

**Sian Evans A329 "The Making of Welsh History" Dissertation**

**"A pick in one hand and a spade in the other"**

**To what extent was life in a Carmarthenshire mining area different from one in Glamorgan between 1880 and 1914?**



Big Pit National Coal Museum Blaenavon

Photograph Sian Evans

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## **Abbreviations**

CCC Carmarthenshire County Council

HCPP House of Commons Parliamentary Papers

WCM Welsh Coal Mines

## Introduction

In about 1883 a farm labourer left his birthplace in Llandovery and, like many others, moved from the land to find work in the coalfields of Glamorgan. That man was my great-grandfather Rees Walters, who settled in the parish of Llanfabon between Pontypridd and Caerphilly. My grandfather, also called Rees, was born in 1885, but by 1888, when his sister was born, the family had moved back to Carmarthenshire, to Llandebie in the coal-mining area of the Gwendraeth and Amman valleys. In the 1891 census, Rees (Senior) described his occupation as "coal miner and farmer". Ten years later he was dead and his eldest son abandoned his hopes of becoming a Methodist minister to work in the mines to support his mother and siblings. My family history is not unusual: between 1851 and 1881, the number of men engaged in agriculture in Carmarthenshire had fallen from 12,900 to 9,200 whilst over the same period the total population of Glamorgan doubled (Williams, J, 1988). Whilst the reasons for migration of an individual are complex and varied, economics and the availability of regular work must be one of the most important.

The coal industry dominated the economy of Wales at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. John Davies (2007, p 459) has calculated that by the end of the nineteenth century almost half the population of Wales was directly or indirectly dependent on the coal industry. Communities were changed beyond recognition due to the impact of industry, urbanisation and in-migration (Jenkins, 2007). The classic view of Wales in this period is of the expansion which took place in the Rhondda Valleys, where the coal industry dominated the landscape (Matthews, 1992). However, it was said of the Carmarthenshire miner that he "had a pick in one hand and a spade in the other" referring to the dual occupation of mining and farming followed by many (James, quoted in Matthews, 1992 p.96). Ioan Matthews (1992), who writes with an obvious sympathy for the miners, argues that the society of this coal field, although having much in common with other coal mining areas in South Wales, had a distinctive character of its own. However it could be said that every community is distinctive to a greater or lesser extent and Mathews' argument would have been stronger if he had included women's experiences and given more comparative examples. Russell Davies (1996) on the other hand, in *Secret Sins, : Sex, Violence and Society*

*in Carmarthenshire 1870-1920* in exposing the hidden side of Carmarthenshire life, particularly in the countryside, suggests that the coalfield communities of East Carmarthenshire had more in common with the communities of industrial South Wales than with the rest of the county. This dissertation will explore the industry and community life of a mining area in East Carmarthenshire and compare it with one in Glamorgan and determine what were the similarities and differences and whether the conclusions drawn are in line with either Mathews or Davies. In comparing the two parishes the research will determine to what extent coal dominated employment and what was the impact of industry, population growth and in-migration on the culture and identities of the two communities. Tim Williams (1988, p 83) has described "culture" as 'the ways that groups of people [...] attempt to assert their humanity and express themselves'. He cites language and religion as two key elements of culture in nineteenth century Wales. Culture and identity are closely aligned and in investigating the wider aspects of community life, indicators of contemporary Welsh culture and identity will be used to compare the two communities.

The historiography of coal-mining in South Wales contains a number of detailed studies of individual areas such as John Williams'(1980) monograph in volume 5 of *Glamorgan County History*. For Carmarthenshire, in addition to Matthews' (1992) article and Davies' (1996) book, *The Black Mystery* by Ronald Rees (2008) is a wide-ranging account of coal-mining in South-West Wales, but as Catherine Preston (2017,a) has commented, there is no single comprehensive review of coal-mining in Wales. Ray Lawrence (1998) has collated a range of information on individual collieries which are also available on the Welsh Coal Mines website (nd). The wider issues of industrialisation and urbanisation and their effect on Welsh culture are covered in *Wales 1880-1914* (Herbert and Jones,1988). Women's lives are not as well documented in the historiography of Wales but the work of Williams and Jones (1982) provides a valuable insight into the subject of women's work. Historians have largely ignored the Llanfabon area; however, Michael Lieven's *Senghenydd: The Universal Pit Village 1890-1930* (1994) addresses both the 1913 disaster and the wider social issues of this village in the Aber Valley in East Glamorgan, an area close to Llanfabon.

Chris Williams (1998) in his article 'Going Underground? The future of coalfield history revisited', reviewed the state of labour history at the time, as it applied to the South Wales coalfield. Later in the same article, Williams highlights parts of coalfield history which

have received less attention and would benefit from further research. In particular he suggests research on coal owners and entrepreneurs, areas outside the central valleys of the Rhondda, Cynon and Taff and history of gender relations and race. He also suggests some techniques for exploring coalfield history using comparison and family history. There have been some comparative studies between the South Wales Coalfield and other coalfields, in particular by Martin Daunton. In *Down the Pit: work in the Great Northern and South Wales coalfields 1870-1914* (1981), he delves into the working practices of the two areas. However there appears to be nothing published which compares two areas within the South Wales Coalfield.

The two areas on which the research is focused are Llandebie and Llanfabon : parishes which in 1880 appeared similar, geographically and economically. Llandebie lies between the Amman and the Gwendraeth Valleys and had some pastoral and dairy farming and in addition to coal-mining had lime and chemical production (Rees, 2006). Llanfabon lies between the Taff and the Rhymney Valleys and was changing from an predominately agricultural economy to one which was based on coal mining and stone quarrying. There were, however, still agricultural areas with some substantial farms (Sellwood,1988).

The first chapter addresses the nature of the coal industry in the two areas being studied, the rate of growth and to what extent the industry dominated the occupational profile of the two communities, by measuring and comparing the numbers employed in key industries. Within the South Wales coalfield there are variations in the geology of the coal seams and the chemical composition of coal which can have a profound influence on a number of factors relating to establishment of mines, the purpose to which the coal is used and therefore demand and also the likelihood of accidents. These will be considered in order to compare the coal industry in the two areas. The census provides information on occupations, but by 1891, respondents often gave their job titles rather than occupation, so some knowledge of the range of tasks carried out within the coal industry is required. Accidents were reported by HM Inspector of Mines in their annual reports and are available on the HCPP website, although these are cumulative statistics according to district so detailed information by county to allow accurate comparisons are not available. In considering women's occupations, the method employed by Williams and Jones (1982) will

be used in order to make a direct comparison of the extent to which women were able to gain employment between Llandebie, Llanfabon and other areas in Wales.

The second chapter widens the view to the population of the coalfield and aspects of community life. Firstly, what were the demographic changes which occurred in the two areas as a result of the growth of the coal mining industry? Did the rate of population increase change between the four censuses under consideration and what were the sources of any in-migration? What were the effects of in-migration on the extent to which Welsh was spoken? These questions are interrelated and the answers will support the arguments of Philip Jones (1988) on the movement of people in Industrial Wales and Brinley Thomas (1987) on the effect of industrialisation on the Welsh Language. The influential nineteenth century writer Henry Richard's view was that the Wales was a Welsh-speaking, Liberal, Nonconformist society, a view which came to dominate ideas of Welsh identity (Preston, 2017b). These three indicators will be used to compare the two parishes. In order to provide a measure of objectivity, Government primary sources, namely census information, General Elections results and Royal Commissions on church attendance will be used to provide data for analysis and comparison. Finally the effect of urbanisation will be gauged by reviewing the range of businesses and leisure activities available to the growing population. Censuses from 1891 onwards provide information on language, whether monoglot Welsh or English or bilingual. Historians and commentators at the time have questioned the accuracy of these findings as the extent to which a second language is spoken or written is subjective (Edwards, (1891) quoted in Evans (2014)). Therefore the numbers of monoglot English will be counted and used to assess general trends only. A number of autobiographies and secondary works will also be used as sources to understand the context of the changes.

The final chapter will summarise the conclusions of the research and determine what were the similarities and differences between these two communities and whether the results support the argument of Mathews or Davies.

## Chapter 1 Industry and Occupations

Coal has been mined in Wales since at least the thirteenth century but it was not until the growth of the iron industry towards the end of the eighteenth century that it became important to smelt the ore (Egan,1987). During the nineteenth century coal was being sold for other purposes and exported through the Bristol Channel ports. The expansion of canals and tram-roads allowed coal to be moved from the rich seams of the southern outcrop through specially built docks such as Cardiff and Barry. The area around Merthyr, then the Cynon and Rhondda valleys became the focus of exploitation from the 1840s. (Davies, 2018). The Rhymney Valley developed its steam coal later, whilst the anthracite coalfield of Carmarthenshire grew relatively slowly until the end of the century. The stimulus for growth came firstly from the test results of the Admiralty endorsing South Wales steam coal for its steamships then later the realisation that smokeless anthracite was ideal for stoves and hothouse central heating (Egan,1987).

The development of coal as a major industry in Llandebie, happened relatively late, as can be seen in table 1, with the greatest increase in the first decade of the twentieth century. However it soon came to dominate the occupational profile of the community .The mines were started by local men and was described by James Griffiths (1968, p8) thus;

*'Until the two big pits were sunk at Cynheidre and Abernant, the anthracite coalfield had been one of small mines, mostly levels and drifts driven into the hillsides. Many of them were opened by the farmer who owned the land, aided by a mining engineer and an experienced "gaffer". [...] Once a seam of coal was tapped, the practice would be to follow the seam to the boundary, or to the fault. When one seam was worked out and it became necessary to drive down to the lower seam, the Salesman at the docks would find the capital. [...] the pits remained small, employing from a hundred up to five hundred workmen.'*

Griffiths later describes the formation of conglomerates of several collieries, often owned by the men who put up the capital, but there was no move to extend individual mines and they remained small. The Ammanford Colliery where Griffiths worked employed 240 men in 1896 whilst nearby Rhos employed 300. One of the largest was Emlyn Colliery in Penygroes which employed 450 ( Lawrence, 1998). Even so, the number of miners in both the

Gwendraeth and Amman Valleys doubled between 1896 and 1905 (Davies,1996). The most common title described in the censuses was "coal hewer" with many men being assisted by their sons or nephews. Others were described as "hauliers", "timbermen" and many as labourers without specifying an industry which may underestimate the number engaged in mining or production. Together they formed the workforce of an industry upon which the majority of the population relied on for its livelihood either directly or indirectly.

There had been small mines in the Llanfabon area such as Llancaiach and Tophill, from the 1850s employing a hundred men at most and producing house coal for local consumption. However it was the demand for steam coal that led to the establishment of large, deep pits at the outskirts of the parish, such as Deep Navigation in Treharris in 1873, the Albion at Cilfynydd in 1887 and especially Llanbradach in 1890 that drew men to the area (Lawrence, 1998). The surge of mineworkers in Llanfabon in 1901 shown in table 1 is the direct result of the opening of Llanbradach mine. Thus the population rose and its increasing dependence on the coal industry started a little before that of Llandebie and required different methods of investment to establish production. The range of job titles described in the censuses mirrored those in Llandebie with the addition of "sinkers" , those specialist miners who, working in dreadful conditions, dug their way down the seams of rock to sink a deep mine, before moving on to the next area (Lieven, 1994). Starting a mine in the deep steam coal measures of the Rhymney and Aber valleys was an expensive business and required considerable capital. William Lewis, Lord Merthyr, was the driving force for forming the Cardiff Steam Collieries Company in 1885 and raising £100,000 from shareholders to sink the pit at Llanbradach. He later raised further capital to start the Universal Colliery at Senghenydd (Lieven, 1994). These mines employed considerably more men than the Carmarthenshire collieries: in 1896 Deep Navigation employed 1846, Albion 1735 and Llanbradach 796 which rose to 2832 by 1913, one of the largest in the South Wales Coalfield. (WCM, nd). Thus there was a difference in the type of mine, the size of the workforce and the ownership patterns between Llandebie and Llanfabon.

All miners faced the spectre of accidents which could maim or kill. Between 1874 and 1893 accidents were one and a half times more frequent in the South Wales coalfield than elsewhere, partly due to the difficult geology with frequent fractures and faults and the 'squeeze' whereby the pressure of the seams above pushed the roofs and floors of the

workings together after the coal had been excavated (Preston, 2017a). There were some major explosions and accidents but the majority of fatalities were of one or two men killed by crushing or falling whilst going about their work. The government had set up a Mining Records Office in 1838 and collected statistics on all aspects of mining and HM Inspector of Mines for each district gave annual reports on mining accidents (Preston 2017a). Whilst major disasters grabbed the headlines, there was concern about the level of serious injuries and fatalities due to miners being crushed by falls of ground, falling down shafts and during haulage of coal (HCPP, 2006a).

From the list on the Welsh Coal Mines website (nd), fatalities appeared to be more frequent in the larger mines of East Glamorgan than in Carmarthenshire but this may be due to several major disasters in the former. Eight men were killed at Llanbradach in 1901 whilst at the Albion Colliery, Cilfynydd in 1894 a massive explosion killed 290. At Senghenydd 81 were killed in 1901 whilst in 1913, 439 were killed, including three from Llanfabon, the worst disaster in British mining history (WCM,nd) . The preponderance of drift mines in Carmarthenshire removed some of the hazards of mine shafts but miners were still in danger of all other causes, including asphyxiation, which together made up over 90% of accidents (ibid). Brian Davies (2018) is of the opinion that smaller coal mines, started usually by a mining engineer and local landowner, were safer than the bigger collieries where profit was the only goal. Davies contends that it was because those with a mining engineering background were more likely to use new technology such as mechanical ventilation systems. If his theory is correct ,this would suggest that the small mines of Carmarthenshire might have been safer than those in East Glamorgan. Anthracite coal, being less volatile than steam coal was less likely to ignite so firedamp explosions were less frequent than in other mines but could still occur and as late as 1955, five men were killed at an explosion in Blaenhirwaun Colliery in the Gwendraeth Valley (WCM, nd). Overall, therefore, the dangers of explosion and shaft falls being reduced, the risks to the Carmarthenshire miners appear less but statistics at local levels are not generally available and beyond the scope of this dissertation.

The coal industry was dominant by 1911 but there were other industries in both parishes. In the early 19th century, much of the agricultural land in Carmarthenshire was described as "marginal", producing some oats and barley (Rees, 2006). Wool was the main product and weaving had been recorded in Llandebie in 1446, but this remained a domestic industry until 1871 when the Cwmllechwr Mill was established. There was also iron and tinplate production, the latter growing until the introduction of the McKinley Tariff in 1890 stopped exports to the USA : however by the 1910s this had largely recovered. A small chemical industry, producing paint and vitriol persisted until the early twentieth century, but it was lime quarrying which provided the greatest number of jobs, other than agriculture, until the introduction of large scale coal mining (Rees, 2006). As the coal industry grew, so did the number of people who depended on it for their livelihood. The "other" category in table 1 includes a number of rail workers, men in the building trades, providing housing for the expanding population and retail and other trades. In 1881 the range of retail trades was small, with a few butchers, bakers and shoemakers providing for the everyday needs of the population but by 1911 these had expanded to include fancy goods sellers, coffee taverns, photographers and architects. However it can be seen that in Llandebie there were still a substantial minority of farmers and production workers who were not dependent on coal.

Much of the uplands of Glamorgan, like Carmarthenshire, was suitable only for the rearing of hardy sheep and cattle, except in the river valleys where dairy cattle could be grazed. Wool was the main product and weaving remained a domestic industry until the early nineteenth century when a small factory was established in Caerphilly, specialising in coloured cloth and stockings.(Baber,1980) In addition to coal mining, stone quarries were developed such as the large Craig-y-hesg quarry near Cilfynydd for the mining and production of Pennant stone for paving. There were also smaller quarries in Quakers Yard and Nelson (Baber, 1980).The growth of the "other" category remained small as it did not have a town which grew as large as Ammanford but by 1911 both Nelson and Llanbradach had a range of small businesses including stationers and confectioners and ice-cream and mineral water manufacturers. However the tables show that by 1911 the total number in occupations not dependent on mining was considerably smaller than in Llandebie (10% v 19%)

As the coalfield developed, the importance of agriculture waned and by 1881 the numbers of employees was falling in Llanfabon as mining grew and the industry had all but disappeared by 1911. By contrast, in Llandebie there remained a significant number of full-time farm workers. For the whole of Wales the number of males in agriculture in 1911 is quoted by Williams, J (1988, p 24) as 12% so the figure of 8% in this industrial area shows it was still of some importance. In addition there were a number of smallholdings run by families where the men were miners for most of the time but stopped working in the summer when demand for coal was less and farm work increased. For those who preferred to continue mining, they would walk and lodge near a steam-coal mine, Mountain Ash being a favoured one for Ammanford miners (Griffiths, 1968, p 10). This developed from a tradition of very small farms being the norm in Carmarthenshire as shown in table 2. Before mining provided alternative employment, these small farmers would have had to work part of the time on larger farms or local estates, or rely on poor relief in order to survive (Jenkins, 2007) .

For the women of the coalfield communities, employment prospects were poor in both parishes (table 3). In 1911, my great-grandmother Margaret Hughes and my grandmother Mary-Jane aged 20, lived on a smallholding near Ammanford and had no occupation listed in the census. In addition to looking after the family of eight, including three coal-miners, Margaret fed the pigs and chickens which provided food for the family and collected eggs and made butter. She drove her pony and trap to Carmarthen market most Wednesdays to sell the butter and she and Mary-Jane spent Saturdays scrubbing out the dairy, then on Sunday attended chapel three times. Everyday life for women in both parishes was one of unremitting physical work, predominantly in the domestic setting, possibly with lodgers or within the family business. Only a few women were able to gain employment outside the family farm or business as there was no mass employment suitable for women and those who did work were usually either domestic servants or dressmakers. The figure of 18% of women in paid employment in 1881 for both parishes almost exactly matches the figure of 17% given by Williams and Jones(1982) for the Rhondda in the same year. Nor, from observation of the census returns, did it change in the following thirty years: in all the censuses, women's employment was usually described as domestic duties or none. That is to undervalue the considerable economic contribution they made to the family. In

both Llandebie and Llanfabon many families took in family members such as siblings or alternatively, lodgers: for example Hannah Edwards of Ystrad Mynach who in 1891 had seven lodgers, all sinkers.

Despite the differences described, the impression from the analysis of the occupational data from the censuses is of two quite similar areas with coal mining dominating industry and providing employment for roughly equal proportions of men who undertook the same roles, whether that was in a drift or deep mine and women who were restricted in their ability to become economically independent.

## Chapter 2 Coalfield Society

Despite the hard work, life was not all drudgery and religious observation for my family : the chapel was the centre of social life with a choir, Sunday School activities, women's sewing guilds, men's debating groups, inter-chapel meetings and the annual Gymanfa Ganu (Singing Festival) as well as special concerts at Christmas and summer outings. Outside chapel life, there were eisteddfodau, with the fortunes of the Brynamman Choral Society and the Emlyn Colliery Silver Band being closely followed as were the sporting heroes of the day especially the Llanelli Rugby Team (Pembrokeshire Herald, 1903). It was, however, almost entirely lived through the medium of the Welsh language, as it was for most people in Llandebie.

The domination of the language in Llandebie is shown in the three censuses from 1891 (table 4). Only about 10% of the population were unable to speak Welsh in 1911 and this did not change substantially until the Second World War (CCC, 2014). Even in 1911, when the number of people born outside Wales had risen to 10% it did not appreciably affect the dominance of the language. Many of these migrants were single men working in the mines and quarries and would eventually have been able to pick up enough Welsh to carry on a conversation, especially if they married local girls (Jones and Williams in Coombes, 2001). Arthur Johnson born in Leeds, a coal miner who married a local girl, was able to speak both languages according to the 1911 census. James Griffiths (1968, p8) describes the Anthracite Coalfield as '*Welsh in language, customs and way of life*'.

Perhaps just as relevant was the total number of Welsh speakers which was just over 4000 in 1891. By 1911 when a significant part of the original civil parish had been transferred to Ammanford UDC, the combined number of Welsh speakers between the two civil parishes was about 10,500. This was due to the source of migration (table 5) and Jones (1988) has shown an inverse relationship between distance and numbers of people migrating. Furthermore as the local pool of migrants dried up, new ones came from further afield. Most early migrants came from rural Carmarthenshire, then Cardiganshire and West Glamorgan, all predominantly Welsh speaking areas, hence the increase in the proportion of Welsh-speakers in 1901, at the start of the boom time for anthracite coal. By 1911, it can be seen that the proportion of the population born outside Wales had tripled.

The migration pattern in Llanfabon was similar but with different consequences for the Welsh language. Industrial East Glamorgan drew most of its migrants from other parts of Glamorgan, Monmouthshire and the West of England. Llanfabon was a predominantly agricultural area in the early nineteenth century and was almost wholly Welsh speaking (Pryce,1988) However, the heavy industrial development surrounding it and consequent in-migration introduced English into everyday life. Nevertheless two thirds of the population in 1891 were able to speak Welsh. This fell over the next twenty years to one third as the population grew and in-migration increased. By 1911 over half the population had been born outside Glamorgan and a significant number born within the county were observed to come from the English-speaking areas around Cardiff. In total the number of Welsh speakers actually rose from about 1800 in 1891 to 2000 in 1911 but the pattern was of Welsh monoglots changing to bilingual then to English only. However the cause was not only one of numbers but also of attitude.

*'The tragedy of the Welsh language in SE Wales is that Welsh speakers themselves came to regard this bilingual time-lag as something permanent and were therefore content to cling to their Welsh in the chapels and "on the hearth" whilst neglecting it elsewhere.'* ( Hindley 1952 quoted in Pryce 1988 p 287)

At the beginning of the twentieth century Wales was still a Non-conformist stronghold: the 1851 Religious Census had shown that four-fifths of all church attendances were to Non-conformist chapels (University of Plymouth, 2017). In 1905-06, the Government undertook a census of church accommodation in Wales which enumerated the numbers of churches and chapels and their communicant numbers (HCPP,2006b). This coincided with the last and biggest Non-conformist revival in Wales, led by ex-coal miner Evan Roberts. The revival had inspired a confidence in the Non-conformist community throughout Wales, which resulted in increased chapel attendance and a spurt in chapel building. In addition, by 1903, the Anglican church had recovered from the low point in the middle of the nineteenth century. By 1914, two out of five of the population of Wales were Protestant Dissenters and combined with a stronger Anglican communion and increasing numbers of Roman Catholics marked Wales as a Christian stronghold (Morgan, 2001 ).

Throughout the period there remained only one large church in Llandebie, St Tybie, (table 6). This held two Sunday services, one Welsh and one bilingual. In 1882 there were five non-conformist chapels which rose to nine by 1903 providing accommodation for a staggering 3570 in a population of 4393. In 1882 there were seven chapels in Llanfabon parish, in addition to the parish churches of St Mabon and St Cynon's, Quakers Yard (HCCP, 2006b). By 1905 a new church had been built in Nelson which together with the existing churches provided accommodation for 650 people and held seven Sunday Services, all in English. This was matched by the chapel building which occurred all over Glamorgan. No figures are given for Llanfabon parish alone but there were thirty-nine chapels in the Caerphilly area and of these twenty-four were Welsh and fifteen English (HCCP, 2006b), thus supporting Hindley's assertion that the Welsh language remained strong in the chapels (Hindley,1952 quoted in Pryce 1988). Both areas, therefore, had significant numbers of church and especially chapel attendance, although detailed analysis and comparisons are hampered due to differences in ecclesiastical and civil parishes and differences in definition between communicants in Non- conformist and Anglican denominations. Suffice to say that both followed the norm in Wales in their religious observation.

Whilst the numbers of church and chapel attendances were impressive, and even taking into account those who attended occasionally, there remained a substantial number who stayed away from any place of worship but still wished to engage with their neighbours. John Davies (2007, p 427) has written that the concept of leisure arose as a twin to the concept of work following the Industrial Revolution and that sport, especially team sports such as rugby, fulfilled both strenuous physical relief to counteract the rigours of work and like chapel-going continued the strong community tradition of communal action. Politics and particularly unionisation can also be regarded as communal action.

During the mid nineteenth century, working class identity had emerged in Wales. David Jones (1988, p 140) describes these "Frontier Years" thus:

*'the miners had established their own culture and identity. Cut off from their 'betters' they created a Welsh working class world of chapels, friendly societies, public houses and recreation.'*

These friendly societies developed into the early trades unions, although they were slower to emerge in Wales than other parts of Britain (Francis and Smith,1998). However by the beginning of the twentieth century, there was a union which represented the whole of the South Wales coalfield, the South Wales Miners Federation "The Fed". Following the extension of the franchise in 1884, the Liberal Party chose some left-wing (Lib-Lab) candidates for General Elections including many of the leading figures of the "Fed" such as William Abraham (Francis and Smith,1998). In 1899, the Labour Representative Committee was formed which later became the Labour Party. Both the Parliamentary Constituencies which included Llandebie and Llanfabon were held by Liberals with large majorities which show a remarkable similarity (table 7). The Liberal share of the vote remained over 60% until the second election in 1910 when Labour candidates were fielded and began to erode the Liberal dominance, a pattern which would continue after the First World War.

As the population of the parishes grew, the towns and larger villages developed a good range of services. Although it had a population of only 6000, Ammanford had a bank, four coffee taverns and four inns. Wales Trades Directory for 1912 listed a total of 38 different businesses, including the Ivorites Hall which seated 1600 and was used for concerts, theatricals and public meetings (University of Leicester, nd). Pontypridd at the junction of the Taff and Rhondda Valleys and the nearest town for residents on the western side of Llanfabon, became a centre for many sporting events (Williams, G,1988). A rugby club started here in 1876 and its popularity grew throughout the South Wales coalfield. Running and cycling was also popular and the Welsh Powderhall Sprint, a professional running event, including a heavy element of betting, was based at Pontypridd and drew a huge number of spectators (Evening Express,1907). By 1912, Pontypridd had a wide range of facilities and entertainments, with eighty entries in the Trades Directory of Wales (University of Leicester, nd). In 1891, the village of Llanbradach had built its first Workman's Hall and by 1911 this was inadequate and a new hall was built with a library, reading room and hall to seat 1000 where silent films were shown several times a week (Sellwood,1988). These facilities characterise the increasing urbanisation of the coalfield which was shared by both Llandebie and Llanfabon. Hamlets were becoming villages and villages were becoming towns and distinguished them from the surrounding rural heartlands from which many of the residents had migrated.

## **Chapter 4 Conclusion**

The increasing industrialisation and urbanisation of South Wales between 1880 and 1914 formed communities unlike those seen before. Those in Llandebie and Llanfabon changed from hamlets in a mainly agricultural economy to populous villages and small towns based very heavily on coal-mining. Coal mining dominated both Llandebie and Llanfabon but there were differences in the industry. Carmarthenshire anthracite coal could be extracted from drift mines, whilst the steam coal of the Eastern Valleys needed deep pits. The Carmarthenshire mines remained small and within the period studied many were still worked on a seasonal basis (Griffiths, 1968). This allowed continuation of the farming tradition which Matthews (1992) has argued made the mining community distinctive. The analysis of the occupations in table 1 together with the testimony of Griffiths (1968) endorses his view of the industry.

However, there are many similarities that this dissertation has revealed which outweigh these differences. The actual labour of hewing and removing the coal were the same, as the job titles in the censuses testify. Accidents, sadly, were common occurrences in both areas and no significant differences in death rates can be detected between them. Both Llandebie and Llanfabon had a small amount of alternative industry, with that in Llandebie being slightly larger and more diverse, but both communities relied heavily on the coal industry for its livelihood. The coalfield societies were remarkably similar with women's lives being based in the domestic setting with little opportunity to gain any financial independence, a characteristic they shared with their sisters in the Rhondda (Williams and Jones, 1982). The political affiliations of the two areas appeared identical. Religion, especially Dissident Christianity was still extremely strong and influential in both parishes and for those who rejected organised religion, there were an increasing number of leisure activities.

The one obvious difference between the two communities was the extent of usage of the Welsh language. Both parishes were almost wholly Welsh speaking at the start of the nineteenth century but in-migration started earlier in Llanfabon and introduced English into the lives of the working classes (Pryce, 1998). The pattern of in-migration in both parishes followed that described by Philip Jones (1988). Despite the influx of migrants, the numbers

of Welsh speakers rose in Llanfabon as well as Llandebie which supports the argument of Brinley Thomas (1987) that industrialisation saved the Welsh language by absorbing migrants who would otherwise have left the country.

Overall, the similarities between the two parishes outweigh the differences and endorses Russell Davies' (1996) view that the coal-mining areas of East Carmarthenshire had more in common with other South Wales coalmining areas than with their rural hinterlands.

The identities of the two communities were those of a Wales in transition at the turn from the nineteenth to the twentieth century. Of the Liberal, Non-conformist, Welsh speaking identity which characterised Wales in the second half of the nineteenth century (Preston, 2017b), Non-conformism was still strong but the element of class described by David Jones (1988) was having its effect and the Liberal domination was just beginning to lose its grip. During the time period studied, it was the process of in-migration which had the greatest effect on this identity, by diluting the Welsh-speaking population. This process was sowing the seeds of an altered identity for Wales in the twentieth century.

5922 words

## Appendices- Tables

**Table 1 Male Occupations (showing percentage of total male population over 12 years old)<sup>1</sup>**

	Llandebie				Llanfabon			
	Mining <sup>2</sup>	Farming	Production <sup>3</sup>	Others <sup>4</sup>	Mining <sup>2</sup>	Farming	Production <sup>3</sup>	Others <sup>4</sup>
1881	338 (29)	209 (19)	72 (6)	497 (45)	361 (39)	99 (11)	67 (7)	396 (43)
1891	431 (29)	86 (6)	294 (21)	596 (42)	476 (44)	132 (12)	72 (7)	405 (37)
1901	857 (49)	165 (8)	262 (12)	899 (42)	1077 (77)	50 (4)	92 (6)	182 (13)
1911	1438 (61)	190 (8)	263 (11)	467 (20)	1494 (66)	65 (3)	147 (7)	547 (24)

Notes : 1 Source UK censuses

2 Includes owners, managers and technical staff.

3 Includes Quarries, Tinplate. Lime, Chemicals and Weaving.

4 Others contains the remaining male population including the small numbers retired or with no occupation.

General labourers who may have worked in mining or production included here.

**Table 2 Number and Acreage of Farms 1881<sup>1</sup>**

	Llandebie	Llanfabon
Number	120	28
Total Acreage	6801	2700
Average size	57 acres	96 acres

Note 1 Source UK census 1881

**Table 3. Females in Occupations<sup>2</sup> in 1881 compared with Williams and Jones (1982)**

Llandebie	Llanfabon	Rhondda	Glamorgan
242 (18%) <sup>1,2,3</sup>	172, (18%) <sup>1,2,3</sup>	17% <sup>2,3</sup>	24% <sup>2,3</sup>

Note: 1 source UK censuses

2 excludes all undertaking domestic duties in the home and female relatives within a family business

3 expressed as a percentage of female population over 10 years old.

**Table 4 Number and Percentage of English Monoglots (2 years and over)<sup>1</sup>**

	Llandebie	Llanfabon
1891	131 (9%)	963 (34%)
1901	283 ( 5%)	2067 (56%)
1911	612 (10%)	3996 (66%)

Note 1Source UK Censuses

**Table 5 Population origin with percentage of total<sup>1</sup>**

	Llandebie <sup>2</sup>				Llanfabon			
	Total	County	Wales Other	Outside Wales	Total	County	Wales Other	Outside Wales
1881	3562	3230 (90)	220 (6)	112 (3)	2657	1762 (67)	444 (17)	451 (17)
1891	4366	3642 (83)	550 (13)	174 (4)	3006	1874 (62)	600 (20)	532 (18)
1901	6393	5060 (79)	1082 (17)	251 (4)	4035	2204 (55)	1110 (28)	721 (18)
1911	6760	4740 (70)	1191 (18)	829 (12)	6509	3141 (48)	1294 (20)	2074 (32)

Notes

1 Source UK censuses using Ancestry .co.uk

2 From 1911 a large part of Llandebie civic parish was recorded as Ammanford UD. The remaining area was re-named in the Welsh spelling Llandybie. The actual growth in population was thus much greater than 6%. In 1911 the population of the newly formed Ammanford UD was just over 6000.

**Table 6 Churches and Chapels<sup>1</sup>**

	Llandebie	Llanfabon
Churches 1882	1	2
Nonconformist Chapels 1882	5	7
Population 1905 <sup>2</sup>	4393	3616
Churches 1905	1	3
Communicants 1905	429	608
Accommodation 1905	750	650
Chapels 1905	9	39 <sup>3</sup>
Communicants 1905	1476	4518 <sup>3</sup>
Accommodation 1905	3570	4514 <sup>3</sup>

Notes 1 Information extracted from *Return of Churches, Chapels and Buildings registered for Religious Worship 1882 (HCPP,2005)* and *Royal Commission on the Church of England and Other Religious Bodies in Wales and Monmouthshire, 1910 (HCPP,2006b)*

2 Population over 3 years old

3 Information for Caerphilly area of which Llanfabon Civil Parish is about 20%

**Table 7 General Election Results- Total Votes Cast and Liberal Percentage of the Vote<sup>1</sup>**

Year	Carmarthenshire East		Glamorgan East	
	Votes	Share%	Votes	Share%
1885	6609	66	6972	70
1892	Uncontested		8561	67
1895	6937	64	9964	61
1900	6492	66	11074	63
Jan 1910	10070	75	20448	72
Dec 1910	9316	62	19366	47

Note 1 Information extracted from "A Vision of Britain through Time" website, University of Portsmouth, 2017

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