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How significant was the experience of living in rural North Wales in shaping a Welsh identity in the period 1841-1911?

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**How significant was the experience of living in rural North Wales in shaping a
Welsh identity in the period 1841-1911?**

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2018 Open University

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IMAGE REDACTED

Fig 1: The women of Ysbyty Ifan's Alms Houses c 1875 by John Thomas (PCW online)

IMAGE REDACTED

Fig 2: The people of Ysbyty Ifan Alms Houses c 1875 by John Thomas (PCW online)

IMAGE REDACTED

Fig 3: Tyn Porth Inn c 1875 from the private collection of L Owen

Abbreviations

BCMR - Bethania Calvinistic Methodist Records

CDHSWI - The Caernarvon and Denbigh Herald and South Wales Independent Newspaper

GVADENW - General View of the Agriculture and Domestic Economy of North Wales –

Gwallter Mechain (1813).

NWCAP - The North Wales Chronicle and Advertiser for the Principality

NGGBI - National Gazette British Isles 1868

NLW - National Library Wales

NMRW - National Monuments Record of Wales

PCW – Peoples Collection Wales

PRO - Public records office

SDNSW - Slaters Directory of North and South Wales

SJPR - St John's Parish Records

WNO - Welsh Newspapers Online

How significant was the experience of living in rural North Wales in shaping a Welsh identity in the period 1841-1911?

Denbighshire in the 1800s

The period of 1850-1914, noted as the era of the Welsh nation's resurgence, is usually discussed within the arenas of politics, religion and industry, in the various written histories tackling this subject. The impact of rural areas in Wales on the formulation of a Welsh identity is often lost when the focus is placed heavily on the South Walian experience, with scant attention paid to those who worked and lived in the agricultural land in North Wales, during this period. The popularisation of tourism to the sea bordering areas of North Wales also tends to divert attention away, when discussing this period's motivating market forces in the region, from rural Denbighshire and Caernarfonshire. If North Wales is discussed at all it is in the context of the Liberal and Nationalist movements in Merionethshire's Bala, the importance of the Chapel in daily life, the slate mines of Lord Penrhyn, in nearby Blaenau Ffestiniog, or the mining communities in the North Welsh coal field. The identity of the farming classes in this area, often Anglican and Conservative voting are disregarded as antiquated or depicted as stifled by their subjugation to the whim of their landlord.

(Morgan, (1981) p,187)

To understand one North Walian rural community's identity, an in-depth study of the village of Ysbyty Ifan, Denbighshire, is to be undertaken, more specifically a section of the village called Tir Ifan. Ysbyty Ifan's long Anglican tradition, centring around the former, medieval

creation of the Knights of Jerusalem hospice, which evolved into the still focal point of St John the Baptist church, and the arrival of the Seion Welsh Calvinist Methodist Chapel in 1803 (Coflein, online), made for a devout village, but also raises the question of the need for cohesion of the two religious factions in this remote spot.

A small but historically significant village, straddling Denbighshire and Caernarfonshire, with its tight knit and often related community, this dissertation about Tir Ifan will attempt to uncover what their rural North Walian experience was during the years between 1840 and 1914. There is little documented reporting from the perspective of the Ysbyty Ifan residents available to give a completely clear picture of the true nature of the relationship between landlord and tenant in this specific area, however there are clues in the artefacts under examination in this piece, photographs, memorabilia, newspaper articles and from findings in census reports and church records.

The ascendancy of the Liberal Party in this part of Wales, ousting a long period of Conservative rule, in the 1868 general election, was in part achieved by a rising political resentment against the landlords, who owned the land worked by mainly tenant farmers (Morgan K.O, (1981) p, 11), however in this area a cursory inquiry into local newspapers at this time demonstrate a working relationship with the landlord, in this case again Lord Penrhyn, (National Trust, 2018) which seems to have been an enduring and loyal one. The loyalty of villagers towards their landlords are demonstrated in local monuments, for example a memorial in the nearby village of Pentrafoelas, which has been erected in honour of the late wife of W M Wynn (British Listed Buildings, online) by a subscription raised by

the villagers or from a closer examination of newspaper articles of the daily events and social gatherings in this period, which speak of a village that is working class, but retains Anglican and Conservative leanings amongst its residents. Dawson Jones' dissertation on North Walian nationalist identity within the construct of the British Empire is helpful here to explain this paradox and an examination of this work with its findings confirm that this area of Wales has a history of loyalty to the Crown and the Empire, whilst retaining a mistrust of English interference and opinion. (Dawson Jones (2016). This tricky relationship between the idea of a Non-Conformist, Liberal led, Welsh Nationalism is raised by K O Morgan in the journal article "Welsh Nationalism; The Historical Background". (1971). He ponders the question of the championing of Welsh tradition and literacy by the Anglican "literary clergy". Gwallter Mechain, a resident of the village in the early 1800s, or as was discovered when examining of the diaries of Shadrach Price, a vicar in Ysbyty parish from 1864-7 (Dictionary of Welsh Biography, Online (DWB hereafter) held at the National Library of Wales (NLW hereafter) are relevant examples here. Equally it will be important to ascertain the link between the class system, and the impact of the extension of the voting franchise in 1868. Cragoe in his book, Culture, Politics, and National Identity in Wales 1832-1886 (2005), has challenged the notion of Liberal domination in North Wales in this work, which takes the focus off the dominance of the chapel and places weight on the landowning classes' contribution to political life in the building of Welsh identity. The unopposed Conservative seats in Denbighshire at this time could be put down to coercion by the Landlord, regarding threats of eviction for the tenants on their estates, or more simply that the electorate had reasonably good relations with their landlords.

The statistical analysis of the censuses and parish records from this period, have also uncovered data, telling a story which could be perceived as supporting some of the infamous anti-Welsh slurs, that arose from the publishing of the “Blue Books”, the *Reports of the commissioners of enquiry into the state of education in Wales*, in 1847. The allegations of illiteracy and illegitimacy, with its inference of low morals, will be considered in a context that places a relevance, but not an importance in the controversies their publication threw up. The writing of Isobel Emmett (1964) concerning a North Wales village has been invaluable here when considering the evidence presented regarding rural customs and attitudes to illegitimacy.

With regards to the accusations of illiteracy, and with it a suggestion of low intellect, it is contended here that the Welsh’s identity cyphers of poetry, a keen awareness of their history and ancestors, kinship, an abiding pride in their surroundings, and a strong religious faith were in existence here, from the early 1800’s. Borrow’s travelogue, *Wild Wales, The People, Language and Scenery* (1862), and a brief scan over the writings of Gwallter Mechain, aka Walter Davies, a curate of Ysbyty Ifan in 1799, noted as a cleric, poet, antiquarian and literary critic in the *Dictionary of Welsh biography* (DWB, online), whose *General View of the Agriculture and Domestic Economy of North Wales* (GVADENW hereafter, (1813) online) relates a picture of an already existing rural community structure and its evolving husbandry considerations. Gwallter Mechain, with his strong links in London-Welsh circles, particularly the Gwyneddigion Society, “was instrumental in the formation of

Eisteddfod societies” (DWB, online). This is a clear indicator of the importance of Anglican personnel shaping identities within the rural structure already in Denbighshire.

The significance placed on local Eisteddfod’s raised a community of local poets and writers.

The poet Hedd Wyn, a son of a Meirionnydd farming family living over the moors adjacent to Ysbyty Ifan in Trawsfyndd, was the winner of three Bardic Chairs before his untimely demise in the First World War. Ysbyty’s village square was filled with storytellers and myth makers. (Williams, (2010) p14). John Ceiriog Hughes, whose poetry influenced by Creuddynfab, William Williams (1814-69), the first secretary of the National Eisteddfod, “who convinced him that he should write simple, natural poetry to express his deep feelings for rural Wales”, (Go Britannia, Online) lived some 30 miles away. The poetry he is remembered for is evocative of “the feeling of nostalgia for the rural scenes and characters and music of one's childhood, a feeling known in Welsh as hiraeth” (Go Britannia, Online).

Delving into the pre-census period’s Parish records (SJPR, (1677-1812) it is possible to see that there are instances of literacy within the village. Often the eldest son would be able to sign his name on marriage certificates, but subsequent siblings might be lacking. The poet Twm o’r Nant was taught to read and write by the clog maker, lay reader and poet Sion Dafydd Berson (c.1675-1769), who is buried in St John’s churchyard with the inscription “Galar, i'r ddaear ddu - aeth athraw...” (Oh grief, into the black earth - goes the teacher...).

Oral traditions were handed down and recorded by diarists and amateur historians during the Victorian Era here. In the notebook on the area by Shadrach Pryce, who was the Rector in Ysbyty 1864-1867, we uncover a keen sense of the importance he and others placed on

local history, folk memory, genealogy and the poetic, three of the important motifs that make up an idea of Welsh identity.

Statistical analysis will also be taken of Welsh speakers from the censuses under consideration. “The 1870 Education Act enforced nationally the use of English in education and arguably reduced the use of Welsh”. (Dawson Jones (2016). However, the surrounding area was known as a region of generally monoglot speakers. Borrow notes in “Wild Wales; its people language and scenery” (1862), p 315), that residents of the Pentrafoelas and Paddock localities are, having no English, pleasantly surprised that Borrow can converse in their tongue. There is an oral tradition in this area that children did not speak English, often until they went into the schoolroom. This is evidenced here in the Welsh Censuses of 1891-1911), which noted which language was the respondents main tongue. As late as the 1950s this was a common occurrence in Ysbyty Ifan, and yet as will become apparent, there was an emphasis on the Anglican faith, loyalty to the British Empire, its Royal Family and Conservative leaning community here.

Furthermore, by examining newspaper reports, photographs of the villagers and village taken by the photographer John Thomas, circa 1875, (PCW, hereafter) in conjunction with the primary and secondary sources already listed, a fuller picture of the contribution of this agricultural district to the story of Welsh resurgence in the late Victorian and Edwardian eras will emerge.

Chapter 2 A statistical and visual analysis of Tir Ifan

The village, commonly believed to be an important junction on several pilgrimage routes to holy places within North Wales, is named after the Hospice of St John, built in the late 12th century. Formerly called Dôl Gynwal, the village subsequently became the head-quarters of bands of robbers who devastated the district, until checked by Meredydd-ap-Evan" (NGGBI (1868) online), who took advantage of the device of sanctuary afforded to them by the still remaining Chapel of St John's. The lawlessness of the area is discussed in Shadrach Pryce's historical notes (Pryce, (1864) NLW), which he wrote on becoming the Anglican vicar of St John's in 1864. In addition to the cultural contributions of its inhabitants by the 1800s there was a thriving agricultural economy, due in part to industrialisation and a greater understanding of husbandry, as set out in Gwallter Mechain's work on this subject (GVADENW,(1813).

Findings of the Welsh censuses

To give a more rounded report of the experiences of the villagers in Ysbyty Ifan there should be an analysis of the Wales Census returns from 1841-1911 (Ancestry online). Due to the split of county borders in Ysbyty Ifan, there are two sets of census returns for this village, and surrounding farms, as a whole. In the interests of simplicity and, pending a more thorough investigation into the composition of the village, the returns from Tir Evan or Tir Ifan will be selected for our data. Whilst this separation of data is unfortunate, a larger proportion of the Llan, meaning "of the village", section lay here. Apart from the water mill, the school and the parsonage, the major mass of Ysbyty Ifan lay within the Denbighshire border.

There are additional challenges when researching this hamlet, with the variations in the name of Ysbyty Ifan, rendered in this period as Ysptyty Evan, Yspty Ifan, Spyty Evan, with further similar combinations.

When assessing the ethnology in the village it should be noted that there are only Welsh names listed until the 1911 census when the Welsh born Wood family arrive. (Ancestry, 1911). Even the Scottish gamekeeper, who arrives in the 1880s, census is called Lloyd. The name Roberts is very common in this village, several farms and businesses are held by this extended family listed under this surname and by 1911 the main residents of the town are almost all Roberts' (Ancestry, online). On closer examination of parish records, and census information, it appears there are many that are kinsmen. This is indicative of the findings relating to the complex nature of North Walian rural kin structures, expanded upon in Emmett's book (1960) or Owen's article (1964), which avers that most of the villages were related to each other, stating "only one in seven households were not related by blood and marriage to the first or second degree" in Glan Lynn, Merioneth (p, 187). The handful of people who come to Ysbyty from other North or South Welsh counties arrive for agricultural labour (men) or as domestic servants (women).

Census by Year

In 1841 Tir Evan is mainly comprised of agricultural workers. Ty Mawr is occupied by a number of families. This house is much larger than it subsequently became. The extended back in John Thomas' Ysbyty Ifan series of photographs is showing circa 1875 but is not now attached to the house. (PCW, online). There have been several cottages which have also disappeared from this immediate area, probably around (Digimap, (1889) online). There are

higher numbers of people born out of the county of Denbighshire than in subsequent censuses and is also due to residents being born in Eddia. There is one Anglican Minister of the Parish, a parish Clerk and a Calvinistic Minister.

In 1851 there are more farmers, mainly from other areas in North Wales. Shepherds are now listed independently. There is a shop, which is busy enough to employ an assistant. Two quarrymen have arrived to work; more likely Penmachno mine, rather than Ffestiniog's. The hosier is common in this area but there is only one listed in Tir Ifan (GVADENW (1813), p403). There are 10 paupers listed, mostly over 45. There is one 72-year-old midwife.

By 1861 there is a rise in the number of skilled tradesmen, roofers, carpenters, and four stonemasons. This is indicative of more homes being erected locally. The population has risen slightly, the need for new homes in the next decade sees 20 new dwellings built in Tir Ifan. The number of farmers stays static, but there are now 7 quarrymen residing there.

For the 1871 census there are 14 farmers listed and born locally, two are from Beddgelert and Ruthin, perhaps attracted by more fertile land or financial prospects. There has also been an increase since the 1851 census of house servants and house keepers. This would infer that the farmer is now reaching a higher standard of living than in previous years. The shop keeper is now listed as draper, grocer and Farrier (a shoer of horses). There has been an explosion of dressmaking and tailoring with 10 employed in this business. This is possibly because the sewing machine had become slightly cheaper to purchase for the average waged householder. 10 are still working in mining. This appears to be a prosperous time for the village.

The 1881 census throws light on the subject of illegitimacy in Tir Ifan. Mary Jane Roberts of Tyn Porth, listed in parish registers without a father as being Jane Roberts' daughter (SJPR (1874). On the census she is listed as Margaret Roberts' daughter. Isobel Emmett's discourse on family groups in rural communities relates the information that this was common practice in these communities and uses a quote by the Chaplain of The Bishop of Bangor (1847, p102-103) regarding the lack of need for Union workhouses for unmarried mothers due to rural Welsh families refusing to cast out their daughters and viewing illegitimate births as a natural progression to marriage.

Economically Tir Ifan looks very different in 1891, the first year that there is an assessment of Welsh speakers in the census. There is a dramatic downturn in the numbers of skilled tradesmen, and of the population count. It appears the Victorian economic depression is taking a toll on the people of the village. This trend continues in the 1901 census with 42 people disappearing from the population count.

The final 1911 Welsh Census relates there is a tendency for the older people to be monoglot Welsh, although there are 5 children under 11 who speak only Welsh. This tallies with the oral tradition of children from the area speaking only Welsh until they go to senior school. There are few adult children living with their parents unless on farms, but also there are cousins and nephews who take the place of the children that no longer reside at home. The chapel has a caretaker, but no minister residing in the village.

There are only three instances of disabilities listed for Tir Ifan, which is at odds with the findings of Morgan (1981) p 22) of high incidences of deaf mutism in North Welsh rural communities. During the period under examination there are 2 blind people listed and one

person listed in 1911 as “feeble minded”. There were several deaths from Tuberculosis in the 1860-80 period (PRO, death certificates) but generally the state of health in the village is good. There is evidence of sharing of surplus provisions in rural areas for the less fortunate in Mechain’s GVADENW and in with drives by Women’s societies with cake baking a staple of the Welsh rural kitchen (NWCAP (1861) online). All housewives and farmers would routinely forage for fruit, vegetables and field mushrooms to eke out a meagre diet. The thinness of the people depicted in the photos under consideration below can be attributed to the hard-physical work they were doing as much as a lack in their diets.

The people of the village

John Thomas was a photographer who travelled the whole of Wales taking pictures of its localities and its people. In the first of two pictures of John Thomas (fig i), dated circa 1875, a group of six women residents of the Alms-houses. One of the women clutches a child of around 6-year-old, who looks cared for and fed, and all have a look of pinched, knowing on their faces, with two of the women having formidable and defiant countenances. Their clothes, probably hand me down from the local gentry and farmer class (NWCAP (1881), appear warm, woollen shawls and best, but outdated, hats sit upon their heads. The second photograph (fig2) depicts a better dressed couple sitting in front of a mixed gender set of Alms-house residents. Their fine clothes, happier faces and the number of buttons on the gentleman’s boots give the overall impression that these are benefactors to the Alms-houses. In an article dated 1889 regarding distribution of Alms overseen by Lord Penrhyn, it is stated that the parishioners are happy with the monthly award of 5s 8d to the Alms-house

residents. (CDHSWI, 1881). Finally (fig 3) is a group photograph from my personal collection (Lucinda Owen Collection), taken in the 1870s of the residents of Tyn Porth Inn, a mixture of farmer sons and daughters, with the matriarch proprietor underneath the sign bearing her name.

Tyn Porth Inn would be the focal point of the village in some respects. Later there would be court sessions held within its main room area (Y Cloranydd (1909) WNO), which housed long wooden pew seats and hooks in the ceiling holding sides of meat for those who came to the inn. There was no cellar, an implication which would close the inn after the change in the licencing act requiring one for storing beer in public houses (Hansard (1961). Temperance societies had recently arrived in this area, started as part of the non-conformist drive to stay the “innate beer-loving character of the Welsh” (Davies (2007), p, 363) The main proponents of the Temperance Movement were generally chapel attending, wives of Ministers and Liberal MPs, middle class, not particularly the social class found in Tir Ifan (Davies (2007) p363).

Tyn Porth Inn, is a sixteenth century building, inhabited since the 1860s by the Roberts family. The family had been in Tir Ifan for several generations and Owen Roberts is listed as a cattle dealer or drover, and Innkeeper on his death certificate in 1868. In the 1851 census he is listed as a farmer with 4 acres who has no men working for him. He was a member of the Anglican Church of St John’s congregation in the village. When Owen died from tuberculosis, his widow Margaret became the licensee of the inn, listed in Slaters Trade directory (SDNSW, (1890) p164) as such (fig3). Margaret was able to speak only Welsh, we learn from census returns, never learning English. This has not held her back from living on

her own means by 1881. She was buried in 1912 with her husband, he with an English epitaph on his gravestone, Margaret's below in Welsh.

Margaret was a member of Ysbyty's St John the Baptist's Anglican Church in Wales' congregation, a lapsed Calvinistic Methodist (BCMR, PRO), who as a widow has to provide for her family by running the village public house. A reasonably respectable trade for a woman in this period, in Wild Wales, Borrow gives numerous accounts of landladies running drinking establishments as he travels across North Wales in 1854 (Borrow (1862), p87). She raises a family of 10, who are sometimes to perish from illness in childhood, or eventually old age, burying at least 6 of her offspring, she is last listed in the 1911 census bringing up her grandchild, away from the inn. It was quite common for children in North Wales to be raised by aunts, grandparents and cousins (Emmett (1964), p104). Indeed, in Ysbyty there are a number of children from the 1891 census onward, who are bi-lingual, listed from towns in England, as nephews and nieces of the residents. It is possible that they are there permanently, holidaying for the Easter school break or convalescing from isolation worthy illnesses in the purer air of the Welsh countryside (Hidden Lives, online).

Chapter Three

Villagers lives; Religion and politics

The high numbers of servants, household or farm workers in the listed in the Tir Ifan censuses 1841-1911 would bear out K O Morgan's phrase, "[Agricultural Workers] became the forgotten man of Welsh Agrarian Debate" (Pretty, (1989), p, x). Analysis of the experience in Tir Ifan of these workers cannot be debated here until artefacts and primary sources are located to give a fuller picture. Previous investigation into the lives of rural workers by Beddoe (2000), Emmett (1964) and Owen (1960) have informed the main body of historical evidence in this dissertation. For this reason, the central focus is on a family who were farmers, employing the agricultural workers, and who owned their small farm in Tir Ifan. This places them outside of the tenant farmer class somewhat, but not within the realms of the Landlord class.

In Isobel Emmett's 1964 account of an anonymised Merioneth village, she discusses how the "English take the place of the Upper, Upper middle class or ruling class" and that the Welsh villagers themselves were classless, that "nationalism is the dress in which class antagonisms are expressed" (Emmett, (1964), p 23). The upward mobility of the Roberts' during the period of 1841-1911 tells a story that differs slightly from Emmett's conjecture. Her book is generally sympathetic to the Welsh villagers she spends time with, and though it can be argued that 1964 is not 1864, its clear the continuing hold of the upper strata in Welsh society is still resolutely Anglicised. This idea of a classless rural society is also put forward by Owen (1960) regarding a village in Merioneth, who states that the mixing of the

workforce between farms and then rising within the farming structure, after spending time as farm servants themselves on relative's farms, to tenant farmer status, "minimise the[se] distinctions" (Owen, (1960), p188).

Equally Morgan states in his book *Rebirth of a Nation* (p45) that there is lack of historiography regarding the Conservative Welsh citizens in the period under discussion, "in part due to Welsh Conservatism counting for very little during the 1885-1905 period" which did include sixteen years of a Tory British government. This statement sounds quite disingenuous. It is however understandable, given the decline in population in the countryside towards the end of the 19th century, still from a historical perspective it is a North Walian cultural identity that should be examined.

The voters of Tir Ifan were constituents of Denbighshire, subsequently West Denbighshire. In the years following voting reform in 1868 the figures for voters in the area rose from 5533, to another 2000 registered voters. (Craig (1977) p. 523–524). The area of Denbighshire was split between two MPs; one returned Conservative unopposed while the other Liberal unopposed. From 1885 there was a Liberal majority in West Denbighshire, prior to this the Conservatives held sway, however large numbers continued to vote Conservative.

In the Dawson-Jones' dissertation (2016) on the paradox of the Welsh speaking citizen of North Wales, embracing the British Empire whilst not being overtly pro-English, and quite possibly a Liberal and/or Nationalist in their political outlook, touches on the issue of language in his final chapter. Within the census returns for Tir Ifan, post the 1870 Education

Act, which banned the use of Welsh in the courts system (Dawson-Jones, (2015) p20), and attempted to curb the use of Welsh in schools with the “welsh not” directive, we do see that there is a slight rise in the number of bi-lingual villagers, however the rise is not so steep to assert that the monoglot status of this area of North Wales was in peril.

In agreement with the findings of Dawson-Jones’ dissertation there were recently found in the belongings of the former residents of Tyn Porth Inn, commemorative books on the British Royal Family regarding coronations or Royal memorabilia pertaining to aspects of the Royal family’s ties to Wales, along with many plates and cups bearing their various milestones in the post Victorian period. There is a cup from the coronation of George V which sat upon the Welsh dresser for around 100 years. A Bacon’s Excelsior Atlas (1911), belonging to one R J Jones, a school pupil who lived in nearby Cerrigydruddion, has a map of the world which shows the “possessions” of the British Empire in red. Wales is attached to England in the separate maps of the British Isles, with Scotland and Ireland having their own pages, it is evident that from a young age the Welsh were taught their power lay in Empire than within their own country.

In the introduction of his work Pretty argues that the popular figures of Gwilym Hiraethog (William Rees), Samuel Roberts, Thomas Gee, and T E Ellis were “active ostensibly in the name of the Gwerin (common people)” (Pretty, (1989), p, xi) and only represented the interests of the section of the community of these Middle-Class farmers and the findings here agree with this. He further describes the Agricultural worker as “the most part poor, backward, inarticulate and raw.” Given what is known about the strength of the Eisteddfod in rural areas, the deep philosophical discussions and retelling of homegrown folkloric

fables, which were the staple of the village square (Williams, 2010, p11), the almost universal attendance at Church or chapel this assertion, with intellectual debate at the weekly *seiat* (Owen (1960) p 189) to discuss, Welsh history, poets or theological matters, this is a somewhat trite statement on Petty's part. Certainly, in Tir Ifan, it is clear from collecting census information that education and social betterment were priorities for several residents, if not all, in this vicinity.

Petty describes the countryside way of life as a "never more a potent symbol of working class subjugation" (Petty, (1989), p,xii) and the process by which agricultural labourers obtained employment, standing alongside fellow workers in the street, agreeing to a meagre wage on a six-month contract could be argued in the case of Tir Ifan. There are examples of the younger members of families within the village being employed by the bigger farms, sometimes as young as 12 years old, in the 1841-1861 census for Tir Ifan or in the neighbouring Eddia and Pentrafoelas returns, in labouring jobs and of the female members being employed as agricultural workers, milkmaids or farm servants. There is a drop in agricultural servants and labourers after a heyday that saw many different trades appearing in the village in the 1871 census return. This tallies with the economic depression which hit Great Britain after the 1870s and a subsequent steady decline in the number of people who lived in the village is the result.

In "Out of the shadows" (Beddoe (2000), p35) states the female farm servant's role was interchangeable between household duties and those on the land. The terms of employment were identical to those of the men, often starting at the hiring fairs, comprised of tending cattle, cleaning stables, hoeing, planting and digging vegetables and loading dung

carts. The farmer's wife would also be responsible for the meals of the workers, most kitchens would be large and cater to the men, a breakfast at 6 or 7am dependant on the season, an elevenses, where bread was cut from the top of the loaf using a breadknife sharpened over the years to almost a rapier-like point, a dinner at 1pm, tea at 4pm and a supper after 6pm. She would also be responsible for the gathering of eggs, the making of the dairy products, milk, butter and cheese, and the livestock who provided these staples.

Religion

The figures for the attendance of the entire village of Ysbyty at the Seion Calvinistic Methodist chapel is 320 in 1905. (Welsh Church Commission, online). This congregation would comprise both Tir Ifan and Eddia inhabitants, as well as those from surrounding farms and hamlets. There is no individual breakdown of figures for those who are attending Anglican services in Tir Ifan. It is therefore not possible to certainly ascertain how many people worshiped in the respective churches. From inscriptions on the headstones in both graveyards of the two places of worship, during the period in question, it is possible to presume that there was a healthy attendance at both churches. There were also adherents to both faiths attending from as far away as Blaenau Ffestiniog. In the Anglican church yard there are the memorials to the people who lived in Penmachno and more local environs. This is also evidenced in the births, burials and marriages of the community in Parish records. People who had family resident or who had previously lived in Ysbyty before moving away would return to celebrate their lives and passing in the place where they felt was their home. In an article titled "The Church Commission", in The Carnarvon and Denbigh Herald and South Wales Independent newspaper (CDHSWI) (1908) online), which discusses

the numbers for Anglican communicants' attendance in the Tir Ifan's Diocese of Bangor. Incumbents counted those taking holy communion as 21,813. This is a fairly low figure compared to the stated overall population at 221,663, but this would not reflect the entire Anglican congregation at this period. Further on in the article the issue of whether there is co-operation between the chapel going members of the community and those of Anglican faith, the respondent notes that this is dependent on how strict the respective preachers are in their area; however, it also is noted that "Non-conformists often contributed liberally to Church buildings and vice versa". In a village as small as Ysbyty Ifan, particularly with the pride spoken of their rich history regarding the Church of St John the Baptist, and the number of village celebrations that the Anglican church was providing at this time, it would be right to contend that this was a village that had cohesion between the faiths.

By 1911, the marriage of Robert Owen and Mary-Jane Roberts, residents of Tyn-Porth Inn in 1901-11s censuses, was a mixed Calvinistic Methodist and Anglican union. The children were raised in an alternate order of their parent's respective faiths; The first-born girl being raised Anglican, the son coming after raised in the Calvinistic tradition. This system continued through the further four children irrespective of gender. As late as the 1970s the descendants of these offspring were still worshipping regularly in the two churches of their immediate forbears, and each are buried in their respective church's grounds.

Landlords and Tenant farmers and political leanings

The controversy surrounding Landlordism in Merioneth's Bala does not seem to be as contentious in Tir Ifan. The relationship between the landowner and the tenant is good in this part of Denbighshire and has been so for some time. The meeting of a villager by Borrow in his *Wild Wales*' chapter on Pentrafoelas, has a conversation noted where the local states that "Mr Wynn.... is very kind to his tenants... and Mrs Wynn... in the winter she gives much soup to the poor" (p316).

The pamphlet by Edmund Vincent, a Barrister at Law and later writer for the *Law Times* and *The Times* newspapers, also a son of an Anglican priest, born in the North Welsh slate town of Bethesda, rounds on T J Hughes' (Adfyfr hereafter) criticism of Landlordism in Wales.

Vincent introduces his treatise explaining, although Adfyfr is complaining about South Walian landlord interests, he does not feel the North Welsh experience difficulties with their landowners, stating "Landlordism doesn't exist in North Wales" (p, 6). He goes onto cite the many instances of benevolence of Lord Penrhyn (NWCAP (1882) online) and Wynne towards contributing to chapel building and that rents remained affordable and stable in this region.

Whilst it can be argued that there is a fair amount of bias attached to the piece, due to Vincent being commissioned to write it by the North Welsh Property Defence Association, when taken with other evidence here it demonstrates that there were differing political attitudes in Denbighshire.

David Howell citing "The Carnarvon and Denbigh Herald for 17 January 1890 reflected that:

"To their great credit be it said, most Welsh landowners were prompt to sympathize with their suffering tenants and to relieve them by abatements of rent. Tithe abatements, on the

other hand, had to be forced and wrung from the clergy – from the very men who should have been foremost in evincing sympathy from their hard-pressed parishioners”. (Howell, (2013) p100). This is evidence that he is correct in his assumption that the problem of landlordism was exaggerated to support the Nationalist cause

Finally, a piece in the same newspaper regarding the forthcoming wedding reports that there is to be village wide celebrations to mark the forthcoming marriage of Lord Penrhyn’s heir. Every house, farm and even the vicarage windows were illuminated. The young “frolicked” and boys marched carrying flames for some hours. However, this report is read, it seems the village came together when there was something to celebrate. (NWCAP (1887) online)

Conclusion

It is clear that the Welsh agricultural areas were as important in the formulation of a distinct Welsh identity. The influence of education, kinship, hard work and continuing to embrace their own language made for a people who wanted to remain in their small village and make a success of their lives. As Morgan states, the “Culture in Wales emerged from below, from the tenant farmers and labourers in their smallholdings in the rural areas” (Morgan, (1981), p,13) The lack of a true class system in this area helped form a society who helped each other in times of need and over looked transgression when it occurred, rather than lose their intimate connection. Sadly, the stagnation of the rural North Welsh economy, meant that its people found it more difficult to remain, but there are still farmers who have held

onto their lands and buildings around Tir Ifan. Resolutely Welsh and proud of their heritage.

The religiousness of the area has fallen away, but the Conservatives still poll highly in

Aberconwy (Wiki, online). It is a Welsh identity that may disappoint more socialist Welsh

historians, but it is not historical peculiarity which can be overlooked.

Word Count 6050

Appendix 1

Welsh Census data set 1841-1911 for Tir Ifan

DOC	houses/tenaments	Men	Women	Total	English	Welsh	Both
06-Jun	66	135	133	268			
30-Mar	75	153	149	302			
07-Apr	72	148	163	311			
02-Apr	81	157	162	319			
03-Apr	79	141	136	277			
05-Apr	63	142	133	275	2	236	36 *
31-Mar	62	121	112	233	1	149	69 *
02-Apr	51	113	87	200		101	89 *

*Children under 3 not listed as speaking Welsh or English

Occupations in Tir Ifan 1841-1911 census information								
	1841	1851	1861	1871	1881	1891	1901	1911
Farmer	10	11	10	14	14	10	14	10
Shepherd		3	7	4	1	3	6	7
Cattleman			1			1	7	5
Waggoner/Carter			7				7	13
Horseman/breaker						1		3
Dairymaid								4
Drover			1		1			
Dry Stone Waller						1		
Road Labourer							7	3
Gamekeeper				1	1	2	1	1
Stonemason	2	2	4	2	2			
Carpenter/Joiner		1	4	4	3	2	1	3
Plasterer						1		
Roofer			2	1				
Quarrymen		2	7	14	10	6	8	2
Welder								1
Factoryman			1					
Painter					1			1
Wheelwright	3	1		1				
Saddler	1							
Farrrier				1				
Clockmaker				1				
Potter				1				
Basketmaker				1				
Hosier	1	1	1	1				
Shoemaker	4	2	4	2				
Tailor/Dressmaker	2	4	6	10	8	5	3	1
Retail	1	3	1	2	1	2 *7		4
Postman/mistress					1	1	3	1
Carrier		1	1	1	3	3	1	1
Charwoman					2	3		
Washerwoman					2			
Wool Carder		1						
Miller			1					
Butcher	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Innkeeper	1	1	1	1	1	1		1
Flour Dealer		1	3	1		1		
Midwife		*1						
Teacher				1				1
Minister of Chapel	3	1	1			1	*1	
Pauper		10		3	2			

* living in the village

*72 years old

*caretaker of chapel

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