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**Cardiff and its Rivals: Why was Cardiff Successful in Becoming the
Capital of Wales?**

Frank Dunstan

Dissertation for Open University Module A329 – The Making of Welsh History

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Abbreviations

CWM	Council for Wales and Monmouthshire
MP	Member of Parliament
MWA	Minister for Welsh Affairs
UK	United Kingdom
WLA	Association of Welsh Local Authorities
WPP	Welsh Parliamentary Party

Chapter 1: Introduction

Cardiff became the capital of Wales in 1955, following a campaign which lasted several decades. With hindsight Cardiff may seem the obvious choice, but at the time the issue was somewhat controversial, with other towns, including Swansea, Aberystwyth and Caernarfon,¹ putting themselves forward for the role. Their cases highlighted different views about what constituted Welsh identity and about the required attributes for a capital, especially for a country without its own government. This dissertation will discuss the debates that took place in Wales and in the United Kingdom government and will analyse the reasons for the final choice of Cardiff as capital.

It is widely acknowledged that in the second half of the nineteenth century there was a growing sense of a Welsh nation; for the first time there were Welsh national institutions, legislation specifically for Wales, and even Welsh national sports teams.² One leading historian wrote that ‘...while the United Kingdom represented the union of three kingdoms, it was increasingly acknowledged that it contained four nations’.³ Another wrote ‘By the early 1880s, a sense of Welsh nationality and of national distinctiveness within the wider framework of the United Kingdom was present as never before’.⁴ In such circumstances it was not surprising that calls arose for Wales to have a capital. For example a report in 1888 complained that of the four home countries, only Wales did not have a capital.⁵

Until the mid-nineteenth century English cities filled the role of a capital; people in South Wales looked towards London, and those in North Wales to Liverpool.⁶ According to Kenneth Morgan ‘London was far more emphatically the capital of Wales until the 1880s than was any local town’.⁷ Towards the end of the nineteenth century, following the huge growth of Cardiff, this began to change, at least in the south, so that Jenkins could write

¹ For consistency this version of the spelling of Caernarfon will be used throughout except in direct quotations or titles of primary sources; many texts use alternative spellings such as Caernarvon or Carnarvon.

² W.R. Lambert, *The Welsh Sunday Closing Act, 1881*, *Welsh History Review*, Vol. 6 (1972), pp. 161-189; M. Johnes, *Eighty minute patriots? National identity and sport in modern Wales*, *International Journal of the History of Sport*, Vol. 17 (2000), pp. 93–110; N. Evans, *The Welsh Victorian City: The Middle Class and Civil and National Consciousness in Cardiff, 1850-1914*, *Welsh History Review*, Vol. 12 (1984), pp. 350-387.

³ J. Davies, *A History of Wales* (London, 2007), Penguin Books, pp. 387-8.

⁴ K.O. Morgan, *Rebirth of a Nation: A History of Modern Wales* (Oxford, 1981), Oxford University Press, p. 90.

⁵ Anon., ‘Wales must not be left out’, *Western Mail* (9 January 1888), p. 2.

⁶ G.H. Jenkins, *A Concise History of Wales* (Cambridge, 2007), Cambridge University Press, p. 186.

⁷ Morgan, *Rebirth of a Nation*, p. 92.

that, from the 1870s, no other town could legitimately challenge Cardiff's primacy and that it was capital in all but name.⁸ Newspaper reports from the 1880s contain references to Cardiff being regarded as 'the metropolis of Wales' or even as the 'capital of Wales'.⁹ There was no unanimity, however, over which town should be the capital. One correspondent said 'I for one fail to recognise the circumstances which warrant Cardiff in assuming this honourable title' and claimed that it was not representative of Wales.¹⁰ The divisions in views were well expressed in another article which, after listing many possible candidates for a capital, asserted¹¹ '...there will be a stiff fight between the North and South because the *Gogleddwr* hates the *Hwntw* and the *Hwntw* is suspicious of the *Gogleddwr*'.¹²

Obvious questions were whether a capital was needed and, if so, what should be its functions, especially given that Wales was a country but not a state. While several authors have written about capital cities, there is little written in the context of a country with no existing capital or government. Hall produced a taxonomy of seven types of capital but, since most envisaged a political role, none would have been very relevant to Wales in the first half of the twentieth century.¹³ Urban suggested that a capital should combine metropolitan centrality with political representation but should also assist in nation building.¹⁴ This suggests that the issue of national identity, and how well a capital embodies that, is important in the choice of a capital; for Wales a capital had to be the focus of national aspirations. Such considerations, weighed against administrative and commercial roles, were to figure prominently in the campaigns for a capital.

A number of secondary sources have covered in broad terms the growth of Welsh identity and the founding of national institutions.¹⁵ Morgan outlined what he termed the 'national revival' from around 1880 to 1910, which led to a growing sense of a national consciousness, if not nationalism; such growth must have increased the demands for a

⁸ Jenkins, *A Concise History of Wales*, p. 173, p. 183.

⁹ Anon., Untitled, *Western Mail* (18 January 1890), p. 2.

¹⁰ Anon., 'The Capital of the Principality', *Western Mail* (9 June 1887), p. 4.

¹¹ Anon., 'Home Rule for Wales', *Western Mail* (16 December 1889), p. 2.

¹² *Gogleddwr* refers to people from North Wales and *Hwntw* to those from South Wales.

¹³ P. Hall, 'The Changing Role of Capital Cities: Six Types of Capital City', in J. Taylor, *Capital Cities/Les capitales : International Perspectives/Perspectives Internationales*, (MQUP, 1993), pp. 69-84.

¹⁴ F. Urban, The Limits of State Symbolism, *Journal of Urban History*, Vol. 35 (2008), pp. 196-200.

¹⁵ Morgan, *Rebirth of a Nation*, Chs. 4, 5; Davies, *A History of Wales*, Ch. 8.

capital.¹⁶ Evans documented the growth of Cardiff and its transformation from ‘the self-doubt and self-criticism of the mid-Victorian era’ to one of ‘Edwardian arrogance’.¹⁷ This may have convinced the Cardiff Corporation that capital status was theirs by right, in spite of uncertainty over its Welsh identity. Edwards described the awarding of city status to Cardiff, highly relevant since Prime Minister Balfour wrote ‘...the only possible justification for giving this honour to Cardiff is that it must be regarded as the capital of Wales’.¹⁸ Other authors have described rival claims to house specific national institutions, including the National Library and National Museum; these highlight different views of identity which were relevant to the later campaigns for the capital.¹⁹

One article discusses the campaign for capital status and the final decision, together with an analysis of the changing relationship between Cardiff and the rest of Wales since 1955.²⁰ It describes the polls of local authorities, government lobbying and negotiations with Caernarfon, drawing heavily on an unpublished account written by a prominent Cardiff councillor who played a key role in the negotiations and whose account may therefore be rather partisan.²¹ It contains little about the cases made by other towns and so this dissertation, while discussing this key work, will also examine the campaign from the perspectives of Aberystwyth and Caernarfon, Cardiff’s main rivals, to provide a complementary approach. A wide range of primary sources will be used, including petitions from the rival towns,²² government papers, parliamentary papers and contemporary newspaper reports, to analyse the reasons for the final choice of Cardiff. It will be argued that agreement was reached by a combination of a suitable political climate, a changed Welsh identity more relevant to the second half of the twentieth century and a gradual

¹⁶ Morgan, *Rebirth of a Nation*, Ch. 4, The National Revival.

¹⁷ Evans, *The Welsh Victorian City: The Middle Class and Civil and National Consciousness in Cardiff, 1850-1914*, p. 370.

¹⁸ E. Edwards, *Cardiff becomes a City, Morgannwg transactions of the Glamorgan Local History Society*, Vol. 9 (1965), pp. 80-87. Balfour’s quote is cited there.

¹⁹ D.A. Bassett, *The Making of a National Museum: Part 1, Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, (1982), pp. 153-185; A. Ward, *Archaeology, Heritage and Identity: the creation and development of a National Museum in Wales*, Ph.D. thesis, Cardiff University (2008); L. Madden, *The National Library of Wales in The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland*, A. Black and P. Hoare eds. (Cambridge, 2006), Cambridge University Press, pp. 227-234.

²⁰ M. Johnes, *Cardiff: The Making and Development of the Capital City of Wales, Contemporary British History*, Vol. 26 (2012), pp. 509-528.

²¹ Llewelyn Jenkins, *The Movement for the Capital* (1960), in National Archives: BD 25/60.

²² Although Cardiff became a city, while its rivals were towns, the term ‘towns’ will be used for simplicity when discussing the rivals.

move from localism towards a greater national Welsh consciousness with a consequent acceptance of what was best for the country as a whole.

Chapter 2 will set out the context, describing developments in Wales from the end of the nineteenth century until 1945, including campaigns for the locations of newly-created national institutions, the awarding of city status to Cardiff, arguments over the location of a National War Memorial and the first poll of local authorities. Chapter 3 will discuss the differing views of Welsh identity which inspired the contrasting cases made by rival towns, while Chapter 4 will focus on political considerations, which impinged on the process of choosing a capital, and on the events leading to the final decision. The conclusion in Chapter 5 will reflect on how the changes described in Welsh society and politics played a part in the gradual acceptance of Cardiff as the most appropriate location of a capital. An Appendix will set out a timeline of the principal events in the campaigns.

Chapter 2: The Context – the Rivalry before 1945

One tangible manifestation of the growth of national feelings was the creation of several national institutions, most notably a University College, museum and library. The campaigns for their locations were a foretaste of future ones for a capital, with many of the later arguments rehearsed here as leading towns jostled for a higher status in Wales.

The first such issue concerned the site of a proposed University College in South Wales, contested by Cardiff and Swansea. Their cases have been described by Evans and are detailed in contemporary newspapers.²³ Cardiff argued primarily on the basis of its commercial activities, wealth and the population of its surrounding area, while Swansea's case was based more on cultural aspects, its centrality in South Wales, and its scientific tradition, having hosted the Royal Institution of South Wales since 1835.²⁴ Advocates of Swansea argued that Cardiff was not really Welsh and played upon the slight ambiguity of the status of Monmouthshire in Wales²⁵ but, as Evans claimed, ultimately wealth was the deciding factor. The promise of £10,000 from the Marquis of Bute was probably influential, as noted rather bitterly in the Swansea press.²⁶

Twenty years later plans were made for Wales to have a National Library and National Museum. A number of towns tried to secure them, with Caernarfon, Cardiff and Swansea vying for the museum and Aberystwyth and Cardiff for the library.²⁷ The decisions, announced in June 1905, awarded Cardiff the museum, partly because it was the centre of the most populated area, while Aberystwyth received the library, for geographical reasons and because a famous collection of old manuscripts had been promised if the library was in Aberystwyth.²⁸ Seeking these institutions was a prelude to a bid for capital status; indeed

²³ Evans, *The Welsh Victorian City*, pp. 371-2; Anon., 'South Wales College: The Arbitrators' Decision', *The Cardiff Times* (17 March 1883), p. 5.

²⁴ L. Miskell, *'Intelligent Town': an Urban History of Swansea, 1780-1855* (Cardiff, 2006), University of Wales Press.

²⁵ Anon., 'The South Wales College Misadventure', *The Cambrian* (23 January 1883), pp. 4-5; Evans, *The Welsh Victorian City*, p. 371; the rather ambiguous status of Monmouthshire will not be explored here but is discussed by C. Williams, 'Who talks of any Nation?' in *The Gwent County History Vol. 5: The Twentieth Century*, C. Williams and A. Croll eds. (Cardiff, 2013), University of Wales Press, pp. 342-62.

²⁶ Anon., *The Cambrian* (23 January 1883), 'Notes and Comments', p. 5.

²⁷ Bassett, *The Making of a National Museum: Part 1*, pp. 153-185; D. Jenkins, *A National Library for Wales: The Prologue*, *Transactions of the Honourable Society of Cymmrodorion*, (1982), pp. 139-152.

²⁸ Jenkins, *A National Library for Wales*, p. 151.

the Chancellor of the Exchequer suggested that Wales should first choose a capital and then the institutions could be located there.²⁹

In October 1905 Cardiff was made a city. As noted earlier, Prime Minister Balfour linked this, in correspondence with his private secretary, to capital status and the Cardiff-based *Evening Express* claimed that 'By the King's act the capital has definitely been fixed'.³⁰ Newspapers in other areas reacted slightly differently; the *Cambrian News and Merionethshire Herald*, for example, declared that 'That is why we plead for the recognition of Carnarvon as the capital of Wales, a title which Cardiff with ignorant impertinence now assumes'³¹ and 'Cardiff is not Wales and never can be Wales'.³²

The next dispute over a location arose in 1911 for the investiture of the Prince of Wales, an event intended to recognise the cultural distinctiveness of Wales and to unite the Welsh nation.³³ The organising committee decided to set it in Welsh-speaking Caernarfon, rejecting 'the cosmopolitanism of urban Cardiff in favour of the rural image of the *gwerin*'.³⁴ The historical associations of the Prince of Wales with Caernarfon triumphed over the commercial wealth of Cardiff, projecting a conservative view of Welsh nationality. To some extent the event promoted national unity; after the location was announced, the Cardiff-supporting *Western Mail* wrote that '...in a matter like this there is no longer North or South, but a united Wales...'.³⁵ Others, however, have argued that both regional and class divisions were displayed in the ceremony itself.³⁶

By 1914 Cardiff was the only Welsh city, with the largest population in Wales. It had acquired several major national institutions and saw itself as a *de facto* capital, even though formal recognition was not forthcoming. Perceptions of it from other parts of Wales were not all positive, however. Many saw it as being obsessed by its own importance and too

²⁹ Anon., 'A National Question', *Cardiff Times* (17 June 1905), p. 6.

³⁰ Anon., 'Cardiff constituted a City', *Evening Express* (23 October 1905), p. 2.

³¹ Anon., 'Cardiff a City', *Cambrian News and Merionethshire Standard* (27 October 1905), p. 4.

³² Anon., 'The National Welsh Library', *Cambrian News and Merionethshire Standard* (16 June 1905), p. 5.

³³ J.S. Ellis, *The Prince and the Dragon: Welsh National Identity and the 1911 Investiture of the Prince of Wales*, *Welsh History Review*, Vol. 18 (1996), p. 289.

³⁴ Ellis, *The Prince and the Dragon*, p. 277.

³⁵ Anon., *Western Mail* (10 September 1910), cited in Ellis, *The Prince and the Dragon*, p. 290.

³⁶ Ellis, *The Prince and the Dragon*, p. 291.

cosmopolitan, anglicized and not truly Welsh.³⁷ Its claim to be capital was ‘fiercely contested or derided by a large and influential body of Welshmen’.³⁸

This alleged cosmopolitanism is borne out by census data on the birthplaces of its residents. The rapid increase in the population of Cardiff, from 1,871 in 1801 to 185,858 in 1911, was driven to a large extent by migration, including from outside Wales. Table 1 shows the birthplace areas for those recorded as resident in Cardiff, Swansea and the counties of Caernarfonshire and Cardiganshire in the 1911 Census.³⁹

	Birthplace			
	Home area	Rest of Wales	England	Other countries
Cardiff	51%	17%	25%	7%
Swansea	66%	14%	14%	6%
Caernarfonshire	77%	13%	9%	2%
Cardiganshire	79%	11%	8%	2%

Table 1. Birthplaces by area of residence as recorded in the 1911 census. Because of rounding, percentages in each row may not add up to 100.

Almost a third of Cardiff residents had been born outside Wales, compared to around a tenth in Caernarfonshire and Cardiganshire. This migration was reflected in the prevalence of Welsh-speakers. In 1911 only 6.7% of the population of Cardiff were Welsh-speaking⁴⁰ and this fell to 4.2% in 1951.⁴¹ By contrast the percentages speaking Welsh in 1911 in Caernarfonshire and Cardiganshire were 85.6% and 89.6% respectively,⁴² falling to 69.8% and 79.5% respectively by 1951.⁴³ It was doubtless such factors which prompted the

³⁷ *Y Ddraid Goch*, ‘An Insult to Wales’, *Aberdare Leader* (29 March 1913), p. 8; Anon., ‘Investiture of the Prince of Wales’, *Welsh Gazette and West Wales Advertiser* (15 September 1910), p. 6.

³⁸ T.H. Thomas, ‘Cardiff’s curious position’, *Cardiff Times* (12 August 1905), p. 4.

³⁹ Census of England and Wales, 1911, Vol. IX, Table 2. Data for the towns of Aberystwyth and Caernarfon were not readily available from the Census tables and so their counties have been used instead, possibly introducing bias.

⁴⁰ This combines monoglot and bilingual speakers.

⁴¹ J.W. Aitchison & H. Carter, *The Welsh Language in Cardiff: A Quiet Revolution*, *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, Vol. 12 (1987), p. 485 Table II.

⁴² Vision of Britain, at <http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/census/EW1911GEN/10>.

⁴³ D.T. Williams, *The Distribution of the Welsh Language 1931-1951*, *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. 119 (1953), pp. 331-335.

declaration by the *Cambrian News*, following the award of the National Library to Aberystwyth, that ‘Cardiff is not Wales and can never by any possibility represent Wales, not even if it contained ten times as many foreign seamen as it contains at present’.⁴⁴

Cardiff was also seen by many as being too materialistic and ambitious. McLeod describes a cartoon in a mid-Wales newspaper, depicting Cardiff ‘as an octopus whose tentacles stretch through the country sucking the life out’,⁴⁵ while in the context of the investiture, Ellis wrote ‘Caernarfon’s supporters depicted Cardiff as a materialist leviathan trying to seize the investiture for itself through the sheer weight of its fiscal expenditure’.⁴⁶

The First World War was a traumatic experience for Wales.⁴⁷ The air of confidence prevalent in 1914, called the Edwardian High Noon by Morgan, was shattered.⁴⁸ There was a country-wide wish to commemorate the sacrifices made in the war through memorials to those who had died.⁴⁹ In November 1918 Cardiff proposed the creation of a National War Memorial to be funded by bodies from across Wales and to be located in Cathays Park in Cardiff. This ignored the plans, first discussed in 1917, for a North Wales Heroes’ Memorial to be sited in Bangor; the ensuing arguments highlighted the lack of a national vision which was later reflected in disputes over a capital.⁵⁰

In launching a campaign for donations the *Western Mail*, after accepting the desire for local memorials, asserted rather idealistically that ‘...we in Wales have an inveterate habit of looking at everything we do from the standpoint of the nation and investing it, wherever possible, with a national character...’. The *North Wales Chronicle* took a different view, writing ‘We offer our condolences to Cardiff. The cosmopolitan self-appointed “metropolis” of Wales has experienced yet another and very serious rebuff. Public authorities in Wales

⁴⁴ Anon., ‘Cardiff a City’, *Cambrian News and Merionethshire Standard* (27 October 1905), p. 4.

⁴⁵ J. Macleod, Britishness and Commemoration: National Memorials to the First World War in Britain and Ireland *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 48 (2013), p. 656.

⁴⁶ J.S. Ellis, Reconciling the Celt: British National Identity, Empire, and the 1911 Investiture of the Prince of Wales, *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 37 (1997), p. 408.

⁴⁷ M.A. Williams, ‘In the Wars: Wales 1914–1945’, in *The People of Wales*, G.E. Jones and D. Smith eds. (Llandysul, 1999), Gomer Press, p. 183.

⁴⁸ Morgan, *Rebirth of a Nation*, Ch. 5.

⁴⁹ A. Gaffney, *Aftermath: Remembering the Great War in Wales*, (Cardiff 1998), University of Wales Press, p. 1; G. Matthews, ‘For Freedom and Justice’: the Responses of Chapels in the Swansea Area to the First World War, *Welsh History Review*, Vol. 28 (2017), pp. 705-7.

⁵⁰ Gaffney, *Aftermath: Remembering the Great War in Wales*, Chapter III.

have actually had the temerity to refuse to pander to Cardiff ambitions ...'.⁵¹ Gaffney concluded that the dispute showed that national unity was an illusion and that local communities were more important to most than the nation.⁵²

In 1924 a Cardiff-based newspaper organised a poll of Welsh local authorities, asking if Wales should have a capital and, if so, where it should be situated. A huge majority voted for a capital, with eighty one percent in favour and eleven percent against, the remainder abstaining. Table 2 shows the number of votes, and the corresponding populations, of the towns nominated.

Place	Number of votes	Population of those areas nominating the town.	Percentage of Welsh population ⁵³
Cardiff	76	1,407,181	53.0
Caernarfon	42	267,267	10.1
Aberystwyth	14	82,671	3.1
Swansea	8	431,538	16.2
Llandrindod Wells	8	20,987	0.8
Wrexham	6	116,277	4.4
Carmarthen	4	42,045	1.6
Newport (Pembs.)	1	7,944	0.3
Machynlleth	1	1,870	0.1
Total	160	2,377,780	89.5

Table 2. Results of the ballot of local authorities conducted in 1924 by the *South Wales Daily News*.⁵⁴

Combined with the evidence from the issues over the War Memorial, this suggested that Wales was not sufficiently unified to agree on a choice of capital. A cartoon in the *Western*

⁵¹ Anon., 'Welsh Notes: National War Memorial', *North Wales Chronicle* (4 July 1919), p. 5.

⁵² Gaffney, *Aftermath: Remembering the Great War in Wales*, pp. 67-68.

⁵³ Based on a population of 2,656,474 recorded in the 1921 Census, *Vision of Britain*, available at http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/census/table_page.jsp?tab_id=EW1921GEN_M8&show=DB

⁵⁴ Jenkins, *The Movement for the Capital* (1960).

Mail showed twelve contenders marked on a map of Wales with a caption: 'There is a movement on foot to fix the Capital of Wales. Unless the Prime Minister desires a civil war, he will fix it in some town outside the Principality'.⁵⁵

Several towns, including Swansea and Caernarfon, continued campaigning⁵⁶ and in February 1925 a delegation from Cardiff met the Home Secretary to plead its case.⁵⁷ In 1926 the Home Secretary, replying to a question from the MP for Cardiff South, declared that the absence of evidence for a unified opinion on a location meant he could take no further action.⁵⁸

There were few further developments for twenty years; the crisis which afflicted the Welsh economy, leading to large-scale emigration, followed by the Second World War, meant that other matters assumed a much higher priority. Cardiff continued to acquire prestigious buildings and organisations, including the headquarters of BBC Wales in 1937 and the Temple of Peace and Health in 1938, but the view of Cardiff as not being truly Welsh persisted. Goronwy Rees, describing living there in the 1920s, wrote 'Cardiff is as much an English as a Welsh city, a mongrel border town ...' and the Swansea Director of Education said in 1938 that 'Cardiff is not in Wales, Cardiff is merely a cosmopolitan village about forty miles to the east of us'.⁵⁹ Agreement was far off and the campaigns would resume after the war was over.

⁵⁵ Anon., 'The Rival Capitals of Wales', *Western Mail* (6 May 1924), p. 5.

⁵⁶ Anon., 'Capital of Wales', *Western Mail* (12 February 1925), p. 7.

⁵⁷ Anon., 'Capital of Wales', *Western Mail* (4 February 1925), p. 6.

⁵⁸ House of Commons Debates, *Hansard*, 6 May 1926, Vol. 195, cc. 449-50W.

⁵⁹ Goronwy Rees, *A Chapter of Accidents*, (London 1972), Chatto and Windus; Anon., 'Where is Cardiff?', *Gloucestershire Echo* (4 January 1938), p. 1.

Chapter 3: The Cases of the Rivals

The Second World War had a major impact on Welsh society. As Williams noted, ‘the war dealt a severe blow to the “Welshness” of the nation’ but ‘the country emerged from the Allied victory of 1945 with a new spirit of unity...’.⁶⁰ Travel outside Wales for war-related reasons and the evacuation of outsiders to Wales may have extended horizons, particularly for those in rural areas, and while there was an increased feeling of Britishness, there was a growing feeling that Wales was different from England and this may have strengthened national feelings.⁶¹ Many hoped that having a Secretary of State for Wales would recognise this different status, even if the motivation was more for economic reasons, to avoid a repeat of the catastrophe of the inter-war years, than as a symbol of nationhood. The newly-elected Labour government, however, did not honour its pre-election promises in this regard.⁶² Its centralised system of economic policy meant many leading members regarded class boundaries as being more relevant than national boundaries. There was therefore no sustained move to change the status of Wales within the United Kingdom by devolution of any substantial powers, a process which may have led to the designation of a capital.

Localism had long been a feature of Welsh life. According to Stead, ‘What had guaranteed and sustained traditional culture in Wales was primarily the dynamics of community and the tendency for distinction and success to accrue to that community’.⁶³ There was, however, an awareness in the post-war years that much-needed economic progress might necessitate social change and that this might weaken the ties to language and community.⁶⁴ Smith asserted that the late 1940s were the final years of the industrial community culture in the South Wales Valleys,⁶⁵ and Morgan claimed that the vital culture of communities declined.⁶⁶

⁶⁰ M.A. Williams, ‘In the Wars: Wales 1914–1945’, p. 205.

⁶¹ M. Johnes, ‘Welshness, Welsh soldiers and the Second World War’, in *Fighting for Britain: Negotiating Identities in Britain during the Second World War*, W. Ugolini and J. Pattinson eds. (Oxford, 2015), Peter Lang, p. 67.

⁶² Morgan, *Rebirth of a Nation*, p. 378; M. Johnes, *Wales since 1939*, (Manchester, 2012), Manchester University Press, p. 47.

⁶³ P. Stead, ‘Popular culture’, in *Post-War Wales*, T. Herbert and G.E. Jones eds. (Cardiff, 1995), University of Wales Press, p. 114.

⁶⁴ Johnes, *Wales since 1939*, p. 58-9.

⁶⁵ D. Smith, *Wales: A Question for History* (Bridgend, 1999), Seren Books, p. 163.

⁶⁶ Morgan, *Rebirth of a Nation*, p. 347.

While the place where a person lived still mattered greatly, national considerations were assuming greater importance than previously.

There were still divisions across the country, however. Aneurin Bevan, arguing against the appointment of a Secretary of State for Wales, expressed concern that one would inevitably be a Welsh speaker, part of a domination of largely English-speaking areas by Welsh-speaking parts of Wales.⁶⁷ When a newly-elected MP for Cardiff Central, George Thomas, raised the issue of a capital in the House of Commons in 1945, the reply from the government highlighted the lack of unanimity in Wales over a location, reiterating the view that Wales was parochial and divided.⁶⁸ The prospects for a capital in the foreseeable future were not auspicious and yet ten years later Cardiff was named as capital. The reasons for this change will be analysed in the remaining chapters.

There were two main requirements for a successful conclusion to the struggle for a capital: a broad agreement across Wales of what was required for a capital, and how it would reflect Welsh identity, and a political campaign to persuade the authorities to take appropriate action. The political issues will be discussed in Chapter 4; this chapter concentrates on the different visions reflected in the cases made by the towns seeking capital status.

In the spring of 1949 Cardiff and Caernarfon councils submitted petitions to the King to advance their claims, to be joined two years later by others from Aberystwyth and Llandrindod Wells.⁶⁹ Swansea neither submitted a petition nor actively participated in a campaign but maintained aspirations towards capital status.⁷⁰ The cases they presented revealed much about different perceptions of Welsh identity across the country.

The petitions all stressed the need for Wales to have a capital, claiming that Wales had developed a stronger sense of nation which a capital would enhance. Caernarfon's petition asserted 'that there is today in all parts of the Principality a healthy renaissance of the sense

⁶⁷ House of Commons Debates, *Hansard*, 28 October 1946, Vol. 428, c. 401.

⁶⁸ House of Commons Debates, *Hansard*, 8 November 1945, Vol. 15, c. 1447; K.O. Morgan, *Revolution to Devolution: Reflections on Welsh Democracy*, (Cardiff, 2014), University of Wales Press, pp. 256-7.

⁶⁹ Gwynedd Archives: XD1/1127; Cardiff Corporation (1949), *Petition of the Corporation of Cardiff for a Capital of Wales*; National Archives: BD 24/326. The petition from Llandrindod Wells has not been located but according to papers in the National Archives: BD 24/6, it claimed the town had the best geographical location; many might argue that it was equally remote from all major centres of the Welsh population.

⁷⁰ Anon., 'Sir David undecided on Capital question', *Western Mail* (13 January 1953), p. 1.

of nationhood and a strong desire to realise it',⁷¹ while that of Cardiff said that 'creating a national capital would provide a focus for national life and give consciousness to its nationality'.⁷² Where the petitions differed was in their arguments for their own town to be declared the capital; this revealed differences in their views of what was important for Welsh identity.

Aberystwyth claimed that its geographical location in mid-Wales would help to unite the country which, historically, had been liable to localism and fragmentation. It claimed always to have been regarded as the home of Welsh culture and language, emphasising that the town was home to the National Library and the 'senior University College in Wales'. It also asserted that, in spite of claims about the roles of iron, steel and coal, the basic industry of Wales had always been agriculture and this was centred on Aberystwyth, with its world-renowned Centre for Agriculture.⁷³

Caernarfon also referred to the Welsh language in its petition but its primary appeal was to history.⁷⁴ A Roman fortress was occupied there for three hundred years and Caernarfon was the centre of the ring of castles built by Edward I after the wars of the 1270s and 1280s, with a Royal Charter granted in 1284. It claimed that it was 'the historical and traditional capital of Wales', a status based on the Statute of Rhuddlan of 1284, drawn up after the Edwardian conquest.⁷⁵ This created the Justice of Snowdon to be based in Caernarfon, where courts of Chancery and Exchequer were to be established.⁷⁶ The petition also stressed the links with the Prince of Wales, referring to the birth of the first Prince of Wales in Caernarfon Castle in 1284 and the investiture there of Prince Edward in 1911.

While Aberystwyth and Caernarfon concentrated on history, language, culture and rurality, Cardiff's petition concentrated on its commercial and administrative activities and the population in the immediately surrounding area. It stressed that it was the location for many existing national institutions and a host of Welsh headquarters of government and

⁷¹ Gwynedd Archives: XD1/1127.

⁷² Cardiff Corporation (1949).

⁷³ National Archives: BD 24/326.

⁷⁴ Gwynedd Archives: XD1/1127.

⁷⁵ Also known as the Statute of Wales.

⁷⁶ Ivor Bowen, *The Statutes of Wales*, (London, 1908), T. Fisher Unwin, Introduction p. xxxii.

media offices.⁷⁷ A consequence of the nationalisation policy of the government was that several of the new organisations created Welsh sections, whose headquarters were mostly in Cardiff, increasing its importance in Wales.⁷⁸ Its celebration of the existence of Cathays Park, the renowned Edwardian civic centre, demonstrated that they believed this made the city worthy of being a capital.

The council was clearly aware of how the city was viewed from other parts of Wales, particularly the perception that it was not truly Welsh, and stressed that the number of Welsh speakers was large, even if the percentage was low, referring to the large numbers of school children learning Welsh at school. In a sign of how it thought ideas of identity had changed, it cited the location in Cardiff of major sporting events, particularly rugby and football international matches, reflecting a post-war growth of Welsh patriotism expressed through sport.⁷⁹ This view has been supported by Williams, who claimed that the decline of both religious observance and the Welsh language after 1945 meant sport became an area in which national identity could be asserted.⁸⁰ In that regard Cardiff's case was assisted in 1953 when the Welsh Rugby Union decided to hold all international matches in Cardiff.⁸¹ It helped the city to be identified as a Welsh symbol in more distant parts of Wales which had previously viewed it with great suspicion, particularly as that was the first year in which matches were televised.⁸²

A surprising omission from the rival towns was Swansea, which could doubtless have made a case based on its commercial and industrial importance harking back to the nineteenth century campaign for a University College. It took a neutral stance, abstaining from all discussions and votes that took place over the next five years; its reported priority was to recover from the damage sustained during the Second World War and hope that the capital issue was delayed until it could make a stronger case.⁸³

⁷⁷ Cardiff Corporation (1949).

⁷⁸ J Davies, *Cardiff: A Pocket Guide* (Cardiff, 2002), University of Wales Press, p. 122.

⁷⁹ Johnes, 'Eighty minute patriots? National identity and sport in modern Wales', pp. 93–110.

⁸⁰ C. Williams, 'On a border in history? Wales 1945-85', in *The People of Wales*, G.E. Jones and D. Smith eds. (Llandysul, 1999), Gomer Press, p. 228.

⁸¹ D. Smith and G. Williams, *Fields of Praise: Official History of the WRU 1881-1981*, (Cardiff, 1980), University of Wales Press, pp. 349-350; J. Davies, *Cardiff: A Pocket Guide*, p. 123.

⁸² Johnes, *Wales since 1939*, p. 60.

⁸³ Anon., 'Swansea stays "Neutral" on Welsh Capital Issue', *Western Mail* (8 March 1949), p. 3.

The cases made were divided between those presenting a nostalgic view, dominated by language and religion in a traditional rural setting, and others with a more modern outlook, celebrating a more cosmopolitan country with changed priorities. If agreement were to be reached on a capital, then an accommodation would be needed between these differing visions. Many historians have argued that the Welsh language declined during the Second World War and this, coupled with the growing influence of the English-language media and secular entertainment, challenged traditional culture.⁸⁴ The comment of Dai Smith, made about those in Edwardian Wales who harked back to nineteenth century rural values, that 'The scale of things defeated them. Their idea of culture was challenged by the popular, living culture increasingly removed from their former ties of custom, tradition, religion, language and social deference', largely applied to post-war Wales too.⁸⁵ Such cultural changes, combined with the broader horizons referred to earlier, suggested that an agreement on a capital might be achievable.

⁸⁴ Davies, *A History of Wales*, p. 585.

⁸⁵ Smith, *Wales: A Question for History*, p. 69.

Chapter 4: Political Considerations

There was still no consensus on a capital by 1949. When George Thomas questioned the Home Secretary about it in May 1949, he was rebuffed and other members poured scorn on the idea, with one referring to Cardiff as ‘a modern excrescence on the landscape’ and others advancing the claims of other places including Liverpool and Shrewsbury.⁸⁶ To break the deadlock a political initiative was required.

Details of the events over the next few years, leading to Cardiff’s award of capital status in December 1955, are given by Johnes, drawing heavily on a contemporary account by Llewelyn Jenkins, a prominent councillor in Cardiff.⁸⁷ This chapter will describe the main events, focussing on how they were facilitated by political processes and the Appendix contains a timeline of events.

There were four important bodies which would be influential in securing capital status: the UK government, the Council for Wales and Monmouthshire (CWM), created in 1948 to provide advice on Welsh matters to the government,⁸⁸ the Welsh Parliamentary Party (WPP), a group of all MPs representing Welsh constituencies, regardless of political affiliation,⁸⁹ and the Association of Welsh Local Authorities (WLA).

Political changes instigated by the UK government were important as they changed the nature of the debates. For example the post-war governments set up Welsh branches of numerous government ministries, many located in Cardiff, and in 1951 the Conservative government created the position of Minister for Welsh Affairs (MWA) to act ‘as a watchdog for Wales’ in the Cabinet with a Cardiff office.⁹⁰ While some historians have dismissed the importance of this role,⁹¹ in the context of a potential capital it was significant as it made Cardiff a seat of governance.⁹²

⁸⁶ House of Commons Debates, *Hansard*, 12 May 1949, Vol. 464, cc. 1985-6.

⁸⁷ Johnes, Cardiff: The Making and Development of the Capital City of Wales, pp. 509-514; Jenkins, *The Movement for the Capital* (1960).

⁸⁸ Morgan, *Rebirth of a Nation*, pp. 332.

⁸⁹ Smith, *Wales: A Question for History*, p. 192.

⁹⁰ House of Commons Debates, *Hansard*, 26 January 1948, Vol. 446 c. 695.

⁹¹ Morgan, *Rebirth of a Nation*, p. 379.

⁹² Johnes, *Wales since 1939*, p. 189.

That such matters were important is revealed in internal correspondence between the Home Office legal adviser, Sir Leslie Brass, and other government officials.⁹³ It was argued that a capital is a seat of government and that the absence of a government in Wales meant that Parliament could not confer such a title. It rejected Edinburgh and London as precedents since they had never been formally designated as capitals, for example by an Act of Parliament, but rather accepted by the people, based on the concentration of legislative, administrative, judicial and religious functions located there.⁹⁴ These discussions emphasised the importance of widespread agreement across Wales.

In late 1950 the CWM agreed to discuss the issue of a capital, inviting representations from those places which felt they had a claim; Aberystwyth, Caernarfon, Cardiff and Llandrindod Wells duly submitted petitions.⁹⁵ The criteria used by the CWM for making a recommendation were revealed in the records of Cardiff Council.⁹⁶ While these criteria included history and culture, they appear to be more in tune with the case made by Cardiff. They specified that a capital should have 'a population, physical extent and financial capacity commensurate with major social, commercial, educational, artistic and administrative activities' and possess 'good road, rail and air communications with the rest of Wales and the outside world'. While praising the attributes of the other candidates, not surprisingly, given these criteria, they came down firmly on the side of Cardiff.⁹⁷

Contemporary newspaper reports suggest that the Cardiff Council assumed the matter was now resolved but, replying to Parliamentary questions from Cardiff MPs Llewellyn and Thomas, the MWA said in December 1951 that he had no power to recognise any town as the capital. He suggested that such power would be superfluous if it became apparent that there was general agreement throughout Wales.⁹⁸ The WPP were also unimpressed by the decision of the CWM, since it was not an elected body, and insisted on being consulted

⁹³ B. Cubbon, Brass, Sir Leslie Stuart (1891-1958), lawyer and public servant, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

⁹⁴ National Archives: BD24/8.

⁹⁵ Gwynedd Archives: XD1/1127; Cardiff Corporation (1949), *Petition of the Corporation of Cardiff for a Capital of Wales*; National Archives: BD 24/326.

⁹⁶ Cardiff Council minutes (9 April 1951), p. 1417.

⁹⁷ National Archives: BD23/219.

⁹⁸ House of Commons Debates, *Hansard*, 6 December 1951, Vol. 494, c. 2546.

before any decision was made.⁹⁹ Members of Cardiff Council, although feeling that events were moving inexorably in their favour, decided to continue their efforts to demonstrate their commitment to Welsh culture, to allay the suspicions of those in North and West Wales, and to be proactive in seeking an agreement.

To this effect two meetings were held in late 1952 between representatives of Caernarfon and Cardiff councils to seek common ground, followed by a joint deputation to meet the MWA in secret in January 1953. Records suggest that Caernarfon acknowledged Cardiff as the administrative and commercial capital but insisted that its own historical, cultural and linguistic claims should not be ignored and hinted that the town might be satisfied with Royal Borough status.¹⁰⁰ Details of the deputation were leaked and representatives of Aberystwyth and Swansea displayed outrage, particularly in the press.¹⁰¹ Frustration at the disunity and alleged parochialism was displayed in the Welsh Affairs debate in Parliament the following week, when George Thomas said 'How foolish it is that Wales should be the only country in the world without a capital because parochial pride and civic jealousy prevent an agreement within the Principality itself' and continued to accuse towns of not wanting a capital if it was not their own town.¹⁰² As a Cardiff MP he was a strong supporter of Cardiff but his sentiment was not unique.

The apparent deadlock was broken when, in the summer of 1953, Cardiganshire County Council, for reasons which are unclear, wrote to all Welsh local authorities inviting them to join a conference to discuss the question of a capital. Sufficient numbers of local authorities replied positively for the WLA to decide to conduct a ballot of all local authorities. The results, announced in May 1954, gave an overwhelming majority for Cardiff, with 136 votes, compared with eleven for Caernarfon, four for Aberystwyth and one for Swansea. Several authorities with large populations ignored the call for a vote, perhaps being reluctant to support Cardiff but unwilling to be seen as directly opposing it. For example, according to press reports Swansea hoped for a delay as they felt their case would become stronger as

⁹⁹ House of Commons Debates, *Hansard*, 9 April 1951, Vol. 486, c. 40-41W.

¹⁰⁰ National Archives: BD24/8.

¹⁰¹ Anon., 'Lord Mayor replies to critics of talks on Capital', *Western Mail* (January 17 1953), p.5.

¹⁰² House of Commons Debates, *Hansard*, 22 January 1952, Vol. 510, c. 471.

they recovered from war damage¹⁰³ while Newport Council believed that London 'should remain the capital'.¹⁰⁴

Many of the results were known, through press reports, before the official declaration and in March the *Western Mail*, a committed supporter of Cardiff, lambasted those authorities which refused to give serious consideration to the issue, complaining about 'the tribal suspicions that divide Welshmen and the mutual distrust of the rural and urban communities on which so many other promising national movements have foundered'.¹⁰⁵ This may have been an attempt to deflect criticism that there was still no broad agreement but their fears were unfounded. The majority for Cardiff was widely interpreted as confirming that Cardiff was the choice of all Wales and the WLA passed a resolution, without dissent although not unanimous, to that effect. Delegates from Aberystwyth and Caernarfon were present but crucially did not oppose the motion, while those from Newport and Swansea continued to boycott the issue. The WPP also accepted the vote and wrote to the MWA saying they supported Cardiff's claim.¹⁰⁶

The wheels of officialdom turned slowly and a change in Prime Minister and a General Election in May 1955 doubtless acted as a brake on action. A Home Office document from August 1955, shortly before a deputation visited the Home Secretary, exemplified the caution. Besides reiterating the view that a capital could only be a seat of government, it expressed concerns that approving Cardiff as capital might accentuate divisions between North and South Wales and lead to increased calls for self-government.¹⁰⁷ A meeting in November of the Home Affairs Committee, however, acknowledged that previous statements about lack of unanimity in Wales were no longer valid and recognised that failing to declare Cardiff as capital would cause great offence and might lead to stronger calls for devolution.¹⁰⁸ It was finally agreed by Cabinet that a simple statement would declare Cardiff to be the capital, subject to the Queen's Pleasure, rather than an Act of

¹⁰³ Anon., 'Swansea again shelves Capital Issue', *Western Mail* (16 July 1953), p. 3; their response echoed similar sentiments expressed earlier, for example: Anon., 'Capital of Wales Issue', *Western Mail* (22 January 1953), p. 5.

¹⁰⁴ Anon., Untitled, *Western Mail* (8 February 1954), p. 3.

¹⁰⁵ Anon., 'A Country of Division', *Western Mail* (2 March 1954), p. 4.

¹⁰⁶ Anon., 'Welsh MPs back Cardiff as Capital', *Western Mail* (24 June 1954), p. 5.

¹⁰⁷ National Archives: BD/10.

¹⁰⁸ National Archives: PREM 11/1081.

Parliament.¹⁰⁹ The announcement was duly made on 20 December 1955, in a written reply to a question from David Llewellyn, and Wales finally had a capital.¹¹⁰

The *Western Mail*, long a supporter of Cardiff's case, rejoiced in the news and over several days published congratulations from many Welsh MPs and local authorities, including Aberystwyth, one of its keenest rivals.¹¹¹ Other rivals were less positive; the Mayor of Swansea stated, though reportedly with a smile, 'that if the capital could not be Swansea then Cardiff would be his choice'.¹¹² The MP for Caernarfon said that 'Cardiff deserved the loyal support of all the people of Wales' but insisted that Caernarfon remained the ceremonial capital while the Mayor reserved comment.¹¹³ A telling comment, reflecting the view of some that Wales should have different priorities, came from a Cardiff MP, James Callaghan. He said 'The dock workers in Cardiff would be much more excited if Major Gwilym Lloyd George had been able to announce that two more ships a week would be sailing into Cardiff Docks to discharge their cargo'.¹¹⁴

Outside Wales the Manchester Guardian commented that it was 'the natural capital of the Wales which has grown up with the industries of the South'. Contrasting cosmopolitan Cardiff with the antiquity of Caernarfon with its high prevalence of Welsh speakers it commented 'But sentiment and antiquity cannot help to keep the schools running smoothly'. This echoed a report from a council in North Wales during the poll, namely that the choice of capital should be based on what was best for a modern Wales rather than on sentiment.¹¹⁵ The Guardian writer concluded that the view in the north might be 'Better to have a capital in the South than no capital at all'.¹¹⁶

¹⁰⁹ National Archives: CAB 195/14/13: *Cabinet papers for 10 November 1955*.

¹¹⁰ House of Commons Debates, *Hansard*, 20 December 1955, Vol. 547, cc. 310-11W.

¹¹¹ Anon., 'Wales hails the new Capital', *Western Mail* (21 December 1955), p. 3.

¹¹² Anon., 'Cardiff as Capital of Wales', *The Times* (21 December 1955), p. 5.

¹¹³ Anon., 'Wales hails the new Capital'.

¹¹⁴ Anon., '61 words make Cardiff a Capital City', *Western Mail* (21 December 1955), p. 1.

¹¹⁵ Llanwrst Urban Council, quoted in Anon., 'Llanwrst supports Cardiff as Capital', *Western Mail* (20 March 1954), p. 5.

¹¹⁶ Anon., 'Cardiff gains recognition as Capital of Wales', *Manchester Guardian* (21 December 1955).

Cardiff had finally achieved its goal but its work was not over; as the *Western Mail* wrote, 'capital status is not an end in itself, but a focal point for the expression of the nation's needs and ideals'.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁷ L. Jenkins, 'The Fight for a Capital', *Western Mail* (20 December 1955), p. 4.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

It took nearly fifty years for the status of capital to be conferred upon Cardiff but the final decision was widely accepted across Wales. This was very different from the disputes of earlier years, such as that over a National War Memorial, and it has been argued here that one major cause of this was a declining importance of local communities and a gradual move from localism towards a greater sense of a nation. Another was a recasting of Welsh identity into one that some felt was more appropriate to a modern world, with less emphasis on religion and language. Evans wrote 'Much of Wales would follow it (Cardiff) into anglicization and needed to come to terms with its Welsh identity in the process'.¹¹⁸ This encapsulates the assertion that national identity had changed by the middle of the century.

There was a growing feeling that in the modern world good communication links and suitable infrastructure were more important for a capital than great historical and cultural traditions, a view perhaps reflecting the new economic realities of the post-war world. Even if Cardiff was not always loved across Wales, it was no longer the subject of sufficient hostility to prevent it from becoming a capital.¹¹⁹

It was always likely that if Wales could demonstrate broad agreement on a location, then the Government would facilitate the process. While there was little desire for devolution, many politicians were becoming 'more edgy about nationalism and were looking for ways to deal with it'.¹²⁰ Granting Wales a capital was considered a simple way of encouraging the nation but not nationalism. The implications of refusing to recognise Welsh status are illustrated by the contemporaneous debate about the recognition of the Welsh flag, which caused considerable resentment and almost certainly created a patriotic surge.¹²¹

The debates and votes about capital status took place in political bodies whose members were mostly male and probably at least middle-aged. The extent to which they represented

¹¹⁸ Evans, *The Welsh Victorian City*, p. 387.

¹¹⁹ G.A. Williams, *When was Wales?* (London, 1985), Penguin Books, p. 260, p. 304; Johnes, *Cardiff: The Making and Development of the Capital City of Wales*, p. 515.

¹²⁰ R. Weight, *Patriots*, (London, 2002), Macmillan, p. 283.

¹²¹ Weight, *Patriots*, p. 284.

public opinion on the issue of a capital is unknown. During the poll by the WLA, some councillors argued for a plebiscite to establish popular opinion but that did not happen.¹²² There is no evidence that a popular vote would have led to a different conclusion but it is conceivable that the process would have been more rapid without the vested interests held by politicians.

An analysis of subsequent events and how they related to Cardiff is beyond the scope of this dissertation. Devolution in 1997 has clearly had an impact and given further justification to the choice of Cardiff. Stead argued, in a cultural context,

The great bonus in the post-industrial culture of Wales is its capital city (...) Its emergence as an administrative centre has corresponded with its rise as a major venue for international sporting events, for television and film production, for arts festivals and for musical and operatic performances. The sophistication of Cardiff allows Wales to keep much of its talent.¹²³

It is interesting to speculate if this would have been the case if one of its rivals had been selected.

(6269 words).

¹²² Anon., 'Plebiscite on Capital suggested', *Western Mail* (16 January 1954), p. 5.

¹²³ Stead, *Popular Culture*, pp. 119-20.

Appendix

Timeline of events

Date	Event
March 1883	The location of the University College of South Wales was announced after a campaign primarily between Cardiff and Swansea.
June 1905	The announcement was made of the locations of the National Library and National Museum.
October 1905	Cardiff was made a city.
July 1911	The investiture of the Prince of Wales was held in Caernarfon.
May 1919	Cardiff called for a national conference to plan for a National War Memorial. Its effort did not come to fruition among widespread disagreement.
Spring 1924	A poll of local authorities was organised by the South West Daily Post to canvas views on whether Wales should have a capital and, if yes, where it should be located.
August 1924	The results of the poll were announced. They showed an overwhelming majority wanted a capital. Among those there was a large majority for Cardiff, particularly in terms of the populations of the local authorities voting for it, but over half the local authorities chose a different town.
May 1926	The Home Secretary said there was not sufficient evidence of a general wish to make Cardiff the capital of Wales.
November 1945	The issue was raised in the House of Commons by George Thomas; the Prime Minister said no decision could be made due to lack of unanimity.
1948	The Cardiff Cymmrodorion Society received a letter from the Lord Mayor of Cardiff asking them to take up the issue.

February 1949	Caernarfon and Cardiff Councils submitted petitions to the King for capital status to be conferred.
1950-51	Parliamentary questions were tabled by Cardiff MPs George Thomas and David Llewellyn, asking that Cardiff be recognised as capital; all were side-stepped or rebuffed.
1950	The new Lord Mayor of Cardiff arranged for the question of the capital to be put on the agenda of the Council for Wales and Monmouthshire.
February and March 1951	Aberystwyth, Caernarfon, Cardiff and Llandrindod Wells submitted petitions to the Council, in response to their request for bids for capital status.
April 1951	The Council acknowledged the receipt of applications from Aberystwyth, Caernarfon, Cardiff and Llandrindod Wells. They said these had been discussed and that the Council had decided to recommend that Cardiff be recognised as capital. Written objections were made by Aberystwyth and Caernarfon, reiterating their claims.
December 1951	In reply to a question from George Thomas, the Minister for Welsh Affairs said he had no power to recognise Cardiff, or anywhere else, as capital. There needed to be general agreement.
July 1952	A meeting was held in Shrewsbury between Caernarfon and Cardiff representatives.
November 1952	A second meeting was held in Machynlleth between Caernarfon and Cardiff representatives.
January 1953	Delegations from Caernarfon and Cardiff met the Minister for Welsh Affairs to discuss the issue of a capital. The mayor of Aberystwyth made a statement following the revelation that these talks had been held, saying that Caernarfon and Cardiff could not hope to be more than the capitals of North and South Wales and that Aberystwyth was needed as a central capital.

	<p>Aberystwyth's town clerk wrote to the Minister stressing Aberystwyth's centrality and asserting that Cardiff would be vulnerable in a time of war. The Swansea council also registered a protest about the secret meetings.</p>
June/July 1953	<p>Cardiganshire County Council wrote to all local authorities asking if they would be prepared to join a conference to discuss the question of a capital.</p>
November 1953	<p>At a meeting of the WLA there was an overwhelming vote for the principle of having a capital and agreed that there should be a ballot with votes returned by the end of March 1954.</p>
May 1954	<p>The results of the poll were declared and there was an overwhelming majority for Cardiff, though some large authorities, including Newport and Swansea, abstained from voting.</p> <p>The Association passed a resolution without dissent saying that Cardiff should be recognised as the capital. Delegates from Aberystwyth and Caernarfon were present but not those from Newport and Swansea.</p>
June 1954	<p>The WPP wrote to the Minister for Welsh Affairs saying they now supported Cardiff's claim.</p>
July 1954	<p>The WLA wrote to the Council for Wales and Monmouthshire saying they had passed a resolution without dissent that Cardiff should be recognised as the capital and planned to send a deputation to the Minister for Welsh Affairs.</p>
November 1955	<p>Home Affairs committee discussed the case for Cardiff to be made the capital and recommended it to the Cabinet; the Cabinet approved it. They decided not to raise the issue of whether it was to be the capital of Wales or of Wales and Monmouthshire.</p>
December 1955	<p>The announcement that Cardiff would be capital was made in a written answer to a Parliamentary question.</p>

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