gale have been so tellingly portrayed by someone who had not stood in the face of it and felt the exhilaration and terror, the almost magnetic force that draws you to the water and compels you to touch? It's the vertiginous sensation that Debussy captures so overwhelmingly and yet so subtly in *La Mer* and it's the feeling of powerlessness that catches your breath when you see sailors desperately hauling a line in a Turner storm.

That Crabbe, Debussy and Britten were there in the teeth of a gale you know as surely as you know that Monet lived with his water lilies or Degas with his dancers, and that the blackness of a squally sky was as menacing to Turner as were the black crows to Van Gogh. While wonderful things have been created from the pure and abstract imagination, there does remain a special quality of communication which comes only from direct experience. It is the becoming a part of your landscape as opposed to merely witnessing it. This also true of abstract art in as much as the power of a Jackson Pollock canvas does not rely on a recognition of its starting point. But there remains in its abstraction something private where in realism we can all share.

An absorption of a particular atmosphere is often equated to the degree of familiarity. Britten, for instance, heard and was transfixed by the Gamelan music of Bali and its exotic sounds are evident in his later works, but it is not in his blood – or the music's blood – and does not strike you with the same impact as does the presence of the North Sea and the east coast of England, though had he encountered Gamelan at an earlier age it might also have become an intrinsic part of his make-up.

Timing is everything. In 1956 when I was eight years old my parents bought one of those salt-encrusted cottages on the north Norfolk coast. It was, appropriately, called Cold Blow and lay just outside a village called Morston. You could rule an uninterrupted line between it and the North Pole. Even at that tender age it was an awe-inspiring place to spend your childhood. Those are the years when places steal a particular affection in the memory and are consulted and compared for the rest of life. On our first visit to the marsh we stood for a moment in wonder before getting down to the serious business of mud, sand, boats and sea.

After three years of exploring the marsh I got my first and happiest job. Having learnt to navigate the complex channels and currents I became a boatman ferrying bird-watchers and holiday-makers down the twisting creek and across the temperamental channel to Blakeney Point – a sandy, dune-covered bird sanctuary which juts out from the coast and is an island except at very low tide, when you can walk across the shoulder joint where it meets the coast some two miles below Morston.

When the tide was out the would-be traveller who wished to travel from Morston rather than Blakeney had to walk the slimy marsh since the creek would be completely empty. Quite how severely the sea dictated our fortunes became all too clear while I sat for several hours on a cold seashore longing for a hot drink and, occasionally, a bit of cover. Not to mention the two occasions on which I nearly drowned.

Cold Blow was sold when I was eighteen but because of the initial excitement about freedom from school and the prospect of foreign travel I did not at first notice the gap it was to make in my life.

Now was the time for the intoxication of new smells, colours and animals: the unforgettable sensation, as you land in Africa, of a wall of heat hitting you like a bomb blast. I was so fascinated by this that I found the one hotel in Dar-es-Salaam that had air conditioning, then walked in and out of the reception area to savour the experience. In the hall of this impossibly grand hotel there were little morsels of paw-paw liberally doused with fresh lime juice. It was the one luxury I allowed myself – to go into the cool air of the hotel and the unbelievably refreshing paw-paw and, when thoroughly cool, plunge once again into the exhilaratingly dry heat.

It was from a whole series of contrasting tableaux around the world that I gathered the musical stimulation I have always needed from a landscape. Back in London I would draw on these images and, as a writer keeps a diary or an artist a sketchbook, so I kept a notebook into which went hundreds of fragments: the sounds of new continents and the ideas that those sounds suggested to me. Sometimes sitting in some ravishing setting – under a baobab tree near a Masai village in Kenya or on the coral beaches of the Comoro Islands in the Indian Ocean – I would simply scribble whatever notes came into my head and now, when I look at these portraits, the sound jogs the visual memory and I can transport myself back to small pockets of exoticism. When you rely on your ears, silence and tranquillity are essential and it was invariably in sparsely populated and rather desolate areas that ideas came to me. Back at home the synthesis began: from a walking expedition in Greece, snatches of ancient folk tunes became *Variations on Greek Folk Songs* for unaccompanied viola. The bleached dusty plains between Cordoba and Granada set the tone for *Iberian Notebook* for cello. The click of cicadas, the darting geckoes and the stunted trees of a Provencal olive grove dominate *Three Moods for Oboe*, while the clarity of light and sound of the Mediterranean night pervade *Nocturne for Flute, Harp and String Trio*.

As my music began to be performed, travel became somewhat dictated by the location of concert halls. Once the performance was over I would

find myself anxious to escape, to cleanse my ears of the city, and would eagerly set forth to discover the local countryside.

There are such endless surprises in a landscape. After the hurly-burly and excitement of a first visit to New York and Boston, I headed north up the coast to discover in Massachusetts, New England, a sister to the Morston Marshes. Here once again were the same birds, creeks and even samphire and gorse. Yet there was also a very different quality to the land and fishermen. Neither has been punished in quite the same way; the land feels less ancient, the people less craggy and more giving. The contours of history are less deeply etched and you sense the optimism that you find in much American art – in the music of Copeland or Ives – and, where here there is warmth, in comparable parts of Britain there is eternal sadness. In Scotland, for instance, the rub of sea and weather has produced the granite-like expressions that you find in the stony beauty of Peter Maxwell Davies's music, which reflects not only the harshness but also, in *Mirror of Whitening Light*, the fusion of land, sea and sky of Hoy in the Shetlands to conjure a miraculous and radiant light. In this music of the Northern Lights I find something of Sibelius's relationship to his native Finland, which shows that with time an acquired affinity with a landscape can be as telling as a native affinity, since Maxwell Davies was no more born in Hoy than Gauguin was born in Tahiti.

Even with artists who write less specifically about the land there seems to me to be an aura of geography. The lyricism of Michael Tippett's music, so full of references to the elements in general, conjures up the sweeping plains of Wiltshire where he lives and works. Would the rounded figures of Henry Moore be sharper if he had set up shop on Max's Hoy? And by the same token I am hardly surprised by a violence in the art of the city; it's not the abrasiveness of a savage coast but all too often the language of despair raised to a higher level. I see it in the faces of Francis Bacon, in Brecht's and Weill's portrait of Berlin and in the tragedies of *Wozzek* and *Lulu*.

I saw it too when I left the Royal Academy of Music and played in a rock group which rejoiced in the salubrious name of Seeds of Discord. (Sadly neither in name nor talent did the 'Seeds' have quite the same impact as the 'Stones'! Perhaps a decade later, as punk seeds, we would have come into our own.) Seediness does seem the product of the urban environment and is not a word one would find easy to use in open country. Playing rock music gives one a tremendous feeling of sheer power and it is exciting to experience the gut reaction of hundreds of people, but the need to escape always struck me as more desperate when we were playing in large towns.

I soon began to yearn for a more peaceful existence and returned to the scene of my childhood in an attempt to recapture its more tranquil happiness. Not far from Cold Blow and just beyond Blakeney lies the silted-up port of Cley with its stunning church. And then comes the village that bore the worst fury of the flood, Salhouse. Here there is another bird sanctuary, this time on the marsh itself. A small cottage was for sale and I determined to have it. Walking had by now become a passion and was undoubtedly safer than boating, so with my dog, Trout, I set out to cover the four or five miles from Morston to Salhouse to attend the sale. During that walk along the coast I began to realise that the memories of early days are best left enshrined by time and that you cannot hope to recreate them. What I needed was a new landscape, a new adventure, and so, though I began to bid at the auction, and thought the final price was within my grasp, my hand was not raised as the hammer descended.

Instead fate took me in a straight line west from the flint of Norfolk to the shale of the Welsh Marches and a countryside ostensibly different though not without similarities. For, although the pastoral lyricism of the west of England stretches into the foothills of Radnorshire, there is already a strong flavour of the wildness to which they lead. This is one of the least populated areas of the British Isles, as you soon discover if you try to travel without a car. But what wonderful compensations are to be found in the empty green valleys and the rolling acres of sheep country.

In the distance you can see the Black Mountains and to one side of them the Brecon Beacons. Here there is a touching respect for the soil, or 'him' as it is called. In fact everything is 'him' or 'her'. While building a new barn I was momentarily baffled by the following instructions: 'Fetch him over here and winch her by the truss then we can sheet her purloins while we have our bait'. I feel a great joy as I work with these friends who are so direct. We have a farm which has grown from nothing to a respectable smallholding and when I am helping to make hay, feed the calves or dip the sheep I feel the sense of peace and camaraderie that has been absent since my boyhood on the boats.

As I arrive from a hectic tour of duty in London, a weight seems to be lifted from the shoulders and I drink in the wonderful quiet. Music has priority in the morning (except in lambing time); then there is a long walk to mull over the day's ideas – if there have been any. It's an opportunity to get away from the notes themselves and consider the overall perspective of a piece in progress. I feel I belong in the rolling hills which allow the mind to float freely, and now that walking is such an important part of my life here I cannot imagine how I ever did without it. It has been fascinating to see how Trout, a Cockney mongrel, has adapted to the countryside.

At first, when he encountered a gate he would whine like a baby. Now he's learnt from a local sheepdog to look for a hole or a loose rung.

There's great satisfaction in learning about an entirely new way of life: to know how to help a sheep in distress, how to shear and how to lamb. Gradually I have become able to identify trees and birds and tell from the sound of the brook how high the rainfall has been. In this border country you walk through a series of wonderfully contrasting landscapes, from low rich pasture to high moorland, and these suggest great sweeps of sound.

Without the cleansing cold, pneumonia soon sets about the young calves and the racking coughs of sheep echo across the valley. I cannot immunise myself against the distress of a suffering animal whose plight can colour an atmosphere for days. So sometimes I have to fight off the external sounds, which can appear as actual notes or as an abstract feeling only to be realised later through the labours of pencil and rubber.

As the addiction to walking in the country takes over so your psychological well-being cannot do without the daily ration. It seems to me that we must be grateful to the land on so many levels that its gradual destruction has to be viewed as a form of spiritual suicide. When a hedge is ripped out to make two nine-acre fields into an eighteen-acre expanse worthy of modern machinery it's not just the loss of the hedge and its aesthetic value we should mourn but the deeper implications: the loss of wildlife and the ruin of a natural scheme. When, centuries ago, farmers laid hedgerows they did so for very good reasons. The soil on one side of the divide is frequently different from the soil on the other, where conditions will now change because there is no shelter or break from sun, wind and rain.

Just as we erode the land so too do we erode the communities who best know how to husband it. Whole villages have been dismantled and not just because of modern technology, which certainly has its place. Rather, I am thinking of the ludicrous laws which help no one and have caused the number of farm tenancies to dwindle to such an extent that it is virtually impossible to start farming unless you have vast amounts of the capital needed to buy land. In the hill-farming country that I know and love, the big farms get bigger and the characteristic smallholdings gradually disappear. It is also a tragedy for the architecture of the British landscape, which has for centuries been sculpted by farms of varying size, and as its boundaries and natural barriers are removed so the lie of the land falls a little more off balance.

Sadly, those of us who draw our inspiration and sustenance from the land can only grieve for the future and wonder what would have happened to the great pastoral canvases of the past had there been no sweeping fields

in Elgar's Worcestershire, no lowing cattle in Constable's Essex, no twisting lanes in Hardy's Wessex and no marching hills for the lines of Langland, Kilvert and Housman.

As one remembers how much of what's worth remembering is married in some way to the land it is hard not to feel anxiety. What inspiration will be left as new centuries unfold, both for the artist and for the soul of the common man, unless we cherish the soil and the sea today and tomorrow? This was part of the overall concern for our time and our children's time that led Ian McEwan and myself to write our oratorio, *Or Shall We Die?* We simply felt the need to voice our fears and those of our friends. 'Shall there be womanly times,' we ask, 'or shall we die?' Sometimes the land seems to be posing just that question as it heaves under an all too masculine hand. Can we bind feeling to intellect, have strength without aggression? Blake's apocalyptic lines ring horribly true:

Did He smile His work to see?  
Did He who made the Lamb make thee?

#### NOTE

This article was previously published in Richard Mabey (ed.), *Second Nature* (Jonathon Cape, London, 1984). Copyright: Michael Berkeley.

# THOMAS JONES THE ARTIST BY FRANSIS G PAYNE

## PART TWO

Translated by Dr Ifan Payne

After a tedious journey by coaches through France, Jones reached Turin on 6 November 1776. From there on, until Rome, every day brought beautiful buildings and famous paintings to his attention. In the inns where he stayed he met foreign artists, many of them from overseas like himself. There would also be amongst them some of the travelling English *milordi* and it was a matter of business to be introduced to them, since it was they who principally bought pictures in Italy. But more exciting than all of this was to encounter his own old companions again and, as though by a miracle, rediscover the old merry life that had previously passed by so quickly and to start to relive it. But when he reached Florence he saw that it was a mirage and not a miracle. There intruded into the warm fellowship no less than Hugh Primrose Deane,<sup>1</sup> the old fellow-student of long ago, who had fumed against Jones's success with his 'damned snuff-coloured picture'. And time had not ceased to exist for him. We will not concern ourselves here with his sad story but it is probable that Jones did not forget Deane's misery in Florence even during the festivities of the first night in Rome, which was an entertaining evening spent in the English coffee house. There were about twenty artists present and amongst them were William Pars, his oldest friend and the brother of his teacher in Shipley's school, JR Cozens, Durno, and many others of his old companions. But, as the cold, rainy days of December passed by, Jones had time to realise that they had not slipped back through fifteen years. The former life had come to an end. It was like an old painting that had been finished and framed long ago and its characters arranged to conform to a pattern into which their live models could never again arrange themselves. Everyone had his own new problems. Pars was a particular cause of concern to Jones. He had run away from London with the wife of Smart, the painter of miniatures, or more accurately he had saved her from the clutches of that loathsome man.<sup>2</sup> And Jones was constantly tired of Smart's attempts to gather evidence against his friend. He went sadly back and forth through the rain between the coffee house and his room. It was not possible to recreate the atmosphere of Munday's nor of the Turk's Head there in the muddy tavern amidst Piranesi's capricious decorations. And in his own room, 'hung

around with dirty, dismal pictures of Weeping Magdalens, bloody *Ecce homos*, dead Christs and fainting Madonas', when sleep came he dreamed longingly of London and of its pleasures.

The rain ceased shortly before Christmas and Jones set off with two of his new friends, Hume and Miller, on a jaunt through Marino, Frascati, Castel Gandolfo and Gensano. This was the most fascinating journey in the world for Jones. It affected him greatly. Said he:

Every scene seemed anticipated in some dream. It appeared magick land. In fact I had copied so many studies of that great Man, and my old Master, Richard Wilson, which he had made here as in other parts of Italy, that I insensibly became familiarized with Italian Scenes, and enamoured of Italian forms, and I suppose, injoyed pleasures unfelt by my Companions.

He became reconciled to Italy by this journey. He discovered that a part of the old life still continued undisturbed. The old companions had to some extent changed but Lake Albano was still the same as that enchanting lake that had so often been recreated by his brush in Wilson's studio.

It seems that during those days Jones was dreaming and idling. After he returned to Rome two English cavaliers<sup>3</sup> visited him and they were surprised that he did not have a series of sketches to attract their patronage. They decided that he was an idler and ignored him from then on. Even though Jones treated this event lightly, his time in Rome would have been easier had it not occurred. But within a few days he transgressed against a force in Rome stronger than that of any travelling nobleman, namely James Byers. Byers was a Scot, and he was one of the two most important men in the world of the artists in Rome. Thomas Jenkins, a man from Devonshire and one of Wilson's early students, was the other. Between them they dealt with almost all of the financial and artistic business of the British in Italy. It was by now customary for every British artist who came to Rome to seek the patronage of either one man or the other and he would display his allegiance, as it were, by dining with his patron on Christmas Day. But what Jones did was to come to Rome with a letter of introduction to Byers and within a month eat his Christmas dinner in Jenkins's house! The result of this revolutionary impartiality was not immediately apparent. But it was not forgotten by Byers.

Jones spent a large part of the following year wandering the country around Rome. Pars, Tresham, and Hardwick were his most frequent companions and their books were soon filled with sketches that could be composed and turned into paintings in the studio in Rome. Not that there



was a lot of arranging and disciplining of nature required in Italy. At home, when painting Llan-gors lake, for example, he had to select and re-arrange elements of the scene to some extent so that the picture conformed to the rules laid down by Nicolas Poussin and Claude. But here in Italy it was not so. It seemed to Jones that the country had been created 'in a peculiar manner by Nature for the Study of the Landscape Painter'. Around Frascati, Albano, Castel and Gensano every view was a picture by Claude, and around Tivoli the work of Gaspard 'Poussin' was to be seen everywhere. Jones knew very well that all this was to put the cart before the horse but three years later, in the neighbourhood of Naples, he again has fun mixing cause and effect in the same way: 'Here may visibly be traced the Scenery that Salvator Rosa formed himself upon ... every hundred yards presents you with a new and perfect Composition of that Master'. These painters were three pillars of the taste of their period and it must have been a thrilling experience for Jones to discover nature apparently obeying them. A long time had passed since Jones had failed to understand the intention and achievement of his old teacher, and some of his journeys now have the flavour of a pilgrimage about them:

All went to make Sketches about the Lake of Nemi – particularly a large *Plane* tree on the Edge of the water call'd *Arbor Santa*, which has a hollow within that I believe would contain a dozen persons, and I was told here that my old master *Wilson* when in this Country made use of it as a Study to Paint in.

It is not perhaps strange that another of Wilson's chosen places, Lake Albano in the setting sun, was the first picture that Jones painted in Italy. He started on it on 12 July 1777 and finished it by 21 August. Jones says that the picture drew a lot of attention from his fellow artists and from the public. He was working at the same time on a stormy scene that included the history of Prospero and Miranda from *The Winter's Tale*.<sup>4</sup> He completed only one other that year, namely the view from Jenkins's house in Castel Gandolfo. But by May 1778 he had painted enough to cause everyone from the large crowd of English noblemen and gentlemen who were in Rome to visit his house. A number of the paintings were sold, including *Lake Albano*. This was bought by the Bishop of Derry for forty pounds. This bishop was an exceptional man and a generous but capricious benefactor to a host of artists. He was a brother to the third Earl of Bristol and inherited his title and estates in 1780. He often refused to fulfil his promises but Jones was fortunate enough in his association with him.

In February 1778 Jones went to view the picture *Perseus and Andromeda* that had been painted by Raphael Mengs for Sir Watkin Williams Wynne. Since Sir Watkin was the chief benefactor of the Welsh arts and its most prominent connoisseur, it may be of interest to quote from Jones's account of the ceremony. It should be explained that Mengs (an old friend of Wilson's) lived like a prince in a palace near St Peter's:

... the Exhibition was conducted with the Utmost pomp. All the grand Appartments of the palace being thrown open – in most of which were groupes of Pupils making Studies after drawings, pictures or Statues ... In the room where this famous piece was placed for public Admiration<sup>5</sup> decorated with a Superb frame and green Silk curtain, the Senior pupils attended in form, ready to explain the Subject, point out the different beauties of the Performance, and expatiate on the transcendent excellencies of the great master.

According to Jones, Sir Watkyn paid five hundred sechin for the picture but it was never seen in Wynnstay because the boat that was conveying it there was captured by a French warship.

Later, in July, Jones spent quite a lot of his time with JR Cozens, who was staying in a villa outside the city. Cozens was in poor health and he would ride around on a donkey instead of walking. I do not know whether this illness was the beginning of the physical and mental sickness that killed him and thus extinguished the greatest lyric artistic genius of the age. Very little is known of the details of the life of Cozens but Jones does not mention his friend without referring to his health and without using the adjective 'little'. It seems that he did not see his true greatness even though Cozens was so often drawing his amazing pictures by his side here and in Naples. Jones was just as blind to Francis Towne; he was amused by his physical timidity but he was not impressed by his piercing analysis of the scene in front of him and his exceptional decorative talent.

In the meantime Jones offended Thomas Jenkins, his banker and his 'defender'. He had lent two of his own servants to Jones. They were a man and wife and before long they made baseless accusations against him and threatened him with the law unless they received hush money from him. Jenkins was greatly amused by the affair until the angry artist threw both of them abruptly from his house. From then on Jenkins was as hostile towards him as was Byers. However, Jones had enough work for the time being. Amongst other works, he painted views near Velletri and Frascati and scenes of Plautus's tomb and the Cascatelli in Tivoli. He also made a small seaside scene on the subject of Gay's song 'Twas when the seas

were roaring'. In July his friend, Thomas Banks, RA, made a bust of him and Jones repaid him by painting a picture for the sculptor. At the end of the year, while he was on a visit to Naples, he received commissions from the Bishop of Derry for two more large pictures.

In September Jones went to Naples and he stayed there until the end of January 1779, but to judge by his diary he did not do much work there. He drew a few sketches in the company of 'Warwick' Smith, but he spent most of the time making excursions with Storace, the famous composer. After returning to Rome he settled with Pars in a house in the Strada Gregoriana on the Trinita del Monte. It must, in Jones's view, have been an interesting house:

It was built by the celebrated Salvator Rosa, and was now in the possession of his descendant Augusto Rosa, who with his family lived in the third Story. Poor Augusto, who called himself an Architect, got a very precarious subsistence by making cork models of the different Ruins in and about Rome, and letting out the best part of his hereditary mansion, with some assistance, perhaps, of an Abbate who was the constant attendant on Madame his wife. The walls of all the rooms were covered with Landscapes painted in Water-color by old Salvator's pupils.

The house next to it was built by Zuccherò and almost opposite was the house where Nicolas Poussin stayed. James Northcote, RA, lived in Zuccherò's house at the time. If there is virtue in this spot, he says in one of his letters, I hope to acquire it. It is obvious that Jones himself was stimulated because he details ten pictures on which he was working.

In July of that year Jones makes mention for the first time of Maria, his lady love, whom he married some time later. According to some people, Maria was Italian, but others maintain that she was German. Joseph Farington, RA, says, on the authority of Jones's son-in-law, that Maria came from Denmark. Be that as it may, Jones was most fortunate in his choice of partner.

By the end of March 1780 he had decided to settle in Naples. He gives various reasons for this. He says that the prospects of work in Rome were no longer favourable and that views in the neighbourhood of Naples were the only commissions that he had in hand. He adds also that there would be less competition in that city. But, in truth, Jones was feeling the hostility of Jenkins and Byers. As that hostility had developed, Jones had got his own back. He went out of his way to challenge two of the most sacred customs that had been established by these men. First of all, heartened by the fine cooking of Maria, he had arranged a Christmas

dinner in his own house in competition with Jenkins's customary dinner, with the result that only one guest turned up at that man's table. After lowering Jenkins's pride, he aimed at the Scotsman's weak point, his pocket. There were two pictures worth a hundred and twenty pounds amongst the ones that he painted in 1779 and they were entrusted by the purchaser to the care of Byers. As a result Byers expected, according to his custom, to be able to discuss the financial side of the bargain as well and to receive a commission, based on the total, at the expense of the artist. Except that what Jones did was to send the pictures to Byers according to the wishes of the purchaser and to arrange to receive the money through his own banker without any deduction being taken. Jones had never received any patronage of any sort from Byers, and so his behaviour was completely honourable. It was not, however, wise and now Byers and Jenkins set out to punish this insignificant artist who had, ever since he came to Rome, ignored the rules of their game.

Jones arrived in Naples on 20 May 1780. He had a letter of introduction to Sir William Hamilton, the British Minister, and he did not lose time before calling on that famous patron of the arts. Jones was received:

with much Civility. I afterward attended his Levee as often as Delicacy would permit, and as often begged the favor of a Visit, that if he found my performances worthy of his Notice, I might have the honour of his Patronage. I was ever received with the same Courtesy – but as his Excellency never vouchsafed me a Return I gave over the pursuit in Despair.

Jones soon discovered that Byers's influence could reach as far as Naples. People in Rome were drawn by examples of his work that were exhibited in Pars's house and they asked for Jones's address in Naples. Keeping to the rules Pars directed them to Clarke, the well known *cicerone* in Naples, so that he could receive his percentage by introducing the purchaser to Jones. But, as it happened, Clarke was Byers's creature and he pretended that he did not know anyone by the name of Jones. So poor Jones got no customers.

The year that followed was troublesome in the extreme and he did nothing worth mentioning until Francis Towne arrived from Rome in March 1781. The two spent a month together sketching throughout the country and it is obvious that Jones regained his spirits in the company of his friends. He also had the company of Pars during the summer and the two did an amount of work near the Baia temples and around Vesuvius. But during all of this time Jones completed few paintings. He mentions *A view in my kitchen*, being 'the first attempt at *Still life*', and views on the

Mare Morto and Lake Nemi. He also started two picture of Naples. So he did not have much to show when Cozens came to Naples in July 1782. This time Cozens was travelling ostentatiously in the magnificent retinue of the millionaire William Beckford of Fonthill, who had just completed his famous eastern romance, *Vathek*. Jones called on Cozens at once, and later the same day he was surprised to hear:

that Mr. Beckford had been, with all his Retinue at my house to see the pictures – but though he is said to have expressed his great satisfaction and pleasure, in terms almost *extatic*, I almost never was able to procure a sight of that Gentleman.

However, because of this visit and through the efforts of an Italian friend who brought the ambassadors of Germany and Russia to see the pictures, Jones started to overcome the prohibition placed on him by Jenkins and Byers. Soon afterwards Sir William Hamilton himself came to Jones's house in the Vicolo del Canale and delivered high praise for his work. At the end of the year no less than Hackaert visited. Jones had met him before, but this time:

He was pleased to pay me many Compliments on my progressive Improvements in paying due attention to the *Detail* – that is to say, minute finishing, which by the bye, was more congenial to his own tastes, who like most German artists, study more the *Minutiae* than the grand principles of the Art ...

Being better known today because Goethe was his biographer, rather than because of his forgettable paintings, it is difficult to realise the importance of Hackaert in his day in Italy. He was a friend to a multitude of princes and he acted as though he himself was one of them. And his recommendation was worth having.

But, with Jones starting to find his feet again, news came of the death of Pars in Rome, and in December he received a letter from Wales to inform him that his father had died back in September. Italy was not the same without Pars and since his father had provided for him Jones was no longer dependent upon the earnings from his art. But having won some notice at last and received the encouragement of Hamilton and the others, Jones could not resist making the most of his moderate success, despite knowing that the success was temporary. Therefore he rented a house in a fashionable part of the town where he could be within reach of rich visitors. About this time he was invited by Lord Bristol (the Bishop of

Derry) to settle in his palace in Londonderry but, very wisely, Jones refused the offer of that warm-hearted and irresponsible prelate. But by the end of three months he started to yearn for his own country. In March 1783 Sir George Beaumont, the famous patron who had known Jones in England, came to Naples. The two went together on a drawing trip along the coast of Posillipo and Beaumont commissioned a picture from his companion. However, Jones refused to undertake any new work until he returned to this country. From then on he hurried to complete the pictures that were half finished. One of them gave a broad view of the Campi Flegrei from the Camaldolise convent and this was bought by Sir William Hamilton. In May, since Hamilton was setting out for Calabria, he invited Jones to use his palace as a studio, and there he was hard at it in solitary splendour until 4 August. That day, with his wife and his two girls, he boarded a boat that was leaving for England.

### §

Jones landed in Chatham on the second of November 1783, and the next day he travelled to London full of confidence. But London was not the same as it had been before. His best friends had died and Jones himself was greatly changed since the time when he adventured cheerfully in Mortimer's wake. Says he:

I was nearly in the predicament of a Foreigner. Every thing appeared Strange – the extravagance of the Inns frightened me, and the Rudeness of the Vulgar – disgusted. I was extremely mortified likewise at the Contemtuuous Manner in which we were surveyed by the Servants ... Our Dress and Appearance, to be sure, were not calculated to command respect, and must seem to them rather *Outlandish*.

There was, however, one comfort to which he had looked forward for some time: his collection of pictures and books. In that collection a number of his dead friends still lived on through their pictures, their etchings, their books, and their letters. And there also was a great part of his own youth – every study and sketch that he had ever made for his early pictures. He hurried to the man who had promised to care for them while Jones was in Italy and there in a damp cellar under the street he discovered

all my *Treasure* in one undistinguished heap of Rubbish ... and ordering a Couple of Chairmen, had the whole conveyed to my Lodgings – and, with the exception of a few odd Volumes and ... Sketches and papers ... to get

from before my Eyes such a mortifying Spectacle, had them all thrown down onto the Common Shore.

Jones was greatly disappointed by his reception in London. Other than a few friends, no one wanted his pictures. He painted several for Thomas Jones of the Hafod and he sent two of them, views in Hafod gardens, to the Academy exhibitions. At the beginning of 1785 he took a small, pretty house, number 35, London St, Tottenham Court Road:

where I lived very contentedly on the Income of a small landed Estate, left me by my father of about £300 pr. ann. – beside what I occasionally picked up in my profession. I must own too, that I was guilty of a few *innocent* Impostures – by making Imitations of my old Master Wilson and Zuccharelli – which I passed among our Connoisseurs at some of the publick Sales for Originals – but this trade of Imposition was not suffered to last long, from the jealousy of certain persons whose province I had, by these Means, infringed upon.

What would Jones have said, I wonder, if he could have foreseen that some of his own genuine work would be attributed by later racketeers to his old master? Because his usual work resembled Wilson's work in only a superficial way.

We shall leave Jones in his comfortable small house for a while and cast a look back over his work. Apart from references to a large number of sketches and to his work as an assistant, I managed to create a list of about a hundred and fifty of his oil paintings. Sixty-seven of these were displayed in the exhibitions of the Society of Artists and the Academy between 1765 and 1798. It is highly unlikely that this is all of his work, but of the hundred and fifty of which there is mention only a few are available today. Apart from a photograph or two, I have never seen more than seven oil paintings, seven watercolours, the six engravings that he made for his book *Six Views in South Wales*, JR Smith's mezzotint of *The Bard*, Woollett's engravings of *Dido and Aeneas* and *Merry Villagers*, and the five pictures to be seen in James Baker's book, *A Picturesque Guide to the Local Beauties of Wales* (1792). It would be dangerous to attempt a detailed judgment on such inadequate material but it can be said that Jones was a good painter according to the standards of his age. There was, of course, a large number of good painters in his time and he is a long way from being amongst the best. He belongs to the second rank, or the third; but, as I have already said, the minor artists of the eighteenth century have an abundance of virtues. It is certain that his contemporaries thought



highly of him, otherwise engravers such as Woollett, Smith and Peak would not have concerned themselves with his work.

Even though so much of his work is lost, or at least out of sight, it is possible to obtain an idea of its nature by considering the memoirs in the light of the pictures and engravings that are still available. In doing so, one is dealing only with external characteristics, I know, but it is not possible to do otherwise. I shall arrange his pictures into three classes and, even though these classes overlap, they are on the whole chronologically ordered. Firstly, there is the landscape that tends to be restricted, to some extent, to being a background or a frame to characters or scenes from the classics, e.g. *Sunset with the tale of Alpheus and Arethusa*, *Storm on the land, with the tale of Dido and Aeneas*, *Landscape with the Death of Orpheus*. Sometimes the landscape contains the remains of man's ancient work, e.g. *The Remains of Verulamium*. In the second class there are landscapes containing characters from the modern classics or views of medieval remains, e.g. *Storm on the Land, with a scene from The Winter's Tale*, *The Bard, from Mr. Gray's Ode*, *The Two Students from Salamanca*, from the preface to *Gil Blas*, *Carreg Cennen Castle*. There is also a view or two of contemporary rural life, such as *The Merry Villagers*. There is in the subjects of the two classes a reflection of the belief that was expressed with proverbial force by Pope, that man was the proper subject for mankind to study.<sup>6</sup> Despite the literary content of this type of painting it is sparing and dignified in comparison with the garrulous historical painting of the next century. In the third class there are pure landscapes, that is, 'views after Nature', as Jones calls them. But there is considerable difference between them and what those words implied soon after his death. Some of his later pictures that I saw demonstrate that he was not greatly influenced by the new attitudes towards nature which had already received some degree of expression. Jones was influenced until the end by Nature with a capital N. Man's understanding can be felt in the 'purest' of his landscapes. Where neither man nor anything of man's work is to be seen in the picture, somehow one feels as though the artist himself is somewhere in there out of sight, looking at his creation. There is almost no hint of the new romanticism in his work. Already the traditional figures were being forced to yield to the cliffs and the woods and the rocks around them. Soon views would be painted as if they existed for their own sake. Ordinary natural objects were painted faithfully and passionately in the open air instead of being refined and disciplined in the studio. But Jones idealised the facts of nature. He belonged to the world of Wilson rather than to the new world that was about to reach its apogee in the work of Constable. But he was not, by a long way, as good an artist as his old



teacher. Wilson's work is classical in the manner of the eighteenth century with unexpected lyrical sections, great in their intensity and their splendour. Jones follows after him from afar, always finely wrought, dramatic at times, but without the thrill of white-hot passion. His tongue could never have given utterance to Wilson's sudden exclamation when he came face to face with some dramatic waterfall in Italy: 'Well done, water – by God!'

## §

Jones had a far better life than did his old master and if he had had to stay quietly in London with his wife and children and his three hundred pounds per annum there would have been no cause to complain. But his eldest brother died in 1787 and Jones inherited the entire estate of his father. He returned to Radnorshire at the end of the following year and he settled down in Pencerrig to enjoy country life. He devoted himself to improving its lands and its buildings. He planted countless trees and he laid out orchards and gardens. He played his expected part in the life of the community. In 1791 he was High Sheriff and from the following year he served as a magistrate. In his leisure time he continued to paint a little to please himself and his friends. He produced a number of pictures of the countryside surrounding Pencerrig and between 1794 and 1795 he painted a series of watercolours of the Carneddau, a hill which rises within a mile or two of the house. In these watercolours he came closest to painting nature in the new style. Occasionally he would go to London to see the Academy exhibitions and in 1798 he exhibited some of his Italian landscapes for the last time. During that year he wrote the autobiography that was based on the diaries which are quoted so often in these articles.<sup>7</sup> It is partly a record of the practice and patronage of the arts in the old manner. In it forgotten artists and pictures retain a little of their importance. But already, as Jones recalls his pleasure in them, the fame of the majority was fading and he was to a large extent recalling dead friends and vanished companions. That was his last work. Five months after completing it, in April 1799, his wife Maria died. Jones loved her intensely. He had always expended his passion on people and now, with Maria having followed his old friends, there was nothing for him to live for. His complete desolation is glimpsed in an elegy for his wife:

Oh yield me comfort and protection,  
For ev'ry thing I do or see  
Only embitters the reflection  
Of what I've lost – in losing thee!<sup>8</sup>

Jones himself died in May 1803. The event was recorded but of the fact that he was an artist, nothing was said.<sup>9</sup>

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Translator's note: These enigmatic sentences refer to Hugh Primrose Dean (the preferred modern spelling, the text preserves the author's spelling of *Deane*), an Irish painter who was born in London in 1758 (or a year or two earlier; the precise date is not known) but died relatively young in 1784. When he left for Italy in 1776 he abandoned his wife and son in Britain. When he was in Florence, where Thomas Jones met him again, much to his consternation his wife and son unexpectedly arrived. He sent his wife back to England but kept his son, whom he soon afterwards placed on a ship under Admiral Mann in the Mediterranean. Although he became a member of the Academy in 1776, he ultimately appears to have had little success as a painter and became a Methodist preacher a few years before his early death.

<sup>2</sup> That was Jones's opinion of him. Smart made a miniature of Jones that was sold at Christies in 1937. Through the kindness of Mr Arthur Jaffé I was able to see a photograph of this miniature. It seemed that Jones was an extremely handsome man.

<sup>3</sup> To quote Jones, 'the true Cavalieri, or Milordi Inglesi, were those who moved in a Circle of Superior Splendour surrounded by a groupe of Satellites under the denomination of Travelling Tutors, Antiquarians, Dealers in *Virtù*, English Grooms, French Valets and Italian running footmen'.

<sup>4</sup> Translator's note: The author has recorded faithfully Jones's own words: '31<sup>st</sup> [July, 1777] began a Storm Scene on a Cloth 5 ft by 4 – in which is to be introduced the Story of Prospero & Miranda – from the Winters tale of Shakespeare. Act 1. Sc. 5 & 6'. Jones further confuses matters of subject and date by writing on 3 March 1778 'This month I finished the large Storm of Prospero and Calliban, begun on the 26<sup>th</sup> of July last, ...'

<sup>5</sup> Translator's note: The author corrected my copy of this essay in his own hand, striking the printed 'Administration' as being a misprint and inserting the handwritten word 'Admiration'.

<sup>6</sup> 'Know then thyself, presume not God to scan,

The proper study of mankind is man.' (Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Man*, iii.)

<sup>7</sup> sic.

<sup>8</sup> *The Gentleman's Magazine*, Nov. 1779, p. 975.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, May 1803, p. 484.

## ADDENDUM 1

As suggested in the text, this essay is based on a copy that the author had in 1943 made of the typescript of Thomas Jones's *Memoirs*. On the flyleaf of his 105-page longhand copy, Ffransis Payne wrote in his own hand:

The Diary of Thomas Jones, Pencerrig, Llanellwedd, Radnorshire.

Extracted, with some unimportant omissions, from the typescript of the original MS. in the possession of Llewelyn Evan-Thomas, Esq., Pencerrig, by Ffransis G. Payne, April – May, 1943.

The Typescript used, itself omits some passages of the original. These passages, I understand, were scratched out by Miss Clara Thomas of Llwynmadoc. The original was in the possession of Mrs. Lindsay, now deceased, given to her years ago by Mr. Llewelyn Evan-Thomas.

Certain portions of the diary have been printed rather carelessly in the Transactions of the Radnorshire society, Vol XII, p. 42,<sup>1</sup> from the same typescript. In this copy I have followed the original faithfully in orthography, punctuation, etc.

Ffransis Payne

Payne also compiled a four-page, two columns to a page, index of the *Memoirs*. It should be noted that this copy was made several years before the first full publication of the memoirs in *The Thirty-Second Volume of the Walpole Society*, 1946–8.

Payne is correct of his assessment of Steadman's transcription in that it plays fast and loose with the original (taking the digital transcript online at the National Library of Wales website at [http://www.llgc.org.uk/pencerrig/thjones\\_c\\_001.htm](http://www.llgc.org.uk/pencerrig/thjones_c_001.htm) as being an official and accurate transcript). Steadman's transcript is rife with unannotated omissions and elisions. Furthermore, Steadman was clearly not at all interested in Jones as an artist. He completely omits the years Thomas Jones spent painting in Italy from 1776 to 1783.

This is what Steadman has to say concerning the traumatic events of December 1783 which are illustrated in Figures 1, 2, and 3: '... and after a long and trying voyage landed at Chatham on November 2nd. He remained in London until August following, 1784, "when I went down to visit my Mother and friends in Wales and whom, it was near eight years, since I had seen."' That is, he completely omits Jones's description of his difficult return to England. And he completely misses, or is uninterested in, Jones's significance as an artist.

It is therefore safe to say that Ffrancis Payne was the first person to present Thomas Jones to a twentieth-century audience as an artist of note and the first person to present a full-length treatment of the significance of Jones's artistry. It is only to be regretted that at the time that *Thomas Jones, Yr Arlunydd* was written Payne had no way of knowing of the existence of the oil sketches and of the preservation of so many of Jones's other major works that subsequently came to light. Payne's deep interest in, and knowledge of, art was no accident. His genius was in his appreciation of quality, wherever he found it. Although not a rich man, he owned several Morse-Browns (Sidney and Dorothy), a Kyffin Williams and a Ceri Richards. He said on more than one occasion that he was proud of the fact that, as temporary Keeper of the Art Department at the National Museum of Wales during the Second World War, he gave Ceri Richards his first one-man show.

#### NOTE

<sup>1</sup> D Steadman Davies, *Extracts from the Diaries and Account Book of Thomas Jones, Pencerrig*, published in 1942.

#### ADDENDUM 2

At the end of his copy of the *Memoirs*, Ffrancis Payne includes the following, which, as far as can be ascertained, has not been previously published:

#### Copy of a typescript attached to the Diary

Thomas Thomas of Llanbradach married in 1804 Anna Maria Joanna Rachella Jones daughter and coheir of Thomas Jones of Pencerrig, who, while an artist in Italy and a younger son with no prospects then of inheriting Pencerrig, lived with an Italian woman and married her after the children's birth.

Thomas Jones died in 1803 and Anna Maria then inherited Pencerrig under his will. Thomas Thomas and she had a son, Thomas Jones Thomas born in 1805 who inherited Pencerrig on his mother's death in 1807. He died in 1810 aged 5, and his heir was his father Thomas Thomas who thus became possessed of Pencerrig automatically.

Thomas Thomas then married Bridget daughter of Marmaduke Gwyn of Garth and Llanelwedd, and by her an only child Clera born in 1814, who on his death inherited Pencerrig and his Glamorganshire property.

She married in 1835 Henry Thomas of Llwynmadoc, and they had Evan Llewelyn Thomas, born 1839, and Clera Thomas, born 1842. Henry Thomas died in 1863 whereupon Evan Llewelyn came into his Breconshire property. He died next year leaving it to his sister Clera, and also appointing her certain interests he had in the property of his grandfather Thomas Thomas, contingent upon the death of his mother Clera Thomas which took place in 1877.

Miss Clera Thomas thereafter had Pencerrig and Llwynmadoc absolutely, and also the interests in the Llanbradach Thomas trust, the details of which I do not know, though its general lines are obvious from the way Thomas Thomas came by his property. Pencerrig having come to him by luck and not by right of blood he could dispose of as he pleased, and he settled it on his daughter Clera and her children Evan Llewelyn and Clera so that in the end the latter could do what she liked with it. The Glamorganshire property was in quite a different position. It had come to him from his own family. Part I think he left at once to his brother George: part was settled on his daughter and her children to revert on failure of issue to the descendants of his brother George. This in fact happened on Miss Clera Thomas's death, Mrs. Lindsay, Mrs. Williams and Lady Berwick coming into it.

During Miss Clera Thomas's long enjoyment of all these properties she had a plan for dealing fairly with the different sources of her wealth. Whenever she bought farms out of income to add to the Breconshire property destined to revert to her father's family she also bought and put into the E. L. Thomas's trust a similar acreage adjacent to the Pencerrig property. In this way the Radnorshire 'joint estate' grew up round Pencerrig, bought with Glamorganshire income.

It then becomes obvious that the course led logically to Pencerrig being left to her mother's family who would later come into the E. L. Thomas trust. She had not always intended this, and she therefore started exchanging original Pencerrig farms with the Trust estate and vice versa, so that there might be one more or less compact estate round Pencerrig with which she could do what she liked: and another Trust estate centred round Cae'rwnon which she had then built. In the end she left her accumulations of income to go with the Llwynmadoc estate, and I suppose by way of benefiting her mother's family equally, she left Pencerrig to Mrs. Lindsay, who of course was independently a participator in the E. L. Thomas trust estate.

It was an extremely good thing for Llwynmadoc that she did as she did, leaving money for its upkeep rather than adding Radnorshire property to it.

But I have sometimes wondered if she would have done so had she known that her great grandmother, Elizabeth, wife of Evan Thomas and daughter of the Rev. Thomas Walters, had for her mother a Jones of the Pencerrig family. The nearest representatives of the Jones' of Pencerrig were, or are, the Middleton Evans' formerly of Llwynbaried. They descend from a brother of Thomas Jones the artist, and in fact after a bitter lawsuit they recovered a large part of the property which used to go with Pencerrig round Llandrindod – Middleton Street etc. indications of it. This was on the score of Anna Maria's illegitimacy, and that part of the property having been rather differently settled on Thomas Jones to the rest of the Pencerrig property.

They are the people most [?] connected with the Jones family pictures: and next to them Algy himself by virtue of the descent from the Jones' which I have mentioned before. I should think it quite possible that Algy would be interested in them – I used to know exactly who they all were: the one in the uniform is Major John Jones, brother of Thomas Jones, who commanded the Radnorshire Militia, the two little girls are Anna Maria Johanna Rachella and her sister Elizabeth Francesca who died without issue.

There are references in Thomas Jones' diary, which Mrs. Lindsay used to have, to exactly when they were painted by an Italian friend of Thomas Jones who stayed at Pencerrig and spent a long time doing most of the family. They are not great works of art or of particular value: but as pleasing as most family portraits, and with the additional interest that one knows when and by who they were painted.

Wednesday 10th Sept 1783	Dobson - meals	Deer 9th 1783	Tuesday 61
100 lb of Biscuit -	9 - 30	Took up of Mr James	30-0-0
24 Do Salt Beef -	2 - 20	Do taken from 1-0-0 short -	
14 Do fresh Do -	1 - 60	Tuesday 10th Sept since 9th	
1 Small Barrel of Anchovies	1 - 40	remains - 5 21 quins	7 - 7-0
1 Coffee Kettle (tin) -	0 - 50	at home till 4 - was the Calormans	
12 Rolls of bread -	8 - 60	man strained some of my Pictures	
4 lb Sugar -	1 - 00	round with M. call on Mr M'Hoys	
28 lb Potatoes -	1 - 40	+ left 0-10-6 with Pearson & Barber	
6 Herrings & 1/2 Soap -	0 - 40	to pay him 0-6-0 - home by 6-00	
2 lb Salt Butter -	0 - 60	Cash & Hoys - in cit 12 - each rainy day	
Wine	5 - 60	Wednesday 17th	
Porterage & boat	0 - 30	at home till 4 - dined M. & J. brother	
which according to the	26 - 10	woman - call on Mr M'Hoys - home	
particulars act amounts		- Cash & Hoys - rainy -	
to 4 - 2-0 English currency besides		Thursday 18th	
- 0 - 3-0 for the Boat -		Penridge breakfast with me	
Sunday 15th Sept 1783 Sailed		- went to Mr James - call on Dowd	
from Gibraltar - and arrived		- dined at Woollett's - call on M -	
at Dover on Thursday 23rd of		Cooks - Cash & Hoys - very dirty -	
October - at 25 came to our moor		Friday 19th	
ings in Stangate Creek & Sunday		breakfasted with Mr James - call	
the 2 of Nov we had our Produe		on Smith, Smith, Quater, met Rogers	
the first of coming ashore after a		call on Hoare - dined with M -	
confinement of 13 weeks on board		home looking over my books, papers	
from the 4 of August last -		in which I left with Mr James	
Expences in the Downes	1 - 11-6	which I was in Italy - & which	
Nov 5th took up Cash for a Bill		I had brot home this Morn - NB	
on Mr Tobutt Henries & Co -	30-0-0	I find them all entirely rotted	
Deer 1st brot the Capt's there		& spoilt - by the Damp -	
mainder in full	12-9-0	Cash & Hoys -	
To the Boys of the Ship -	0 - 7-6		

Figure 1. Jones kept meticulous accounts of his daily expenditure in a sequence of account books, in which he occasionally inserted brief diary entries. It would seem that he used these account books as an aide-memoire while compiling the *Memoirs*. This illustration is of the page in the account book detailing accounts and activities from September to December 1783. This page contains his arrival at Dover on Thursday, 23 October 1783, and ends on Friday 17 December 1783, when he details what must have been one of the most tragic of events in his life to that time. He had retrieved and taken home his books and drawings that he had left behind in London. '...[H]ome looking over my books, papers which I left with Mr James while I was in Italy - & which, I had brot home this morn - NB I find them all entirely rotted & spoiled - by the Damp - !'



430, 1783 December,  
 — at length I got all my Baggage together in a Cart, and bid adieu to the Custom house and Custom house Officers — I hoped — forever —  
 I shall only mention one Circumstance more — A Circumstance which gave me more uneasiness than can well be imagined —  
 — When I left London on going abroad. I packed up all my Books, Prints Drawings and other papers in two or three large Boxes, and delivered them into the hands of a Gentleman, who promised to take Care of them till my Return —  
 — I had long, and often flattered myself with the pleasing Idea of looking over my Collection after so many years absence — The Prints, particularly, were of the first Class — being the best works of Woollett, Hall, Croker and other capital Engravers with whom I had been in the habits of Intimacy — and were the very best proof Impressions —  
 — In this Collection were likewise all the Studies I had ever hitherto made either from different Masters, or from Nature — and a few invaluable Sketches of my late friend Mortimer and Others —  
 — When I called upon the Gentleman for my Property — I was shown the way by one of the Servants, down through the Kitchen Area into one of the Vaults under the Street — and in this damp Dungeon — lay all my Treasure in one undistinguished heap of Rubbish —  
 Sir, said the Servant, my Master would be glad you would send for these things of yours as soon as convenient, as he want the Place cleared out — Friend J. D. I, that shall be done immediately, and Ordering a couple of Chairmen, had the whole conveyed to my Lodgings — and, with the exception of a few odd volumes, and a few Sketches and papers which were still legible — to get from before.

Figure 2. A page from the *Memoirs* for December, 1783 describing the destroyed books and prints noted in the account book (Figure 1) in greater detail.



When I was in Italy, I used to vaunt that haggling <sup>103.</sup> was unknown in London except among the Jews - and that a child of those years old might be sent to buy any article, without any Danger of being cheated. I now experienced the reverse, and discovered that my partiality had deceived me  
 ..... After I was settled in Lodgings

December  
 the 1st, went on board the Brig which brought us home, and was then lying at Cherry-garden Stairs - having finally settled all accounts with the Captain, and ordered my Goods to the Custom house, I carried my two little Turtle doves home with me in my pockets. There was nothing among my Baggage liable to any Duty, except the Case of Pictures, and that was to be exempted upon a proper Application to the Commissioners, in the form of a Petition signed by the President and principal Members of the Royal Academy.

This I was provided with. I was likewise personally introduced to some of the Commissioners by So. Am. Hamilton - notwithstanding which, and though I employed a Broker to forward the Business, and was assisted by some of the Clerks - I was five Days rambling backward and forward between Covent Garden and Tower-hill - first attending One office, then another, before I could get through all the intricate and almost inextricable Labyrinths, and Vexatious Ceremonies of the Place. [1 1/2 pages omitted.]

When I left London on going abroad, I packed up all my Books, Prints, Drawings and other papers in two or three large Boxes, and delivered them into the hands of a Gentleman, who promised to take Care of them till my Return.

I had long, and often flattered myself with the pleasing Idea of looking over my Collection after so many year's absence. The Prints, particularly, were of the first Class - being the best works of Woollett, Hall, Rooker and other capital Engravers with whom I had been in the habits of Intimacy - and were the very best proof Impressions. In this Collection were likewise all the Studies I had ever hitherto made either from different Masters, or from Nature - and a few invaluable Sketches of my late friend Mortimer and Others.

When I called upon the Gentleman for my Property - I was shewn the way by one of the Servants, down through the Kitchen Area into one

Figure 3. Ffrancis Payne's transcription, in his own hand, from the *Memoirs* of the same page illustrated in Figure 2.



Figure 4. Thomas Jones, painted by Guiseppe Marchi in 1768 when Jones was aged 26. In his *Memoirs* Jones writes ‘... 1768 ... on the 14<sup>th</sup> of September, set off with my old friend *Gioseppe Marchi* for Wales – Passing through Oxford, Gloucester, and Hereford, we arrived at Penkerrig on the 19<sup>th</sup> – During Marchi’s stay, he painted Portraits of many of the family, and some few friends, while I exercised my pencil in my Own Department – From Penkerrig we went to my brother in law (Humphrey)’s at *Pennant* in Montgomeryshire, and thence to Shrewsbury; where, leaving our horses, we set off in the Stage-Coach and reached London on Saturday the 19<sup>th</sup> of November. –’



Figure 5. *The Bard*, 1774, Oil on Canvas. This painting is based on Thomas Gray's Pindaric Ode, which was written between 1755 and mid June 1757. Gray wrote at the head of the Ode, 'The following Ode is founded on a Tradition current in Wales, that Edward the First, when he completed the conquest of his country, ordered all the Bards, that fell into his hands, to be put to death'. The second verse, Antistrophe, reads:

On a rock, whose haughty brow  
 Frowns o'er old Conway's foaming flood,  
 Robed in the sable garb of woe,  
 With haggard eyes the Poet stood;  
 (Loose his beard, and hoary hair  
 Stream'd, like a meteor, to the troubled air)  
 And with a Master's hand, and Prophet's fire,  
 Struck the deep sorrows of his lyre.  
 'Hark, how each giant-oak, and desert cave,  
 Sighs to the torrent's awful voice beneath!  
 O'er thee, oh King! their hundred arms they wave,  
 Revenge on thee in hoarser murmurs breath;  
 Vocal no more, since Cambria's fatal day,  
 To high-born Hoel's harp, or soft Llewellyn's lay.'

In March 1774 in his *Memoirs* Jones numbered and listed his paintings including:

19) To these I shall add ye picture of the *Bard* 5 ft 6 Inches by 3 ft 9 Inches – the Subject taken from Gray's Ode – and I think one of the best I ever painted – This I presented as a retributory Offering to my Patron Mr. O. Bowles. This Picture was engraved by Smith, in Mezzotinto – but the Plate being very soon bought up by that great Leviathan, Mr Alderman Boydell; was never that I heard of, published – Another Instance of my illfortune with respect to Engravers –





Figure 6. Buildings in Naples, oil on paper, 1782. While in Naples Jones painted a remarkable series of oil on paper sketches that are notable for their lustrous colouring, suffused in Mediterranean sunlight, containing what strikes us today as a very modern sense of composition with the flat planes of the building laid out in a proto-abstract composition. This sketch is of the house that lay directly opposite the roof terrace of the house that Jones rented in May 1780 and which Jones described thus:

Just by Mrs Sherry's was a large new built house, or Palace if you please, that took up the greatest part of one side of the little Piazza, on the opposite of which was situated the *Dogana del Sale* or Custom house for Salt – The ground Appartments were all appropriated to Warehouses – the first and second floors were each intended for two Small families, having distinct kitchens, wells & other Conveniences, and a Common open Stone Staircase in the Center communicated with the several quarters – As nobody now lived in the house, I had my choice and took that Part of the second floor nearest the Sea, being by far the pleasantest, with the use of the *Lastrica* or Terras Roof – My Appartments consisted of a small Antichamber, eating Room, Bed Chamber, Kitchen, & two large Rooms in front, one of which I made my *Study* or painting Room, & the Other an exhibition – or Show Room – for which, with a fee of 3 Ducats to the Steward, I was to pay 60 Ducats 'till the 4<sup>th</sup> of May following, by three equal payments – one every 4 months, according to the Custom of Naples – Accordingly, having thrown in a few necessary Articles of furniture on the 29<sup>th</sup> I took possession –

## A NOTE ON THE BELL IN HOLY TRINITY CHURCH, BETWS CLYRO

Margaret AV Gill

When Frederick Sharpe published his monograph on the church bells of Radnorshire, he noted that the church at Betws Clyro (chapel of ease for Clyro) was equipped with one small bell, hung for chiming. He regretted that, owing to the design and construction of the closed western turret and the non-provision of hatchways, he was unable to examine the bell.<sup>1</sup> In November 2010 repairs to the roof of the building gave a rare opportunity to peer inside the bell-cote and to study the bell and its fittings.

Little is known of the earlier history of the church, which still retains much of its medieval character as well as a quantity of its medieval fabric (including a substantial proportion of the old roof timbers, screen and stone), despite having been completely rebuilt when the church was restored in 1878 by Frederick R Kempson of Hereford. In the architect's specification for this work, he stipulated that 'the turret is to be reconstructed as at present – re-covered with Green Whitland Abbey slates of small size and the present bell is to be hung in same'.<sup>2</sup> The bell-cote was (and still is) a simple square louvred turret with a pyramidal cap.

A few years prior to the restoration of the building, the Revd Francis Kilvert commented in his diary that on 13 February 1870 he heard the chapel bell 'pealing strongly' for only the second time since he had been at Clyro (and he had served as curate there from 1865). On this Sunday, the afternoon service included a baptism. A month later as he approached Betws through deep snow, he observed 'the clerk and two men lounging about the W. end of the Chapel till they saw me crossing the white waste when the clerk ... disappeared round the corner and immediately after the bell pealed out'. Again, there was a christening. The chiming of the bell would seem at that time to have been reserved for special occasions. However, two further diary entries suggest that it may afterwards have come into more regular use, possibly due to encouragement from Kilvert himself. On 21 January 1872 as he walked to Betws, below Penrheal the children of Pentwyn were singing 'Ding dong bell'; he speculated that 'perhaps they saw the parson coming up the hill. Then the Chapel bell tolled out sharp and sudden through the white mist to give notice of the service a quarter of an hour beforehand'. There was nothing special about this particular service; in fact few parishioners attended. Returning to Clyro some years later, Kilvert revisited the chapel on 30 April 1876 by

the desire of the curate and people of Betws and observed: 'The Chapel bell struck out as of old when I came in sight round the corner of the Chapel barn'.<sup>3</sup>

Archival material relating to Betws Clyro is sparse, and references to its bell are few. Nineteenth-century triennial visitation returns for the chapel, made to the bishop by the churchwardens of Clyro with Betws in response to particular queries, note in 1851: 'There is one bell – in repair', and in 1860: 'One bell in order'.<sup>4</sup> Prior to that, the bell is only mentioned in the churchwardens' presentments for five years at the beginning of the eighteenth century – from 1704 until 1708. In these, the bell of Betws chapel is variously described as 'crackt', 'out of order' or 'still uncast', and finally as 'cracked & ought to be new casted'.<sup>5</sup> In the same presentments, the churchwardens reported on the condition of the Clyro bells, of which the second also was cracked. A relief inscription on the present second bell summarises what happened to those bells: 'CABALVA : AND : LLOYNEY OF VS FOUR MADE FIVE H W 1708' – Clyro's four (presumably medieval) bells had been recast and augmented to a ring of five in 1708 by the local bell-founder, Henry Williams of Llowes, at the expense of the gentry living at Cabalva and Lloyney.<sup>6</sup> Since there are no further references to the bells in either church during the rest of the century, it may safely be assumed that the Betws bell received attention at the same time as those of the parent church and that the same bell-founder was responsible.

Where Henry Williams had his first foundry and from whom he learnt his craft is uncertain, but his name and initials are claimed to have been found on bells dated as early as 1677,<sup>7</sup> although the majority of bells bearing his founder's mark were cast during the first two decades of the eighteenth century.<sup>8</sup> At the time of the recasting of the Clyro bells, his foundry was at neighbouring Llowes, where he was a tenant of Edward Howarth of Cabalva. Later he moved up-stream to Glasbury, holding land leased from Sir Edward Williams of Gwernyfed. Here he died on 8 March 1722<sup>9</sup> and was buried two days later.<sup>10</sup>

After the Reformation, bell-ringing had become increasingly popular as a sporting pastime among gentry and commoners alike (the latter often paid for their services, when the ringing formed part of a communal or religious occasion), and the practice of change-ringing evolved.<sup>11</sup> Gentlemen's reference books included chapters on the subject; by 1700 John White's *A Rich Cabinet with variety of Inventions; unlock'd and opened, for the recreation of ingenious spirits at their vacant hours. Compiled by J.W. a lover of artificial conclusions* (1651) had gone into many editions. Monographs such as Richard Duckworth's *Tintinnologia*:

or the Art of Ringing (1668), Fabian Stedman's *Campanologia: or the Art of Ringing Improved* (1677) and John Doleman's *Campanologia Improved or, the Art of Ringing made easy* (1702) expounded the principles and intricacies of change-ringing, which provided the satisfaction of combining both physical and mental exercise. While change-ringing could be performed on four bells, its permutations were limited; five bells gave greater scope.

The inscription on the second Clyro bell suggests the presence of a band of enthusiastic gentlemen pleasure-ringers in the district, who took advantage of the need for recasting one of the four bells to recast all in order to augment them to a ring of five somewhat smaller bells and thus enhance their sport. A court case brought by the vicar, churchwardens and majority of the inhabitants of neighbouring Llowes in the same year not only confirms their presence, but names the individual ringers: Edward Howarth (of Cabalva), Thomas Howarth, Thomas Powell, Thomas Griffith (of Lloyney) and Walter Price. The deposition before the Consistory Court for the Archdeanery of Brecon accused the five men of meeting in an alehouse with the bell-founder Henry Williams and conspiring to break the three ancient bells of Llowes church in order to make of them five new bells – and this at the expense of the parish rate-payers.<sup>12</sup> It would seem that, whereas the gentlemen of Cabalva and Lloyney were willing to cover the cost of recasting the Clyro bells, they expected the cost of similarly recasting and augmenting the Llowes bells (amounting to sixty pounds) to be paid from a tax upon the outraged inhabitants of that parish. The Llowes bells were saved, to be recast in 1858 but never augmented.

While the augmentation of the Clyro bells led to their greater use (and eventual breaking and recasting of three during the nineteenth century), the use of the single Betws bell was limited, confined to the summoning of parishioners to morning or evening prayer. The frequency of services at Betws Clyro (and therefore frequency in the chiming of the bell) has varied from period to period. During the earlier part of the nineteenth century only a few were held during the summer months. Jonathan Williams notes that 'divine service is performed in this chapel five or six times commencing on Trinity Sunday. The inhabitants for the remaining term of the year repair to the parent church of Clyro to pay their religious devotions'.<sup>13</sup> In the third edition of his *Topographical Dictionary of Wales*, Samuel Lewis expands his entry on the chapel with the comment that 'divine service is performed in it only a certain number of Sundays in the summer months'.<sup>14</sup> Although during the incumbency of the Revd Richard Lister Venables services seem to have been held more frequently than either earlier or later,<sup>15</sup> for the last three centuries the single bell has seen

only modest use compared with bells elsewhere that form part of a ring; it might therefore be expected to have survived unchanged since the beginning of the eighteenth century. Restoration work on the church in 1878 (that included an instruction from the architect that the old bell was to be re-hung) is substantially documented. The parish archive contains no hint of any mishap to the bell at this time; while there is a possibility that it might have been damaged during the rebuilding and replaced with a new bell or one salvaged from another church, this is extremely unlikely to have happened.

Therefore it seemed logical to assume that the bell-cote of Betws Clyro church concealed the bell originally placed in the old turret in 1708 by Henry Williams, that the bell was one made by him, and that it would be found to bear both his founder's mark and the date. However, this last assumption proved not to be the case. When the boarding on the west side of the turret was removed and the densely packed accumulation of bird debris and nesting litter cleared, the bell was seen to bear neither mark nor date (Figs. 1–3). A modest bell 14 inches in diameter, without decoration other than the usual raised lines (moulding wires) encircling crown, lower waist and lip, it is crudely finished with the lip fettled where surplus metal from the casting process has been removed. Unfortunately the shape provides no clue as to precisely when the bell was cast; the form is consistent with one made at the beginning of the eighteenth century, but an earlier date is also possible.<sup>16</sup> If the bell were indeed late medieval, the question would arise as to how such a bell came to be placed in the turret at Betws in 1708, and what its origin was. There can be little doubt that the replacement of the cracked Betws bell did take place in 1708, at the same time as the recasting of the Clyro bells. Although the latter was carried out at the expense of local gentry, responsibility for both church and chapel lay with the vicar and churchwardens of Clyro,<sup>17</sup> and the cost of repairing the Betws bell would have been borne by the parishioners – a cost that they would be anxious to keep to the minimum. If there were a redundant sanctus bell at Clyro, this might have been swapped for the cracked Betws bell and hung in the chapel turret (the latter's metal being used in the recasting of the Clyro bells), or Henry Williams might have had an old bell from elsewhere at his foundry; but there is no evidence whatsoever for either scenario.

Despite the lack of any firm evidence by way of an inscription on the bell itself or detailed documentation relating to its casting, the greatest likelihood remains that the bell now hanging in the church at Betws Clyro was made by Henry Williams in 1708.





Figure 1. Bell in Holy Trinity church at Betws Clyro, diameter 14 inches.



Figure 2. Detail of Betws Clyro bell, showing attachment of canons to headstock and chain-operated lever for swinging to chime bell.



Figure 3. Detail of Betws Clyro bell, showing chipping round edge of lip to remove surplus metal.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> F Sharpe, *The Church Bells of Radnorshire* (Brackley, 1947), p.14.

<sup>2</sup> National Record Office, Aberystwyth: St David's Diocese SD/F/36 faculty file for restoration of chapel, containing faculty granted 8 March 1878 with plans and specification by Frederick Kempson of Hereford dated March 1877; MAV Gill, 'Three documents in the parish archives of the Wye Valley group', *Transactions of the Radnorshire Society* Vol. 77 (2007), pp. 40–45, figs.4–5.

<sup>3</sup> W Plomer (ed.), *Selections from the Diary of the Rev. Francis Kilvert* Vols. 1–3 (London, 1938–1940); K Hughes and D Ifans (eds.), *The Diary of Francis Kilvert April–June 1870* (Aberystwyth, 1982); D Ifans (ed.), *The Diary of Francis Kilvert June–July 1870* (Aberystwyth, 1989). Robert Francis Kilvert served as curate to the Revd Richard Lister Venables at Clyro 1865–1872.

<sup>4</sup> NRO: St David's Diocese SD/QA/207 (1851), SD/QA/215 (1860).

<sup>5</sup> NRO: SD/CCB/55.

<sup>6</sup> MAV Gill, 'Concerning some early Radnorshire bell-ringers', *TRS* Vol.76 (2006), pp. 78–80, 85 note 15.

<sup>7</sup> SR Meyrick, *The History and Antiquities of the County of Cardigan* (London, 1808), p. 190. The bells recorded by Meyrick were later recast (F Sharpe, *The Church Bells of Cardiganshire* (Brackley, 1965), p. 95).

<sup>8</sup> F Sharpe, *The Church Bells of Herefordshire* Vol. V (Brackley, 1975), pp. 741–745. For further details of the various bells produced by Henry Williams and conjectures about his family connections, see CA Lewis, *Henry Williams the Glasbury Bellfounder and the Production and Tuning of Bells* (Inverness, 2012).

<sup>9</sup> NRO: BR/1721/53 Will of Henry Williams dated 22 May 1721, with two copies of 'A true & perfect Inventory of ye p[er]sonall Estate Goods Cattell & Chattels of Henry Williams of ye p[ar]ish of Glasbury in ye County of Radnor Bellfounder', which includes the valuation of 'His instruments for bells' at one pound. For a transcription of the will, see Lewis, *Henry Williams*, p. 101.

<sup>10</sup> T Wood, *The Registers of Glasbury 1660–1836* (London, 1904), p. 91.

<sup>11</sup> For general accounts of the history of bell-ringing and change-ringing, see: HB Walters, *Church Bells of England* (Oxford, 1912); E Morris, *The History and Art of Change-ringing* (London, 1931); J Sanderson (ed.), *Change-ringing: the History of an English Art* (Central Council of Church Bell Ringers, 1987).

<sup>12</sup> NRO: SD/CCB(G) 336. For a transcription of the deposition made 18 December 1708, see Gill, 'Early Radnorshire bell-ringers', pp. 80–81.

<sup>13</sup> Hereford Record Office: manuscript of Jonathan Williams, *History of Radnorshire* (undated, circa 1820), p. 417.

<sup>14</sup> S Lewis, *A Topographical Dictionary of Wales* (3rd edn., London, 1845), p. 87.

<sup>15</sup> The entries in *Kilvert's Diary* indicate that services were held in the chapel throughout the year, possibly only monthly during the winter but weekly or at least fortnightly at other times of year. On 25 September 1872 he recounts hearing of the misfortune that befell his successor when, through a misunderstanding that 'he was to go to the chapel every other Sunday', the new curate was about to begin the service at Betws when the door was 'darkened by a portentous shadow' and he heard the terrible voice of Mr Venables saying: 'Are you aware that there is no one at Clyro Church?', before the latter 'turned and ran back to Clyro where the bells had been ringing for half an hour'.

<sup>16</sup> Opinion of Prof Colin A Lewis and Dr John C Eisel.

<sup>17</sup> John Barnett (vicar of Clyro 1688–1723), Thomas Beavan and Oliver Prees (churchwardens 1708/9).

# THE VIRTUES OF UNHEROIC GOVERNMENT: THE COUNTERFACTUAL CASE FOR SIR GEORGE CORNEWALL LEWIS\*

## PART TWO

Richard Shannon

In the general balance of advantages between the two rivals by, say, 1865, Gladstone unquestionably held the ground in the country at large, 'out of doors'. Lewis, counterfactually Leader of the Commons, held the ground in Parliament. In the political circumstances of the time, Lewis's was much the more advantageous situation. Gladstone in 1864 had declared his conversion to the principle of some significant increase in the popular electoral franchise. In 1865 he declared his conversion to the principle of disestablishing the Anglican Church of Ireland. These were two highly controversial policies. Palmerston's House of Commons had been elected in 1865 without reference to either of them. This brings us back to the first big counterfactual question: What would Russell have done?

On the face of it, Gladstone's two *volte-faces* now aligned him with the new Prime Minister. The Whigs had been antipathetic to the Anglican establishment in Ireland since the 1830s. Russell had been pushing for a second Reform Act since 1850. Strictly, it would have been possible for Russell to have removed Lewis from the leadership office and replaced him with Gladstone. It can be assumed that Gladstone would have been breathing down his neck to that end. But it can also be assumed that Russell would have taken pause. Quite apart from the consideration that Lewis was an old, almost family, friend, a man whose career Russell had conspicuously fostered, Lewis's removal would have been a move deeply unpopular in the Commons and, more importantly, the Queen would have resisted. The etiquette of office placements and the manners involved at the heart of aristocratic government would have made Lewis's involuntary removal unavoidably scandalous. Russell might conceivably have proposed that Lewis and Gladstone exchange offices. Lewis almost certainly, with brother-in-law Clarendon in close attendance behind, would have refused to comply. Looking at the larger picture, Russell would have had to calculate as follows: Lewis's popularity in the Commons meant that legislation in his keeping or with his countenance had good chances of getting through. Although Lewis was not known as an enthusiast for Reform he had come to accept the case for it.<sup>1</sup> In the Irish case especially both Lewises, father and son, had been sympathetically

knowledgeable in Irish affairs. That was true also of several of the Whig chiefs of the day. Gladstone as Leader would have had the Commons against him as well as the Queen. Moreover, in the Irish case there were important differences between Russell and Gladstone. Russell had in mind a policy long associated with Whig opinion of 'concurrent endowments', that is, appropriating endowments from the wealthy Anglican Church of Ireland to fund endowments for the two main non-Anglican confessions, the Roman Catholics and the Presbyterians. Lewis was as it happened a keen exponent of this principle; indeed, he was credited as having made the first use of the term in English public discourse.<sup>2</sup> As early as the 1830s he had observed the benefits applied to educational policy in the Prussian state by sharing endowments among the various religious confessions. This approach now also had the advantage of being adopted by the Conservatives. Gladstone, characteristically, favoured the 'heroic' alternative of sweeping away all endowments of religion in Ireland. That of course is what he actually did in his 1869 Disestablishment Act. But Gladstone as Prime Minister in 1869 is, from the present counterfactual viewpoint, a contingency without actual form or substance.

What in all likelihood would have had counterfactual form and substance in 1865 was a decision by Russell, for all that he had always been more of a creed-based Liberal than Palmerston, to keep Lewis as Leader of the Commons as an old familial comrade and as the best means of getting Reform through the 1865 House and trusting that Gladstone would consent to help manage the measure in tandem with Lewis. For Lewis the deal would be that he could keep the Leadership at the price of getting Russell's bill through the Commons. We can reasonably assume that Lewis would have made no difficulties. Russell, after all, was not demanding anything like 'democracy'. True, he had trumped the Derby-Disraeli bill in 1859. But that hardly counted as a desperate Radical exploit. And it must be remembered that, when in actuality the bill Disraeli allowed himself to be blackmailed into producing in 1867 reached the Lords, Russell was so horrified that he wanted it sent back for drastic pruning.

As far as Gladstone is concerned, two scenarios can be envisaged. Scenario One: Gladstone bows to Russell's decision to keep Lewis on as Leader of the Commons. It is a known given that Gladstone was perfectly well aware that he would not have been a popular appointment as Leader. And where else could he go? Gladstone had notoriously brandished threats of resignation against Palmerston in their earlier times of conflict, but had been careful to keep himself in the political mainstream. The same cautious necessity still applied. If he was ever to succeed Russell as Prime Minister he could not afford to alienate him. Above all, he could not afford to

alienate the Queen, for the simple fact remained that on Russell's eventual retirement nothing would decide who his successor should be other than her undoubted prerogative. Scenario Two: Gladstone feels himself, as in 1855, in an impossible situation. He resigns. He hopes that his reputation garnered through the 1860s 'out of doors' as 'the People's William' will, cultivated with yet more extensive populist excursions in the earlier manner of Tyneside and Lancashire, accrue to such a power that he could, in any forthcoming critical contingency in the fortunes of politics, impose himself as Prime Minister in the same manner in which he had imposed himself as Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1859. Such an imposition would have been counterfactually much the less likely scenario. A political crisis adequate to Gladstone's purposes in the conditions of that era is difficult to conceive. Outside the mainstream a challenge to Russell would have exerted feeble purchase. With Lewis and Grey in charge of the domestic agenda, would there have been riots in Hyde Park? The likeliest event would have been a coalition *bloc* to close Gladstone down. His foot having once more been measured, Gladstone was not going to be the heroic rescuer of the country from the political doldrums characteristic of the era following the fall of Peel: the so-called 'era of stagnation' dominated by the collusive negations of Palmerston and Derby designed to stifle 'movement', with loose party lines, with what Disraeli called 'a truce of parties', with collusive front benches, with record numbers of uncontested constituencies in general elections, with an atmosphere of virtual coalition government in view, would have persisted. This was the era celebrated by Walter Bagehot's *The English Constitution* of 1867, an elegiac lament on its passing and the looming onset of a revival of the heroic times of Peel in the form of an even more heroic Gladstone. And it has to be said that, if one person of these times could be singled out as the most conspicuous embodiment of all that was encompassed in the 'era of stagnation' and a 'truce of parties', it could be none other than Sir George Cornewall Lewis.

Gladstone's official biographer, John Morley, was very conscious of this circumstance. He inserted a comment into the first volume of his biography clearly intended as a stinging rebuke to Lewis. The occasion was a reminiscence by Lewis on the furious quarrels Gladstone as Chancellor was wont to have with the Bank of England. Lewis: 'Now I am as cool as a fish.' Morley: 'The worst of being as cool as a fish is that you never get great things done, you effect no improvements and you carry no reforms, against the lethargy or selfishness of men and the tyranny of custom.'<sup>3</sup> It is certainly true that Lewis's political record in the years of his holding high office since 1855 does not abound in what conventionally are extolled as 'great things done'. His greatest achievement was to block

Gladstone and Russell in their attempt to get the British government to provide good offices of mediation with a view to ending the American Civil War. In doing so, Lewis almost certainly saved Britain from having war declared against it by the United States. That, by any measure, was quite a great thing. The existence of present-day Canada can thus plausibly be credited to him. Given the powerfully ingrained and in many of its effects repressive influence of Gladstone's public repute, that episode rarely if ever breaks through the narrative surface of historical treatment of the Victorian years. Ironies tend to occur precisely at such fortuitous junctures. It always has to be kept in mind that the historically imposing Gladstonian presence in the national consciousness and popular memory – four times Prime Minister, 'Grand Old Man', the pious anecdotes and all the rest of it – was just as much a matter of chance and luck as with any other case of political fortunes in his day. It was never a matter of manifest divinely ordained destiny.

Doing 'great things', effecting improvements and carrying reforms certainly were Gladstone's stock-in-trade as Peel's inheritor. For all that he was a disaster as leader of his party in the Commons in the 1866 and 1867 sessions, the semi-democratic borough franchise thereby accidentally created had the inadvertent return effect of giving Gladstone a solid electoral victory and the premiership in 1868. Unquestionably, much of the policies and legislation for which Gladstone was responsible from 1869 onwards counts as publicly beneficial: Civil Service reform, elementary education reform, introduction of the secret ballot, army reform, judicial reform, universities reform, public house licensing reform and so on. That he offended pretty much every entrenched interest in the country and ended up with mutiny in 1873 and stunning electoral defeat in 1874 he could fairly count as badges of honour. His abdication of the Liberal leadership in 1875 was essentially a matter of his critique of the Liberal party rather than the party's critique of him. He followed through after returning to office in 1880 with suppression of corrupt electoral practices and assimilation of the 1867 borough franchise with the county franchise in the 'Third Reform Act' in 1884. Some of these measures undoubtedly merit repute as 'great things done'. But it must be borne in mind that we are contemplating counterfactually an alternative, Russell, ministry for at least the earlier years here under review. Russell, with Lewis at his side, would not have been an inactive legislator. Most of what Gladstone did manifestly needed doing. Mishaps and misadventures occasioned on the way have no bearing in any case on the issue presently in question.

Three important and revealing areas of concern in the matter of Gladstone's doing great things, however, do have a bearing on the issue



presently in question and require due critical attention. The first of course is the ever-looming 'Irish Question'. Claims for Gladstone as a doer of great things must ultimately take purchase primarily on his performance in realising his 'mission', as he put it on first undertaking the government in 1868, to 'pacify Ireland'. This historiographically has been much attended to. Entirely unattended to on the other hand is the ancillary issue of Gladstone's seeming conversion in 1877 to the principle of funding Irish tenancy purchase as the central focus of Irish Land policy. This hitherto he had deliberately and consistently opposed. Equally unattended to has been his blocking of local government legislation for both Ireland and Britain desired by his Gladstonian Liberals throughout his 1880–85 ministry.

In 1869 Gladstone launched his heroic Irish Disestablishment policy. This humiliated the Anglican ecclesiastical Ascendancy. However, it did nothing to pacify the Irish. What the heroic style of Gladstone's Disestablishment Act did was to stimulate enormously agitation in Ireland for disestablishment of the Anglican landed Ascendancy. Gladstone had in view in a few years' time some kind of Irish land reform. Now, in 1870, he found himself hustled by intense swell of Irish expectations into a premature Land policy. He heroically ignored all advice to consult expert Irish opinion. Expert Irish opinion would have advised Gladstone to adopt a policy of funding purchase of tenancies by tenants from willing landlords. That indeed proved to be the Land policy that solved the Irish Land question in the nineteenth century, culminating in the great 1903 Wyndham Act. But Gladstone would have none of it. It was simple and grossly unheroic. As Roundell Palmer, Lord Chancellor Selborne, put it, Gladstone did not take counsel with those whose point of view at all differed from his own. 'This makes him hardly possible to be a Minister, except when it is time for some "heroic" measures, for which he can excite public opinion.'<sup>4</sup> Gladstone preferred to concoct an heroically elaborate Land Act designed to purchase survival for the Irish landlords at the price of about a third of the value of their estates. The long and the short of it was that it did not work. The Irish regarded it as an alien imposition. It did nothing to pacify. It stimulated the emergence of the Home Rule movement, founded in 1870 by Isaac Butt. Then in 1873 Gladstone landed himself in disaster with his heroic challenge both to the Irish Catholic bishops and to Liberal principles of intellectual liberty over Irish universities.

So far, Morley's claims on Gladstone's behalf as a doer of great things might be judged as compromised but by no means disqualified. Gladstone, after all, had yet another twenty years in public life ahead of him. It was as abdicated leader in 1876 that Gladstone was handed inadvertently by Disraeli the grand moral cause of the 'Bulgarian atrocities' in 1876, when

Disraeli's anti-Russian and Turcophile Eastern policy made Britain appear to be accessory after the fact of extensive Turkish massacres of Christians in the Balkans. Gladstone exploited his 'Eastern Question' opportunity and economic depression in the later 1870s to the hilt. So it was that Gladstone in 1880 triumphed brilliantly not only over Disraeli, or Lord Beaconsfield as he had become, but his own party led by Lords Granville and Hartington. He imposed himself as Prime Minister (largely in fact unawares) on an almost hysterically unwilling Queen. These certainly were 'great doings'; or, more accurately perhaps, preliminaries to possible later 'great doings'. Gladstone could plausibly offer both a new moral foreign policy and restored finances. As 'Grand Old Man' he was now beyond the reach of mutineers in the old style. As a veteran Liberal MP put it, 'the right hon. Gentleman (Mr Gladstone) can do anything he likes: I do not think the country could have a better man at the head of affairs; but whatever he says, whether it be right or wrong, I believe will receive support in the country.' Lewis's stepson-in-law, Harcourt, put the matter to Gladstone even more starkly: 'Pray do not entertain the notion that you can say anything *personally* that does not commit and bind the party. *You are the Party* and your acts are its acts.'<sup>5</sup>

At this point, and with these considerations in mind, attention needs to be drawn to the second and third of the areas of concern earlier alluded to bearing on Morley's claim. When on a visit to Ireland in 1877 (a visit, it must be said, almost grossly misunderstood and misrepresented),<sup>6</sup> Gladstone, while extolling his 1870 Land Act, declared his conversion to the idea that funding of purchase of tenancies by occupiers was the way ahead on the land question. He applauded Bright's efforts in this direction; efforts which hitherto he had consistently deprecated. Purchase of tenancies by occupiers 'in a good and appreciable number of instances' would, he now believed, be 'an object of great importance for Ireland'. He spoke as abdicated statesman without responsibility for the present or the future; 'in a position of greater freedom and less responsibility', as he famously said of another issue at the time. In 1879, in the Commons, he endorsed the attempts of the leading Liberal exponent of the tenant-purchase policy, George Shaw-Lefevre, to persuade the then Conservative government to adopt it. It was more than a matter of merely economic necessity, Gladstone insisted; it was a moral, social and political necessity as well. Yet, on arriving back in office in 1880 and confronted with another huge swell of Irish expectations, Gladstone's second heroically concocted Irish Land Act of 1881 was as deliberately bereft of means of tenant purchase as the first had been, and as derisively denounced by the Irish as another futile alien imposition.



How to explain a seemingly negative exercise in non-great doing? Was it the case of his being reclaimed by the 'Treasury Mind'? Or did Gladstone have an undeclared motive in not killing Home Rule with the kindness of conceding its land policy? Was his thus exposing himself wide open to the ensuing Home Rule offensive itself part of a cunning plan? Conjecture is all we have to go on. It is also all we have to go on with in the question of Gladstone's blocking what a spokesman for the Gladstonian Liberals in 1880 called 'the greatest hope for the Liberal future': 'the work of constructing an efficient system of local government for Ireland and Great Britain – which would not only satisfy all that is reasonable in the Home Rule demand but also regenerate local government in this country'.<sup>7</sup> The legislative deprivation Gladstone thus imposed for the whole term of his second ministry, while keeping concealed his ultimate motives, inflicted lasting damage on Gladstonian Liberalism. Meanwhile, we arrive at the greatest thing done, or at least attempted, in the Irish case. Without consulting either colleagues or party, Gladstone suddenly set out in 1886 to foist on them a policy of conceding what the Parnellites in Ireland wanted in the form of Home Rule. He did this, moreover, without having a majority in the Commons independent of the Irish: something he had distinctly stipulated for at the time of his equivocal hintings in 1885 about possible Irish measures. Of all the mischiefs attending the controversies on this affair, the greatest is to assume that 'Home Rule' meant only what Gladstone said it meant in his Government of Ireland Bill in 1886. In fact it was a concept susceptible to a wide variety of definitions, which, had Gladstone consulted colleagues and party, might have been beneficially aired, and, possibly, even more beneficially applied legislatively than in fact was the case. What was going on in Gladstone's head when he decided there would be no consultation with either colleagues or party? Obviously there was the consideration that he would thereby avoid initial opposition. In any case he had convinced himself that he could override all opposition by a heroic stroke of mighty leverage. But whence came the conviction? Looking at the evidence in his diaries, there can be no doubt as to its source. Gladstone's consultations were with Almighty God; there was no need of any on earth. There is no point in going on about this. The evidence, disconcerting to the secularist Morley and his many followers since, is overwhelmingly there.

The real point to go on about is that the whole heroic venture ended yet again in mutiny and disaster, of which the most disastrous aspect was the end of any hope that there might otherwise have been alternative arrangements relating to a degree of Irish self-government in the 1880s

that Westminster might, however reluctantly, have been able to offer and Ireland might, however grumblingly, have been willing to accept. As the Parnellite Timothy Healy remarked in December 1885, it would take 'a few years' for the intelligent British public to apply their enlightened minds to digesting the meaning of the Irish electoral revolution of 1885.<sup>8</sup> These years they were not given. Gladstone intervened with his own deludedly God-driven heroism in their stead. The baffled Hartington could only despairingly ask of Granville: 'Did any leader ever treat a party in such a way as he has done?'<sup>9</sup>

To such a comprehensive factual catalogue of political misadventure might it not be of benefit to propose a reasonably plausible contrasting counterfactual catalogue? Take the case of Cornwall Lewis coming in to the 1866 session. His job is to get through Palmerston's Commons a Reform Bill for Lord Russell. It was going to be a moderate measure, something along the lines indicated by Russell's 1859 amendment to the anodyne Derby-Disraeli bill. Whether Gladstone stayed or went hardly by now mattered. There would be opposition in both parties from such as Robert Lowe and Lord Robert Cecil and their friends, convinced on utilitarian grounds that the existing franchise answered all requirements. But their misgivings about a bill managed by Lewis would have been far less than their fears about a future beckoned for them by Gladstone. And by now countervailing pressures were in evidence. John Bright and his Radical friends were doing their best to agitate the country in the direction of 'democracy'. This in turn stimulated notions that something needed to be done to neutralise Bright. A bill moderate enough to avoid giving fright yet solid enough to offer a convincing answer to the franchise question was what was needed. The Queen, anxious to avoid public unrest, was now a key participant. She was in a position to instruct Derby and Disraeli to assist. And Lewis was of course her man. With the Tories assisting, Lewis pretty much had a majority for sure. So Russell would get his bill up to the Lords, where Derby (who described Disraeli's effort in 1867 as 'a leap in the dark') would join him in welcoming a statesmanlike settlement. There was already, it might be said, something of a 'coalition' atmosphere in the political scene.

So Russell gets his long-desired Reform Act. Allowing for new registers, a general election could not long be delayed. That Russell, much like Palmerston in 1865, would get a majority in the new parliament was not in doubt. It would in all likelihood have been elected in 1868. So Russell goes on in 1869 to doing something about the Irish ecclesiastical establishment, the other of his long-contemplated ambitions. His bill, piloted again as can be assumed by Lewis, would however have been far

different from Gladstone's actual legislation of that year. It would have been 'concurrent' in its approach to endowments; it would have been countenanced by the Conservatives; it would not have subjected the Church of Ireland to humiliation and it would have stimulated nothing like mass Irish agitation in the direction of disestablishing the landlord class. It is unlikely that either Russell or Lewis had plans for anything big in Irish Land policy. Russell, spokesman for Whig progressiveness over the decades, was no more prone than Gladstone to consult Irish opinion. He certainly had ideas about Irish popular education that would not have suited the Irish Catholic bishops. Lewis, indeed, had been something of an expert in Irish social questions ever since his early days under his father's tutelage. But Russell, unlike Gladstone, would not have been hustled. He, and Lewis, would have remained in command of the political agenda. There had always been Liberals led by Shaw-Lefevre and Bright pressing for going along the grain of Irish opinion with tenant-purchase funding; now they would have been joined by many Conservatives following Lord Salisbury's lead in the same direction. Counterfactually, in the absence of Disraeli as Reformer and Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury would certainly have succeeded Lord Derby in 1869 as Conservative leader in the Lords, and it was as an exponent of tenancy purchase funding that he criticised both Gladstone's 1870 and 1881 Irish Land Bills. His argument was that the best defence of big property was ramparts of small property. (It was in fact in Salisbury's ministry in 1885 that the first pilot scheme for tenancy purchase funding was set up successfully in the form of the 'Ashbourne' Act.)

However all that may have been, going with Russell would not have been a great problem for Lewis. Russell's Liberal majority in 1868 would have been nothing as fractious as Gladstone's. Russell had always been a keen reformer in the matter of the people's education, and was not hampered by notions that it must be for the benefit of Anglican religion. What else? Certainly not Civil Service reform. Russell was wedded to the patronage principle. Russell would have been much more 'national' – and popular – on foreign and imperial policy than Gladstone, with Lewis probably trailing somewhat. There would absolutely have been no international arbitration over the American demand for damages inflicted by Confederate privateers built in British yards during the American Civil War. Gladstone offered this to the Americans with a view to its being a model for the nations. It turned out to be a nightmare. Britain came near in 1872 to the brink of either humiliation or war. Russell observed that sardonically, much in the way he observed in 1873 the collapse of Robert Lowe's budget and Liberalism's long-cherished repute for sound public finance. Russell had criticised severely Gladstone's eccentric appointment

of Lowe to the Exchequer instead of Cardwell. Otherwise, necessities would have presented themselves counterfactually to Russell much as they did factually to Gladstone. With Prussian precedents now startlingly in view abolition of purchase of infantry and cavalry commissions would have been unavoidable. Lewis, in any case, had long, like many another member of the Liberal thinking classes, been an admirer of the efficiencies of the Prussian state. Certainly there would have been an end to religious tests for the ancient universities. Russell had started that tack back in 1850. Lewis was no friend to the *parti prêtre*. The Liberal party wanted the big things denied to them by Gladstone: local government reform, including reform for Ireland that would have satisfied all that was 'reasonable in the Home Rule demand'. They wanted reformed London government. Neither Russell nor Lewis had anything in the way of Gladstone's assumably concealed motives for thwarting them. The Ballot? Lewis was known to be a supporter. It is possible in any case that Russell would have been content to leave those big issues to his successor. By the early seventies, after all, he was getting on. (He died in 1878, in his eighty-sixth year.)

Who would have succeeded him as Prime Minister? The Queen's prerogative, slightly compromised in 1865 by the arrangements between Palmerston and Russell in 1859, to which she of course was privy, would on this occasion have remained unfettered. That she would have wanted Lewis to take over is certain. There is no reason to suppose that Russell would have advised otherwise, were he asked. (Gladstone, it may usefully be recalled, was carefully not asked to advise in the matter of his own successor in 1894. He wanted to advise that it be Spencer; she was determined that it be Rosebery; and Rosebery it was.) There is equally little reason to suppose that Gladstone might at that juncture have presented a plausible alternative possibility. It is true that, counterfactually, he would not have been as unwelcome as in fact he was in 1868. But he would nonetheless have remained not especially welcome. Had he stayed in the mainstream with Russell, it would have been at the Treasury. Where else? That had been his unanswerable point against Palmerston in 1859. He might well have achieved the one thing from his 1853 plan left unachieved: abolition of the income tax. His improvised attempt in fact to do that in 1874 proved the ultimate disaster of his first ministry. Who knows but that with the countenance of either Russell or Lewis he might eventually have been successful? But to what end? It was an issue that did not touch the masses. It would not have been his means of escape, the key to unlocking the Treasury door. Within the train of events here counterfactually envisaged, it would have been Gladstone's ineffably ironic fate that the Treasury, having been the launching pad of his heroic career, would have ended up as his prison.

Of Lewis's likely counterfactual fortunes as Prime Minister, there is little point in speculating. There would have been no drama, no heroism. In his last published work, *A Dialogue on the Best Form of Government* in 1863, Lewis, wearing the mask of Crito, advised: 'it is the part of wisdom and prudence to acquiesce in any form of government which is tolerably well administered, and affords tolerable security to person and property'.<sup>10</sup> Bagehot would have published a rather different kind of *English Constitution*. Perhaps, in his *Physics and Politics* in 1872, he might have extolled Lewis rather than Palmerston as the best example of the progressive and efficient quality of English statesmanship, embodying the principles of natural selection and inheritable excellence in national life, with animated moderation as the key element in mankind's most successful achievement in social evolution, the polity of discussion. (It was certainly never going to be Gladstone.) The party wanted local government and London government reform. Lewis, it can reasonably be assumed, would have given it them. Should Russell's 1866 Reform Act have left the counties largely alone (that would have probably been the price of Conservative assistance) Lewis would not have balked at eventual assimilation of the borough and county franchises, given that the borough franchise of Russell's bill in any case would have been very moderate compared with Disraeli's 1867 version. Salisbury for the Conservatives might well have pressed, as indeed he actually did in 1884–85, for comprehensive redistribution of constituencies with a view to equalising vote values, and thereby enfranchising the fastest growing social sector, suburbia. Within a semi-coalition, or perhaps by now a fully realised coalition frame, Lewis would have been unlikely to resist. He was no enemy to the villa vote. One issue, however, needs to be stressed. With the onset, in 1875, of the 'Eastern Question', Lewis would never have allowed British policy to go in the heroically interventionist 'Palmerstonian' Turcophile direction Disraeli actually took it in. Lewis was known as a 'father of Splendid Isolation'.<sup>11</sup> With Salisbury at his side, Britain would thus have been spared a great deal of both untoward drama and heroism from either Disraeli or Gladstone. It can be fairly supposed that Lewis would have left the Afghans, Afrikaners and Egyptians alone. It is equally likely, on the other hand, that he would have been adequately Cobdenite in holding true to Cobden's doctrine that Britain's free trade policy implied British naval mastery. What would Lewis have done in response to Home Rule, assuming indeed that Butt's initiative in response to Gladstone's imposing his Land Act of 1870 would have taken some similar form in response to whatever it was that Russell might or might not have done? Given the circumstances by then counterfactually prevailing, would Parnell – supposing, again, his successful deposition of Butt – have

been able to make of Home Rule anything like the aggressively popular force that confronted Gladstone in 1885? Probably Lewis would have been in a position to trust that Liberal plans for local government for Ireland designed to appease all that was reasonable in the Home Rule demand might prove adequate to pacify the Irish; or perhaps something along the lines of Joe Chamberlain's 1885 County Government scheme; a scheme deftly seen off by Gladstone, but a scheme eventually judged by Rosebery as the best chance Gladstonian Liberalism was never allowed to have.<sup>12</sup> Perhaps Gladstone would at last have had his chance around about, say, the middle eighties, safely past the time he could apply much heroism. Could we fairly say that the so-called 'era of stagnation' of the 1850s and 1860s has been vindicated? Other than Walter Bagehot in his *English Constitution*, the most intelligent comments made on that theme by a historian that I am aware of were made by WE Williams, in his *The Rise of Gladstone to the Leadership of the Liberal Party*, of 1934. He judged Morley to be 'inadequate' in dealing with it as an evil merely to be swept away by a scornful and impatient Gladstone. 'A truer explanation is, that it is the meeting place of two political generations.'<sup>13</sup> George Cornewall Lewis was, or rather might have been, the heir to one of those generations. His talents would have made him, it can fairly be claimed, not unworthy of the chances denied him by fate.

#### NOTES

\* This paper is an extended version of a lecture delivered to the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion in London on 17 March 2010. I am much indebted to the help and advice of Professors Prys Morgan and Jonathan Parry.

<sup>1</sup> ODNB, Vol. 33, p. 615.

<sup>2</sup> ODNB, Vol. 33, p. 612.

<sup>3</sup> J Morley, *Gladstone* (1903), pp. i, 519. Morley in fact was quoting from a letter by Gladstone to his wife in 1861. Lewis had observed of Gladstone in 1854: 'it is a pity he puts so much heat, so much irritability into business'. Bevan, p. 67.

<sup>4</sup> RT Shannon, *Gladstone, God and Politics* (2007), p. 265.

<sup>5</sup> Shannon, p. 319.

<sup>6</sup> Shannon, pp. 295–98.

<sup>7</sup> Shannon, p. 323.

<sup>8</sup> Shannon, p. 369.

<sup>9</sup> Shannon, p. 372.

<sup>10</sup> ODNB, Vol. 33, p. 615.

<sup>11</sup> ODNB, Vol. 33, p. 614.

<sup>12</sup> Shannon, p. 444.

<sup>13</sup> WE Williams, *The Rise of Gladstone to the Leadership of the Liberal Party, 1859 to 1868* (1934), p. 2.

## HATFIELD'S MYSTERY SOURCE FOR THE BATTLE OF BRYN GLAS

Michael Livingston

In 1947, William Hatfield, who had been a headmaster, chairman of the Knighton Urban District Council from 1932–34 and a member of the Radnorshire Society since its inception, died at the age of eighty-six.<sup>1</sup> Just prior to his death, he published a memoir of his youth in Knighton, entitled *Knighton and District*. It was in this book, as he discussed the Battle of Bryn Glas, which was fought on 22 June 1402 in close proximity to Knighton near the modern village of Pilleth, matching Welsh forces under the direction of Owain Glyndwr and English forces under the command of Sir Edmund Mortimer, that Hatfield made the following statement:

One writer relates that in 1402, before the battle of Pilleth, the Welsh crossed the hills from Llanidloes towards Knighton, burning and slaying on all sides. Sir Edward (*sic*) Mortimer sent 400 men to Knighton and found all the men under arms; they had sent their women and children in wagons towards Ludlow, but as the town had a strong wall the men were determined on making a stout defence. A party advanced five miles beyond the town and found a village on fire and attacked the Welsh, who were repulsed and the party returned to Knighton ... there is scarce a house left standing between Llandiloes and Knighton.<sup>2</sup>

This information is interesting in any light. We have no other record that Knighton's walls were so stout at the time, for instance, and the details provided here about the movements of the opposing forces before the Battle of Bryn Glas might be highly useful for understanding the course and even the location of that engagement. For many reasons, therefore, there has been strong interest in identifying Hatfield's unnamed 'writer' and locating this mystery source.

Perhaps few have searched harder than F Noble. In a report on excavations at the nearby Bleddfa church, published in the *Transactions of the Radnorshire Society* in 1963, Noble cited Hatfield's passage as possible evidence for the destruction being uncovered at Bleddfa. He writes:

Sir John Lloyd was obviously unaware of this source when he wrote the standard biography of Glyndwr, and I have been unable to find any other



writer who has used it. Yet I am fairly certain that Hatfield did not invent it, although a note in his manuscript which attributed it to 'Old Stones, New Edition, p. 101' proved a false trail when this book by W.S. Symonds was finally tracked down. The extract is not written in Hatfield's style and demands a more detailed knowledge of the period than he displays, though it contains the common error of 'Edward' for 'Edmund' Mortimer. It resembles most closely translations of Norman-French letters of this period.... Wherever the original exists, and wherever the translation was published, they have been sufficiently obscure to escape the notice of all the historians who have written on the subject, and all the friends and experts I have applied to for help in the past ten years. The extract is important.... Any member who can identify the source will be performing a considerable service.<sup>3</sup>

Geoffrey Hodges, writing his history of Glyndwr's rebellion almost thirty years later, considered the passage 'rather more detailed and circumstantial than one would expect of a Norman-French official letter', but he likewise could not find the source.<sup>4</sup> Hodges nevertheless used Hatfield's mystery source as an essential element in his reconstruction of the Battle of Bryn Glas.

As it turns out, both Noble and Hodges were right – and wrong. The source is by no means a Norman-French letter, and Hatfield most certainly did not make it up. Alas for the arguments of both men, however, the source is also quite unreliable in terms of history: GA Henty's 1899 juvenile novel *Both Sides of the Border*, a historical fictional retelling of the early fifteenth century. As it happens, in fact, the account is not even about Bryn Glas. Henty imaginatively has Mortimer leave Ludlow to meet with Lord Grey of Ruthin – not knowing that Owain has captured him – and in his absence the Welsh forces make an otherwise unrecorded attack on Knighton that Mortimer's men must combat:

At daybreak, on the third day after Mortimer had left [Ludlow], a messenger arrived at the castle with news that a large body of Welsh had, the evening before, entered Radnor by the road across the hills from Llanidloes, and were marching towards Knighton, burning the villages as they went, and slaying all who fell into their hands. The horn was at once sounded, and Sir John Wycliffe and the other knights hastily assembled in the court-yard. Here, after a short consultation, it was determined that a mounted party should be at once despatched to endeavour to harass the advance of the Welsh, the troop consisting of Alwyn's men-at-arms, twenty men of the garrison, and fifty mounted men who formed part of the new levy. Four



hundred footmen were to follow at once. ... They reached Knighton by nine o'clock. The enemy had not as yet come within sight of the town, but throughout the night the sky to the west had been red with the flames of the burning villages and homesteads. The male inhabitants were all under arms; many had already sent their wives and children in waggons towards Ludlow, but as the town had a strong wall the men were determined upon making a stout defence. ... It was evident, however, that the Welsh force was not keeping together, but after crossing the border had broken up and scattered over the country, burning and slaying. Some of the bands had approached to within five miles of the town...<sup>5</sup>

Here follows an imaginative scene of Sir John's party finding a border village on fire, attacking it, and heroically repulsing the Welsh there. Victorious, the English knights all return to Ludlow, where on Mortimer's return they report both their successes and the impact of the Welsh incursion:

There is scarce a house left standing between the hills on this side of Llanidloes and Knighton.<sup>6</sup>

A quick glance between Henty's text and that of Hatfield all but confirms that this is the long-sought mystery source: not only do the same unique details appear, but they also appear in the same phrases and constructions. One could suppose that both Hatfield and Henty have individually utilised the work of an unknown third party, but we must admit that this would be a slim chance indeed. Given the parallels of syntax between these two sources, we would have to assume that both writers independently copied the same multiple phrases from their hypothetical source almost word for word without any acknowledgments of the fact. Far more likely, on balance, is the assumption that Hatfield utilised Henty and mistakenly attributed it to the wrong book (as Noble discovered).

As a result, one must conclude that Hatfield's text is – at least in this present instance – essentially valueless to the historian seeking reliable information about the Battle of Bryn Glas.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> 'Society Notes', *Transactions of the Radnorshire Society* Vol. 17 (1947), pp. 1–2.

<sup>2</sup> William Hatfield, *Knighton and District* (Hereford, Jakemans, 1947), pp. 14–15.

<sup>3</sup> F Noble, 'Further Excavations at Bleddfa Church and Associated Problems of the History of the Lordship of Bleddfa', *Transactions of the Radnorshire Society* Vol. 33 (1963), pp. 57–63.

<sup>4</sup> Geoffrey Hodges, *Owain Glyn Dwr and the War of Independence in the Welsh Borders* (Logaston Press, 1995), p. 75.

<sup>5</sup> GA Henty, *Both Sides of the Border: A Tale of Hotspur and Glendower* (London, Blackie & Son, 1899), pp. 143–144.

<sup>6</sup> Henty, p. 157.

# THE LONDON DAMS THAT NEVER CAME TO WALES

Richard Rhys Rees

## INTRODUCTION

One day I was researching the Central Wales Railway at the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth when I came across an estimate for diverting the line out from the Irfon valley. The estimate was titled 'London Water (Welsh Reservoirs and Works)'.<sup>1</sup> Thus began many journeys between Wales and London to bring the proposals to light.

2

In Parliament—Session 1899.

# LONDON WATER (WELSH RESERVOIRS AND WORKS).

(DEVIATION OF CENTRAL WALES SECTION OF THE LONDON AND NORTH WESTERN RAILWAY.)

## ESTIMATE OF EXPENSE.

Length of Line . . . . .	Miles.			Whether Single or Double.		
	6	7	7	Single.		
<b>EARTHWORKS:—</b>	Cubic Yards.			£ s. d.		
Cuttings—Rock . . . . .	280,000	3 0	42,000 0 0	£	s.	d.
Soft Soil . . . . .	78,000	1 4	5,200 0 0			
Roads . . . . .	317,000	1 0	15,850 0 0			
Total . . . . .	675,000	—	63,050 0 0	63,050	0	0
<b>Embankments, including Roads . . . . .</b>	745,000	Cubic Yards		4,000	0	0
Bridges—Public Roads . . . . .		Number 5		5,825	0	0
Accommodation Bridges and Works . . . . .		None		8,242	0	0
Tunnel . . . . .		None		50	0	0
Viaducts . . . . .		None				
Culverts and Drains . . . . .		None				
Metallings of Roads and Level Crossings . . . . .		None				
Gatekeepers' Houses at Level Crossings . . . . .		None				
<b>PERMANENT WAY, including Fencing:—</b>	Cost per Mile.					
Miles . . . . .	6	7	7	at	2,800	0 0
Permanent Way for Sidings and cost of Junctions . . . . .					19,495	0 0
Stations . . . . .					2,000	0 0
Contingencies, 10 per cent. . . . .					10,000	0 0
					11,268	0 0
<b>LAND AND BUILDINGS:—</b>	A. 100	R. 0	P. 0		17,000	0 0
<b>TOTAL . . . . .</b>				£	140,930	0 0

Dated this 24th day of December, 1898.

Witness—FREDERICK E. COOPER.

ALEXR. R. BINNIE,  
Engineer.

Figure 1. London Water (Welsh Reservoirs and Works)

This is an account of the proposed plans by the Victorian London County Council of the 1890s for obtaining a pure Welsh water supply for London. It was to be a colossal engineering project conceived with Victorian arrogance. Had it been carried out, a vast area of Mid Wales would have been drowned or, as the engineers would say, 'Submerged'.

### THE BINNIE REPORT ON THE AVAILABLE SOURCES OF WATER SUPPLY FOR LONDON

Alexander Richardson Binnie was the Chief Engineer to the London County Council. He was a brilliant water engineer and had served under Henry La Trobe Bateman. He had also spent years in India constructing many large dams. Previously he had been Chief Engineer to the Bradford Waterworks. On 16 February 1894 the Water Committee of the London County Council ordered that 'the chief engineer be instructed to report on the site and yield of other sources of water supply, and as to the method which might be adopted for storing and conveying water to London, with estimates of cost'.

In his report Alexander Binnie first looked at the Thames valley but soon concentrated on the Mid Wales region. He stated that he was well



Figure 2. Map of Scheme, Richard Rhys Rees Collection.<sup>2</sup>

acquainted with the area from the time he had been involved in the construction of the Mid Wales and the Neath and Brecon Railways. At the time he had closely examined the rivers in the areas the railways were passing through. He stated that it was possible to obtain a water supply from the rivers Usk, Wye, Towy and the various tributaries that flowed into these rivers. He then outlined the scheme that he could construct to obtain a water supply for London.

All mountain rivers and streams above the 600 foot contour draining into the River Usk between Trecastle in the west and Abergavenny in the east would be captured and fed into three collecting conduits: the Usk North Western Conduit would collect water from nineteen rivers and streams, the most westerly being the River Gwydderig behind Llywel Church; south of the River Usk the Beacons Conduit would collect water from twelve rivers, with reservoirs on the Tarell, Cynrig, Menascin, Caerfanell, Tarthwyni, Clydach and Gorwr Fawr; east of Bwlch, the Black Mountain Conduit would collect water from twelve rivers, with reservoirs on the Grwyne Fawr, Grwyne Fechan, Cumbeth, Cumgu and Rhiangoll. The water from forty-three rivers and streams would be taken by conduits, tunnels and siphon pipes and fed into a gigantic reservoir at Llangorse Lake, which would be transformed by the construction of two dams that would raise the level of the lake by ninety-three feet. There would be reservoirs on the Cilienni, Bran, Ysgir Fechan, Ysgir Fawr, Honddu and Anod rivers. The North Western Conduit would discharge at the Talyllyn Railway Junction; the Beacons Conduit would discharge at Ty Gwyn farm and the Black Mountain Conduit would discharge at the site of Blaenllynfi Castle. The Brecon and Merthyr and the Mid Wales railways would be diverted, and the railway triangle at Talyllyn Junction would be moved to the west.

To replenish the water lost to the River Usk a compensating reservoir would be built across the Usk valley west of Senny Bridge. This reservoir would drown the valley back to Llywel and travel up the Crai valley for two miles. To capture extra water the Senni and Trewern valleys would be dammed. A tunnel would connect the two reservoirs and a conduit would then take their combined waters to the Usk Compensating Reservoir at Senny Bridge.

On the River Irton Alexander Binnie proposed a dam across the valley east of Coed Cowyn and Rhosfolro farms near Cilmeri. The height of the proposed dam would be 166 feet from the riverbed and its length nearly a mile across the valley. The Central Wales Railway would be diverted out from the Irton valley.

On the River Towy a dam would be erected downstream from the confluence of the Camddwr and Nantgwrach rivers. The purpose of the Towy dam was to divert the Towy, the Camddwr and Nantgwrach rivers and all their tributaries above this point into a tunnel over four miles long. This diverted water would be fed into the River Irfon, a mile upstream from the town of Llanwrtyd Wells. To replenish the lost water of the River Towy a compensating dam would be built across the Doethie valley. This reservoir would store the waters of the Doethie, the Pysgotwr Fawr and the Pysgotwr Fach and all their tributaries.

On the River Wye a dam would be built upstream from the confluence of the River Marteg north of Rhayader. This reservoir would extend for four miles up the valley to the village of Llangurig. The water of the Upper Wye Reservoir would be taken down the Wye valley by conduits, tunnels and steel pipes. South of Rhayader a four-mile tunnel would take the water out of the Wye valley and discharge it into the Chwefri valley at Bryn Ieuau farm at Llanafan Fawr, where a reservoir would be built. From here more pipes, conduits and tunnels would carry the combined waters of the Wye and Chwefri southwards to the stream at Rhosfolro farm to feed the proposed gigantic reservoir in the Irfon valley.

On the River Ithon a dam would be built across the valley upstream from the village of Llanddewi on the road between Cross Gates and Newtown. This reservoir would submerge the Ithon valley for four miles and the Camddwr valley for two and a half miles. To replenish the water lost to the River Ithon a compensating reservoir would be built across the River Clywedog at Abbey Cwm Hir.

The water from the Ithon Reservoir would be taken down the Ithon valley in an aqueduct as far as Cefn Brith farm two and a half miles south of Cross Gates. Another aqueduct would bring additional water from the Upper Wye Reservoir to Cefn Brith farm. The combined waters would then enter a three and a half mile tunnel that would discharge into the River Edw near St. Mary's Church in Betws. On the River Edw a main dam would cross the valley at Box farm. An auxiliary dam would block the western approach to the village of Hundred House. The water from the Edw Reservoir would be taken down the Edw valley to connect with one of the main aqueducts to London.

This gigantic scheme consisted of ten main dams and twenty-one smaller dams. It was proposed to start with a small section first and as London's water demands increased so the scheme would be added to. The completed scheme would be finished in the year 1945.

On the map (Figure 2) the light areas are the proposed water gathering grounds and the dark red areas are the proposed reservoirs: Llangorse

Reservoir with its nineteen dams and forty-three feeding rivers and streams; Usk Reservoir and its two extra feeding reservoirs; Irfon Reservoir; Towy Reservoir and tunnel; Doethie Compensating Reservoir; Llanafan Fawr Reservoir and aqueduct; Upper Wye Reservoir and two aqueducts; Clywedog Compensating Reservoir; Ithon Reservoir and aqueduct; Edw Reservoir and aqueduct.

Because of the height of the districts where Alexander Binnie proposed to erect his dams, the Welsh water supply for London would be able to gravitate all the way, so no pumping would be required. Like the water flowing to Birmingham from the Elan valley the proposed water to London would flow through tunnels, conduits and steel pipes. These pipes would form siphons to enable the water to flow down into a valley and climb up the other side. There would be siphon houses on the inlets and outlets. As long as the outlet was lower than the inlet the water would flow by gravity.

The length of the proposed first aqueduct to London was 168 miles. This would have twenty-five siphons to cross the valleys and forty-five tunnels to penetrate the hills. The longest tunnel would be in the Cotswolds, over fifteen miles long. Two main aqueducts would be built alongside each other from Wales to Chedworth in the Cotswolds, where they would diverge, the northern route heading for Boreham Wood and the southern route heading for Banstead. When the proposed aqueducts were in a tunnel or conduit the width would be sixteen feet and the height fifteen feet, each aqueduct being capable of carrying just over 200,000,000 gallons a day.

The completed scheme was designed to supply London with 415 million gallons a day from Wales.<sup>3</sup> To safeguard the watershed and to prevent pollution the London County Council would have to purchase compulsorily over 312,000 acres of Mid Wales, which is equivalent to 488 square miles. The estimate for the complete scheme was £38,800,000 (in the year 1894).

The Binnie Report included the results of water testing on the Welsh sources of the proposed Metropolitan Water Supply that had been carried out by William Joseph Dibdin, the Chief Chemist for the London County Council. In his report, Mr Dibdin had stated that the water samples from the Rivers Towy and Wye were of exceptional purity and softness and that with the exception of Llangorse Lake all the waters tested were of high organic purity. The sample tested at Llangorse Lake was found to be polluted by the stream passing through the village of Llangorse. Mr Binnie in his report remarked that the only source of contamination which had been noticed by the chemist was the small village and farmhouses on the banks of the existing lake, which would be submerged were the proposed reservoir constructed, and so remove the only possible source of pollution



in the district. Binnie's engineers had surveyed all the proposed sites and produced field plans. His proposal for a water supply from Wales to London was gigantic and would have supplied London with pure Welsh water without the cost of pumping.

The upheaval to the people of Wales and the social consequences of the proposed scheme were not the engineer's problem. The number of villages, schools, chapels, churches and farms to be destroyed was vast and hundreds of farms would be compulsorily purchased with the tenants having no legal right of compensation. The planned destruction was as follows: Llangorse Reservoir scheme: nine villages; Usk Compensating Reservoir: two villages; Irfon Reservoir: three villages and one town; Llanafan Fawr: one village; Upper Wye: one village; Ithon Reservoir: one village; Edw Reservoir: three villages.

Two years after the publication of the Binnie Report the London County Council Water Committee asked two prominent water engineers to look closely at the scheme proposed by the Chief Engineer to obtain a water supply from Wales. On 7 August 1898 Sir Benjamin Baker and George Frederick Deacon made their way to Wales. Travelling with them were the Chief Engineer Alexander Binnie and the Assistant Chief Engineer Seymour Rumble. They visited all the proposed sites for the dams and in their report they stated that there were no engineering difficulties in the scheme proposed by Binnie. However they did observe significant local opposition and stipulated that great care should be taken in the Irfon valley to lessen the local opposition to the scheme.

They also investigated other schemes. They visited the construction works in progress by James Mansergh for the Birmingham Water Corporation in the Elan valley. Here they saw Cwm Elan House, once the



Figure 3. Cwm Elan House. (*Powys Archives*)



home of the poet Shelley and soon to be submerged. The two engineers visited the Liverpool Reservoir at Lake Vyrnwy, where the village of Llanwddyn had been drowned eight years before.

They also looked at proposals from the 1860s to the 1880s which had never been carried out. In 1865 Mr Bateman had proposed seven reservoirs on the tributaries of the Upper River Severn. The Rivers Vyrnwy, Banw, Tarranon, Carno, Tylwch and Clywedog would be dammed, some more than once, giving a possible supply of 250 million gallons a day to London. They looked at Mr Fulton's proposals of 1867. This was an even bigger scheme, proposing 393 million gallons a day for London from the River Wye and its tributaries. Mr Fulton proposed six reservoirs in the first section planned for the Upper River Wye gathering ground. These reservoirs would be located on the Rivers Wye, Elan and Claerwen. Another three sections would follow, with reservoirs on the Ithon, Edw, Irfon, Cammarch and Dulas. The two engineers were also given particulars by Mr Price Williams of a scheme to supply water from the Dee valley at Bodwenni, two miles downstream from Bala.

Baker and Deacon stated that there was no problem in submerging the town of Bala and the district as the 1,800 people living in the area could be relocated to higher ground. But when they came to examine the scheme of Hemans and Hassard it was a different matter altogether. This scheme involved bringing water from Cumberland and Westmorland to London with an additional supply from the Bala Lake. They dismissed this, as the Lake District consisted of residential property and was also a pleasure resort. Obviously Bala did not matter!

They concluded their report by stating that for the next fifteen years the River Thames would remain as the main source of water supply for London but they could see no difficulties in going to Wales in the future for a water supply.

## AFTER THE REPORTS

Despite this negative report, the London County Council decided to go ahead with Binnie's gigantic scheme, and initially they considered starting with the Llangorse Reservoir. However, Binnie concentrated his attention on the Towy and Wye watersheds. The Chief Engineer arrived in Wales with an army of surveyors, lawyers and clerks to prepare Parliamentary Plans and Sections and a Book of Reference to accompany the application for an Act of Parliament.

A tremendous amount of work had now to be done. The surveyors had

to prepare plans to show the position of the dams and the top water level of all the reservoirs. These plans also showed any diversion needed to any railway, road or river. Enlargements on the plans showed any buildings affected by the scheme. All property on the plans would be identified by numbers corresponding to numbers in the Book of Reference, which would restart at every change of parish. The book would show the property owner, the lessee and the occupier of all property affected by the construction of the reservoirs and dams. The work of the lawyers and clerks would be to obtain true information to enable them to compile the Book of Reference.

The section of the Book of Reference concerning the proposed Irfon Reservoir was devastating for the Irfon valley. Nine parishes would be affected. The villages of Garth and Llangammarch would be submerged and the town of Llanwrtyd was to be destroyed to ensure the cleanliness of the water. The property listed as number one was the Epynt House Hotel, known today as the Lake Hotel in Llangammarch. The joint owners, Stanley Bligh and John Griffiths, on hearing of the London proposals quickly built a large extension. They had realised that by doubling the size of their hotel they would double the compensation that the London County Council would have to pay them. Everything in the valley between Llanwrtyd and Cilmeri would be destroyed. Notices were given to the owners and occupiers of the following properties: sixty-nine farms; 212 houses; twenty cottages; two mansions; thirty-seven shops; nine workshops; three hotels; seven public houses; three blacksmith shops; five watermills; four stations; three schools; nine chapels; four churches; one brickworks; one public hall; 1,533 fields and a vast amount of woodland. Property values were as follows: School: £1,500; Chapel: £1,600; Church: £2,750; the Garth Inn: £1,000; Cottage: £150; House: £200; Cammarch Hotel: £5,000; Epynt House Hotel: £12,000 (The extension had certainly increased the price); Timber: £40,000; Land: (at £50 an acre) £363,250; Loss of fishing and sporting areas: £6,570. It was total devastation – and this was for just one of the five reservoirs in the first part of this gigantic scheme. Once the London County Council had obtained the two Acts of Parliament, Binnie would have come to Wales to destroy and submerge many communities and valleys. The Welsh way of life in these areas would be destroyed forever.

## §

Back in London the County Council was trying to take over the eight water companies and a Bill was being prepared to do so. At the same time

a Royal Commission was in progress in the Moses Council Room in the House of Lords, Westminster. The Chairman was Viscount Llandaff. The Commission was looking into the subject of water supply within reach of the metropolitan water companies. The Commission sat for eighty-four days and seventy-nine witnesses were cross-examined. The evidence to which the Commission listened included Alexander Binnie's scheme.

Many water engineers were cross-examined on the subject, and some were against the scheme but many supported it. One engineer stated that there was no suitable foundation at the proposed site of the Irfon dam. The Assistant Commissioner of Statistics was cross-examined on the matter and he stated that he had been to Wales to look at the various valleys that were to be submerged and at the site of the proposed Irfon dam he saw that holes had been dug across the valley. The engineers at the site told him that at every hole they had hit rock and this proved that there was no problem obtaining a proper foundation for the dam.

Another engineer stated that some of the London water companies had been sending clerks and lawyers to the Irfon valley. They had been instructed to try and persuade the local people to give false information to



Figure 4. The proposed Irfon Reservoir and Railway Diversion.

(Metropolitan Archives)<sup>4</sup>

Binnie's staff regarding the true ownership of the land that was to be submerged under the proposed Irfon Reservoir. If the Book of Reference was incorrect then the opposition could get the Select Committee to throw out the Bill at the first reading.

This engineer also stated that the water companies took many locals back to London, where they were entertained and dined at the company's expense for their help against the London County Council. The *Western Mail* reported that fifty Welsh farmers had been put up at two first-class hotels as guests of the water companies. They were also taken to theatres and music halls and paid a pound a day as recompense for their time.

Despite these setbacks, Alexander Binnie managed to complete the plans and Book of Reference for the Irfon Reservoir, the Towy Reservoir and tunnel, the Doethie Reservoir, the Llanafan Fawr Reservoir and aqueduct and the Upper Wye Reservoir and aqueduct, the first section of his gigantic scheme. A copy of these was deposited with the Clerk of the Peace in the counties of Brecon, Cardigan, Carmarthen, Radnor and Montgomery.

At the same time a Bill for the Act of Parliament was produced. The Bill named all the proposed reservoirs outlined in the plans and also described any new road or railway. It stated that if the London County Council took any land used as a graveyard then all human remains on that land would have to be removed and re-buried in other graveyards. There were nine chapels and four churches to be dealt with just for the proposed Irfon Reservoir. The Bill allowed the London County Council to purchase compulsorily all the land required for the reservoirs and watersheds, including all the property listed.

The Bill first went to the Select Committee on Standing Orders. The Examiners were Messrs Campion and Thomas, who were sitting in Committee Rooms 16 and 17 in the House of Commons. The rooms were crowded with agents and clerks on both sides. Officials of the London County Council were also present as well as a hundred witnesses for the objectors to the Bill.

One complaint had been that a John Jones had not been given notice for one of his fields. The Examiner was told that confusion arose because this man's cousin was another John Jones and he owned half the field in question. Close by lived another three John Joneses. Similar problems were had with the Evanses and the Prices. It took over four days for the Examiner to deal with the 800 objections to the Book of Reference and he decided that the vast majority were minor mistakes.

The Bill was sent to the House of Commons for its first reading. The House received a Petition against the Bill from Captain Penry Lloyd. He stated that land which was to be taken had been in his family since the

reign of Queen Elizabeth and that he would lose 2000 acres, including many farms, along with Dinas Mansion, where he lived. He would also lose a water mill and many mines. He further stated that the Bill made no mention of the main aqueduct and that it should be thrown out because it was incomplete.

The *Western Mail* on 17 March 1899 reported on the Annual Meeting of the Carmarthenshire County Council. The Clerk had stated that they would have to deal with the London Water Bill and that the dam intended for the River Towy would turn the river above Twm Shôn Cattie's cave into a two-mile ditch with not a drop of water in it. The Reverend William Davies was very concerned that Llanwrtyd would be drowned. The Clerk told the councillors that Llanwrtyd was in Breconshire and they would have to look after themselves.

Carmarthenshire County Council sent in a Petition of Opposition. It stated that they would oppose any Bill that proposed to turn the River Towy water towards London. They also said that in the future Carmarthenshire would require the River Towy for its own industry and people. Like Captain Penry Lloyd, they claimed that the Bill was incomplete, as there was no mention of the aqueduct to London. Finally they stated that, if the Bill was passed, they would ask for more compensatory water than was proposed to be sent down the River Towy. They would also require the London County Council to pay for any police duties required at Ystradffin during the construction of the Towy and Doethie dams.

Despite these petitions the Bill was sent forward for a second reading. On 21 March 1899 at the House of Commons, Mr James Stuart spoke at length in support of the Bill and stressed that it should now go forward and not be postponed until the report of the Royal Commission on the London Water Supply had been published.

Mr Charles Algernon Whitmore, MP for Chelsea, did not agree and put forward an amendment that the Bill be postponed until after the Royal Commission report. Arthur Charles Humphreys-Owen, MP for Montgomeryshire, voiced his concern for the tenant farmers whose land would be submerged by the proposed Welsh reservoirs. He said that many farms had tenants who had been on the farms from generation to generation, yet they had no legal right to compensation. He wanted the London County Council to take a generous view of the position of these farmers. Mr William Jones, MP for Arfon in Caernarfonshire, wanted an assurance that the schools that would be destroyed would be replaced by the London County Council. Mr Lloyd Morgan, MP for Carmarthen West, also expressed his concern about the plight of the tenant farmers. He said that the landowners would receive very substantial compensation, as

would the leaseholders, and the shopkeepers would be looked after, but the tenant farmers would receive no consideration at all. Mr Stuart said that the fact that the tenant farmers had no lease would not be regarded as a bar to their receiving compensation and each case would be dealt with on its merits. As regards the schools, he said that they would be created again. The question of the amendment was put to the House and 206 against 130 decided that it was inexpedient that the Bill be read a second time before the Royal Commission on the London Water Supply had presented its report.

Despite this setback the London County Council sent Alexander Binnie and his staff straight back to Wales. The Chief Engineer changed the position of the proposed Irfon dam. This time his plans showed the proposed dam further upstream, crossing the valley just downstream of the village of Garth and passing through Llwynpiod farm. The railway diversion was also changed. The plans showed the new railway to be a mile longer, with two tunnels and many viaducts to cross the proposed branches of the Irfon Reservoir. The new water levels would now reach the town of Llanwrtyd Wells. The village of Llangammarch Wells would lie even deeper in the dark depths of the new Irfon Reservoir. The village of Beulah would now be submerged. The position of the proposed Llanafan Reservoir was also changed. It was now further upstream. From this reservoir more tunnels and conduits would carry the water into the next valley. Near Glandulas Bridge the water would enter the Gwenwst stream and thence flow into the River Dulas to feed the new proposed Irfon Reservoir.

A new Book of Reference was also made for the scheme. All the previous numbers for the property to be taken were changed. The book now also included all the property required for the aqueduct route between

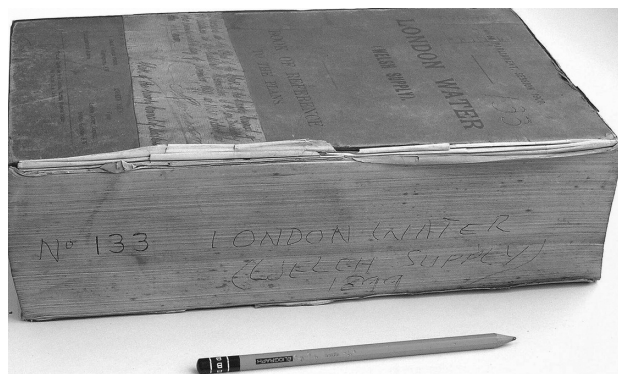


Figure 5. Book of Reference listing all property to be taken by the scheme. (Metropolitan Archives)<sup>5</sup>



Wales and north London. This gigantic book now totalled 864 pages and listed all owners, lessees and occupiers of all the property to be requisitioned. The aqueduct route chosen would allow the water to gravitate all the way to London.

At Tregoyd near Three Cocks plans were made for a filter treatment works which would cover 500 acres and be able to treat 415 million gallons a day. After leaving the filter beds the proposed aqueduct would make its way to Cusop and the Golden Valley. It would cross the River Wye at Ross-on-Wye, with a tunnel taking the aqueduct into the Forest of Dean; and it would cross the River Severn upstream from Gloucester. After travelling 168 miles the Welsh water would arrive at a receiving reservoir in Boreham Wood, north London. The water would have travelled by gravity and fallen 300 feet in height.

Copies of the aqueduct route plans and sections, along with a Book of Reference and a copy of the Notice published in the *London Gazette*, were deposited with the Clerk of the Peace for the counties of Brecon, Cardigan, Carmarthen, Radnor, Montgomery, Hereford, Gloucester, Oxford, Buckingham, Hertford and Middlesex.

A Petition of Support came from the Battersea Vestry. The Breconshire and Monmouthshire County Councils both sent in Petitions of Opposition, as did the Towy Valley Riparian Owners. They stated that London was not entitled to take water from Wales as the counties of Carmarthen and Glamorgan would in the future require this water. They pointed out that the River Towy was the main river in the county and to lose such a quantity of its water would reduce the River Towy to a skeleton of its former self.

On 30 December 1899 the Report of the Royal Commission on the London Water Supply was made public. This did not please the London County Council, as the report was against them purchasing the eight London water companies. The report stated that for the next fifteen years the River Thames should be London's source of water, not Wales. Further, the Commission was not happy with the estimate given by Binnie for the Welsh scheme, as some engineers were estimating the cost to be £76 million, double the amount quoted by Binnie. They considered that a Water Board should be formed to take over the London water companies and that the subject of obtaining water from Wales should be a matter for the future and not the present.

On 29 March 1900 the new London Water (Welsh Supply) Bill came before Parliament. Mr William Charles Steadman, MP for Stepney, formally moved the second reading of the Bill. Sir Frederick Dixon Hartland, MP for Uxbridge, opposed the Bill at length. He said that the

London County Council had issued a Statement that quoted from the Royal Commission report: 'There is no doubt that there is something attractive in the scheme of bringing water from the Welsh mountains for the supply of London and one would be glad if it were possible now to secure a watershed to be used hereafter if London should require it'. He then said that the London County Council had failed to include the remainder of the paragraph: 'assuming the water should prove sufficient in quality and quantity, the fact remains that it is far more costly than the supply from the Thames and that it is unnecessary to incur this extra cost now as the supply from the Thames will be adequate in quantity and quality up to 1941'. He also opposed it due to the huge cost to the London ratepayers.

Sir John Talbot Dillwyn Llewelyn, MP for Swansea Town, seconded the motion for the rejection of the Bill. He stated that Glamorganshire required Welsh water for its own purposes. Mr James Stuart, MP for Hoxton, said that the Royal Commission had looked at the scheme from a financial angle only and had used seriously inaccurate figures. He also said that the London County Council was simply asking that the merits of the Thames and Welsh schemes be considered from all points of view, not only financially. Mr John Burns, MP for Battersea, stated that to avoid contamination Londoners wanted to get their water from cloud land in Wales. Mr Brynmor Jones, MP for Swansea District, also opposed the Bill and asked the House not to give to the London County Council a first charge upon the natural resources of the Welsh counties. He suggested that the Bill should be withdrawn to give the House time to consider what the principles really were.

Due to such strong opposition, the Bill for obtaining a water supply for London from Wales was withdrawn. All Binnie's schemes had been flattened in one debate. Years of work were laid to rest. Many Welsh communities had come within a hair's breadth of being drowned forever. The London Water Supply Scheme from Wales was a gigantic proposal with no sympathy for Welsh communities or for their way of life and culture. A large part of Wales would have been destroyed.

At the proposed site of the receiving reservoir in Boreham Wood pure Welsh water can be found today. However, unlike the vast millions of gallons a day proposed by Alexander Binnie, this water is available only from a drinks dispenser at the railway station.



## NOTES

The author would like to thank the Carmarthen and Powys Archives; Metropolitan Archives; House of Lords Record Office; National Library of Wales; Hereford and Gloucester Archives; National Archives, Kew.

<sup>1</sup> Ormathwaite Estate Papers AD3/3, National Library of Wales.

<sup>2</sup> Map 10, *Report of the Royal Commission on the Metropolitan Water Supply* (1900).

<sup>3</sup> The Elan valley scheme for Birmingham is seventy-five million gallons a day.

<sup>4</sup> Metropolitan Archives ACC/2558/MW/C/31/501.

<sup>5</sup> Metropolitan Archives MR/U/P/NS/133.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- HC Richards, WHC Payne and JPH Soper, *London Water Supply* (1899).  
 A Shadwell, *The London Water Supply* (Longman, Green & Co, 1899).  
 RCS Walters, *The Nation's Water Supply* (Nickolson & Watson, 1936).  
 T Barclay, *The Birmingham Water Supply* (Cornish Bros, 1898).  
 FW Simms, *Practical Tunnelling* (Crosby Lockwood & Son, 1896).  
 AR Binnie, *Report on Available Sources of Water Supply for London* (London County Council, 1894).  
 B Baker and GF Deacon, *Report on Water Supply of London* (London County Council, 1897).  
*Minutes of Evidence and Report of Her Majesty's Commissioners appointed to inquire into the subject of the WATER SUPPLY within the limits of the Metropolitan Water Companies* (1900).  
*Western Mail* (1894–1900).  
*The Times* (1894–1900).



## KILVERT'S 'TREE ON WHICH THE DEVIL HUNG HIS MOTHER'

Andrew Breeze

**K**ilvert's diary entry for 9 May 1870 offers lyrical impressions of a Radnorshire spring, and figures as such in a classic Oxford anthology:

The turtles were trilling softly and deeply in the dingles as I went up the steep orchard. The grass was jewelled with cowslips and orchises. The dingle was lighted here and there with wild cherry, bird cherry, the Welsh name of which being interpreted is 'the tree on which the devil hung his mother'. The mountains burned blue in the hot afternoon.<sup>1</sup>

Kilvert's arresting name for the cherry deserves comment, as there seems some confusion about it. The evidence is as follows.

Welsh lexicography gives *Y pren y crogodd y Diawl ei fam* and *Y pren y crogodd y Gŵr Drwg ei fam arno* as genuine Welsh names. The first appears in *A General View of the Agriculture and Domestic Economy of South Wales* (1814), the work of Walter Davies or Gwallter Mechain (1761–1849), Montgomeryshire cleric, poet and polymath. Yet he gives it as a name not of the wild cherry or bird cherry, but of the spindle tree (which is still known as such in Glamorgan). We are no better off with *Y pren y crogodd y Gŵr Drwg ei fam arno* [the tree on which the Evil One hanged his mother]. This is a north Powys expression for the guelder rose, not for the cherry. *Pren y Gŵr Drwg* [the Evil One's tree] is also still found in Glamorgan as a term for the spindle tree.<sup>2</sup> It seems that Kilvert was in error. It is hard to see why either the wild cherry (*Prunus avium*) or bird cherry (*Prunus padus*) should have macabre or diabolical associations. The poet Housman gave it quite other links:

Loveliest of trees, the cherry now  
Is hung with bloom along the bough,  
And stands about the woodland ride  
Wearing white for Eastertide.

But the spindle tree (*Euonymus europaeus*) is another matter. For all the beauty of its delicate pink berries, it has had a bad reputation. The Elizabethan herbalist John Gerard said that, if three or four of its fruits were swallowed, 'they purge both by vomit and stoole'. He also quoted

Theophrastus on its fruits and leaves as being poisonous to goats. Grigson hence collected unflattering local names for the spindle tree, including cat tree, death alder (in Buckinghamshire), dog tree, and foulrush. He pointed out as well that its pink berries, conspicuous in autumn, must be the laxative ‘gaitris beryis’ mentioned in the tale of Chaucer’s Nun’s Priest (a fact quite unknown to Chaucer scholars).<sup>3</sup> As for the guelder rose (*Viburnum opulus*), which is not a rose but a member of the honeysuckle family, this is a shrub or small tree of from six to twelve feet high, with beautiful white umbels or ‘snowballs’ of flowers from May to July. Yet neither spindle tree nor guelder rose is a cherry.

So the records are perplexing. Either Kilvert was misinformed, the name for one or other showy tree or shrub having been transferred to another; or his memory played tricks on him. There is certainly nothing in Welsh tradition for ‘the tree on which the devil hanged his mother’ as a name for any species of cherry.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Geoffrey Grigson, *The English Year from Diaries and Letters* (London, 1967), p. 58.

<sup>2</sup> *Geiriadur Prifysgol Cymru* (Caerdydd, 1950–2002), p. 2874.

<sup>3</sup> Geoffrey Grigson, *The Englishman’s Flora* (London, 1955), pp. 119–21.

WALTER MEREDITH (c.1558–1607):  
SCRIVENER OF RADNORSHIRE  
AND LONDON\*

Hilary Yewlett

Professor Sir Glanmor Williams noted that the early modern Welsh diaspora is ‘a huge and fascinating subject’, emphasising that ‘the outflux of men and women of humbler origin [from Wales to England and beyond] is more significant in terms of numbers involved than the most dazzling of Welsh luminaries’.<sup>1</sup> This was a theme that was explored by Robert Owen in his prize-winning essay at the Colwyn Bay Eisteddfod in 1947. Entitled *Migration from Wales to London and the history of the Welsh in London up to 1815*, it is available only in Welsh, but has been described as ‘a huge source to be quarried, full of raw material about important facets of life in the capital city’.<sup>2</sup> Owen estimated that approximately one per cent of the population of mid-Tudor London was Welsh, but he did not locate the home parish of the ‘middling sort’ who were his subjects. Thus we do not know where in Wales their London journey began. In his more recent work on the topic, WP Griffith also did not examine the regional origins of his selection of London’s Welsh population, but he estimated that, by 1541, 2.4 per cent of the city’s inhabitants were Welsh.<sup>3</sup> We have frustratingly little knowledge about them because of the paucity of primary sources concerning ‘the middling sort’ that remain to us. Not being owners of large Welsh estates, they left behind no papers for the assiduous archivist to investigate. Fortunately, information about the lives that a small number of the successful Welsh ‘middling sort’ led in the English capital can be obtained from family wills and, in some cases, early Chancery Proceedings for the Tudor period. These documents can also add detail to our understanding of migrants’ relationships with their kinsmen back in Wales.

Tom Arkell declared that ‘the most detailed [early modern] wills’ are potential mines of information, ‘with fascinating and instructive detail about so many different aspects of life in the early modern period that sometimes historians of other periods must look enviously upon them’.<sup>4</sup> This paper will seek to illustrate, by means of a case study, how the early modern historian may glean valuable, sometimes detailed, evidence from such primary sources, comparatively rare though these documents may be for the Welsh ‘middling sort’ of the period.

From the Last Will and Testament of Walter Meredith, proved in 1607, and from the writ he had issued against his enemies thirty years earlier, we

can gather valuable insights into his progress in the English capital, after his arrival there as a young adolescent. Coming from the remote, rural, mid-Wales village of Glasbury, during the fourth quarter of the sixteenth century as an unknown Welshman, Walter successfully qualified as a member of the lucrative profession of scrivener, becoming thereby a citizen of London. In 1603, he was elected Warden of the Guild of Scriveners, one of the oldest livery companies. This was a position that had also been held by Francis Kydd, father of the Elizabethan playwright, Thomas Kydd, and by John Milton, father of the great Puritan poet of the same name. The only primary sources we have concerning Walter's life are the writ and his will. Nevertheless, close examination of these documents, coupled with attention to other available contemporary evidence, helps us understand some of the socio-political issues at play in the London he inhabited and in the rural community from which he came.

Walter was born in Glasbury-on-Wye around 1558, a son of David Thomas ap Meredith. We know from Walter's will that he had two brothers, David and William, and two sisters, Elizabeth and another, unnamed. Given the traditional pattern of family naming, it is likely that Walter was a younger son. As a successful yeoman farmer, his father would have provided Walter with an education to fit him for a profession other than farming for, as Glanmor Williams pointed out, the hopes of many such younger sons 'lay in commerce, and for them the path to fame and fortune lay through an apprenticeship, preferably to a great London merchant'.<sup>5</sup> Given Walter's status as a yeoman farmer's son, it is unlikely that his family was sufficiently wealthy to include lawyers among its members. To apprentice Walter to a scrivener, a quasi-legal profession, was an unusual decision for someone from his rural Welsh background, even though the fathers of the majority of English apprentice scriveners in London during that period were described as yeomen. From 1580 to 1628, the names of scriveners' fathers, together with their place of residence and their occupation, are recorded in *The Scriveners' Common Paper*, the only Scriveners' records to survive the Great Fire of London.<sup>6</sup> These records tell us that, from the mid-sixteenth to the early seventeenth centuries, it was not unusual for men to come 'long distances in order to qualify for membership of a profession offering a special and essential service to the population at large'.<sup>7</sup> However, Walter was the sole apprentice listed at that time as coming from Radnorshire. His achievements as a scrivener in London are therefore unique.

As Walter was not university educated the law was beyond his reach; not so a quasi-legal profession like that of a scrivener. Literacy was a prerequisite for entry into almost all guilds, but where Walter learned to

read and write is not known. It could have been in Christ College, Brecon, founded by Bishop William Barlow in 1541. It could also have been in Presteigne, at the grammar school founded in 1565 by the cloth merchant, John Beddoes. Equally, Walter could have received instruction from a local parish priest as did the diarist, John Evelyn.<sup>8</sup> G Dynallt Owen pointed out that ‘it was these humble but enlightened vicars who gathered their ‘scolers’ around them in their homes...and taught them how to read and write’.<sup>9</sup>

While Walter’s move from Glasbury to London must have been made with the blessing of his parents, such approval was not given by every Radnorshire family. Griffith ap Rees ap David of Llandegley, a parish in the centre of the county, stipulated in his will of 1602 that Margaret verch John was to be given a black cow, on condition that she came home from England. Should she fail to do so, then her brother would inherit the cow.<sup>10</sup> Like many of today’s successful migrants, Walter was young, male, single, energetic, ambitious and enterprising. His goal, London, lay at what was then a great distance from Glasbury and the journey there from the Welsh heartland was a tortuous one over what was known as ‘The Great Road’. Richard Moore-Colyer pointed out that a much-used roadline connected Glasbury with Presteigne, from where the road ran into Herefordshire and eventually onwards to London.<sup>11</sup> As a yeoman farmer’s son, Walter may have travelled to London in the company of the cattle drovers who, mindful of inclement weather, made their journeys only in the spring and summer seasons. All in all, the decision he made to migrate to England was a momentous one. Yet it was made by more than one young man of Walter’s generation. The outcome was not always a happy one, for Ilana K Ben-Amos affirmed that ‘the drop-out rate of London apprentices throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was in the order of 50 per cent’.<sup>12</sup>

There were considerable restrictions upon the young apprentice which not all were able to tolerate. He was subjected to the quasi-paternal authority of his master. He did not normally receive a wage, receiving his training in return for his work. He usually lived in his master’s household where he was provided with food, drink and clothing. His manners, dress, entertainment and freedom to marry were limited. Certain other restrictions were stringently applied. Court Aldermen ruled in the early seventeenth century that ‘no apprentice shall receive the freedom of the city unless he shall first present himself at that time with the hair of his head cut in a decent and comely manner’.<sup>13</sup>

In 1577, Walter was occupied in London as servant to John Hutton, scrivener, with whom he probably also lodged.<sup>14</sup> In 1580, he completed his

seven-year apprenticeship as a scrivener, thereby qualifying as a ‘writer of the Court letter’. The Worshipful Company of Scriveners, the guild to which Walter had been apprenticed, had been established as a corporate body in September 1373. By the fifteenth century, their importance had increased considerably for, ‘from humble beginnings as mere “writers” of letters and documents...these men banded themselves together as a guild and...took steps to ensure that they had the monopoly of their calling’.<sup>15</sup> On 11 November 1634, the Company received a grant of arms confirming the arms in use since circa 1530. The Company’s motto is ‘*Scribite Scientes*’ [Write ye learnèd ones].

Walter’s duties as a scrivener would have included the copying, for clients, of confidential papers such as wills, charters, conveyances and other legal documents. His English, therefore, must have been as fluent as his Welsh. Important as his role as scrivener in Elizabethan society was, it was also an uncomfortable one. David C Coleman pointed out that, ‘in addition to exercising their purely clerical art, scriveners frequently acted as legal and financial intermediaries, and thus came under fire from current opinion on middlemen’.<sup>16</sup> Even in seventeenth-century France, neither scrivener nor attorney enjoyed much popularity, as the narrator of Charles Perrault’s fairy story, *Le Chat Botté* [*Puss in Boots*], made clear:



Figure 1. Coat of Arms of the Worshipful Company of Scriveners



There was a miller who left no more estate to the three sons he had than his mill, his ass and his cat. The partition was soon made. Neither scrivener nor attorney was sent for. They would soon have eaten up all the poor patrimony.<sup>17</sup>

Perrault had originally trained as a lawyer, so there may have been some personal experience lying behind this observation. The notary was accorded equally scant respect in early eighteenth-century south Wales, as is made clear by the following doggerel, ‘A Satyr on the unjust Civilians or a true narrative of ye unjust proceedings in Landaffe Court’:

Civilians Civill villains are  
and doteing fools are Doctors  
Notorious Rogues are Notaries  
and prateing Knaves are Proctors.<sup>18</sup>

Scriveners working for the Llandaff Court in Cardiff at the time were probably equally unpopular.

In the London of Walter’s day, Shakespeare’s audiences were not unfamiliar with the function of the scrivener. They were also probably not unmindful of their dubious reputation. Many might well have sought a scrivener’s services to draw up a marriage contract for one of their children, as Tranio does for his son, Lucretio, in Act IV iv of Shakespeare’s *The Taming of the Shrew*. Some may even have borrowed money from a scrivener to finance such a marriage settlement. In *Richard III*, written in 1597, slightly later than *The Taming of the Shrew*, the scrivener is given a brief but significant role to play in Act III vi:

London. A street. *Enter a Scrivener*

**Scrivener:** Here is the indictment of the good Lord Hastings,  
Which in a set hand fairly is engrossed  
That it may be to-day read o’er in Paul’s.  
And mark how well the sequel hangs together:  
Eleven hours I have spent to write it over,  
For yesternight by Catesby was it sent me;

Not only does the scrivener draw the audience’s attention to his skill in copying the warrant for Hastings’s arrest that will be read aloud to all of London later that day; he also has the important role of highlighting the king’s hypocrisy, for the engrossment by the scrivener was written hours after Hastings’s death. The scrivener, like everybody else, can see that the

claim in the paper is a lie invented by Richard to justify killing his political rival. It has been calculated that more than 50 million visits were made to London's playhouses between 1567 and 1642. As a mature man, Walter may well have heard of the play being performed at the Globe Theatre, newly opened on the south bank of the Thames in 1599.<sup>19</sup> It is doubtful if he attended a performance, however, for his will suggests that he had Puritan leanings.

Twenty-five years previously Walter, then still young and inexperienced as a scrivener, was dealing with a family crisis in Wales. *Clâs-ar-Wy*, the Welsh name for his beautiful home village, twenty-five miles from Hereford in the Welsh Border country, gives us an idea of its origins. During the medieval period, a *clâs* was the home of a community of canons, headed by an abbot, who were attached to a mother church. At Glasbury, the monks were dedicated to serving the church of St Cynidr, an early sixth-century foundation. The site of St Cynidr's Well can still be found on Fynnon Gynnydd Common above Glasbury village.

Glasbury enjoyed some importance as an ecclesiastical centre at the time of the Norman conquest, for in 1086 Bernard de Neufmarché (of whom more later) gave the manor of Glasbury with the church of St Cynidr to Gloucester Abbey.<sup>20</sup> While the present village on the left bank of the river is of medieval origin, after the Reformation, when Walter was a boy, the manor of Glasbury came into the possession of Blanche Parry, Chief Gentlewoman of Queen Elizabeth I's Privy Chamber. At least one modern scholar has been impressed by Glasbury village's 'beauty, its peace and its extraordinarily English appearance'.<sup>21</sup>

Indeed, there was more than appearance in common between Glasbury, on the Welsh border, and an early modern Essex village like Terling, for example, which, lying only thirty-five miles from London, 'was well placed to feel the influence of the city'.<sup>22</sup> Both Glasbury and Terling were 'riddled with petty conflicts'.<sup>23</sup> In neither village was life always tranquil or idyllic. However, it was because of Glasbury's strategic position close to England that the village's intermittent civil disharmony attracted most attention from English justiciars. In medieval times, William I had planted a line of castles along the border to protect England against invasion by Welsh princes. There, he placed '... men who, with their Norman instinct for fighting and plunder, might be trusted to conquer Wales for their own profit'.<sup>24</sup> One such frontier lord was Bernard de Neufmarché, who, while conquering and pacifying the Welsh kingdom of Brycheiniog, took Glasbury from Cadwgan ap Elystan Glodrydd, who had been prince of all the lands between the Wye and the Severn. As lords of the March, men like Bernard held their own courts and were not subject to the laws of England;

neither did they bend to the writ of royal law. Their lordships became notorious for their anarchy and violence.

Recounting an episode from the *History of the Gwydir Family*, compiled by the North Walian, Sir John Wynn, Caroline Skeel shows what sometimes happened in this frontier territory towards the end of the fifteenth century: ‘in those dayes in that wild worlde every man stood upon his guard and went not abroad but in sort and soe armed, as if he went to the field to encountre with his enemies’.<sup>25</sup> Skeel also relates details of the feud between Jevan ap Robert and Howell ap Rhys ap Howell Vaughan, one episode of which was Howell’s attack on Jevan’s house during the latter’s absence at Caernarfon assizes:

The attack was delivered early in the morning; the leader in the defence being Jevan’s wife...it continued all day and all night, till the following morning Howell’s people retired discomfited, and he himself was advised by a kinsman, David ap Jenkin, to take Jevan as his brother-in-law, neighbour, and friend, ‘for’, quoth David, ‘I will not be one with you to assault his house when he is at home, seeing I find such hot resistance in his absence’.

Legislation passed during the reign of Henry VIII was designed to curb such lawlessness in the Welsh March. The king appointed Bishop Rowland Lee as Lord President of the Council in the Marches, to bring law and order to these regions. Lee was not entirely successful, however, for even in the latter half of the sixteenth century family dramas, not unlike that which had been played out in Sir John Wynn’s family in north Wales, were still taking place more than one hundred years later along the Welsh border.

Glasbury was not alone in harbouring miscreants for, in Terling too, privately brought cases involving theft, assault, forcible entry and disseizin [poaching] formed the largest category of cases brought before the English Quarter Sessions and Assizes.<sup>26</sup> Wrightson and Levine pointed out that in Terling

the precise nature of the original quarrels that resulted in bindings to keep the peace remain...for the most part hidden from us, they would certainly appear to suggest the existence of a high degree of conflict among villagers of middling status in the first decade of the seventeenth century.<sup>27</sup>

These authors go on to note that longstanding feuds existed in Terling and these ‘could clearly disrupt the peace of the village, involving ever larger

numbers of villagers as the principals drew upon their network of friends and kin to support them against their opponents'.<sup>28</sup> Clearly, Welsh village society was no more anarchic than English in early modern times.

In 1577, when still a scrivener's apprentice in London, Walter turned to the Court of the Star Chamber held in Westminster Palace for help in resolving a family dispute in his home village. Urgent legal cases were heard in this room, so called after the star pattern on the ceiling, in order to avoid the cumbersome procedure of the ordinary law courts. Although the Council in the Marches of Wales had been established to suppress riots and other disturbances in the area, Penry Williams tells us that many cases 'were brought directly to London and the Star Chamber as a court of first instance'.<sup>29</sup> As a scrivener living in the metropolis, Walter possessed some legal knowledge, but it was not in order to gain a tactical advantage that he took his case directly to the senior court.<sup>30</sup> It was simply more convenient for Walter to seek redress for his family's wrongs directly from the Star Chamber rather than from the Council in the Marches, for their procedures and jurisdictions were very similar.

In the writ which he presented to Queen Elizabeth, Walter beseeched Her Majesty to bring to justice those villains who, in their search for him, had viciously assaulted his widowed mother, Katherin verch David, together with members of her family, in her Glasbury farm.<sup>31</sup> In this family emergency, just as in Sir John Wynn's, women played an important role in the events, though at Glasbury they were the assailants, not the defendant. Walter had probably been apprised of the assault by his brothers William and David and his sister, Katharen, for David and Katheren were then still residing in Glasbury.

Penry Williams has pointed out that 'any historian who comes upon the Star Chamber Proceedings must be filled with excitement: here are highly dramatic stories, frequently scandalous and disreputable, often involving the most important local figures'. He noted that in the depositions phrases like 'daggers, gunnes, billes, staves and other weapons as well invasive as defensive' are frequently repeated.<sup>32</sup> While cautioning that the proceedings were partisan and often violently sensational, Williams nevertheless conceded that the bringing of an action in the Star Chamber was not 'in any way a light matter'.<sup>33</sup>

As in Terling, so in Glasbury: we do not know the reason for the dispute between Walter and his neighbours, for his complaint to the Queen simply states that these men '...doth yet bear great evil will and deadly malice towards your said subject and his friends without any occasion to him given'. Was it perhaps a result of neighbours' jealousy at Walter's metropolitan success? Walter's anger at this unjustified attack upon his

family is evident in the Bill of Complaint. So too is his mother Katherin's terror when she and her family were set upon by a gang led by John David, Roger ap Thomas's henchman, for Walter describes the episode in graphic detail.

The attack took place one Sunday evening at the beginning of January 1577, the day after Epiphany, at a time when the miscreants undoubtedly knew that Walter was unable to safeguard his mother and her grandchildren. John David, a local smith, did with 'fire and anger, unlawfully and riotously gather and assemble together' a band of approximately twenty 'lewd, desperate and evil disposed persons' who were armed with a menacing array of weapons. Joan, the wife of John David, had 'a mattock in her hands and stones in her apron'; Roger ap Thomas carried 'a forest Bill'; Maddock Sais, 'a lewd person' of no fixed abode, had a 'maynspike'. In addition to being a vulgar vagrant, Maddock also knew some English as his nickname *Sais* indicates. We can deduce from this description that Welsh was still widely spoken around Glasbury at the time for it would seem that, unlike many others in the area, Maddock was familiar with English.

Another of the conspirators, Thomas ap Roger, held a sophisticated weapon – a sword; while his mother Margaret carried a more crude but no less effective pile of stones in her apron and held a spade; Lloykie [i.e. Lleuci], Thomas's sister, had also brought stones and carried 'a stake in her hand'. Others, also armed with swords, bucklers, bill staves, maynspikes and javelins, and women 'with their aprons full of stones' hid in the barn adjacent to the farm house and there 'desperately and maliciously consulted together' as to their battle tactics.

It was decided that John David and Maddock Sais were to break down the door of the farmhouse. When these men had gained entry, they were joined by their armed companions, who declared 'with many more rancourous and rigorous words' that, unless Walter was given over to them, they would murder his mother, 'being a very old woman', and the three small children then staying with her. While stopping short of assassination, members of the group allegedly gave Katherin and the three young children 'many cruel and mortal blows', from which they 'sickened and lay at the mercy of God, not like to escape the danger of death'. Not content with inflicting such grievous bodily harm, the armed gang also made off with goods and chattels from the house to the value of one hundred pounds.

Walter requested the Queen to serve a writ of subpoena on John David and the others, to appear before her in the Court of the Star Chamber to answer the charges brought against them. Alas, we do not know how they

responded for we have no record of the answers of the defendants, nor of the depositions of witnesses. While proceedings of this Court exist in large numbers, few of the administrative and judicial records remain. The most significant loss is that of the Decree and Order Books, giving final judgements by the court: none have survived. Thus we do not know what redress, if any, was obtained by Walter for the offences perpetrated upon his family and their property.

Cases similar to Walter's also came before the Council of the Court in the Marches in the late sixteenth century. They attest to the fact that housebreaking, assault and unlawful entry were not then infrequent in those areas.<sup>34</sup> However, records show that Walter's was the only Radnorshire case to come before the Star Chamber in 1577.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, by the reign of James I it was noted that 'the Subjects of the Country and Dominion of Wales have been constantly Loyal and obedient, and have lived in all dutiful Subjection to the Crown of England'.<sup>36</sup>

Walter did not return to Glasbury permanently after the 'breaking and entering' episode for there would have been little opportunity in the mid Wales of his time to develop his career as a scrivener. He remained in London where, after qualifying to enter the Scriveners' Guild, he became a Citizen, with all the privileges that citizenship bestowed. That Walter was proud of the status he had attained is clear from the opening lines of his will, where he describes himself as 'citizen and writer of the courte letter of the citie of London'.<sup>37</sup>

In his maturity, Walter had become sufficiently skilled to enable apprentices to learn their craft from him. In 1590 Robert Griffith, who had been Walter's apprentice, was admitted to the Guild. Robert's deceased father, Peter Griffith of Aston below Hawarden, Flintshire, was described in the *Scriveners' Common Paper* as a gentleman. Seven years later in 1597, Richard Wotton, son of William Wotton of Marden, Herefordshire, another apprentice of Walter's, also qualified as a scrivener.<sup>38</sup> Richard's deceased father, like Walter's, had been a yeoman farmer. All three scribes, then, were trained in an occupation very different from that practised by their fathers. Clearly, Elizabethan parents were as ambitious for their sons as are contemporary ones.

As apprentices, Robert and Richard, like Walter before them, were tested before the Warden to ensure that they had a satisfactory knowledge of grammar, for the early history of the Scriveners' Company was mainly concerned with its efforts to establish control over the practice of all those writing legal documents in London, especially conveyances of real property. They held on to their quasi-legal function, but not without some opposition. It was challenged first of all on Wednesday, 11 November

1601, when *A Bill for avoiding Frivolous Sutes in Court at Westminster* was brought before Parliament. ‘One Lashbrook, an Attorney spake and shewed the inconvenience of Scriveners being Attornies and practising in their names.’<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, scrivener notaries continued to thrive in the metropolis, for it was not until four hundred years later, in February 1999, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth II, that Lord Ponsonby of Shulbrede asked Her Majesty’s Government:

What plans there are to end the monopoly in London of the Worshipful Company of Scriveners.

The Lord Chancellor (Lord Irvine of Lairg) replied:

The Government has concluded that the monopoly of the Worshipful Company of Scriveners over notarial work in the central London area should be ended. An appropriate amendment will be moved to the *Access to Justice Bill*.<sup>40</sup>

In sixteenth-century London, Walter’s professional prospects were not adversely affected by this issue and on 12 December 1596 he was wealthy enough to marry Katherin Boorne in the church of St Mary Magdalene, Milk Street, in Cripplegate Ward. We know more about the area she came from than we do about the bride herself for John Stow, another contemporary of Walter’s, noted that ‘there bee many fayre houses for wealthy Marchantes and others’ in the neighbourhood and that St Mary Magdalene was ‘a small parish church’.<sup>41</sup> Sadly, this church of medieval origin did not survive the Great Fire. It was afterwards united with the church of St Lawrence Jewry. From Walter’s last Will and Testament we learn that, after they were married, he and Katherin were living in the parish of St Dunstan-in-the-West, Farringdon Without ward, to the west of the city. WP Griffith tells us that this was one of the areas where the Welsh settlement was marginally more significant than in other parts of London.<sup>42</sup>

Like all immigrants to a new country, Walter bonded closely with fellow-countrymen living in the district where he settled. St Dunstan was clearly a residential area appropriate to Walter’s rising socio-economic status, for John Stow noted that its parishioners included ‘many rich Marchants, and other occupiers of diuerse trades, namely Saltars and Ironmongers’.<sup>43</sup> WK Jordan later declared that the social and economic complexion of St Dunstan-in-the-West comprised ‘an interesting mixture of gentry employed on crown affairs, chancery clerks and officers, professional men generally, and a large number of merchants and



shopkeepers, including, however, no great merchants'.<sup>44</sup> Walter would have fitted very well into this milieu.

Walter had four houses in Fleet Street which he owned jointly with his brother William, whom we must assume had joined him in London. It was probably from one of the houses in this street that Walter transacted his business. Only one house, No. 17, survived the Great Fire and, while undoubtedly not all the others could have compared with such grandeur, the size of No. 17 gives us some indication of the quality of real estate that existed in the street in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Walter also owned land in the parish of St Dunstan and, though its exact location and acreage is not known, his name appears in the Lay Subsidy Lists of 1597 and 1600 for the parish of St Dunstan in the ward of Farringdon Without.<sup>45</sup>



Figure 2. No. 17 Fleet Street, London EC4.<sup>46</sup>

Publishing started in Fleet Street around 1500, when William Caxton's apprentice, Wynkyn de Worde, set up a printing shop near Shoe Lane. About the same time Richard Pynson set up as publisher and printer next to St Dunstan's church. More printers and publishers followed, mainly supplying the legal trade in the four Law Inns around the area. Clearly, Walter's choice of residence was strategically made in relation to his occupation as a scrivener. Nowadays, as in Walter's time, Fleet Street is associated with the Law and its courts and barristers' chambers, many of which are in alleys off Fleet Street itself.

The textual landscape of early modern England was changed forever by the invention of the printing press, for new scripts, surfaces, and techniques were required to enable it to function effectively and, of course, a ready supply of paper was a primary requirement. In his very early history play, *Henry VI, part 2*, Shakespeare, disrespecting the historic timeline for artistic purposes, has Jack Cade accuse Lord Saye thus:

whereas before, our forefathers had no other books but the score and the talley, thou hast caused printing to be used and contrary to the King, his crown and dignity, thou has built a paper mill.<sup>47</sup>



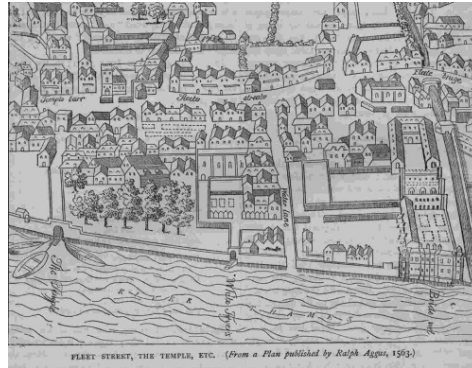


Figure 3. Fleet Street, The Temple etc. 1563

from Edward Walford's *London, Old & New*, 1881.

Jack Cade was leader of the fifteenth-century Kentish rebels. Undoubtedly, the real allusion that Shakespeare was making, via Cade's remark, was to the first commercially successful paper mill established in England in 1588, on the river Darent in Dartford, a hundred years after Cade's day. In February 1589, Sir John Speilman, a German-born entrepreneur, secured a patent giving him a monopoly in buying materials for making white paper, and preventing anyone from setting up in competition without his permission.<sup>48</sup> Such restrictive practices could not have found favour with the scriveners of Walter Meredith's time.

There was no shortage of work for scriveners like Walter whose greatest profit lay in activities like conveyancing and money-lending. Indeed, RH Tawney believed that scriveners have a claim to be among the pioneers of banking. He described their early modern professional progress thus:

The constant mortgaging of land, and the growing dependence both of *Landowners* and *Traders* on credit transactions, involved a great increase in the half-clerical, half-legal business of 'making bonds'; this made the *Scrivener* at once more dispensable and more expert, and put considerable sums of money into the pockets of the more successful members of the profession.... His intimate knowledge of business conditions and of the land market, his practice in weighing the standing of Moneylenders and their clients, and his sometimes not inconsiderable wealth, made it inevitable that, in addition to arranging loans, the *Scrivener* should himself take to lending money.<sup>49</sup>

During the early modern period, it was scriveners and goldsmiths who were rivals in the matter of issuing loans, for goldsmiths already kept in their large coffer the money, gold or silver which their customers had deposited with them for safekeeping. While it is not known if they had a professional relationship, Walter enjoyed the friendship of one such wealthy goldsmith, William Pennant, who originally came from Flintshire and was one of the ancestors of Thomas Pennant, the antiquary and naturalist. William lived in Smithfield, also in the ward of Farringdon Without. In his will, he bequeathed 'to my loving friend Walter Meredith £5 in money and also my cloak of fine black cloth with some lace and lined through with rusty taffety'.<sup>50</sup> The sober colour of this garment may have indicated its owner's Puritan leanings. Nevertheless, such a handsome item of clothing, expensively dyed black, was costly and highly fashionable in late Elizabethan London. It would have been a visible sign of status and authority when worn by the owner. Thus, in leaving his cloak as well as a considerable sum to Walter, William Pennant, the wealthy merchant, was acknowledging him as his social equal.

Caroline Cross has highlighted the existence of Tudor legal formularies composed by scriveners and notaries for the benefit of their clients.<sup>51</sup> It is possible that during his career Walter himself may have made a contribution to such a legal handbook. His own will, copied in an impeccable Secretary hand, was drawn up when he was 'in good healthe and perfecte memorye', a condition for which he praised 'Allmightie God'. In an age when plague epidemics were not infrequent, such a prayer must have been heartfelt. The religious preamble was written with a Protestant emphasis: 'I comend my soule unto Allmightie God my Creator and to Jesus Christe his onely Sonne my Savyour and Redeemer by the merytte of whose previous deathe and passion and by no other meanes I have assured hope of eternall salvacon'. Leaving the reader with no doubt as to his Puritan leanings, Walter added, 'And my bodye to the earthe from whence it came to be decentlie buried without pompe'. Details of where he wished to be buried were not given. Experienced scrivener that he was, he noted at the end of his will that he had subscribed his name 'to every sheete being five in number and tyed them at the toppe with a labell and my seale'.

Tudor central government assumed no direct responsibility for the needs of the poor, so, without charitable bequests from the rich, such people could not survive. By the end of the sixteenth century, John Stow was complaining that the rich did not provide for the poor as their forebears had done.<sup>52</sup> Such parsimony was not uncommon as is evidenced by the following illustration:



Figure. 4. A rich man ignores the pleas of a beggar.<sup>53</sup>

However, like other testators of the period, Walter Meredith did not shirk from his Christian duty of almsgiving for he requested that, on the day of his funeral, twenty shillings should be distributed in bread or money among the poor of St Dunstan's, his London parish, with the same amount to be donated to them on the first anniversary of his death. In the codicil to his will, he bequeathed 'forty shillings yearly forever' to the poor of the same parish. He also left five pounds 'to make a supper or drynckinge' for his neighbours and others in St Dunstan's to mark his funeral. Such bequests make clear to us that Walter was a man of some standing in his community and well-known to many. Undoubtedly recalling his own years of apprenticeship, he left 'forty shillings' to the assistants of the Scriveners 'to make a repaste or drynckinge' on the same day.

To his wife, 'during her widowhood', Walter bequeathed £200 together with his mansion house. Walter was a man in early middle age when they married. Katherin may have been younger than him; thus he may have had the expectation that, after his death, she would remarry. Their marriage was childless, but Katherin did not receive the entire inheritance. Much of Walter's estate was bequeathed to his extended family and to friends in London and Glasbury. They clearly meant a great deal to him, for his bequests to them were generous. Childless himself, he left to his two nieces, the daughters of his sister, Elizabeth Watkins, 'tenne pounds apiece yearlie towards their maintenance'. On the occasion of either their marriage or their majority the girls were to receive one hundred pounds

each, a sum which would set them up well in life. Before this, however, the £200 was to be loaned 'to persons of good sufficiencye and thereby raise proffyte towards the paymente of the said Twenty poundes yearlye', for their maintenance. Obviously, by the end of his life, Walter had become as proficient a moneylender as he was a scrivener.

Like many emigrants then and now, during his lifetime Walter had provided some support for his family back home, for his will reveals that his brother-in-law, John Thomas ap Howell, owed Walter two sums of money: £42 and 46 shillings and 8 pence. Walter stipulated that, as long as his sister and brother-in-law lived together, they could both hold onto the sum. If his sister should predecease her husband, then the money was to be returned to Walter's estate. However, to safeguard her interests should she be widowed, she could retain the amount, eventually leaving it to any issue she might have. Several other generous bequests were made to poor, named Glasbury individuals, before Walter bequeathed to his former London apprentices, Robert Griffith and Richard Wootton, three pounds each. Both men were later to follow in their master's footsteps and become Wardens of the Guild of Scriveners, Robert in 1615 and Richard in 1621. Clearly, as Wrightson and Levine noted about some of Terling's testators, 'occupational solidarity had some influence' on the legacies left by Walter.<sup>54</sup>

That Walter was part of a close-knit, Welsh community in St Dunstan-in-the-West is clear from the names of some of the other legatees: Robert Morgan, William Jones, as well as his former apprentices, are all included in the 1597 and 1600 Lay Subsidy Lists for the parish. Robert Morgan, Walter's 'lovinge friende and neighbour', was bequeathed 'fortye shillings for a remembrance'. Robert was to become Master of the Guild of Scriveners in 1620. William Jones, also Walter's 'lovinge friend and neighbour', was left a similar amount. The bulk of Walter's real estate, his four houses in Fleet Street, was left to his brother William, who was also the executor of his will. Wrightson and Levine noted that in Terling too, where the distribution of an estate was concerned, 'there was an overwhelming bias' on the part of testators towards nominating the closest kin to supervise the handling of the testator's property.<sup>55</sup> They maintain that this was because it was kin who were most deeply trusted in such matters.

On William's decease, the houses in Fleet Street were to pass to Walter's nephew, also Walter, the son of his brother David. Walter also inherited his uncle's books. He too had joined his uncle in London and, after starting his apprenticeship as a girdler, 'translated' from the Girdlers' company to the Scriveners', taking the oath in 1632. In a Quit claim case, dated 2 May 1636, Walter junior is described as 'citizen and scrivener of London'.<sup>56</sup>

A major charitable bequest of Walter's was 'to the poor people of the parishe of Glasburie where I was borne'. He may have had cause to lament on some of his journeys home the poor maintenance of the bridge in his home parish, for he left 'Fortye shillings' 'towards the makinge or repayinge of Glasburye bridge', an act that would have been of benefit to all of Glasbury's parishioners. WP Griffith pointed out that in early modern times 'inland journeys were never easy and it may not be a coincidence that many wills of the period contained bequests for local bridges'.<sup>57</sup> While there had been ferries across the Wye at Glasbury since earliest times, for it was one of the narrowest crossings of the floodplain of the river, Walter's is one of the earliest references to a bridge being built there. Reverend Jonathan Williams made a brief note of Walter's bequest in his *History of Radnorshire*.<sup>58</sup> However, Clwyd-Powys Archaeological trust maintains that 'the earliest mention of a bridge across the Wye appears in 1665, where reference is made to a former bridge at Glasbury further upstream from the present bridge, near the confluence of the Llynfi'.<sup>59</sup> Until the nineteenth century, it was a common occurrence for bridges to be swept away by the flooding of the Wye. The bridge which had benefited from Walter's legacy may have suffered such a fate. The present bridge over the river Wye at Glasbury is a concrete structure, built in the twentieth century.

Another of Walter's bequests to Glasbury's poor may have enjoyed a longer life. After his wife's decease, he willed that four pounds per year be distributed every other year, at Allhallowstyd, among the poor people of Glasbury parish in order to buy them clothes. On the alternate years, he requested that four pounds be distributed among eight young boys and girls, not exceeding the age of twenty years, as they grew in readiness for service, in order to prepare them for the same, 'always remembringe that my owene neerest poor kyndred be therein first preferred'. He required that six men of substance in the parish, 'whereof those of my neerest kyndred to be in the same number', should receive and distribute the money annually. This money was to be raised and paid out of income from his houses in Fleet Street.

In an intimate, short note at the end of this lengthy document, Walter added, 'further legacies as are contained in an olde will in my cubborde in the hall unto Messrs Robert Johnson, Robert Morgan, Robert Griffith and Richard Wootton my will is shall be performed'. These men, all scriveners, were also loving friends and neighbours of Walter's, who, having few close kin in London, nominated them as overseers of his will.

Alas, almost sixty years after Walter's death, the properties on which so many of these investments were drawn literally went up in smoke in the Great Fire of London, in 1666, though not before Walter's nephew was

able to benefit considerably from his inheritance for, as a scrivener, he was involved in the buying and selling of estates in Cornwall, from which negotiations he profited handsomely.<sup>60</sup>

All migrants travel with a dream of achieving success and happiness in their chosen country. Few could have realised that dream more fully than did Walter Meredith, a representative of those gifted immigrants of modest birth and means whose rise to prominence in London, so graphically illustrated in his richly detailed will, can rightly claim to be impressive. Assuredly, there were other early modern Welshmen of ‘the middling sort’ who, like Walter, left their native communities with uncertain prospects and, one way or another, helped to make early modern London what it was, even if their achievements there were not of the order of ‘dazzling Welsh luminaries’.<sup>61</sup> Comparisons, similar to the one carried out in this paper, of the records they left behind would divest these migrants of their anonymity and add to our knowledge of the ways enterprising young Welshmen contributed to the life and culture of the Tudor metropolis.

Since Walter’s day, when young men of ambition and ability were forced to find an outlet for their gifts mainly in London, the tables have turned several times on the history of migration from Wales. The youth of Europe and the wider world continue to flock into London today, but now some also migrate to Wales, which, since 1955, has had her own capital city. Young people come to Cardiff and Wales’s other major towns in order to study in the country’s universities and to work in her shops, offices or hospitals. They soon learn that the Welsh have a separate identity from the English and are enriched by this knowledge. They will also find today in Cardiff the ‘mosaic of cultures, the metropolitan ambiance and the pace of a big city’ that Walter found in Elizabethan London.<sup>62</sup> They will contribute to the Welsh economy and many will seek, as Walter did, to support their families back home. They may even, in their visits to rural Wales, come across the beautiful Wye valley and the parish of Glasbury, once the home of the scrivener, Walter Meredith.

#### NOTES

\* We are grateful to the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion for permission to publish this article, which was previously published in their Transactions in 2010.

<sup>1</sup> Glanmor Williams, *Renewal and Reformation: Wales c. 1415–1642* (Oxford, 1993), p. 406.

<sup>2</sup> E Jones (ed.), *The Welsh in London, 1500–2000* (Cardiff, 2001), p. 3.

<sup>3</sup> WP Griffith, ‘Tudor Prelude,’ in E Jones, pp. 8–34.

<sup>4</sup> Tom Arkell, ‘The Probate Process’ in T Arkell, N Evans, N Goose (eds.), *When Death Do Us Part* (Oxford, 2000), p. 13.



<sup>5</sup> Glanmor Williams, p. 466.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> FL Steer (ed.), *Scriveners' company common paper 1357–1628: With a continuation to 1678* (1968), pp. VII–XXIV, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=35888>. Date accessed: 3 December 2009.

<sup>8</sup> Guy de la Bédoyère (ed.), *The Diary of John Evelyn* (Woodbridge, 1995), p. 21.

<sup>9</sup> G Dynallt Owen, *Elizabethan Wales* (Cardiff, 1964), p. 207.

<sup>10</sup> Cited in *Almanac: Newsletter of Powys Archives* (Llandrindod Wells, Autumn, 2009).

<sup>11</sup> Richard Moore-Colyer, *Roads and Trackways of Wales* (Ashbourne, 2001), p. 84.

<sup>12</sup> Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos, 'Failure to become freemen: urban apprentices in early modern England', *Social History*, Vol. 16, No. 2, (May 1991), p. 155.

<sup>13</sup> EB Jupps, WW Pocock, *An Historical account of the Worshipful Company of Carpenters of the city of London*, (1887), p. 434.

<sup>14</sup> TNA 157 DD/P/15/12, 2 July 1577. Gift: William Waller to Anthony Winfeild and William Cavendishe (all as DD/P/15/10): property as DD/P/15/10: further to DD/P/15/10. Witn. Walter Meredith (servant to John Hutton, scrivener), Robert Clark, Thomas Henson, Phillipe Hobbye, John Waller. Seal

<sup>15</sup> FL Steer (ed.), *Scriveners' company common paper 1357–1628: With a continuation to 1678* (1968), pp. VII–XXIV, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=35888>. Date accessed: 13 March 2010.

<sup>16</sup> David C Coleman, 'London Scriveners and the Estate Market in the late Seventeenth Century', *Economic History Review, New Series*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (1951), p. 221.

<sup>17</sup> Charles Perrault, *Le Maistre Chat ou Le Chat Botté* (Paris, Barbin, 1697).

<sup>18</sup> Glamorgan County Records: Quarter Sessions files, 1727–53, Cardiff Records: volume 3 (1901), pp. 192–236. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=48158>. Date accessed: 04 December 2009.

<sup>19</sup> S Greenblatt (ed.), *The Norton Shakespeare* (New York, 1997), p. 3.

<sup>20</sup> RJ Sylvester, R Hankinson, 'Clâs, Church and Village at Glasbury', *Transactions of the Radnorshire Society*, Vol. LXXIII (2003), p. 116.

<sup>21</sup> D Sylvester, 'Glasbury, Norton, and the problem of the nucleated village in Radnorshire', *Transactions of the Radnorshire Society*, Vol. XXXV (1965), p. 19.

<sup>22</sup> Keith Wrightson, D Levine, *Poverty and Piety in an English Village* (Oxford, 1995), p. 154.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. p. 110.

<sup>24</sup> Caroline AJ Skeel, *The Council in the Marches of Wales* (London: Hugh Rees, 1904), p. 3.

<sup>25</sup> Caroline AJ Skeel, *op.cit.*

<sup>26</sup> K. Wrightson and D Levine, p. 117.

<sup>27</sup> Wrightson and Levine, p. 122.

<sup>28</sup> Wrightson and Levine, p. 124.

<sup>29</sup> Penry H Williams, 'The Star Chamber and the Council of Wales in the Marches of Wales, 1558–1603', *Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, Vol. XVI (1956), p. 287.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, p. 294.

<sup>31</sup> National Archives, *Star Chamber Proceedings: Meredith v David, Roger ap Thomas and others*, STACS/M17/13, 19 Elizabeth.

<sup>32</sup> *op. cit.*, p. 289.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.



<sup>34</sup> CAJ Skeel, 'Social and Economic Conditions in Wales and the Marches in the Early Seventeenth century', *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion* (1918), p. 125.

<sup>35</sup> PH Williams, p. 297.

<sup>36</sup> CAJ Skeel, p. 143.

<sup>37</sup> National Archives *PROB, 11/111 Walter Meredith, Writer of the Court Letter of Saint Dunstan in the West, City of London*.

<sup>38</sup> FL Steer, *op. cit.*, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=35888>.

<sup>39</sup> 'Proceedings in the Commons, 1601: November 11th–15th', An exact Account of the Proceedings of the Four last Parliaments of Q. Elizabeth (1680), pp. 207–216, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=43554>. Last accessed: 16 September 2009.

<sup>40</sup> Worshipful Company of Scriveners *Monopoly*, [www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/..text/90210w02.htm](http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/..text/90210w02.htm).

<sup>41</sup> John Stow, 'The warde of Faringdon extra, or without', *A Survey of London* (Reprinted from the text of 1603 (1908)), pp. 20–52. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=60053>.

<sup>42</sup> WP Griffith, 'Tudor Prelude', in Emrys Jones (ed.), *The Welsh in London*, p. 10.

<sup>43</sup> Stow, *Ibid*.

<sup>44</sup> WK Jordan, *The Charities of London 1480–1660* (London, George Allen and Unwin, 1960), p. 37.

<sup>45</sup> AH Nelson, *Lay Subsidy Returns for London, Middlesex, Surrey (North) 1593–1600*, <http://web.archive.org/web/20080215034647/http://socrates.berkeley.edu/~ahnelson/SUBSIDY/snos.html>. Last accessed: 14 Sept 2009.

<sup>46</sup> Peter Easton, *Samuel Pepys and Fleet Street*, [www.pepysdiary.com/.../samuel\\_pepys\\_and\\_fl\\_php](http://www.pepysdiary.com/.../samuel_pepys_and_fl_php). Last accessed: 8 April 2010.

<sup>47</sup> *Henry VI, part 2*, Act IV vii, 30–31. The play was written c.1590, but not published until 1594.

<sup>48</sup> Rhys Jenkins, *Early attempts at Making Paper in England 1495–1788* (Association of Assistant Librarian reprints, No 5, 1958).

<sup>49</sup> RH Tawney, 'The Antecedents of Banking', in T Wilson (ed.), *A Discourse upon Usury* (1925), p. 85.

<sup>50</sup> National Archives *PROB 11/114, Will of William Pennant, gentleman of London*.

<sup>51</sup> C Cross, 'Wills as evidence of popular piety during the Reformation period', in D Loades (ed.), *The End of Strife* (Edinburgh, 1984).

<sup>52</sup> Stow, *op.cit*.

<sup>53</sup> S Bateman, *Crystal Glass of Christian Reformation wherein God may behold the Colored Abuses Used in this Our Present Time* (London, 1569).

<sup>54</sup> Wrightson and Levine, p. 101.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*. p. 100.

<sup>56</sup> DS/321, Cornwall County Record Office.

<sup>57</sup> WP Griffith in E Jones (ed.), p. 27.

<sup>58</sup> J Williams, *The History of Radnorshire* (1859), p. 213.

<sup>59</sup> *The Middle Wye Valley*, CPAT Trust, <http://www.cpat.org.uk>. Last accessed: 15 March, 2010.

<sup>60</sup> Darrell Stephens muniments 1557–1895, Cornwall County Record Office.

<sup>61</sup> Glanmor Williams, p. 406.

<sup>62</sup> J Segrott, 'Today and Tomorrow', in E Jones (ed.), p. 186.

# THE HISTORY OF A RADNORSHIRE BORDER TOWN

Colin PF Hughes

Keith Parker, *The Story of Knighton* (Logaston Press, 2012), pp. xii + 212, £10.

This detailed survey is an excellent account of the history of Knighton, Tref-y-Clawdd, by Radnorshire's premier local historian, Keith Parker. The author states that, although the book covers the history of Knighton from early times to almost the present day, it is mainly concerned with the period from the 1770s to the 1990s. Keith Parker also states that an unusual feature of the book is the reliance upon newspapers for information about the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The book starts with the origins of the wider Knighton area and refers to the prehistoric finds that have been discovered in the locality. Then the author establishes the fact that the town's Welsh name, Tref-y-Clawdd [the town on the Dyke], dates from 840 AD, when the Anglo-Saxon king Offa built his dyke between Wales and England. Keith Parker points out that Knighton is the only settlement on the Dyke along its whole length.

Knowledge of Knighton in medieval times is very sparse as there is little material evidence of the town's development during this period. There is a lack of research on the subject. Even so, the Domesday Book of 1086 described Knighton as a manor of about 600 acres, situated in the Leintwardine Hundred of Shropshire. During medieval times, Knighton was controlled at different times by various Marcher lords, especially by the Mortimers. There were two castles in medieval Knighton, just 500 yards apart, at Castle Bank and at Bryn-y-Castell. In 1230, Knighton was given a charter, granting it the right to hold a market on the eve of St Matthew's feast (20 September). This was of considerable importance, of course, in the development of Knighton as a town serving its population and its hinterland. Knighton's fortunes in later medieval times varied due to a deterioration in climatic conditions and due to a series of plagues, including the Black Death of 1349–50. The Black Death led to a labour shortage in Knighton, as elsewhere, and to an expansion in sheep farming as it needed less manpower than arable farming. Knighton was laid waste as a result of the Battle of Pilleth in 1402 but, despite this, the wool trade flourished, as did the cloth manufacturing industry in the town. Two buildings survive in Knighton from the late fifteenth century – the Horse and Jockey and the Old House, on High Street. Knighton passed into the

hands of King Henry VII after the Battle of Bosworth in 1485 and became part of the Lordship of Cantref Maelienydd.

The political stability of the Tudor and Stuart periods, especially after the Acts of Union of England and Wales in 1536 and 1542, led to Knighton becoming relatively self-sufficient. The new county of Radnorshire was created and the status of Knighton was advanced because, along with Cefnlllys, Knucklas, Radnor and Rhayader, it became one of the five boroughs whose burgesses elected the MP for Radnor Boroughs. The Acts also gave local gentry like the Price family of Monaughty, Pilleth and Knighton huge opportunities for advancement. Keith Parker provides a detailed picture of the Price family before referring to the part played by Knighton in the English Civil War of the 1640s. Like the rest of Radnorshire, Knighton was broadly sympathetic to King Charles I during the war. In the later seventeenth century, religious tension raised its head, with the emergence of Puritanism in the town and in the surrounding area.

Documentary evidence relating to Knighton in the eighteenth century, as with the rest of Radnorshire, is relatively sparse, according to the author. The Price family re-emerged as the main gentry family and the parish church was rebuilt. Knighton in the late eighteenth century was a typical isolated market town; it was 'marking time', claims Keith Parker.

Detail is provided of Knighton in the early nineteenth century, during the era of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars of 1793–1815. The wars led to increasingly high food prices and life for most ordinary people was a struggle. Richard Price II and Charles Rogers of Stanage Park were the foremost landowners in the area at this time. After the wars were over, Knighton continued to hold its regular fairs; turnpike roads were constructed and the Knighton Poor Law Union implemented the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, with its central focus on the workhouse system. Interesting details are provided of living conditions in Knighton in the 1840s.

The third quarter of the nineteenth century saw Knighton emerge as the principal market town in Radnorshire. Keith Parker refers to this era in Knighton's development as 'The Great Rebuilding'. The author impresses with his knowledge and his detailed research into this period of Knighton's history. Developments in the town included the Farmers' Club, the sheep market, the market hall, the local Board of Health, the Gas Works, the Central Wales Railway, the National School, and the Norton Arms Hotel, and there were improvements in the agricultural and commercial sectors. The author concludes his survey of this period with reference to Richard Green Price.

In the 1870s, the economic situation deteriorated in Knighton, as

elsewhere, with a nation-wide agricultural depression. In late Victorian times, the optimism and energy of Knighton's 'Great Rebuilding' began to wane. Investment in the town did continue but it was designed to maintain the town's status, rather than to encourage further development. Outbreaks of foot-and-mouth disease in 1872–76 and in 1881–83 had a debilitating effect. The railway had brought an influx of cheap, mass-produced goods into Knighton and this led to a decline in the local businesses. In 1899 the Knighton Development Association was set up to try to meet the challenge. Broader issues were also of concern in Knighton at this time: the 1902 Education Act; the 1909–10 Constitutional Crisis; and the Disestablishment of the Church in Wales. Knighton personalities of this time are highlighted – Dr CJ Covertton, CC Rogers, JR Bache and JG Goulstone. An interesting survey of social life in Victorian and Edwardian Knighton is then provided.

The loss and destruction caused by World War One, 1914–18, is assessed. Reference is made to Knighton's contribution to the fighting front and to the home front. Although agriculture was more prosperous during the inter-war period, only 13% of Knighton's labour force was now employed in agriculture. This was the time of the Great Depression and of mass unemployment in Britain, but Knighton, like most rural areas, suffered less than the areas of traditional heavy industry, like the south Wales coalfield area.

The period of World War Two, 1939–45, was perhaps the most difficult time the town had faced in recent centuries, claims Keith Parker. However, by contrast, the 1960s and 1970s were possibly the most prosperous decades the town experienced. The author's access to an increasing number of sources, especially newspapers, is apparent in his very detailed survey of Knighton in the mid-twentieth century. The town's housing stock increased dramatically and its economy expanded as it developed a promising industrial base.

Keith Parker's final chapter is entitled 'Towards the Twenty First Century'. His story of Knighton is brought right up-to-date. Knighton's population increased by 51% between 1971 and 2001 and its housing stock increased by 57%. These were unprecedented increases. However, the 1980s and 1990s saw Knighton's industrial base shrink, as businesses closed and retail trade shrank too. The population of the town aged 60+ increased as younger age groups migrated out and older age groups moved in from the west Midlands in particular. The 2001 census revealed that just 38% of Knighton's population was born in Wales and 58% was born in England. Knighton was seen by some as increasingly a dormitory town as people of working age travelled to work outside it. This was despite

the developing tourist industry, for example, and the establishment in the late 1990s of the Knighton Business Enterprise Park. On a positive note, Knighton's core function, as a centre for the livestock trade, continues successfully and the townscape and its facilities have been transformed.

Keith Parker's *The Story of Knighton* is a fascinating read. It is a very detailed study from the earliest times to the present day of this 'classic border town'. There are some minor errors in the production of the book, such as referring to the advent of the railway in the mid-seventeenth century, rather than mid-nineteenth century; an incorrect date for the death of the jockey William Garnet Evans; and reference to the Welsh Development 'Association', rather than 'Agency'. Despite this, the book is attractively produced, with pictures, maps, diagrams and statistical data to enhance the text.

The book is fully focused on an important Radnorshire border town. It is a comprehensive local historical study which occasionally dips into the broader picture of Welsh and British history. If the success of a local history study is judged by its ability to encourage the reader to go to visit the subject of the local study with informed eyes, then Keith Parker has achieved this.

# A DRAGON WITH TWO TONGUES

Dai Hawkins

Meic Stephens, *cofnodion* (Y Lolfa, 2012), pp. 243, £9.95.

The title of this autobiography (lower case in the original) is not accompanied by a translation because the Welsh word *cofnodion* is ambiguous; it can mean ‘records’, ‘minutes’, ‘notes’, ‘memoranda’, ‘memorials’ and more, and is a perfect description of the wide-ranging contents of this interesting book. The author, not to be confused with the slightly younger singer-songwriter Meic Stevens, has been a well-known figure on the Welsh literary scene since the 1960s, and his reminiscences of his varied life and career transport the reader along as in a fairground ride, the spotlight shining on each scene in turn, before the reader is whisked off to enjoy the next cameo. He writes in a dialectal Welsh literary style which would certainly have annoyed Ffrancis Payne, who disapproved strongly of this sort of writing in anything but ‘pure’ literary Welsh, but I found the style unexceptionable and eminently readable, although Stephens’s profligacy with apostrophes mildly amused and bemused me.

Meic Stephens was born in Trefforest, near Pontypridd, in 1938, on Michael Wilding’s birthday, hence his first name, which, like Ffrancis Payne and the present reviewer, he subsequently altered. He declares his relief that his grandmother was a fan of that actor, and not of Haile Selassie, who was also born on that day, a touch typical of the author’s humour, which surfaces from time to time throughout the book. His upbringing was in many ways typical of south Wales working-class boys who received a grammar-school education: like most of his school-mates he and his family spoke only English; like many of them, he lived in a three-generation household, including in his case a stereotypical cockney grandfather (his mother’s father). At the beginning of the book, he takes us on a panoramic trip around the world of his childhood, with details sure to arouse vivid memories in those readers who grew up after the Second World War. Throughout the book he is frank and open about himself and others, and his description of the relationships inside his family raise interesting questions about the nature of personal identity. How did he turn out to be such an enthusiast for Welsh and Welsh-language culture, whereas his younger (and only) brother never felt the slightest identification with these, and indeed ultimately turned his back on Wales altogether? Perhaps the most important factor in the author’s

life in this context was when the young English-speaking Meic went to study French at the University of Wales in Aberystwyth, the college that George Thomas seemed to regard as some sort of factory for producing his abhorred 'Nationalists'. Certainly Stephens's student days made him aware of the variety and wealth of the cultures of Wales, and he went on to learn and master the Welsh language. It does not follow from this that he in any way turned his back on his English-language roots; indeed he documents in this book how he became one of the chief movers of the efforts to recognise and celebrate and foster the work and achievements of those in Wales whose literary output, be it prose or poetry, is in the English language.

The developing nationalist and Welsh-learner did many of the things that young Welsh students did in the 1960s, but he is unique in being responsible for Wales's most famous graffito, on a wall near Llanrhystud, exhorting passers-by (in incorrect Welsh) to remember Tryweryn, the village drowned to supply Liverpool with Welsh water, to supplement the acidic Montgomeryshire water that dissolved some of the lead molecules in the pipes of my childhood home. The Welsh has long since been corrected, but weather and vandalism mean that the wall is rapidly deteriorating, and Cadw are trying to find a way to save it.

From 1967 to 1990 Meic Stephens was Literature Director of the Welsh Arts Council and he devotes a whole chapter to describing his efforts to promote literary work in both languages, revealing some of the inner workings and wranglings of that institution and of its interface with governmental bodies. I found this part of the book most informative, but not really surprising. His occasional dealings with relevant authorities in London make it clear that similar bodies and sponsors of the arts in the metropolis are, if anything, even more subject to whim and wheeler-dealing than their counterparts in Wales. During this quarter-century, on top of not inconsiderable duties in his day job, he was also a prolific journalist and political activist, and was editor of the *The Oxford Companion to the Literature of Wales*, as well as its Welsh-language counterpart, both of which were published in 1986, and he also edited the revised editions in 1997 and 1998.

Stephens had known since 1962 that his father had been born out of wedlock, but a conversation between them in 1979 was the start of a dogged decade-long attempt to discover the identity of his natural grandfather. His first step was to obtain a copy of his father's birth certificate from St Catherine's House, from which he found that his grandmother was a Lloyd from Blaen-bedw in Glasgwm. This connected him to the famous Lloyd family of bone-setters, including the fabled



‘Silver John’, but brought him no nearer to the identity of his grandfather. In the chapter ‘*Y Ferch o Glasgwm*’ [the girl from Glasgwm], Stephens, like a Welsh Ariadne, leads us through the labyrinthine complexities of his determined efforts to solve this puzzle. The twists and turns of his quest are complex and unexpected, and hard-core Radnorians will be delighted with the appearance of names and families and locations that they know well. Did he find his father? Meic Stephens tells us whether or no. The corollary to this genealogical passion was that it led to a fascination and identification with Radnorshire, as evidenced by the fact that his house in Whitchurch, Cardiff, is now called ‘Blaen-bedw’. It was this passion for our county that spurred him on to write Welsh poetry for the first time, much of it on Radnorshire themes; in his own words, ‘I was spurred on by the story of my father to start composing poetry in Welsh, and for that I am especially grateful’ [my translation]. After retiring from the Arts Council in 1990, Stephens became a freelance, including a stint as Visiting Professor in the English department of Brigham Young University, in Provo, Utah, in 1991. In a chapter entitled ‘*Tymor yn Seion*’ [a term in Zion], he narrates and analyses his term there with a wry look at Mormon life passed on to the reader with his usual honesty and frankness. The extensive genealogical library there gave him the chance to find out much more about his Lloyd ancestors, but he was a little taken aback to discover that their marriages had been ‘sealed for all eternity’ by proxy through the agency of the Latter-day Saints. This chapter gives us a fascinating insight into what it feels like to live in such a stiflingly restrictive society, and the reader shares the author’s sigh of relief as he flies back to Gatwick at the end of his stay.

After a chapter recounting his experiences in politics, the arts and education in the early 1990s, Stephens returns to the theme of Radnorshire. His first Welsh poem was a type of long poem called in Welsh *pryddest*, entitled *Gwreiddiau* [roots], which he submitted to the 2002 National Eisteddfod in the competition for the bardic crown. He missed the crown by a hair’s breadth, but there is no doubt about the power and persuasiveness of this poem. It consists of dialogue between members of a family, some of whom have remained in Radnorshire, while others have moved to Merthyr. As this poem is written in dialect (which might be part or all of the reason that he wasn’t awarded the crown, Ffrancis Payne’s views on such things being still held by many Welsh literary figures), he has the problem of trying to portray two dialects which although different are very similar in many respects. I feel that Stephens somewhat painted himself into a corner because, in order to distinguish clearly between the two dialects, he was tempted into introducing into his poem some

characteristics of Montgomery Welsh dialect which were never characteristic of Radnorshire, and which rather grated on this reader. In Montgomeryshire and parts of south-east Wales ‘a’ becomes ‘æ’ (something like a German ‘ä’ or the ‘a’ in ‘Mary’), which explains the pronunciation of place-names like ‘Aberdare’. Thus *mam* becomes *mæm*, and *bach* becomes *bæch*. Another Montgomeryshire characteristic is to insert an ‘i’ into certain words, so that *cegin* becomes *ciegin*, and *capel* becomes *ciapel*. Add to this a handful of other distinctly Montgomeryshire words like *wtra* [lane or track], and I can no longer hear a Radnorshire voice in my ears. Stephens quotes Gerwyn Williams, who said, ‘I suggest in all seriousness that a recording and hard copy of this poem should be sent urgently to Saint Fagans because it is so important from a linguistic viewpoint’ [my translation]. This is a most excellent poem, but there is no way in which these quirks can be said to represent the real Radnorshire Welsh dialect, and the language in this fine poem is not an accurate depiction of it. I have found no evidence of such pronunciation and lexicon even in the Radnorshire parishes adjoining Montgomeryshire, and these features should not be used for linguistic purposes as suggested by Williams. But such criticisms are trivial in the context of this excellent and heartfelt poem.

In the remainder of the book, Stephens gives us a taste of his wide range of artistic creation in poetry and prose, in two languages, and a picture of himself in his so-called retirement. The final chapter is entitled ‘*Sha pen y daith*’ [towards the end of the journey]. I sincerely hope that this is a bit of poetic licence, and that Meic Stephens will be among us for many more years to come, to inform us, to entertain us, to irritate us and to make us smile, and most of all to be a continuing example for us to follow in making our own contributions to the cultural life of Wales. Sadly, most of the readers of this review will not be able to read *cofnodion*, and I’m afraid that *Gwreiddiau* isn’t available in the ‘Thin Language’, but there is a consolation prize: much of the content of this book can be read in English under the title *A Semester in Zion: A Journal with Memoirs* (Gwasg Carreg Gwalch, 2003), £8.95. Whichever language you speak, I think that the one in your mother tongue would amply repay the outlay.







